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Rural-Urban Migration in China 1949 - 1990

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Aufsatz studiert Ausmaß und Merkmale der Migration von der Gründung der Volksrepublik China bis zum ersten Jahrzehnt der Wirtschaftsreformen. Dabei werden sowohl die längerfristige Land-Stadt Migration mit einer Änderung des ständigen Wohnsitzes als auch die kurzfristige Mobilität ohne Wohnsitzänderung untersucht. Im Mittelpunkt steht eine Analyse des Migrationsvolumens nach Perioden und einzelnen Städteklassen sowie strukturelle Merkmale wie Alter, Familienstand, Bildungsstand und Beruf der Migranten oder Angaben über die Migrationsgründe. Hauptdatenquelle sind die erste chinesische Migrationserhebung der Akademie für Sozialwissenschaften aus dem Jahr 1986 in 74 Städten des Landes, der Mikrozensus von 1987, die vorläufige Ergebnisse der Volkszählung von 1990, jährliche Meldedaten sowie einige Lokalerhebungen in Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan und Henan.

Schlagworte: Bevölkerung, Urbanisierung, Meldewesen, Erhebungen, Migranten, mobile Bevölkerung, Migrantenmerkmale, Beschäftigung

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Abstract: This article studies migration volume and migrant characteristics in the period from the founding of the People's Republic of China up to the first decade of economic reforms. It investigates both long-term rural-urban migration with a change of permanent registration and short-term mobility without a change of registration. The focus is on analyzing migration volume by period and city size, as well structural characteristics such as age, family status, educational level and occupation of migrants or causes of migration. Main sources are the first Chinese migration survey by the Academy of Social Sciences in 74 cities and towns from 1986, the 1987 micro-census, the preliminary results of the 1990 population census, annual registration data and a number of local surveys in Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan and Henan.

Key words: Population, urbanization, household registration, surveys, migrants, floating population, migrant characteristics, employment

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RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION IN CHINA 1949-1990

For decades China has been a closed country, closed to the outside world, but also closed and compartmentalized in her internal set-up. Regional mobility was much reduced and largely confined to organized forms of re-settlement, peasants were effectively tied to the countryside and prevented from migrating to the cities. This has helped China to avoid the problems of rapid urbanization, rural exodus and rampant unemployment which have plagued so many other Third World countries. However, with the advent of economic reforms the positive aspects of past policy have given place to a growing awareness of the costs involved. These include human costs in terms of learning, creativity and motivation foregone. They also include the social costs of conservatism, nepotism and festering conflicts which can make work in many institutions and enterprises so galling. And, finally, these costs translate into an economic bill being footed: low productivity, slow growth and reduced income.

It is in recognition of these facts that migration has become liberalized to a certain degree in the 1980s. With the rising number of migrants a concomitantly rising number of migration studies has been published, some of them throwing light on the hitherto neglected history of past population movement, some of them discussing the age-old problems of migration that now come to the fore again. This paper is heavily indebted to the survey work of many Chinese colleagues and repeated discussions with them. Above all, it draws on the national sample survey of migration in 74 cities and towns that was conducted in 1986 under the leadership of the Academy of Social Sciences.¹ Whenever possible, data from that survey are analyzed with reference to the rural-urban migration component only. In this way, numbers can be compared with the work of other authors who base their conclusions mostly on total migration including urban-urban mobility.² The 1986 national survey is complemented by smaller regional samples of both permanent and temporary migration emanating from Peking³, Shanghai⁴, Wuhan⁵ and Henan⁶. Finally, annual registration data⁷ as well as results of the 1987 micro-census⁸ and preliminary results of the 1990 population census⁹ are used.

