Negotiating a Concurrence:
Tracing the Visible/Invisible Relocation within Migrant-Inhabited Cities of China

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Abstract

It is essential for us to illuminate the specific role and adaptation process of China's internal peasant-origin migrants (or the peasant flood), who have experiences not entirely different from those suffered by overseas immigrants. A number of reasons convince us to draw this conclusion, including the large gap in income compared to local workers, the fact that they share different cultural values to native residents and the noticeably lower living standards between the areas of the migrants' origin and their destinations.

Migration in China is an experience that begins before people move away from their place of origin and continues long after arriving in their new home destinations. As a unique feature of migration research, national relocation is not simply a crossing of a geographical boundary, but also a transgressing of social and psychological environment barriers. Our research intends to examine the underestimated or marginal character played by such outsider crowds with special regard given to the individual's experience of unfamiliar settlements. This involves exploring the role of migrants' transformation through the misapprehension that relocation is merely a geographical movement. We suggest that visible relocation brings other incidental replacements, such as changes in identity, psychological cognition and social cohesion.

Introduction

Population movement is not new, however the rural-to-urban migration in China has reached unheard-of levels (Table 1). 'All the world seems to be on the move', as stated by Sheller and Urry (2006). However, this migration also has a vibrant element in China, especially since most fast-paced urbanized cities face similar issues of people's fluidity. (Figure 1) The word 'relocation' originally referred to human movement. Rossi (1980) describes a 'human move' as:
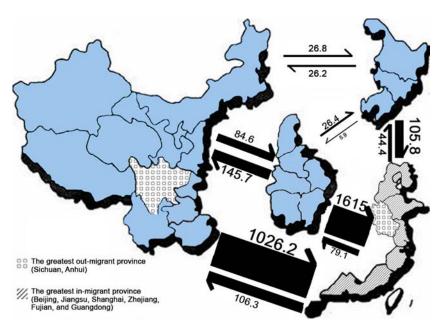
[…] a shift in address […] involving a shift in location through space that can vary from a few feet in the case of a shift from one apartment or room to another within a structure to thousands of miles to another country or from one end of the country to the other" (Rossi 1980).

Table 1. Migrant populations at the place of origin by pattern of migration flow, 2011-2012

Area	2011			2012		
	Out-county Within district	Out-district Within province	Out of district	Out-county Within district	Out-district Within province	Out of district
Nationwide	20.2	32.7	47.1	20.0	33.2	46.8
East	32.1	51.3	16.6	32.0	51.7	16.3
Central	13.0	19.8	67.2	13.1	20.7	66.2
West	15.4	27.6	57.0	15.4	28.0	56.6

The massive movement of people, especially migration from rural to urban areas, has been part and parcel of the tremendous economic and social transformation within China over the past three decades (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Volumes of inter-provincial migration within and among regions, 1990 (Drawing by Xueni PENG).

Note: The figure clearly reveals the volumes among inter-provincial migrants amid South, Central, North and West China. All flows have increased in volume, with the most pronounced flows within the eastern district and those from the central and western regions to the eastern region.
Source: Rush A. 2011, 'China's Labour Market', *Reserve Bank of Australia Bulletin* (September), pp. 29-38. Available at: http://www.rba.gov.au/publications/bulletin/2011/sep/pdf/bu-0911-4.pdf
Chan, K. W. 2013, 'China, Internal Migration', in Ness, I. and Bellwood, P. (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*, Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken, NJ.
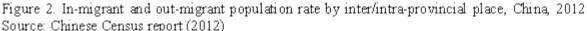
In fact, there are two main causes for the increase in mobility in China, the first is the Chinese government's policy of relaxing controls on population movement from rural provincial areas to quicken urbanization; the second is the attraction of employment, education, business opportunities and a higher standard of living in the cities (Griffiths 2010). Since the early 1980s more than 15 percent of the country's population has lived in places other than their home settlements, towns, or cities.[1] However, the massively diverse destinations among such migrants characterize the awkwardness of their internal transitional experiences.
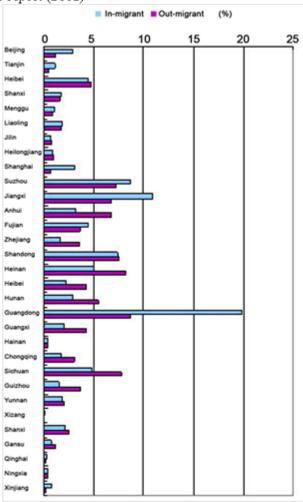
Our research provides an examination of the migrant worker community through three phases they undergo for survival, namely: confront, transform and assimilation. A number of factors make China's rural-urban migrants more like immigrants from developing to developed counties than internal migrants within a developing country. For example, a large gap in income, and distinctly different cultural values, and living standards exist between the areas of origin and destination. More importantly, there are restrictions preventing or obstructing migrant settlements in terms of selecting destinations, ranging from labor market discrimination to China's household registration (hukou) system – a de facto internal passport system.[2] In fact, the hukou system segregating migrants from the urban population may be a much more significant factor than cultural barriers in accounting for migrant marginality and denial of their citizenship rights. In the case of China's inner migration, Hukou 'identity' (the household registration system) places people spatially with a rigid institutional hierarchy (Shen 2013; Fan 2002). Stonequist, for instance, believes that being within the orbit of double hierarchal cultural milieus can result in inner strain and malaise, a feeling of isolation, of not quite belonging (Stonequist 1937). Hence, the term 'psychological marginality' has been coined to define such awkwardness in their new urban environments. Chinese migrants can be depicted in the following way: 'they come in peasants and leave marginalized people' due to their constantly drifting life (Bach 2010).

