

China in Europe Research Network (CHERN) - CA 18215

Understanding the globalization of Chinese companies from below

Basics

Host Organization: ZRC SAZU, Slovenia

Host Organizations's representative: Martina Bofulin, PhD

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The tentative length of the STSM: cca 3-4 weeks

Call's description and objectives

The globalization of Chinese companies has received much attention in the last decade, but there is still scope for nuanced understanding of how these companies insert themselves into local settings across the world. One way to do this is to examine the relations of cooperation and/or contestation with local actors, be they national or subnational. This STSM aims to apply this approach with the examination of one case study of a Chinese multinational company's acquisition of a Slovenian company.

Many studies on the globalization of Chinese companies examine the phenomena on the aggregate level (Shambaugh 2013, Barabantseva and Callahan 2011, Arrighi 2007). This approach often uses a security lens and examines the risks involved with the globalization of Chinese-made goods and technical standards set by China (Gulley et al 2019) and the impact of Chinese companies on the global economic system (Weinhardt and ten Brink 2020) or as a study of comparative capitalisms (Alami et al 2021, De Graaff 2020). In contrast, the case study approach using individual companies has been rarer and mostly done by anthropologists and sociologists (Driesen 2021, Schmitz 2021, Zhu 2021), as well as in the international business literature (Fang and Chimenson 2017, Knoerich 2010), where the focus on individual firms is a well-trodden methodological path.

The STSM will consider the pivotal role of the Slovenian company in regional and local development from the socialist era, through the difficulties of post socialist transition and the challenges of globalization and integration into the EU common market that the

company faced before its takeover by the Chinese multinational. That being said, the majority of the STSM's field research will focus on the most recent phase of the company's development: becoming a minor part of large Chinese corporation that has a clear strategy to establish a multinational presence. The symmetry of this transition – from a big fish in a small pond to a cog in the machine – suggest potential ways of how this transformation might be understood, both by the Chinese and the Slovenian side, respectively.

The scientific mission will firstly look into the understanding of the acquisition from the Chinese side by carefully reading the publicly available records in China on the acquisition and the Chinese company's globalization plans more generally. What is the discourse and rationalization of this particular acquisition and what is the envisioned role for the Slovenian company within the Chinese company's global networks? The acquired data will highlight the characteristics of the Slovenian company's role in the Chinese company's global networks and inquire how this impacted its position in the domestic and regional markets.

Secondly, the data on the Chinese company's insertion into the local Slovenia' setting will be collected and analysed. The research will highlight the complexities of the relationships between the local government, the new owners and the Slovenian government, and the perceptions of the Chinese and local employees and inhabitants on these relations and the acquisition itself (especially in terms of labour standards, managerial practices and inclusion into the local environment). Given the Slovenian company's role as a key employer and former national champion, the complexities surrounding the acquisition should prove to be particularly fruitful and could form the basis for a wider study on how Chinese multinationals negotiate sensitive acquisitions. This knowledge would be especially relevant in the current climate of heightened security concerns and suspicion about Chinese companies' international activities.

Objectives:

- To gather and analyse data from publicly available Chinese media and other records on the selected case study, focusing on the topic of acquisition and the role of the merged company in the multinational company's network
- To gather and analyse data on the Chinese company's insertion into the local setting, focusing, if possible, on the Chinese employees' perceptions of what a 'good' acquisition is and whether emplacement into the locality forms part of that perception

Call's specific requirements

In addition to COST requirements, the applicant should have:

- Native or near-native level of Mandarin Chinese
- Empirical field research experience
- Good knowledge of business studies
- Good knowledge of Chinese companies' internationalization strategies

Results

In addition to COST requirements (see **Practical details** below), the applicant should have:

- The data collection (online data and interviews)
- A co-authored working paper to eventually be submitted to a high impact journal in business anthropology or international business field
- Blog post for CHERN website

Practical details

All applicants must carefully read the [STSM basic facts](#) on CHERN's website before applying.

Potential pandemic restrictions would mean that initial meetings and activities would be done remotely. The exact dates and timing of the mission shall be determined jointly by the Host and the selected applicant.

Deadlines

Deadline for applications to be submitted: **March 25 2022**

Notification of application outcome: **April 5 2022**

Period of STSM: Spring to Summer 2022 (exact dates to be determined together with the host)

Submitting the reports: **30 days** after completing the STSM (and no later than October 15th)

Accepting/ rejecting the reports: **within 2 weeks** after submission of the report

Execution of the payment of the grant: **within 4 weeks** after submission of the report

More information

For more information please contact:

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