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Does Hukou make a difference?

—a study of rural migrant workers in urban regions in China

Graduation Thesis

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Acknowledgement:

I would like to give special thanks to my supervisor Dr Jan Magnusson, for his advice and guidance during my writing. Also, I would like to thank my interviewees for their cooperation in my interviews. Without their help I could not finish my thesis.

Abstract:

Internal migration has become debatable issue in China, since there are more and more migrant workers after social economic reform. Those migrant workers, attracted by better job opportunities in cities, have made great contribution for urban areas; but at the meantime they are suffering from restrictions caused by household system. In this thesis the main purpose is to figure out the links between migrant workers and hukou system, and at the meantime give readers some basic information about the situations of (rural) migrant workers in China. In order to achieve this, both qualitative and quantitative approaches is introduced in this research, with the purpose of increasing the reliability of my research. For quantitative part, I used RUMICI database which helps me picture the general situation of (rural) migrant workers from macro level; moreover the experiences from individual level--namely specific rural migrant workers--are also discussed in my thesis, for the reason that I want to make their voice heard and also as a support to my quantitative method (because the database itself could not answer my research questions properly). As you can read in my thesis, RUMICI database shows there are differences between migrant workers and local people. And interviews with rural migrant workers presented in 5th and 6th sections indicate that such differences are somehow concerned with household registration system in China. Also, the analysis of my empirical research is also presented so that readers could have better understanding from a more theoretical perspective.

Key words:

Internal migrants, migrant workers, hukou system

1. Introduction and research questions

International migration has become a topic of considerable interest to social science scientists (Carr, 2010). At the same time, internal migration has become a world-wide phenomenon, and is particularly obvious in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Berry, 2010).

In China, we have the similar situation. The social economic reform and the introduction of market economy from the mid-1980s led to the transition of government's role in social life and a release of household registration system (Hukou System) across the nation. And these resulted in the emerging of "massive number of internal migrants from rural areas to urban areas", and from "less developed cities to economically productive cities" (Dong, 1989; Li, Stanton, Fang, & Lin, 2006; Wei, 1996; Wu & Zhou, 1996; Wu & Treiman, 2004). According to a survey, the total number of rural migrant workers is nearly 200 million by the year 2006 (Project Group of the Research Office of the State Council, 2006). Actually there is no consensus among Chinese scholars about the exact number of rural migrant worker, but there is one thing we are sure is that the number is on million-level.

As we can see, the main character of social economic reform in China is the implication of capitalist regime to socialist regime, with the hope of improving socialism. For example Chinese government introduced market economy to replace planned market; also the decentralization, marketization, commercialization and privatization of the welfare system could be an example. Therefore in China 2 conflicting forces at the same time; thus capitalism in economy and socialism in politics. The influence of market economy and marketization, which requires highly mobility of labor force and free competition, is getting stronger after reform; on the other hand Chinese government still acts as an administrator. Many of the social policies and systems that are used for

population control, for example hukou system, are still valid. In other words, what is happening in China is that, migrant workers leave their hometown and migrate to other cities for better job opportunities; meanwhile hukou system ties those migrant workers with their original birth place by limiting their access towards welfare service. I am curious that under the influences of 2 conflicting forces, how rural migrant workers will think and behave. And also I believe it would be meaningful to study on this topic.

My thesis examines the experiences of rural migrant. I am quite interested on internal migrant issue and a study on internal migrant issues in China could be interesting and meaningful. For the reason that China has the largest population in the world (total population is 1.4 billion at the end of 2010; NBSC, 2011) and the number of rural migrant workers is massive. It would be important to study how millions of people are influenced by similar problems caused by one system (hukou system).

Based on these, I came up with the research questions as: *1. Does hukou system or other social policies have impact on rural migrant workers? 2. If so, to what extent does hukou system or social policies influence rural migrant workers' life?*

Since it would be too broad to study the whole, I would like to narrow down the research questions a little. In other words, I would like to focus on specific aspects of rural migrant workers' life, namely education, housing, health care as well as working condition.