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[1] The latest official estimates of the 'floating population' in China is 211 million on 2010. Source: http://www.china.org.cn/travel/expo2010shanghai/2010-07/13/content_20483664.htm

[2] Because of its entrenchment of social strata, especially as between rural and urban residency status, the Hukou system is often regarded as a caste system of China.

Figure 2. In-migrant and out-migrant population rate by inter/intra-provincial place, China, 2012
Source: Chinese Census report (2012)

Note: Guangdong City placed on the South China Sea coast of China possesses a great variety of resources, and has a lot of agricultural, industral, and international trade. Along with the rapid economic growth and open social environment in the process of urbanization, Guangdong turns out to be the biggest receiving migrant destination.
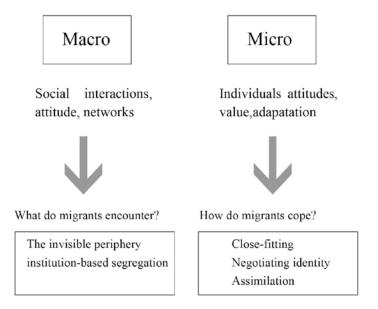
It is contended here at the outset, as proposed in the abstract, that China's internal migrants experience hardship akin to those undergone by overseas immigrants. Migration is not 'ready-made' but instead it is a part of one's life that endures and has relevance for years and generations to come (Deaux 2009). Another interpretation could describe migration as both a dynamic and a symbolic procedure instead of a separate event. In the light of such variation in the labeling of migration, I offer a general framework for discussion that is adapted from an immigration model of personality and social structure developed by Thomas Pettigrew (1997), whose approach led me to consider a new way to think about intra-province migration in China. In Figure 3, what Pettigrew terms the macro and micro levels facilitate us to understand more about the Chinese rural migrant experience. Here the macro level

describes a physical, social and psychological space defined in the adopted destination migrants arrive at. At the micro level is the individual migrant at discrete transitional points that, is in the face of varying situations and experiences, and how he/she negotiates and adapts to the changing circumstances. I seek to develop a framework that can foresee some of the systematic challenges that the Chinese migrants encounter, which is akin to the hardship that immigrant also face in a new culture.

Descriptions of China's internal migration and migrants

With China's implementation of economic reform over the past 20 years, the process of urbanization has been based on and accelerated by mainly the rural-to-urban migration flow. By 2011, the number of off-farm migrant workers in China totaled 253 million, which was an increase of 4.4% (11 million) compared to 2010 (Human Resources and Social Security Department 2011). By 2030, China's urbanization rate is projected to reach 65% (IEAS, 2010), in turn the number of rural migrants is expected to swell to approximately 400 million (Lian 2012). It is important here to note that the vast majority of migrants in China are from its farming or peasant class. For some time now, peasant-related migration, or the 'peasant flood' as it is termed in China, has created a large number of new and unexpected of social and economic issues for the country.

Figure 3. Main elements of migration process examination

What distinguishes China's recent mobility change is not only the large size of the 'tidal wave of rural migrant labor' *(mingong chao)*, but the type of rural-urban migrations accompanying the transformations of rural life, the large gap in wages and standards of living, and the restrictions preventing the settlement of migrants (Roberts 1997). At the administrative operational level in China, migrants can thus be identified as being of two types (Chan & Zhang 1999), hukou migrants – migration with 'local' residency rights *(bendi hukou)*, usually open only to a very select group (currently, the rich or the highly educated) and immediate family members of residents with local hukou (Chan & Buckingham 2008); non-hukou migrants – migration without hukou residency rights. Some scholars concerned with exploring experiences as 'outsiders' differentiate them further into permanent migrants and temporary migrants according to different resident statuses (Fan 2002).

Let me begin this new path of enquiry with three basic questions: what is the migrant confronted with? How does the migrant transform? How does the migrant deal with this new life? In choosing these questions, I am suggesting that migration goes beyond the crossing of a geographical boundary and involves more of a switching of social and psychological environments.

What is the migrant confronted with?

The invisible periphery

My understanding of 'invisible periphery' stems from what Michel Foucault proposes as the 'techniques of the self' (Foucault 1990) concerning how people are perceived as 'selves' by 'others' (individuals) and 'themselves' (in society), and finally how they allow a separate 'self' to regulate their behavior, their attitudes to the mainstream. Thus, through this awareness, the community is projected within ourselves and shows who we are to ourselves and to other people. Individuals behave and act according to their day-to-day experiences within such guidelines (Foucault 1990). Following this, 'invisible periphery' can also be considered as a part of the emotional conflict through which rural migrants find their identity and self-esteem are weakened socially and psychologically by trying to blend easily into a new urban community. From a migrants' standpoint, working with one's group in some form of collective action is more likely to be a choice. More specifically, 'invisible periphery' can be considered as a community that is experienced differently by locals and non-locals. With perceivable differences, both locals and nonlocals will locate their selves and others in their

separate urban environments. Finally, this 'invisible periphery' influences their subsequent behavior physically and mentally. As an outsider, the invisible periphery reinforces emotional conflict and, in turn, rural migrants are further weakened by attempting to identify themselves as part of the existing urban fabric.