1 QRQQDZ 1988.

2 Ma Xia and Wang Weizhi 1988; Sha Jicai and Chen Guangbi 1988; Sha Jicai 1990; Xiong Yu 1988; Wang Xiangming 1988.

3 Luo Maochu et al. 1986; LW, 8.12.1986, 15.12.1986, 22.12.1986; RYJ, No.2/1988, pp. 25-27.

4 Fudan daxue 1986, 1988; Zhang Kaimin et al. 1990.

5 ZRN 1988, pp. 378-388.

6 RYJ, No.3/1991, pp. 42-46.

7 Ren Suhua 1988; Beijing shi renkou tongji ziliao huibian 1949-1987; ZRTN 1989.

8 ZRTN 1989.

9 RPZS 1991.

Overall Dimensions

Unless stated otherwise, migration here is defined as a change of permanent residence or move to a temporary domicile for more than one year involving movement across county or city borders. Its rural-urban component in China has been certainly reduced if compared to migration rates prevalent in other developing nations. Nevertheless, the once widely held picture of a frozen urbanization process does not hold true. Quite the contrary, the 1986 sample survey shows a sizable movement from the villages to the towns and cities taking place over the years. This, of course, is mostly due to the large-scale influx of the 1950s and accelerated urban growth in the 1980s. But even during the 1960s and 1970s rural-urban migration never really ceased.

The total number of rural-urban in-migrants between 1949 and 1985 has been variously estimated to between 60 Mio. and 79 Mio., averaging between 1.67 Mio. and 2.20 Mio. per year.¹⁰ These are approximations only as changing classification rules for urban places, the balancing of gross and net migration and questions of data validity continue to present puzzles. But by and large it can be accepted that about one third of urban growth during that period of time was due to net rural-urban migration, another third to reclassification of places and redrawing of city boundaries.¹¹

In the 1980s the pace of migration certainly has increased. The 1987 micro-census yielded a figure of 13.50 Mio. rural-urban migrations during 1982-1987, of which 42 % were directed to cities, 58 % to towns.¹² Preliminary census results for the period 1985-1990 show that the last five-year total has increased to 16.45 Mio. meanwhile.¹³

The 1986 migration survey substantiates the prominent role of rural-urban influx and allows a differentiation according to city size. It shows that in all size-classes migration from rural areas has supplied the largest share of total urban in-migration with towns being in the forefront, metropolitan areas close to the average and intermediate cities trailing behind.

Table 1:
Percentage of urban in-migration by place of origin, 1949-1986

	Metropolis	Large city	Medium city	Small city	Town	Average
total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
city	36.7	36.8	34.7	33.3	15.4	31.5
town	16.0	22.6	24.2	24.7	25.8	21.1
village	44.5	38.7	39.4	40.9	56.9	45.2
other	2.8	2.0	1.7	1.1	2.0	2.2

Source: Ma Xia and Wang Weizhi 1988, p. 7.

¹⁰ Ma Xia 1987; Wang Xiangming 1988.

¹¹ Cf. Wang Xiangming 1988, pp. 19-20; New China's Population, p. 81.

¹² ZRTN 1989, p.573.

¹³ RMRB, 21/5/1991.

Trends in time

Whereas table 1 sums up results of migration in the first 36 years of the PRC table 2 offers a closer look at the dynamics involved. It demonstrates an highly uneven course of development and corroborates the well-known fact that campaigns and political factors have played an overriding role in migration patterns. The first five years of the PRC are marked by a high migration intensity directed at the large metropolitan areas. This is an era of normalization after the civil war in which refugees, displaced rural inhabitants and a new revolutionary elite all converge on the political and economic centers of the nation. First attempts at registration are made in the cities but there is no anti-urban policy in effect.

Altogether 8 Mio. rural migrants enter the cities during 1953-57 and this number swells to a huge wave of 20 Mio. rural in-migrants in 1958 and 1959 alone. At the same time juvenile unemployment starts to develop into a major urban problem and the rectification campaign of 1957/58 takes its toll. Therefore we witness first migration checks and forced reverse migrations in 1955 and 1957. Rural-urban migration enters a trough in the early 60s when 20 Mio. new urbanites are being sent back to their native villages and a rustification movement for urban youth commences. This is also the time where the strict immigration, employment and rationing controls are effected which until now serve as the major break on spontaneous mobility.