In my thesis I will use resources from both top-down perspectives (surveys and dataset for example) and bottom-up perspectives (individual interviews). I rely heavily on e-research in my thesis. Most of the data, statistics, surveys and interviews in my thesis are collected through internet. Therefore data collected

from multiple sources could be more reliable. And I would like to focus on migrant workers' experiences in my thesis. During my studying on previous researches of this issue, I found very little amount of researches on (rural) migrant individuals, compared with large amount of previous researches on migrant workers as a group. Therefore I decided to focus more on those individual opinions so that their voice could be heard. Obviously I will use surveys and previous studies as my context, but as you will see in my thesis they couldn't answer my research questions; so I introduced individual interviews to complete my study – that is another important reason why I focus on individual level in this thesis.

I would like to divide my thesis into three parts:

Firstly, introduction part – I will give an introduction about internal migration in China and the information of social welfare system and social policy. An introduction of household registration (Hukou) system will also be given. Secondly, data analysis – Previous researches help me build up my context about rural migrant workers in perspective of age, education and working conditions; individual interviews I conducted complete my study and answer my research questions. Moreover, the concept of welfare regime from Asping-Anderson and Gough and Wood will be used for my analyzing. After finishing all these, I will give a conclusion.

2. Rural migrant workers in China

Before starting my analysis a definition of migrant worker would be necessary. I found a relatively comprehensive definition of the migrant worker, which defined them as “people whose household registration was in rural area, without a higher education degree and stayed in urban area for a period of time (a minimum of six months according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China) to make a living” (Liu, 2005 and Tan, 2003). However this definition is kind of narrow because

migrant workers could be well-educated and be urban hukou holders come from different cities. Therefore I decide to borrow Liu and Tan's definition but change a little bit. Namely, in my thesis, migrant worker means those "who leave from their hometown and live in other cities for a minimum of six months to make a living". And people "whose household registration was in rural area, and have stayed in urban area for at least six months to make a living" will be defined as rural migrant worker in my thesis. There is no requirement in their education background, the only thing different between them is their household registration. Rural migrant workers are rural hukou holders, whilst migrant workers could be both rural and urban hukou holders.

Moreover I would like to introduce Sun's classification of migrant workers which categorized four kinds of migrant workers. This definition comes from personal communication between Sun. L and Yongxia Gui, John W. Berry and Yong Zheng.

Basically there are four kinds of migrant workers, according to the extend they adjust to urban life. The first kind is migrant workers "who have been living in urban areas for quite a long time, have a stable financial condition and social status and have made a successful adaptation to the city culture"--they are the "quasi-city resident migrant workers". The second kind of migrant workers are "mostly the owners of shops"; as we can see they are mostly private owners of shops, restaurant and etc. and they are mostly self-employed and have "stable but limited income", therefore they belong to the middle class in urban areas. The third kind is "employed migrant workers"; most of their jobs require heavy physical workload and their wage is low. In the case of China, large proportion of rural migrant workers could be identified as example of employed migrant worker because they work as construction workers in urban areas, doing tiring jobs and being paid very little. The fourth kind is migrant workers "who are usually unemployed for reasons such as their own limited skill or knowledge". As you can

read in the next sections, the dataset I used in my thesis covers most of the four kinds above; my interviewees can be classified as the third kind, employed migrant workers (Yongxia Gui, John W. Berry and Yong Zheng, 2012; Sun,L, personal communication).

Thought internal migrant has a long history in China, the research on internal migration in China made progress only after the late 1980s, as a result of the “increasing availability of information” (Chan and Liu, 2001). Before the economic reform, social science as a whole was a “forbidden area” for scholars, including population mobility. There were very little official documents about internal migration at that time; even in the first ten years after the reform, migration studies “did not advance much because of the lack of data” (Chan and Liu, 2001). Thanks to these scholars, now I can get access to huge amount of data about internal migration issue.