Reception in the majority of rural migrant destinations in China is reflected in widely different ways, ranging from willing acceptance from some local governments to absolute refusal by local residents. Researchers have suggested that the source of the difficulty lies essentially with the government's attitude to 'non-natives', particularly rural strangers, who are always treated with jaundiced eyes.

Correspondingly, rural migrant workers are vulnerable in the urban environment of China due to institution-based segregation regarding housing and because of the fact that they can be allocated by the government Hukou system to the poorest clusters or residential areas for living. Such conditions involve a low level of physical housing facilities, more restricted opportunities for residents, fewer opportunities at achieving financial success in society and a higher level of mental vulnerability as Plummer found in her study of poverty in Vientiane (2001).

The local population's exclusive attitude and discriminatory segregation cannot merely be attributed to a lack of local facilities and resources, but also to the concern for security. The root cause for the difficulties that migrants face can be traced to one sole policy which was first introduced in the late 1950s, and which was intended to restrict the mobility of China's population, namely, the household registration system, *Hukou* (Wu and Treiman 2006). However, its most weighty consequence is the creation of a potential hereditary system that has divided China's agricultural and non-agricultural populations and effectively bound the peasantry to the land they tilled. The constraints of the *Hukou* system have in their own way caused a rural/urban segregation pattern to emerge. This segregation of residency status significantly disadvantages most migrants and relegates them to a second-tier 'temporary' civic status. Even though the Chinese government emphasizes social harmony as an important national development goal, in many cases, migrants' unprotected legal status leads to their vulnerability and social exclusion, such as having no right to social welfare or educational opportunities. Local governments tend to set stringent entrance conditions (credentials regarding their residence, employment, social insurance enrollment, birth

planning policy compliance, and health conditions) to discourage rural migrants from accessing most welfare programs, such as the Minimum Living Security Scheme (zui di shenghuo baozhang jizhi), which can provide relief to poor residents, and housing support programs like Economic and Comfortable Housing (jingji shiyong fang) and Low-Rent Housing (lian zu fang), which can provide housing subsidies to individuals facing housing difficulties (Li, 2009; Fan and Peng, 2009). The realization of local non-rural residential identity is accordingly a vital stage for the citizens considered migrants towards escaping the vulnerability they are confronted with and towards achieving a better living standard.

Furthermore, such discriminatory institutions in essence intensify geographical duality in China and have deepened the conflict between the city and the countryside (Cheng and Selden 1994). Such a reality, at the same time, toughens and shapes the identities of the outsiders. In addition, most migrants fail to seek assurance of their own worth from their host community. The social categorization of migrants as outsiders stems from these institutional obstacles which by extension entail exclusion from their place of origin.

This exclusion includes urban society's rejection of specific groups of migrants, particularly off-farm migrants (which is most of rural to urban migrants). Such discrimination against migrant groups is mirrored in terms of urbanites' attitude of exclusion, disparate treatment and refusal to build equivalent social relationships with the outsiders. What is more, the urban community bestows little social worth, recognition or sense of belonging on migrants. Therefore, for the floating migrants, their social links and community participation as well as their subjective awareness of social belonging are likewise discouraged or dampened due to being part of the invisible periphery.

Communal psychological effect – group-oriented versus individualistic adaptation
At the regional level, the rural/urban division is highly confronted by the deep-seated assumptions of the pattern of urbanization, as Jones (1997) claims, namely that urbanization has essentially to do with the psychological detachment of rural and urban existence and daily routines, and the spatial location of the proletariat. Earlier, in evoking a precise understanding of urbanization, Wirth (1938) also captured the challenges of such a change – it no longer signifies simply the process by which persons are involved in a place entitled 'metropolitan' and assimilated into its system of life. It denotes also the collective highlighting of the

features characteristic of the manner of life which accompany the growth of cities, and lastly the varieties in the life patterns accepted in a city (Wirth 1938).

Adapting to such a shift toward urbanization is also reflected in Chinese migrants' own situations. Owing to the strengthening of exterior and interior sensual stimuli in the city, in contrast to a rural environment, the city nurtures a condition where one must buffer him or herself from a continually varying atmosphere. Namely, lives turn out to be matter-of-fact, with little attention to emotional concerns. As Simmel (1903) wrote more than a hundred years ago, life in the city compared poorly with the individual connections characteristic of smaller settings. In other words, superficially Chinese migrants gradually transfer from their home rural settlements to establish city lives and engage in urban occupations, but their elemental identity and family network remains grounded in village culture. Migration, put more broadly, involves relocation or a transfer procedure that bridges individual(s) and spaces—not only for persons who migrate but also for their family relation network. That sense of adherence to community of origin can be regarded as contributing to the floating population and its long-standing safekeeping may be maintained in exchange for cash remittances (Graves and Graves 1974).

Affiliation within the migrant group is founded principally on kinship – with brothers, sisters, and relatives from the migrants' origin at the core. It is a basis from which we can demonstrate that family life in our culture is crucial to the development of social relations. In addition, scholars working in the field of Chinese migrants have explored the emotional and communal experience of migrants in urbanized spaces, probing into how their community sentiments are built upon the axis of differences and transformations (Liu et al. 2010). However, the above mentioned works concentrate on documenting migrants' emotional experience in given situations rather than considering the different social formation as the key factor underlying the inevitable intergroup conflict.