Table 2:
Percentage of rural-urban migrants by years of migration

Years	Metropolis	Large city	Medium city	Small city	Town
1949-86	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1949-50	5.0	1.0	1.5	2.1	1.0
1951-52	5.0	1.1	2.4	2.4	1.5
1953-54	4.6	1.2	3.4	3.0	1.9
1955-56	5.4	3.8	4.0	3.7	2.7
1957-58	7.5	6.2	5.6	4.0	3.2
1959-60	4.3	4.9	4.9	4.1	2.0
1961-62	1.1	2.4	2.9	1.6	1.8
1963-64	1.7	2.8	2.6	2.1	1.7
1965-66	1.6	7.1	2.7	2.4	3.7
1967-68	1.5	2.8	2.5	2.8	2.0
1969-70	2.7	11.8	6.5	4.5	4.1
1971-72	5.0	10.5	6.1	5.8	4.9
1973-74	3.9	5.0	3.1	5.8	4.5
1975-76	6.2	6.8	6.8	6.3	5.6
1977-78	9.2	4.8	6.8	6.8	5.7
1979-80	15.7	8.2	12.7	11.4	13.9
1981-82	6.7	6.3	9.4	9.0	9.7
1983-84	6.5	6.7	9.5	11.3	9.6
1985-86	6.4	6.6	6.4	11.0	18.3

Source: calculated from sample in CQQDZZ 1988, pp. 137-139.

During the Cultural Revolution political factors complicate the picture even further: Starting in 1968 the forced movement of urban youth, cadres and socially discriminated groups to the countryside develops into a massive campaign involving over the years some 17 Mio. youth and an unknown number of urban adults. However, table

2 substantiates the surprising fact that at the same time masses of new rural in-migrants flock to the supposedly emptied cities, 14 Mio. people according to some sources.¹⁴ Indications are that this is intimately connected to the prominent role of the army in the early Cultural Revolution period: Relatives of army personnel are granted urban residential permits and demobilized soldiers are offered the incentive of much desired urban job placements. Apparently the majority of such placements involve large and medium cities as the percentage for the metropolitan areas in table 2 stays conspicuously low.

With the fall of Lin Biao and the anti-Confucius campaign of 1973/74 rural-urban migration is reduced once more, only to recover again with the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping and the beginning of the return of sent-down population. The all-time record is recorded in the period from late 1978 to 1980 when about 8 Mio. sent-down youth return to the cities and a large number of former banishments for cadres, intellectuals and political offenders are revoked.¹⁵

The figures for the early 1980s show an end of this abnormal situation in 1981. But they also point to the fact that migration volume generally rises with the advance of economic reform. A noted watershed is the year 1984 when the government permits peasants to settle in small cities and towns provided they care for work, food rations and housing themselves. This is reflected in the sudden jump of the migration percentage for towns in 1985-86. Absolute numbers for 1985 alone amount to 6 Mio. peasants taking advantage of this opportunity.¹⁶

When analyzed in conjunction with comparable figures for total migration¹⁷ the figures of table 2 convey a much clearer story: With the exception of towns the percentages for rural-urban migration to cities in the early 50s are always higher by 1-3 percentage points - another proof for the concentration process taking place at that time. During 1975-80 the same phenomenon can be observed for metropolitan areas. Apparently, migration was biased in favor of big agglomerations again. The opposite holds true for the 1960s: Whereas urban-urban migration continued on a low level, rural-urban migration can only be termed depressed. Strikingly lower than for total migration are also the percentages of rural-city migration in the 1980s. They serve notice of the fact that new liberalization measures are foremost directed at migration within the urban sector. An exception is only the migration to towns. Here the percentage for rural-urban movement surpasses that of total mobility.

Structure of rural-urban migration

Stressing the heavy political content of migration patterns does not mean denying the fact that personal factors enter the picture, too. As a matter of fact, lobbying for preferred schooling places and job assignments, demands for the reunion of families separated by the strict migration checks and private calculations in military recruitment, work recruitment and job transfer all play important roles. Finally, some very basic factors of migration exercise an influence: movement of residence is involuntary and not work-connected during

14 Feng Lanrui 1982, p.115-116.

15 Scharping 1981, pp. 67-82, 136-168, 342-359, 451-462; Chan Kam Wing 1985, pp. 596-613.

16 ZRN 1985, p. 90; Ma Xia 1987, p. 7.

17 Ma Xia and Wang Weizhi 1988, p. 6.

childhood, it usually peaks when young people enter higher institutions of learning, take up work or marry and it levels off during later periods of life again.

