
Negotiating change: narratives of China as curse and blessing in the translation of Chinese urban modernity in Ghana

Alena Thiel*¹

¹GIGA, Hambourg (GIGA) – Germany

Abstract (in French and English)

In this paper, I look at Ghanaian transnational traders who source commodities from the Chinese cities of Yiwu and Guangzhou. After introducing the ideal types of transnational traders we identified in our comparative research project (Ghana and Senegal) – defined on the one hand by their social and economic context at home and on the other hand by their particular engagement with Chinese markets and producers (through Chinese, compatriot or no middlemen) – I present some of the ideas that travel in these traders' conceptual luggage from China to Ghana. Seeking to introduce change at home following their exposure to Chinese ways of managing business and public realms, these traders are met with considerable resistance when trying to introduce changes in their companies and communities at home. I round up by analyzing the use of narratives and counter-narratives of China as a (il)legitimate source of re-ordering when zooming in on the negotiations accompanying these potential transformations.

Keywords: China, Africa

*Speaker