When individuals relocate, it is not a simple concern for oneself or selves. As migrants, they experience the act of mobility in a spatial dimension, with those incoming establishing contact with the unknown which in turn compels individuals to build new identities (Moghaddam 2002) and participate in the compromising of their individuality over time. For many older (first)-and neo (second)-generation rural migrants in China, the dialogs regarding identity are frequently manifested by a push-and-pull phenomenon (a financial push towards

the city to find employment and earn money, and an emotional pull to return to their home communities and loved ones), with binary opposites, such as barbarous versus etiquette, rural versus urban, fail versus succeed (Mukora 1999), leave versus carry on, and custom versus innovation. These paradoxes are an essential part of their self-formation. Referring to Wirth, whose description of influential urbanism as a way of life depicts how urbanism is a form of social organization that is harmful to culture, and who characterizes the city as a 'substitution of secondary for primary contacts, the fading of ties of kinship, and the waning social meaning of the family, the vanishing of the neighborhood, and the discouragement of the traditional foundation of social unity' (Wirth 1938, pp. 3-5). To emphasize this, it is important to note that the countryside and the city are the specific sites where the cultural differences between rural Chinese and urban Chinese are most clear-cut. At this point, it is pertinent to revisit an image of the family in the eyes of the Chinese.

Family, *Jia* for Chinese people, is more like a symbolic place of kinship. The ideal family is in fact an extended family living under one protecting roof. In China's countryside, until now this family type stands for the permanence of a family's full lineage. It is generally well maintained by a populous, extended family, often with more than a dozen members, or may include all inhabitants in a hamlet who have the same surname (Fukuyama 1996). People in the countryside grow up and live surrounded by the group; they do not prefer to be alone. In terms of the village encircled by the city I am concerned with the rural home of China as an archetype.

The rural represents the kinship (clan) family-based social structure while the city mirrors the inclination of a relatively individual-dominating social order; so to speak, the rural and the urban of China translate into I-location, that is, 'who we (kinship family) are' and 'who I am'. One great challenge that newly-urbanized rural people face is understanding the notion of the individual (or rich self-image) and entering into the spirit of the city. However, on the basis of this comprehension we understand the individual as someone who does something from the 'me', and someone who focuses on the problem he or she finds themselves in, however, rural people also seem to lack a strong self-identity or central self. Individualism in the context of Chinese history and culture is a deviation from the behavioral norm expected of most Chinese (Smith 1992). To a certain extent, the traditional Chinese concept of a person is not presenting the self as an individual person but as one who is inescapably immersed in a

group – the family. In that sense, the rural and urban parts control a number of differently respective dimensions.

To shed further light on some of the mental states undergone by migrants, and to apply I-location to our case study, we can say that the 'I' is formed out of the self-consciousness of one's activities and this leads to the formation of a clear self-entity. In turn, although a Chengzhongcun (hereafter CZC), as, a village encompassed by the city boundaries, is well-received by both rural migrants and the urban poor, its dwellers have a tendency to consider themselves as an isolated group and fail to interact successfully with locally-born residents. Such a solo I-oriented city lifestyle, does not exist in the society of the countryside. For people living in a *CZC*, social life takes place in migrant groups there and does not involve those outside the CZC. This fact is illustrated by the comments that settlement house dwellers made about their lack of expectation to have affection for this area—which can be identified as signifying 'an absence of a self-belonged group'. This passive appraisal of one's settlement is also reflected in other opinions on living in a CZC: expressing a sense of insecurity due to the lack of a 'village unit' organization or a management model and crowds of unknowns; no public services.

Barriers in observing the actions and attitudes of others generate encumbrances in contacting individuals with whom they are not fully acquainted, and this results in *CZC* dwellers restricting their interaction to peer groups[3] in which the daily risks can be minimized to a degree. Passive or negative, the *CZC* dwellers have considerable difficulty in feeling that people are organized in a cooperative group activity. Perhaps a CZC resident can see, observe, and describe this action; but they do not view themselves as an integral part of the community. Standards, for instance, equivalence, reliance, and mutuality are considered as only applying to their origin-based community relationships instead of outside of these peer groups. For these migrants, the peer group is a routinized congregation of a community with a restricted range: kin-relatives and people from the same location.

This narrow living circle, of course, impedes cooperative activity. Resources are not shared within a framework of reciprocal norms which means that migrants need to contribute their own resources to swell the adaptive potential of the group as a whole. *CZC* dwellers, for

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[3] The basic structure of migrants' lives in a host city is peer group sociability. Peer group may be defined as a group of people who, through homophily, share similarities such as age, background, and social position.

instance, take a minimal number of steps to improve the community where they are housed, or they are not interested in making improvements, because, being outside of their peer group, they want to make money and save their energy for their own family-oriented behavior within their peer group. Certainly, there is no denying that some other likelihood still exists, according to the National Population and Family Planning Commission in 2008, the first-generation migrants are thrifty and they save up as much as they can in order to support their children, whereas the neo-generation migrants tend to change in different ways having stayed in the city for a period of time. Influenced by urban consumer culture, some of them live from paycheck to paycheck spending on their daily activities, such as food and clothes, rather than give every penny they have to their parents – they are sometimes referred to as 'the moonlight group (*yueguangzu*).

Such a living circle constitutes the typical adaptive mode of many cooperative, kin-based rural communities and contrasts with the individualistic strategies more common within the urban community. It can be argued that these different dimensions we see now do not just bring inevitable emotional conflicts; this definition of self-cognition, together with migrants' role and location in work and at home, makes the *CZC* seem like a new beginning. There is a tendency to assimilate aspects of the new system with components of the old, even creating ground for conflict. In positing a multidimensional concept of assimilation, such assimilation is accomplished through alterations happening in community on both sides of the ethnic periphery through boundary crossing, obscuring and transforming (Alba & Nee 2003).