Chinese people have experienced several waves of internal migration, mostly are related to political purpose. For example, from 1949-1953 the Chinese government actively relocated Han Chinese to frontier provinces such as Xinjiang with a purpose of constructing and defending, “especially after the falling-out between China and the former Soviet Union” (Howell and Fan, 2011:120); also, citizens in the three gorges areas were moved out because of the construction of the dam. However, the wave from 1980s till now is totally driven by market instead of political factors.

According to the previous study, prior to the 1980s, the rural–urban population movement was kept low because of “the requirements of planned economic system and of the strict household registration system”. Also, during that period heavy industry was the “core of the national economy”; the funds necessary for industrial development were obtained through agricultural industry, thus what we called “agriculture serves industry and sacrifice rural areas for

urban areas' growth". Therefore a series of systems such as Household Registration system "came into being to help the government control the urban population and maintain the rural population so that their principle could continue" (Gui, Berry, Zheng, 2011).

After the social economic reform, the government released the control towards society and market to some degrees; one distinctive change is that we experienced the loosening (but not the elimination) of the household registration system. As a consequence, large numbers of the rural population moved to urban areas (Hu & Wu, 2004). On the other hand, the released control of population mobility also strikes against the hukou system. Hukou system was designed for the administration of internal migration -- rural and urban residents were kept in the place where they registered their household. So if the mobility of population becomes nation-wide and becomes unstoppable, the old hukou system no longer suits the current situation and becomes a huge obstacle for internal migrants.

3. Introduction of Household registration system (Hukou)

Since the focus of this thesis is about the relationship between hukou system and internal migrant workers in China, it is important to introduce this system.

The household registration system (also known as hukou system in China) was established in 1958, aiming at "supervising people's geographical mobility" (Chak et al, 2008: 8) and redistributing welfare services; the system is still functioning now. Each person is required to register their residence to the local government where they were born, both urban and rural. People are required to "apply to the authority when changing their residence" (Chak et al, 2008: 8). Hukou system is not only a kind of supervising method; it is also in reverent with distribution of resources and social welfare benefits, no matter for planned economy era or market economy era in China. Simply, Chinese people could be

divided as urban hukou holders and rural holders. For those urban holders they are classified as “individual hukou” holders, which refers to regular urban residents; and “collective hukou” holders, mostly are migrant residents from other cities.

Basically, the Chinese society is sort of segregated by hukou registration. The classification of people as different hukou holders is due to where they were born and registered their household.

In normal cases both urban and rural hukou holders are supposed to stay within their original place. And only people who have the local household registration are eligible for local welfare services, including education, pension, social insurances, and so on. On the other hand, for non-native hukou holders, for example migrant workers, they have limited access to those welfare services; and even worse they need to pay for such welfare services. Examples have already been found in my research (I will give more detailed description later on); for example children of migrant workers cannot attend schools as regular urban kids if they don't have native hukou registration; same situation for pregnant migrant females, they need to purchase for their childbirth or going back home if they are non-native hukou holders. More extreme examples could be found in Guangzhou, young couples with “collective hukou” could not get married^①.

In a word, if people move away from where they registered their household and become migrant workers, they will probably live a difficult life. The relationship between hukou system and residents is tight, especially when it comes to aspects like social welfare services.

The reason why this household registration system is so involved with

① Internet source: <http://gd.news.sina.com.cn/focus/hkhy/> (in Chinese)

people's life is because that hukou classification serves as criterion for welfare redistribution within social welfare system. As I said at the beginning of this part, the redistribution of welfare resources is the main target for hukou system; therefore from the day this system was established, it becomes part of people's daily life.

I would like to give an example of pre-reform era in China, just to show how "powerful" hukou system was. Before the reform in 1970s, the social welfare policies in China were characterized by "collective social welfare policies" and also "different approaches for the urban and rural places" (Zhu, 2012). For instance in urban area, state owned enterprises (SOE) were the carriers of welfare policies, in the form of packages of different welfare benefits. The packages covered almost every aspect of individual life, "including housing, education, health, social security benefits for sickness, maternity, work injury, invalidity and death, elderly care, and pension" (Zhu, 2012:44). This kind of institution, according to scholar Gu (2001), was defined as the "work unit system" in cities. A "work unit" is another way of saying SOE in Chinese society. Even for today Chinese still call the companies they work for as work unit. During planned economy era work unit functioned as companies, but it is more than a company. Work units were responsible for implying governments' policies. Moreover they provided housing, child caring, health caring and many other kinds of welfare services to their employees. There is one thing that should be noticed here: because of the principle that "job was available to all" of CCP (Stephen, 2007), instead of hiring employees in labor market, jobs were allocated to urban residents, according to where they registered their household information.

