

TRANSFORMING URBAN VILLAGES: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN CHINA

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1

Background

- China has seen an increasing number of migrants (estimated between 20 to 80 million in the mid-1990s) moving crossing county boundary, especially from rural to urban areas.
- Many rural to urban migrants were only able to take up "3 D" jobs (dirty, dangerous, and demanding) and that were not attractive to the local residents at the earlier decades of the reforms.
- In recent years, with re-structuring of state-run enterprises, changes in labor market in urban areas, and increase in unemployment in urban areas, it has been observed that an increasing number of former employees of state-run enterprises come to compete with rural migrants for jobs in informal sector, which they previously would not like to take.

2

Background (cont.)

- For many decades, the dichotomy of urban and rural was one of the important determining variables in explaining many social and behavioral differentials, including the patterns and settlement of rural to urban migration.
- In recent years, with rapid urbanization process and the increasing number of rural to urban migration, the original status and structures of urban communities have been transformed remarkably.
- Many Chinese cities have been expanding so rapidly in terms of territorial boundaries and population sizes. The traditional urban communities have been joined by newly transformed and emerged “urban villages”, which traditionally were rural communities.

3

Objectives

- This paper focuses on two types of communities in Chinese cities in terms of administrative status, *urban resident community*, under the administration of Neighborhood Committee (*ju wei hui*) and “*urban village*” which was originally *rural resident community* and converted to be part of urban area, but still under the administration of Village Committee (*cun wei hui*).
- The paper differentiates the status and structure of the two types of migrant-host communities in Chinese cities and attempts to understand to what extent the status and structure of the host communities determine the patterns of social stratification within migrant-concentrated communities.

4

Data

- Mainly based on data collected in "**Shantytowns in Chinese Cities: A Five-city Study of Migration and Urban Poverty**", carried out in 2003, supported by the Ford Foundation.
- Selected 25 migrant-concentrated communities in five cities: **Beijing, Shijiazhuang, Shenyang, Wuxi and Dongguan**.
- Three types of data collected: 2,531 **individual questionnaires** on demographic characteristics, living conditions, income and consumption patterns, employment status, and interactions between locals and migrants; **25 community profiles**; and **50 case studies**

5

"Urban Villages" in Chinese Cities

- As fertility rate in China's urban areas has reached very low level since mid-1980s, the natural increase of urban population has been very slow.
- In addition to rural to urban migration, China's rapid urbanization has been achieved through other two types of urban growth: expansion of existing cities and establishment of new urban centers.
- Since the implementation of economic reform, especially since 1990s, the number of cities and the size of urban centers have increased dramatically.

6

- Number of cities: 461 in 1990; 675 in 2000.
- Number of large cities (1 million above non-agri. Residents): 31 in 1990, 38 in 2000.
- Number of medium-sized cities (300,000 and above non-agri. Residents): 119 in 1990, 196 in 2000.
- Land mass covered by urban areas: 7.6% in 1984; 18% in 1996.

7

- Both types of urban growth - expansion of existing cities and establishment of new urban centers – have resulted in the transformation of land use in the affected areas from primary agricultural usage or semi-agricultural usage to urban residential or commercial usages.
- Consequently it resulted in the transformation of original communities, including the nature of the communities, the structure of the communities and the administrative system of the communities.

8

- With rapid urbanization and expansion of urban boundary in recent years, “urban villages” were emerged.
- “Urban villages” are normally located at urban periphery areas where the members of communities are still regarded as agricultural residents and under management of Village Committees, e.g. Tujing village, Beijing.
- Many Chinese cities have also seen rapid transformation of villages or small towns to medium size urban centers in a short period of time, e.g. Changan Township in Dongguan.

9

- The most significant difference between an urban resident community and an “urban village” is that the “urban village” has collective ownership over the land and other collective assets of the community, while urban resident community normally does not have such ownership.
- In addition, a “urban village” also manages village-run enterprises and other economic activities and distributes income, pension, welfare and other benefits to its members and their families. A urban resident community, does not have ownership of the land in the community, and it does not manage collective enterprises.