The picture we saw in a CZC in China is familiar to those who have read *The Urban Villagers* by Herbert Gans, published in 1962. It is a neighborhood that suggests an ideal type of cultural adaptation to city life that reproduces distrust of authority and self-protection. In this sense, the *CZC* in China is doomed to be a physical entity that witnesses the assimilation and hybrid of going-between, in which a modern urban identity and a traditional rural identity coexist in the process of urbanization. Moreover, a similar study appears to reveal that residents' subjective awareness of exclusion (Fukuyama 1996), emotional encounters and weakened community networks significantly reduced any positive influence on cohesion in a city. Also, such factors had a noticeable effect on the diminishing degree of trust in a wide variety of social relationships.

How does the migrant transform him/herself? Who am I?

Due to their geographical movement, individuals encounter their own identities both combining and clashing with other identities that are significant to the self. Deaux (2009) claims that issues like individual choices, interpersonal encounters, and reconstruction of cognitive and passionate anchors are indispensable for accepting how floating populations become accustomed to a new destination and are composed of separate identities. These adaptive procedures are demonstrated by migrants themselves in terms of a series of strategies by which they mainly rely on to facilitate the transformation from being a local to being an outsider at the level of encounters between migrants and natives. Nevertheless, the so-called alternative strategies which are naturally engaged in to cope with the transition of self-definitions can be classified into four groups: 1) from floating to permanent migration; 2) from leaving the land but not the countryside to leaving the land first and then the countryside; 3) from the first generation of migrants to the neo or second generation of migrants; 4) from temporary dweller to permanent resident.

'From leaving the field but not the village' to 'leaving completely both the field and the village'

The real life of a rural place is related to the farm work undertaken by peasants, but the truth is that many people defined as peasants have little experience of or have spent little time on agricultural activities. For example, in the rural areas of Jiangsu province, 55 per cent of the occupations of local peasants is in non-agricultural employment but they continue to dwell in villages, known as *litu bu lixiang* – leave the field but not the village. Such temporary migration or repeated migration by China's first rural-urban workers was common because on one hand, the working area was close to the countryside, and on the other hand, they provided a significant contribution to household labor during the farming seasons.

This pattern of transitory labor flowing in-and-out, we might note, is concentrated in the Eastern part of China, the prosperous coastal regions. And labor migration is likely to be of the 'leave completely the field and village' pattern, *litu you lixiang*. This describes the rural migrants' status as leaving behind their attachment to rural homesteads for their new lives in their host cities. The first condition gives rise to the maintaining of strong bonds with their community of origin while another type contributes heavily to their individualistic

development, or to creating barriers to their long-term return home. The larger a migrant's network of urban kinsmen becomes, the longer he remains away, and the higher tendency there is to permanent unreturning (Graves & Graves 1974). As a result, due to large number of the rural population who continue to flow into the steadily developing urban areas, despite the geographical distance, the urban employment structure has given way to a patchwork of variously labor-intensive areas in the city which appear like paddy fields of activity from a rural setting.

From first-generation migrant to neo-generation migrant

In terms of age selection, the first migrants in our study are defined as people who experienced rural-urban migration in their 30s, starting in the 1980s with their hunt for labor work in the city. The second group of migrants was born after the 1980s. At present, the neo rural-urban migrant generation occupies 58.4 per cent of the total rural-urban migrant population (NBSC, 2012). This community, is now known as the 'Neo-generation migrants (*Xinshengdai nongmin gong*) in China, in recognition of their reluctance to stay in rural areas and desire to start their own 'gold rush' after a basic education. Unlike the older generation of migrant workers, the majority of them experienced their passage into adulthood in the cities and hoped to become urbanites someday. The generation born in the 1980s who started their city migration journey just after finishing junior high school has followed a difficult pathway into adult life, experiencing a more unsteady labor-market casualization, and worsening housing-market circumstances. Certainly, their presence has been traced from initially being fortune seekers, and it has been argued that many of them are entering the social order through the in-between manner and have become more individualized in realizing their own happiness, and independence (Li 2001).

From floating (liudong) to permanent settlement

In China, few scholars or policy makers recognize that Chinese rural migrant workers, *nonmingong,* have in fact predominantly formed permanent settled groups, *yimin,* within urban centers. This distinction designates the floating population as individuals who have never been categorized as neo urban settlers, *xinyimin*, remaining instead rural-to-urban transients, *zanzhuzhe*.

Within this description, the movement of people across rural or provincial borders has been assumed as a temporary relocation. However, during the past three decades, and especially

nowadays, the neo-migrants, *xinshengdai,* have shown their strong will and intention to become real urbanites permanently. From this perspective, the past decades witnessed the transformation of their definition of self – floating to permanent settlements[4]. Solinger (1999) points out that for a Chinese conception, the 'floating' has been a matter of geographical temporary mobility (flowing in and out), rather than seeing themselves as 'migrated', *qianyi,* (they are not, and will not become, an eternally settled community). In contrast to the process of migration worldwide, purely moving from place of origin to a new destination and settling down there for a specific period is not regarded as migration in Chinese terminology.