On the other hand, in rural areas residents "had to join local agricultural

communes^① so that they could get access to nominal collective welfare based on agricultural work units”. Otherwise rural residents had to rely on themselves and families (Zhu, 2012:44).

Generally speaking, hukou system has the power to change people’s life pattern, at least during planned economy era. Rural and urban citizens, just because they were born in different place, could be living in such different life patterns.

After the reform was put forward, lot of changes were made by the CCP; however hukou system still remained. Therefore theoretically, the system could still influence people’s life as it used to be. Just because of the recommodification and commercialization of the labor market, SOEs went bankrupt and People’s Communes were abolished, hukou system has been weakened and could not function as it used to. However, the influence of hukou system is still a big issue in Chinese society, especially for migrant residents. Unequal treatments can still be found in social welfare policies. For example, in order to ease the tension of housing in cities, government put forward economic comfortable housing (ECH) which is cheaper for regular workers that could not afford the regular commercial housing. But it is not accessible for all; there are several restrictions for applying or buying ECH such as “the applicants must be registered local urban households, and must be either homeless or with living space below the county government’s minimum line” (Ministry of Construction, 2004). More examples were found during my interviewing, I will give more detailed describing in the following parts.

① Agricultural communes, which also known as People’s Communes, had governmental, political, and economic functions). Commune system was a “highly centralized unified management and distribution system” (Qi, 2000:15), providing jobs for all the workers; also communes were responsible for the distribution (Gang et al, 1998)

As it is only an introduction section I am not going to expand my argument here. In the next sections I will present what I found and what I think could support my hypothesis that hukou system affects life of migrant workers.

As a summary of this part, I find hukou system and marketization policies sort of contradictory with each other. After the market economic was established, the central government has allowed certain relaxations of Hukou system, because the introduction of market economy requires the mobility of population. The release in Hukou system allowed some rural residents taking up jobs in some urban areas. At the meantime people living in rural areas are attracted to urban areas because of limited job opportunities in the agricultural sector as well as better income in cities (Chak et al, 2008: 8). But because of their rural residence registration, they have to deal with restrictions when they want to move into urban areas. And as you can see in my study, the growing scale of rural migrant workers requires further transformation of hukou system because they are still suffering from the segregation created by hukou system. It is still long way to go for rural migrant workers.

4. Problems regarding migrant worker

With the help of previous researches, I summarize the main problems for migrant workers are as follows:

4.1 Rural migrant workers and reduced social insurance

According to the laws in China, pension insurance, unemployment insurance, injury insurance and medical insurance should be included in labor contract. All these insurances should be required in labor contract. However, different factories have different policies for these social insurance benefits, many of them reduced benefits for workers. And in some extreme cases, workers don't sign contracts with their employees.

4.2 Migrant workers and Hukou reform

The reform of Hukou system is not complete, the mobility of population is still under restriction and under controlled by government. There are examples of migrant worker-friendly cities. Such as the city of Ningbo has a relative hospitable policy towards migrant workers (I will explain more later on); package of welfare services are provided to migrant workers. As a result, the coverage of people who take part in welfare projects is quite high. On the contrary, many other cities use Hukou as tools for restricting the entrance of what they called “less literate population”, namely rural migrant workers, because many of them have low education background. For example an officer in Beijing suggested a limitation towards rural migrant workers, it was failed at last, but the situation reminds us that rural migrant workers, even work hard like machines, and are still treated as “second class” citizens to a very large scale.