A variant of this world-wide observable pattern can be studied in table 3. It shows the mentioned peak in the age-groups of 15-29 years. Larger cities tend to raise the demands on educational standards and work capacity. Therefore a higher percentages for migrants between 20 and 29 years of age can be seen. At the same time big cities are much more restrictive in issuing residential permits for adult peasants or allowing rural relatives to permanently move to their urban kinsfolk. Accordingly, the percentage of migrants above the age of 40 is lower as in the case of small cities and towns.

Table 3:
Percentage of rural-urban migrants by age-groups, 1949-1986

Age	Metropolis	Large city	Medium city	Small city	Town
0-99	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0- 4	4.4	5.0	5.1	7.4	6.3
5- 9	5.0	5.3	6.5	6.6	7.3
10-14	5.0	5.8	5.4	6.7	7.6
15-19	18.0	20.2	20.0	18.6	18.8
20-24	30.7	33.2	29.6	25.3	22.8
25-29	18.2	15.9	13.5	13.3	12.0
30-34	7.1	5.7	6.3	6.6	7.3
35-39	3.6	3.3	4.3	5.0	4.6
40-	8.0	5.5	9.4	10.5	13.2

Source: calculated from sample in CQQDZZ 1988, pp. 114-116.

If reckoned by sex, the composition of rural-urban migrants is noticeably different from that of the total migrant population. Whereas in the latter group men are dominating in all age-specific cohorts much bigger female shares can be detected in the sample used here. This has been interpreted as a sign of the importance of marriage- and family-induced migration among rural-urban migrants - a hypothesis born out by some other regional data.¹⁸

Table 4:
Percentage of rural-urban migrants by marital status, 1949-1986

Status	Metropolis	Large city	Medium city	Small city	Town
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
unclear	0.1	1.0	0.3	0.1	0.1
single	56.2	43.4	47.3	38.8	43.2
married	40.7	53.5	49.3	58.1	53.4
widowed	2.5	1.9	2.7	2.8	2.8
divorced	0.3	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.5
other	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1

Source: calculated from sample in CQQDZZ 1988, p. 152.

The marital status of in-migrants can be gleaned from table 4. Unsurprisingly, it shows the low divorce rates typical for the Chinese population at large and a relatively high percentage of singles connected with the young

age-structure of migrants. Under closer scrutiny there is also the familiar predominance of unmarried men which among migrants is even more pronounced than among the ordinary population. The percentage of married migrants in small cities and towns is higher than in larger cities as it is easier to obtain the necessary residential permits for spouses here.

Table 5:
Percentage of rural-urban migrants by educational standard, 1949-1986

Age	Metropolis	Large city	Medium city	Small city	Town
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
unclear	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5
College grad.	1.7	1.2	1.1	1.3	2.0
College student	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.4
senior high	19.3	12.2	13.1	14.2	17.5
junior high	34.4	30.5	30.5	28.7	31.9
elementary	26.0	40.1	34.0	31.2	30.1
illiterate	18.2	15.7	20.7	24.4	17.4

Source: calculated from sample in CQQDZZ 1988, pp. 153-154.

Rural-urban migration in China clearly favors persons with above-average educational attainments. This is demonstrated in table 5 which allows three observations: First, there is an obvious link between city size and length of schooling. Larger cities claim the better educated migrants. Second, all percentages for advanced schooling are higher than the comparable figures for total population. This corroborates the thesis mentioned above. Third, the standards of rural-urban migrants are significantly lower than those of their urban-urban counterparts¹⁹ - a reflection of the limited educational opportunities in villages and towns.

Table 6:
Percentage of rural-urban migrants by occupation, 1949-1986

Age	Metropolis	Large city	Medium city	Small city	Town
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
unclear	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0
worker	17.6	15.0	11.7	10.9	18.5
peasant	45.2	54.0	52.7	47.1	30.7
cadre	3.1	2.4	3.6	4.3	9.7
office personnel	1.0	0.6	1.1	0.6	2.7
specialist	1.4	1.5	1.9	1.0	3.8
service trade	1.3	0.6	0.7	1.2	2.2
military	3.6	2.8	3.5	2.0	1.3
other employment	3.6	3.0	2.5	4.7	3.1
retired	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.5
student	7.2	5.2	7.0	6.7	8.7
unemployed youth	3.3	3.7	3.9	3.8	3.4
housework	9.0	8.3	7.5	14.0	11.7
other unemployed	3.1	2.8	3.5	3.2	3.6

Source: calculated from sample in CQQDZZ 1988, pp. 155-157.