From temporary dweller to permanent migrant

Throughout the period covered, almost 3.38 million migrants with their entire families have moved their residence away from their home areas and migrated to the city (Solinger 1999). Substantial attention has been devoted to this family-based movement, while referring to seasonal migration as the "*leave the field but remains in the rural area*" pattern. This presents strong evidence that the longer migrants stay in one city, the more likely they are to be reluctant to leave, and the more eager they are to become permanent migrants. In this case, permanent migration has in fact already occurred on the part of family migrants.

A migration decision-making process is also considered a family project; for men, this typically meant acquiring more financial assistance with an urban job; for women it meant emancipation in terms of traditional restrictions and household status. This does not mean that family migrants lost interest in their original community, a great pool of research presents proof that social networks evolve around the triple sphere of 'blood, kinship and geography' even though there is a large geographical distance (Fan, 2002; Deaux 2009). Rural migrants rely on this triple-based relationship throughout their motive lives despite the geographical separation.

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[4] This group can be divided into two typical communities. The first one is, colloquially called, the 'ant group': 蟻族 (Lian 2009) and was originally used to define a mass community of the post-80s generation of those with better education or a well-trained background. Although full of dreams, they have to face a harsh reality. They live a poor life without stable dwellings, normally living in collective dormitories, which are shared with other 'ants', but they have dreams in their hearts of the big cities of China. Within this community, the low-waged IT workers became known locally as the Chinese 'ant tribe' due to the nonexistence of formal housing where they are living and their suffering a situation of poor personal hygiene. The second group is, colloquially named, Beipiao: 北漂 (Chen 1991), literally "Beijing vagabond", and this refers to the community of people who do not have a Beijing hukou (household of permanent residence), and who migrated to Beijing from other places in China pursuing the Beijing Dream—opportunities for a better future. Beipiao is also the lifestyle of a drifter in Beijing.

The proportion of permanent rural migrants in cities has been progressively growing (Table 2), age, heredity membership, sibling order, rights to traditional titles (Graves & Graves

Table 2. Annual rural worker population growth numbers by type of household origin, 2008-2012

Unit : Million					
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of rural workers	22542	22978	24223	25278	26261
1 . Out-rural worker	14041	14533	15335	15863	16336
single	11182	11567	12264	12584	12961
household	2859	2966	3071	3279	3375
2 . Local rural workers	8501	8445	8888	9415	9925

Source: NBSC (National Bureau of Statistics of China) 2013

1974), and so on have all been cited as significant determinants of who is most likely to stay at home; who leads the chain migration; and who will finally finish the household migration and the whole process of rural-to-urban movement. Likewise, other scholars (Chan 2013; Knight & Song 1995) have found that migrants mainly came from part of a limited-resource and dissatisfied stratification system, and their absence has in turn strengthened the semi or completely undeveloped village structure. Put starkly, the floating dwellers will leave their rural community forever and finally evolve to be permanent migrants in their host urban areas. However, when due to institutional reasons they cannot become urban residents, especially for migrants with low abilities, in the face of city life without dignity, no doubt homecoming is a decisive endpoint or their best and only choice.

How does the migrant deal with this new life? To be a migrant

When migrants move to a city as a temporary destination or as a permanent settlement, the new physical setting forces migrants to experience a physical, social and psychological shift to adapt. Their migration and living experiences reflect their transforming identity status in China. The term 'adaptation' is currently giving way to an observation of rural-urban migrants as a more dynamic mediator in shaping his/her social conditions. Adaptation facilitates these floating populations to enter urban life, but allows them to maintain an option to return to their own origins. Owing to this, the adaptations which follow upon the migration of rural workers to an urban destination are the products of exclusion and negotiation in three modes: close-fitting mode; negotiating identity (Deaux 2009) mode and assimilated mode.

Figure 4. Distribution of six-selected CZCs in Beijing city. (Source: Chaoyang Planning Bureau, modified by authors)

To shed light on Chinese migrants' adaptation patterns, we make use of the 2010 interview information of 300 migrant workers living in six selected CZCs in Beijing, respectively Mingguang, Shiliuzhuang, Guanzhuang, Yamenkou, E'fang, and Zhongtan, located in six different districts (Figure 4). These 300 interviews, while not representative of all intra-national migrants, provide insights into how some migrants can or cannot combine their identity transformation into the adaptation of 'changes'. The migrants interviewed include first and neo-generation migrants and those reaching middle age (age range 20-45). Such migrant examples would need to consider their negotiating careers in the context of migration and transforming social networks, new opportunities availability, the confrontations with hostile or supportive members of resident host communities and diminishing expectations of a satisfying living environment cannot be avoided to deal with the new life as a migrant.

Close-fitting mode to the rural social matrix

The first mode copes with discriminatory treatment by relying on a closed system, a rural enclave, which functions as a supernumerary for elements of the home culture left behind in rural parts of China. Here, we see the close-fitting mode as a survival-maintaining choice when the migrant's network structure is only connected via a small number of bridging ties – total and remaining traditional (Burt 1992). At the group level, it involves the community of elderly rural migrants restricting itself with a closed network, consisting of closely linked

members that are inclined to endorse the norms, morals, faith and social sustenance within the group (Burt 1995; Coleman 1988). A migrant community closely fits the rural social matrix and does not interact with its host society in anything other than rudimentary or stereotyped methods. This index refers primarily to the scope to which migrants are dispersed within the main chain circles—family, social networks and habits of their origin to make available the strength and security desirable to handle and challenge the estrangement experience.