4.3 Migrant children and schooling

Many of them could not attend very good schools (public schools) in cities, because their resident registration is not local. There're special migrant schools for them, but the number is quite low and even if there is any, usually they are less facilitated than regular public schools. So there are usually two choices for migrant families with children: go back to their hometown for education: the schools are less facilitated and the children will be separated with their families. Or pay several amount of money. For public schools, the money is cheaper but the places are limited. For private schools, the fees are too high that most of the migrant families could not afford those schools.

On the other hand, for those children who can go to schools in cities, they have to move to different schools because their family's mobility. This influences their learning because they need to get used to new schools and new friends

from the beginning.

4.4 Migrant workers and housing

Most of the migrant workers live in houses arranged by their companies, or rent houses outside but share with several roommates (because the rent is high). Regular housing is too expensive for them to purchase, and they are usually not eligible for applying ECH (non-urban residence registrations). In my data analysis part, I will explain more about this issue.

5. Data, Theories, and Analysis

5.1 Methodology

The entire of my study are finished online, thus e-research. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were implied in my thesis. However it is not a mix of those two methods. Therefore I focus on online individual interviews to get deeper understanding of my research questions. Before that I also introduce virtual documents and previous quantitative research articles to form my context of migrant workers in China (as you will see in the later sections).

Actually I have been thinking about focusing on quantitative method for my research, but later I figure out that if I imply quantitative method here, the reliance on instruments and procedures could block the connection between research and everyday life (Bryman, 2006: 159). In other words, my study about hukou system and its influence towards rural migrant workers should be highly relevant with the life of those migrant workers; if I use survey in my quantitative method, firstly I couldn't guarantee the "reliability of my results", secondly I wouldn't know if the respondents of "my survey are aware of what I am asking" (Bryman, 2006: 159). Therefore I turned to RUMICI dataset (first wave); it is a nation-wide survey about rural migrant workers in China this dataset has been used in many

other articles, so I believe in its high reliability and validity. Those RUMICI articles, together with other types of documents such as diary from a reporter in Beijing; posters and discussion list from different forums form my basic context about rural migrant workers in China.

Since I have changed my focus on quantitative method, I would like to seek answers through individual interviews. During my interviewing, at the very beginning I had problems looking for interviewees. Firstly I chose to focus on forums such as Tianya and Maopu which are popular among Chinese internet users. I tried to write posts about my research and that I needed some rural migrant workers to complete my interview; also I tried to look for posters related to rural migrant workers and mail directly to the authors, but no replies. Therefore I had to change my plan and focus on the largest instant messenger platform called QQ. This platform has millions of users and I managed to locate some rural migrant workers. Bryman (2006) told us we need to “choose synchronous mode or asynchronous modes when we interview people”. I used both of them. At the first beginning I used synchronous mode. Namely I interviewed rural migrant workers through the instant messenger in real time and they reply immediately. The advantage of synchronous mode is the flexibility – I can change some of the questions on the question list according to the answers from interviewees. Moreover I could collect data quickly. But I did imply asynchronous mode to some of my interviewees because there is time difference between China and Sweden; some of them still work at night when I interviewed them. Therefore I had to send some questions to them and wait for their reply. Luckily they all replied my answers at last.

I will explain more in the following parts.

5.2 Data collecting methods

As I said in this thesis I would mainly use qualitative methods--interviews and documentary resources. However I did not plan to go back China for my interview and therefore used e-research instead. Because, according to Bryman, “through e-research data can be collected quickly; distance is no problem, since the research participant only has to be accessible by computer”—it doesn’t matter if “he or she is in the same building or across the world”; and e-research is more economical in terms of time and money (Bryman, 2006).

Also, documentary resources are used here. The implication of previous researches here definitely help me in my thesis because I don’t have to do the research from the beginning; moreover I can understand better about the existing results on internal migrant issues in China, and through reading those previous work I can learn from their strengths and avoid weakness or mistakes previous researches made. And because I have chosen e-research as my research method, therefore I focus more on the online documents and articles. I need to find relevant websites and articles for my research questions. I used Google, Global Research Gate, as well as Summon as my research engine. It is not only because those search engines are truth worthy, but “one single search engine provides access to only a portion of the internet”; therefore “the use of several search engine is highly desirable” when I am looking for appropriate websites and articles (Bryman, 2006:629).