18 Ma Xia and Wang Weizhi 1988, p. 7. Cf. also Wuhan data in ZRN 1988, p. 378-388.

19 Xiong Yu 1988, p. 23.

Turning to the occupation of rural-urban migrants at migration time we find an expected majority of peasants. The category worker refers to employees of rural industry which serves as a spring-board for change to an urban post. Cadres, military and students as particularly mobile groups claim a larger percentage of migrants than is typical of their share of total population. In a rural environment their numbers nevertheless do not reach the proportions typical for urban-urban migrants. Notoriously low is the percentage of specialists and practitioners of service trades among rural-urban migrants. In sum, the occupational composition of migrants from rural areas shows the slow progress in the division of labor that has been made in the Chinese countryside until now.

Causes and effects of migration

Figures for causes and effects of rural-urban migrations are weak. They must be deduced from the larger sample of total urban in-migration or from fragmentary data referring to different universes. So the conclusions reached from table 7 should be treated with a degree of caution.

Table 7:
Causes of urban in-migration in %

Cause	cities and towns 1949-86	cities 1951-86	Peking 1981	Shanghai 1981
Co-migration with family members	23.3	17.6	13.8	4.4
Transfer of work	19.0	23.2	19.4	9.4
work recruitment	9.6	23.4 ^a	5.3	28.5
migration after marriage	9.0			
moving to live with relatives	8.6			6.9
assignment for graduates	7.4	6.8	1.1	
demobilization of soldiers	5.7	8.8		
return of resettled youth	4.0			3.2
study and training	3.1	20.2	14.3	6.7
job hunting	1.7			
political reasons	1.6			
retirement	0.9			5.6
other	5.6			35.3

a) including retirement and political reasons

Sources: Ma Xia and Wang Weizhi 1988, p. 9; Ren Suhua 1988, pp. 20-21;
Hu Huanyong 1984, p. 349.

They indicate that despite heavy political censorship social and personal causes such as co-migration, marriage-induced migration, family relationships, study and retirement dominate. Altogether these causes add up to some 45% in the 1986 survey. However, the wide margins to comparable data from the other studies strike a skeptical note. Data pertaining to study and training obviously are highly dependent on the educational endowment of the place under scrutiny. Work recruitment, school enrollment and assignment of graduates is known to have varied widely during different periods of time. And the mutual exclusiveness of the categories used is not sure. For instance, returned youth from the countryside could be enumerated under work recruitment, transfer of work, study and training as well as return of resettled youth.

Underlying this somehow elusive causal structure are powerful economic forces at work: Over two thirds of all migrants report an improvement of income, work and living conditions after moving to towns and cities. Income

levels are also positively related to educational standard and city size. As expected, migrants with better schooling have been rewarded with a significantly higher share of cadre or specialist positions. They have also occupied relatively more positions in privileged state enterprises as opposed to urban collectives or private firms. And comparisons of their performance with that of non-migrants tell a decidedly positive story of initiative honored.²⁰

The rewards of migration are there, to be sure. But they are distributed and channeled by a vast bureaucracy. One striking feature of table 7 catches the eye: job hunting (*wu gong jing shang*) seems to be the only spontaneous activity free from administrative interference - at least in recent years. All other causal factors are subject to either outright political fiat or to some sort of bureaucratic quota handling: co-migration, living with relatives and marriage-induced moving - yes, after consent has been given; work recruitment in state and collective enterprises - yes, after the labor plan has been consulted; assignment or study - sure, after the Educational Commission, provincial authorities and other agencies have reached agreement; return from the countryside and various remedial policies - well, upper echelons are still debating the case ...

But some innocent 1.7% of all rural-urban migrants, job hunters from the villages who turn up in the cities, have been turned loose on society. Since this is a percentage from a longitudinal survey the number is small. It mirrors the degree of ossification Chinese society has reached during the last decades. Yet, in the 1980s numbers have certainly been growing. After 1988, however, the situation seems to be volatile as ideological verdicts against private business and the vicissitudes of economic reform have caused a certain stagnation.