On the one hand, migrants may not be easily altered or modified to fit conditions; on the other hand, adhesion to the community of origin is a means of lessening individual(s) risk and conflicts between their internalized expectations based on their backgrounds. In turn, they also receive emotional and informational support from this narrow social bond that has already been established in the destination places. This reflects the reciprocity relationship which exhibits a logic and source of social networks in facilitating migration.

With this interpersonal attitude, the lack of a cordial relationship then strengthens the communal barricade; makes both communities unapproachable to each other, and worsens the boundaries of differences between US and THEM. That is to say, no matter how they build and enforce their social network, they are accustomed to and likely to continue to maintain access to resources within their own group, which may function as an association of fellow provincials, *tongxianghui*. Nevertheless, immediate responses displayed by these kinds of associations affect the problems that strengthen the obstacles confronting rural migrants and their host cities while social assimilation continues on a minimal scale. For example, Mr. Liu has been in Beijing for five years, and he is now working in a Beijing restaurant. His answer was recorded to stress migrants' real living situation:

> I always regard myself as part of my original household in the rural areas. I make frequent visits to my home place, and feel some obligation to extend financial assistance to those left behind.

In addition, while conducting my research, I was joined by another two girls from Zhejiang who came to Beijing in 1998 when they were 23 years old. They told me that,

> Kinship ties and native-place networks played a significant role in sustaining the migratory flows and especially in the early formation of the Zhejiang migrant community in Beijing. The traditional social networks facilitate the organizational framework for our rural migrants' social life and private business.

Likewise, despite rising migration, the majority of Chinese rural migrants are still tied closely to their native resources. For most Chinese migrants, migrating in a city means moving to a less safe and poorer quality neighborhood. A 32-year-old respondent who lived alone in a Beijing CZC said: 'I have little attachment to the places where I find work. I enjoy coming home to "a friendly environment"'. Indeed, much more widely accepted is the fact that the migrants' home or origin unit keeps providing different support from employment information, to psychological comfort.

The trend and emphasis seem to be on the prevailing attitude towards rural migrants as permanent second-tier sojourners in urban society (Fan 2002) which causes their network ties to deteriorate. As a result of migrants' cohesion being grounded in the lower levels of society and in the long absence of stable support or protection from the host setting, such residents have naturally formed themselves into self-sufficient groups (Zhang et al. 2003).

Negotiating identity—the in-between or rootless social lives
In our interviews and conversations, a large majority of migrants frequently present themselves as strangers in a rootless mobility. Most of them can tell stories about what awkward situations they face. One Sichuan couple expressed strong aspirations to adjust to the new way of life in the city:

> […] for us, what we found here is what we were searching for. But we still feel the city is not a place of our own. We don't interact with the locals, they look down upon us because of our non-native identity and un-standard mandarin. The locals always give us hard life, poor employment and education opportunities.

With respect to this point, I asked them whether they considered themselves as native residents. They replied,

> We think that all the time, but the dilemma for the migrant workers is we become out-of-place outsiders both in urban life and at home. We are wondering where our home truly is or whether we still have a residence titled 'home'.

As Hall (1987) pointed out, migration is a one way trip; there is no 'home' to go back to. Migrant groups form bridges to their host community through balancing their inclination for group differences. In the case of this mode, the presence of young migrants is paramount as a

representative of imagining an 'ambiguous negotiating identity'. The negotiating identity mode has a different profile compared to the first mode according to the category of a migrant group. The majority of this rootless group is second generation migrants, who develop their relationship to the world from simply dealing with the land to making a livelihood without land and agriculture.

The essence of this negotiating of life is the attempt to bridge their rural background to the more open system of urban society. This group is not familiar with their host destination, nor do they have intimate local kin ties or friendship networks, or make a complete transformation to living a life surrounded by unfamiliar people and new things. Successful adjustment requires a considerable amount of flexibility and skill. More significantly, it requires the ability to deal with the conflicting requirements of two different systems. But in truth, the life of this mode turns out to be peripheralized and marginalized, involving a more negative resolution of bi-cultural tension. This marginal lifestyle is exhibited by inferiority complexes, social isolation, feelings of powerlessness and ambivalence to personal identity. The lack of a sense of identity results in the rootless involvement and community attachment, as illustrated by another Wuxi woman with higher education who works in a design company:

> Quite a different respect is to have a mental blank. I don't know if you have seen the movie Lost in Translation but I felt like one of the characters (without the romance), alone in a big city. I saw great things and learned a lot but I didn't have anyone with whom to share these experiences I was having.

Actually, negotiating careers in the context of migration and the diminishing expectations of satisfactory situation is necessary. For example, a man working in a government department in Beijing describes his position:

> A migration decision was my family project, my parents are first-generation migrants, I am one of the neo-generation. I am not isolated within the rural migrant community, I also maintain contact with the Beijing mainstream. That is the merit of our neo-generation. I know both sides equally.

Furthermore, one predicament arises—the state of not actively being involved in either the rural community or the receiving host society. On the one hand, migrants encounter exclusion from their host society; and on the other hand, their identification with rural society becomes weaker and weaker. This ambiguity involves a double negation, that of non-identity with both urban and rural life which occurs with the majority of migrants. Finally, the migrants face the

dilemma of 'non-survival in a city or non-return to the countryside' both of which are not feasible.