10

Concentration of Migrants in “Urban Villages”

- “Urban villages” in many Chinese cities have become popular destinations of settlement for floating population, or temporary migrants, especially those with agricultural household registration status, because of the periphery locations (often close to newly established industrial enterprises) and availability of affordable rental properties (often under private ownership).
- Urban resident communities, which are normally located in more central locations of the city, could also attract migrants, they normally could not accommodate a large number of migrants due to limited supply of rental properties and expansive rental prices. Affordable properties in this type of urban resident communities include basement units of residential buildings and self-built shabby houses and shelters which normally are poorly constructed without permission of urban planning authorities.

11

Urban resident communities

Community	% of migrants
Miaopuxili, BJ	10%
Beijie, BJ	13%
Dongli Nanjie, SJZ	26%
Ertai, SY	11%
Changan, SY	6%
Tieling, SY	5%
Nankazimen, SY	26%

“Urban Villages”

Community	% of migrants
Tujing, BJ	78%
Dangjiazhuang, SJZ	76%
Beidu, SJZ	52%
Shizhuang, SJZ	80%
Sumiao, WX	34%
Xiaobian Shanyang, DG	84%
Zhendixincun, DG	94%

12

- The proportions of migrant population in “urban villages” are much higher than that in urban resident communities.
- It is very clear that migrants are more concentrated in those “urban village” communities in all five cities, although the five cities have remarkably different levels of social and economic development and migration policies.

13







Inequality Between Migrants and Local Residents: Comparison of Two Types of Communities

Housing space per person in two types of communities (sq m)

Community	Local residents	Migrants	Ratio (migrants/locals)
Beijing (Neighbourhood Committees)	14.56	9.06	0.62
Shenyang (Neighbourhood Committees)	10.97	5.02	0.51
Shijiazhuang (Village Committees)	33.61	10.95	0.33
Wuxi (Village Committees)	49.66	14.02	0.28
Average	30.33	10.38	0.34

18

- The greater inequality in housing conditions between migrants and locals in “urban village” communities could be related to the changes of these communities from originally agricultural communities to “urban village” communities, in which most of agricultural production functions have been removed while the collective ownership of land and other assets are still in place.
- Local residents in this type of community are entitled to build their own dwellings on the land that was allocated to them. Many local residents are able to build self-use houses as well as houses for rental and other commercial purposes. This kind of benefit is not available to local residents in the sampled urban communities,

19

Average hourly wage in two types of communities (*yuan*)

Community	Local residents	Migrants	Ratio (migrants/locals)
Beijing (Neighbourhood Committees)	5.36	5.14	0.96
Shenyang (Neighbourhood Committees)	3.09	3.00	0.97
Shijiazhuang (Village Committees)	3.67	1.95	0.53
Wuxi (Village Committees)	4.49	3.35	0.75
Average	4.28	3.39	0.79