Table 8 tries to catch the picture from the urban employment side. It shows the job opportunities available to rural-urban migrants during the reform decade. These are aggregate numbers encompassing both state, collective and private employment. A representative cross-tabulation of employment of rural labor in the various urban ownership-sectors is not available, but indications are that more and more rural migrants are working in the urban private or collective sector with the state sector still being powerful but slowly losing ground.²¹

Table 8:
Newly employed rural labor force in cities and towns, 1978-89

Year	Mio.	as % of total new urban employment
1978	1.48	27.3
1980	1.27	14.2
1982	0.66	9.9
1984	1.23	17.0
1985	1.50	18.5
1986	1.67	21.0
1987	1.67	20.9
1988	1.60	18.9
1989	1.20	19.4

Source: ZRTN 1989, p. 197; ZTN 1990, p. 130.

²⁰ Ma Xia and Wangweizhi 199, pp. 9-10; Sha Jicai and Chen Guangbi 1988; Sha Jicai 1990.

²¹ Taubmann 1991, p.15.

This is also the message conveyed by a Peking survey of private commercial and industrial enterprises operating in the city districts. In 1987 they employed more than 15.000 employees, the majority being temporary rural migrants from outside Peking municipality. Especially noteworthy was the large number of migrants in tailoring, repairing and restaurant service. The majority of these people did not enjoy permanent resident status in Peking but rather worked there under a temporary residential permits. In 1987 this category of floating population in Peking had grown to 1.15 Mio. people. At the same time, the number of in-migrants with completed formalities for permanent resident status had only amounted to gross 0.095 Mio., net 0.051 Mio.²²

"Temporary" urban-rural migration

By general consent "floating population" (*liudong renkou*) does not include commuters between place of work and place of residence who return home on the same day. But as far as the extension of stay is concerned the definition of "floating population" gets blurred. Regulations require newly arrived people in urban areas to fill out a registration card in hotels and guesthouses or - if living in a private household - to register with the local public security station after three days of stay. If this registration is effected the person is granted a temporary residential status (*zanzhu hukou*) for three months which may be renewable on application.²³

However, because of inconvenience or fear of refusal many people eschew registration and stay in the cities without permit. There is no way to know precise numbers but surveys offer some hints: In 1982 some 4.8 Mio. people, 13% of the national total for floating population, were not in possession of any household registration.²⁴ Two years later in Shanghai 46% of the floating population living in households had not acquired a temporary residential permit. This amounted to 0,271 Mio. people - approximately 4% of the Shanghai city population at that time.²⁵

Therefore, numbers for temporary residential permits do not reflect the real situation. They are even more problematic because many holders of temporary residential status tend to prolong their stay indefinitely. Whereas in 1982 there were 6.4 Mio. holders of *zanzhu hukou* staying away from their permanent domicile for more than one year this number has climbed to between 19.8 and 21 Mio. in 1990 - a steep rise both in absolute and relative terms. Especially affected are boom regions like Peking, Shanghai, Guangdong and Hainan where percentages are well above the national average. Another prominent group are border areas like Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia, Tibet, Qinghai and Xinjiang, where preferential treatment for much-needed specialists and technical personnel nowadays often includes the right to keep the permanent residence at the place of origin.²⁶

In such a way, the floating population with extended stays in urban areas has been continuously on the rise. According to Shanghai surveys the percentage of people with one to five years stay has climbed from 15.9% to

22 RYJ, No.2/1988, pp. 25-27; Beijing renkou tongji ziliao huibian 1949-1987, p. 370. For private enterprises and self-employed people cf. also Heberer 1989.