Assimilation of adjustment

Polzer et al. (2002) began by defining identity negotiation as an aspect of adaptation. The true nature and challenge of full assimilation in a new living environment is highlighted by the awkwardness of the youngest migrants with their background in their adaptive community. For this minority, the rural background does not have any practical significance; instead it is symbolic and even a burden. They are dubbed 'second-generation migrants' in literature and the essence of a number of this group is they started their urban migrant life at birth. Also this generation spent their childhood in the city, often they dropped out of school after finishing elementary or high school, and started to imitate the path of their parents' life course to start their 'gold rush' at a tender age (aged 16). Owing to this context, they prefer to speak the language of their host destination, and have limited knowledge of their home (rural) culture and dialect. Compared to their parents' generation, this group who migrated here in early adulthood or was born in the host city has an inclination to expand their abilities to assimilate to their host culture.

Many neo-generation migrants effectively are included in this type, reciprocating the assimilation for living in the host cities. During our interview, my conversation with many neo-generation migrants who were born in the host city frequently involved their perceptions of Beijing and the meaning of belonging to the city. However, in reality, many of this younger generation of assimilated migrants face barriers to their entry into urban society and their participation in their origin community through distant family ties. Assimilated young migrants have more urban friends of diverse backgrounds as their emotional source and social connections. Most seek jobs in the urban mainstream. They live in various locations in the suburbs with urban ways and culture. Their only ties to its countryside are historical and can be traced to their parents' hometown. Even though they may identify themselves as rural migrants by intention, this leaves them in a state of conflict: there are forces in their origin and community from which they find psychological support, but they also sense that in some instances, they may attempt to hide their origins in the case where they experience discrimination. It is true that 'lonely psychological support' is a reasonable response to the prejudiced situation in their host cities. I asked young migrants who were born in Beijing

whether they thought they have to be assimilated to adapt to life in their host city. They explained as follows:

> […] We were born here, we speak mandarin or prefer to speak mandarin instead of our parents' home dialect. We live in the city environment instead of the rice field, we have social networks in the city, and follow the social and cultural norms of our host city.

> My life is quite different from my parents, I don't expose myself to the rice fields every day. I really like living in Beijing. I try to adapt myself to the host culture. Mianzi (face) and social expectations from friends and relatives inspire me a lot.

Unlike their parents (the first migrant generation), neo migrants are likely to have long-term plans in the city, which is viewed as a place which is their hometown, their place of occupation, a source of earnings and a place of dreams. As one insurance salesman who was born in Beijing said:

> My social life is strongly based in this city. I think that my life patterns and thinking style follow exactly the urban mainstream. After all, assimilation cannot be avoided.

Migrant networks are more likely to engender a community that connects on a small scale, for example, with other migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of 'kinship, friendship, and shared community origins' (Massey et al. 1999). So migrants cannot integrate into the city, instead they are reluctantly involved. But from another perspective, migrant networks are more prone to be narrowed down within groups of geographical origin due to their low-level of trust in each other in the urban setting, so urban exclusion might also come from migrants' 'internal' bond to their villages or the 'external' restraints put upon them by their urban environments.

Conclusion: relocation is beyond spatial movement

On reflection what does our study of the experiences of migrants tell us about their shifting interface and their process of adaptation in their adoptive cities of China? Also, what are the implications of comprehending both the impact of internal migration and its differentiated processes?

While Chinese internal migration has maintained strong social and cultural divisions built upon institutionalized inequality, both cognitive knowledge and evaluative attitudes (related to cultural norms) have forced adjustment among migrants. For Chinese migrants, internal migration supplies a permanent/temporary migration choice. The adjustment procedure extends to many dimensions of experience: survival in isolation, mediating through biculturalism, and full assimilation. In other words, Chinese rural-urban migration is a process of active geographical and psychological negotiation that turns natives into outsiders and an in-system into an out-system.

In a different national context (aside from China) migrants may face fewer systematic challenges; have greater access to social backgrounds, and face noticeable discrimination. Nevertheless, in China, distance and spatial borders that once functioned as constraints to migrants have been reduced to a much lower level. Some of the previous obstacles presented by rural life are nowadays moderated by the influence of globalization, and the long distances to travel to the city have been shortened by more progressive communications which enable those separated to maintain social and emotional connections.

When migrants relocate to a new destination, rural and urban areas are like two societies within one country (Whyte 2010), and rural migrants definitely experience a radically new physical, social and psychological space defined by a set of unfamiliar parameters. Through the interviews conducted in our study we gain a more vivid sense of the individual experience – of the choices, the obstacles, the prospects, and the accomplishments with both a place of origin and a place of residence, and the fact that transnational activities concordant with this dual identification are feasible as well (Itzigsohn et al. 2005).

The differences in generation also imply that there is a varied adaptation across migrant populations. For the migrants themselves, negotiation of their social and psychological life is a continuing process and part of locating oneself. One clear feature seems to be the fact that first-generation parents are more likely to endorse a close-fit approach to the hometown community. Such a connection would be conducted with limited dependence on the outside environment by this first-generation group, instead there would be a tighter connection with the rural community than their (second-generation) children would have, but their offspring in turn have been more effective adapting to the host city environment. These psychological processes and value orientations move us from a description of what level of adaptation exists

to an understanding of the pattern of migration experiences. Consideration should be given not just to the views of migration in the host society, but also to the estimation of the migrants themselves, and these two perspectives reflect the possible match or mismatch of migrants to their living environments. In this case, the migrant community was not natural, fixed, or in an eternal place; rather, it was constantly made and remade through political and economic struggles in space and time.

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