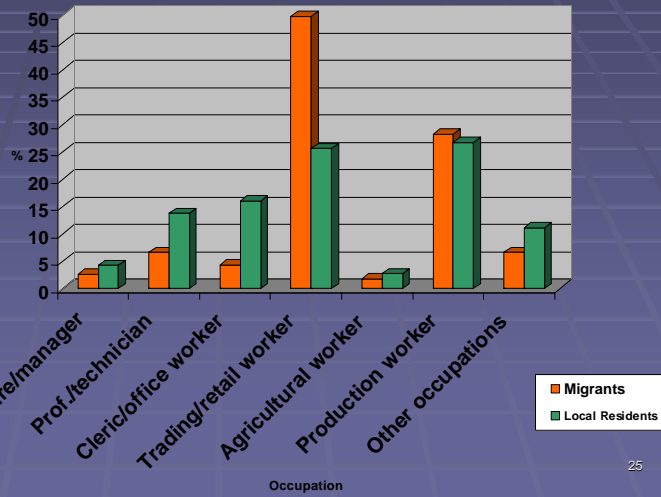
20



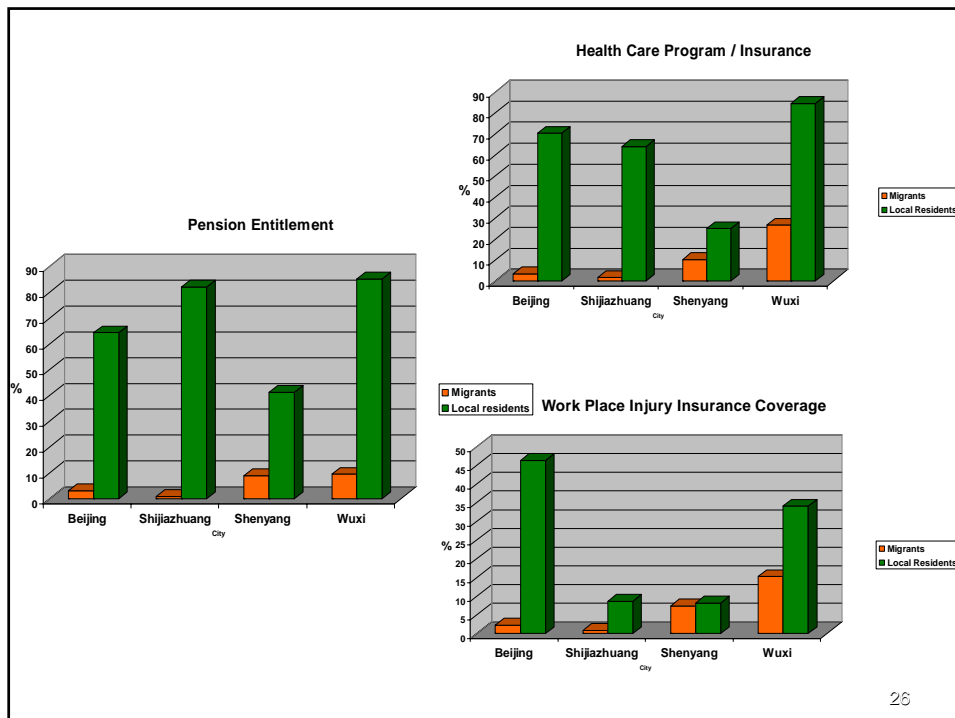


- The monthly income per capita in Beijing's urban resident communities could be converted to 1,286 *yuan* for local residents and 1,233 *yuan* for migrants (the average working hours per week was 60), and the estimated monthly income per capita for Shijiazhuang's "urban villages" could only be converted to 880 *yuan* and 468 *yuan* respectively.
- The income levels of members of selected communities were much lower than the average income levels in each of these cities and provinces (details in the paper).

Main Occupations of Migrants and Local Residents



25



26

Regression Coefficients of Individual's Monthly Income (log)

Variables	Coefficients	s.e.	Sig.
HUKOU	.1430	-.492	.053
SINGLE	-.1400	.1430	.195
CHILDREN	-0.005	-.140	.938
JOBNUM	-.259	-0.005	.117
CONTRACT	0.090	-.259	.046
JOBBASE	0.041	0.090	.439
EMLength	0.001	0.041	.007
OCCUP	.275	0.001	.000
Intercept	6.912	0.188	.000

27

Discussions and Conclusions

- The distinction between the traditional “urban community” and “rural community” has become blurred in the age of massive rural to urban migration.
- The penetration of rural migrants in urban labor market and the urban resident communities has brought new challenges to the urban administrative system.
- When the urban resident communities are unable to accommodate the massive amount of migrants, especially rural migrants, “urban villages” has emerged rapidly to respond to and accommodate migrants’ need for affordable housing as well as employment opportunities in Chinese cities.

28

- There are considerable differences in the patterns of migration settlement in the urban resident communities and “urban villages”.
- The proportions of migrants in the “urban villages” are noticeably greater than that of the urban resident communities.
- In the urban resident communities, local residents enjoyed *noticeable* better living conditions than that of migrants, while in the “urban villages”, the living conditions of local residents are *much* better than that of migrants in the same communities.

29

- The income of the local residents and migrants are not significantly different in the urban resident communities, while in “urban villages” the income of migrants is considerably lower than that of local residents.
- The results of this study indicate that it is highly likely that the migrants in those newly transformed or emerged “urban villages” could end up becoming the most disadvantaged members of the host community, and therefore the most disadvantaged members of the host city.

30