23 ZRN 1985, p. 90.

24 Zhang Qingwu 1986, p. 3; Wei Jinsheng 1984, p.35.

25 Fudan daxue 1985, p.28-30.

26 RPZS 1991, pp. 10-11; ZRB, 21/12/1990. Cf. also Cao Liquan 1985.

31.9% of total floating population by 1988.²⁷ Under these conditions the difference between permanent and temporary status of residence becomes highly theoretical. For all purposes, it boils down to a different administrative handling of housing, employment, food rationing and schooling questions. Economically, however, an ever growing part of the floating population in urban areas is here to stay. Both as producers and consumers they participate in the daily life of cities. An increasing number of studies therefore includes this segment of the population under the bracket of permanent residents or migrants.²⁸

Obviously, the large influx of floating population is above all an urban phenomenon involving both rural-urban and urban-urban movements. Judging from Peking and Shanghai data, the percentage of unregistered peasants there has fluctuated between 25% and 68%.²⁹

Numbers have generally been rising although in this realm, too, a certain slackening has been noticeable during the last two years. It is much harder to secure data for temporary urban residents than for regular in-migrants. Table 10 gives some results of the 1986 migration survey of 74 cities and towns in 16 provinces of China which has also been the most extensive survey of temporary migrants to date. The sample is arranged by age-groups using the same brackets as for permanent migrants in table 3.

Table 9:
Floating population, absolute numbers in Mio., 1978-1990

Year	China	Peking	Shanghai	Tianjin	Kanton	Shenzhen
1978		0.30				
1982	30.00					
1983						
1984		0.70	0.75			
1985	40.00	0.80	1.10			
1986		1.10	1.80			
1987		1.15				
1988	50.00	1.31	1.25	1.13	1.10	
1989				0.80		0.93
1990	70.00					

Sources: Xinhua, 21/9/1988; Zhang Qingwu 1986, p.3; Fudan daxue 1986, pp.1-2; Beijing ribao, 14/11/1984; Wenhui bao, 27/10/1984; RMRB, 26/2/1989; ZRB, 21/12/1990; ZRN 1988, pp. 71, 110; ZRN 1989, pp. 92, 94, 113; ZRN 1990, pp. 142-194.

In contrast to the above table, the age-structure of temporary migrants is much more even. The critical cohort of people aged 15 to 24 years sticks out again. The percentages are, however, significantly lower than those for permanent migrants. As the duration of urban stay for members of the floating population is far from being clear and living conditions are highly unstable, children are rarely taken along with. The larger number of older people among the floating population is conspicuous and so is the clear prevalence of male migrants: No family

²⁷ ZRN 1990, pp.121-127.

²⁸ This has been the practice of the 1986 national migration survey and other studies ever since. Cf. also the different position of public security authors who stress the crucial criterion of permanent residence status: Zhang Qingwu 1986; Zhang Qingwu 1988; Ren Suhua 1988.

²⁹ Luo Maochu et al. 1986, p. 3; Fudan daxue 1986, p. 3; ZRN 1988, p. 71.

reunions and rural sweet-hearts here but rather business with a traditional division of labor between outside tasks for men and inside chores for women.

Table 10:
Percentage of temporary urban residents from rural areas by age-groups, 1986

Age	Metropolis	Large city	Medium city	Small city	Town
0-99	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0- 4	2.9	2.8	2.7	5.1	2.0
5- 9	2.3	0.6	1.3	2.6	2.2
10-14	2.0	1.1	3.7	6.8	5.6
15-19	16.5	14.7	15.2	22.2	18.7
20-24	19.8	19.2	23.3	23.1	14.7
25-29	7.3	4.0	9.4	6.0	4.6
30-34	7.1	7.3	11.0	1.7	6.7
35-39	5.4	2.8	4.8	4.3	5.2
40-	36.8	47.5	28.6	28.2	40.5

Source: calculated from sample in CQQDZZ 1988, pp. 240-242.

Table 11 confirms this impression: Visiting relatives and job hunting are the most important reasons for temporary migrations. They indicate strong economic motives as "visiting relatives" often disguises the desire for a long-term stay. Alternatively it can serve to entrust children to grandparents, thereby freeing a couple to pursue an income maximizing work strategy. The above sample is confined to temporary migrants staying in private homes. Once floating population in hotels and guesthouses is considered, too, causes like official business, schooling and tourism occupy a far more important position.³⁰

Table 11:
Causes of temporary urban in-migration to households in %, 1986

Age	Metropolis	Large city	Medium city	Small city	Town
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
official business	4.4	0.3	1.4	1.8	1.8
schooling	2.0	2.6	0.6	2.2	3.9
visit relatives	68.6	72.1	63.0	75.7	76.8
job hunting	9.6	6.6	24.6	6.9	4.1
medical treatment	3.3	2.3	0.9	1.1	2.2
tourism	2.3	0.7	1.3	0.4	0.7
other	9.7	15.4	8.1	12.0	10.5

Source: calculated from sample in CQQDZZ 1988, pp. 242-243.

But these are purposes of stay that in the main concern city visitors from other urban places. Many studies show that for most peasants temporary urban residence means buying and selling, transporting goods and looking for all kinds of gainful self-employment: Preferred jobs are hawkers and peddlers, refuse collectors, nannies, and

odd repairmen. A big group are rural construction gangs which are hired in cities. Their number has risen from 3.35 Mio. in 1978 to 8.55 Mio. in 1988, a figure equal to 45% of all Chinese construction workers.³¹

Table 12 provides a good look at the rural side of the picture. It illustrates the causes of temporary out-migration as surveyed by a large sample of Henan peasants. While on leave from the home village, over 80% of these peasants worked in urban places, with big cities in a clear first place before small towns. 57% of these floating migrants were self-employed or worked in private business, the state sector absorbed 23% of them, urban collectives gave work to 19%. In the vast majority of cases (over 80%) the jobs being taken up were sought out privately or recommended by friends, local work-gang leaders organized 12 %. The village administration handled a meager 2 % of all cases. The average length of work outside of the village was 166 days and average income amounted 970 Yuan per head. Remittances from migrants to their home families averaged 686 Yuan per head.

Table 12:
Causes of temporary rural out-migration in Henan, 1989

Cause	Percentage
job hunting	62.4
trading	9.5
transport activities	6.2
repairing	5.4
business contacts	4.4
refuse collection	3.7
visiting relatives	3.6
medical treatment	2.1
working as nanny	1.2
schooling	0.8
tourism	0.3

Source: Sample survey in: RYJ, No.3/91, pp.42-46.

Henan peasants make up some 6% of the 50 Mio. odd people from the countryside who roam through China since the mid 1980s.³² They are a harbinger of things to come as 100 Mio. more are expected to quit agriculture in the coming decade. Their arrival will be greeted by some, but others are starting to shiver right now.

Conclusions:

The above analysis has been mainly descriptive. Size and composition, historical development and motivational structure of rural-urban migration has been assessed. Because in recent years much attention has been paid to small rural towns the discussion focused more on the big cities. What remains weak in both cases is the study of economic consequences. Sure, all available reports point out the income gains for the migrating rural labor force

30 Compare the regional figures from Peking and Shanghai surveys: Fudan daxue 1986, p. 3; ZRN 1988, p. 71; Luo Maochu et al. 1986, p. 4.

31 ZRTN 1989, p.198.

involved. But the overall balance of social costs and benefits is far from clear. It may well be that gains are privatized while costs are socialized. More systematic work on the direction, volume and use of remittances, on the consequences for land use and yields as well as on the externalities of migration would serve to clarify some of these issues.

Classical theory would have it that labor flows to high wage regions while capital moves in the reverse direction until at some point equilibration takes place. While the span of time ever since the economic reforms is still too short to reach firm conclusions, indications are that in China only the first part of the formula is at work: Rural excess labor moves to urban high consumption areas, but capital and investment stays in the cities. How to combat this situation would be a further subject deserving study.

Finally, the perennial issues of rural industrialization versus urban concentration are as pressing as they always have been. Of course, in a constantly changing environment they will never be solved satisfactorily. But this report contains some disturbing signs that the small town strategy does not work to the extent Chinese planners would like to see.

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BR: Beijing ribao, Peking.

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RK: Renkou, Shanghai.

RMRB: Renmin ribao, Peking.

RPZ 1982: Zhongguo 1982 nian renkou pucha ziliao, Peking 1985.

RPZS 1991: Zhongguo disi ci renkou pucha di zhuyao shuju, Peking 1991.

RX: Renkou xuekan, Changchun.

RY: Renkou yanjiu, Peking.

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ZRB: Zhongguo renkou bao, Peking.

ZRN: Zhongguo renkou nianjian, Peking.

ZRTN: Zhongguo renkou tongji nianjian, Peking.

ZTN: Zhongguo tongji nianjian, Peking.