My interviews with the individuals are conducted online as well. Because replies “are often more detailed and considered than with face-to-face interviews because interviewers put more efforts on the interviews, and interviewees have more time to ponder their answers and they can tidy them up before sending them” (Curasi, 2001).

5.3 Weakness of data collecting methods

My research method has at least 2 aspects that I am not confident.

Firstly is about the e-research. According to Bryman, the internet is still “not available for all; therefore certain groups of rural migrant workers are likely to be inaccessible”, for instance those who are working at the bottom level of labor market; or those who do not have internet access. Even for migrant workers who have internet connection, the invitation of the interviews might be refused because such invitation might be viewed as an interruption to their life. Moreover, online interviews “lack the personal touch, therefore lack the relationships between interviewer and interviewee, it is difficult to pick up visual or auditory cues” (Bryman, 2006:632).

Secondly, due to a limited coverage of the internet sources researchers actually have access to, “only a portion of the available articles are provided”, even we use multiple search engines. What’s worse, the data we found might be a “biased sample” (Bryman, 2006:632).

5.4 Ethical considerations

All the interviewees in my research participated voluntarily. I told them as detailed as possible about my study, my purposes and my plan of interview before I started my interviewing, including the persona information I will present in my thesis, such as their names, education level and so on. The aim is to provide as much information as possible to my interviewees so that they can trust me, as the organizer and conductor of the interview.

As you can read in my interview part, I include some of my friends as interviewees. Actually there is only one of this case: Mr. Lin. And he is not only my interviewee, but my informer as well. Mr. Lin works as a social worker currently; I believe he could provide relevant information or even previous experiences to me. Therefore I include him to my research. Also, Mr. Lin is a rural

migrant worker, his answers to my questions could be good reference to my research.

Moreover, I presented the family name and some other information such as age, education and occupation. In terms of the family names of interviewees, they were used for better presentation of my interviewing. Also, I asked my interviewees if I could use their family name and most of them agreed. There is only one person who did not agree and I used Mr. A instead. It is important to mention here that family name in China is not so unique; it is people's first names that make a difference, so there is no risk for other people to get access to the personal information of my interviewees.

6. Presentation of results

I started my data collection by looking at documentary resources, from previous researches, and also from the internet. Since migrant worker issue is a hot spot topic in China, I could find various articles, from a governmental level and from individual level. Those articles form a picture of the basic situation of migrant workers in China.

When talking about rural migrant workers, firstly I would like to utilize the rural-to-urban migration in China and Indonesia (RUMICI) dataset, which covers the 10 largest provinces sending and receiving migrants (Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hubei, Sichuan, Guangdong, Henan, Anhui, Chongqing and Hebei), and the samples of this survey were randomly chosen from the 15 top immigration destinations (cities) in China, namely Wuxi, Shanghai, Nanjing, Ningbo, Hangzhou, Shenzhen, Dongguan, Guangzhou, Chongqing, Wuhan, Bengbu, Zhengzhou, Luoyang, Hefei, Chengdu (Akaya et al, 2012). RUMICI project started in 2008, and it was designed as a 5-year long survey from a household level and contained Chinese part and Indonesia part. I will use the first

wave of the dataset, Chinese part, which consists of tracking for 5000 migrants and their families (about 18,000 Chinese households) for 4 years (Frijters and Meng, 2010). The dataset provides a relatively accurate representation of the migrant population, including long-term migrants and temporary/seasonal migrant workers; therefore I think this dataset is truth worthy and highly reliable.

Besides, I also checked Chinese National Bureau of Statistics website, where I found the report of rural migrant workers investigation in 2011. It is a report about rural migrant workers, and it's the only one official report I could find on this issue so far, I think it would be good reference when I am trying to study migrant worker issue.

Researchers from RUMICI project classified their interviewees as 3 categories: migrant workers, rural non-migrant and urban individuals and tried to make comparison among those people. And it turned out that there are distinctive differences among them. There are slightly differences among the sources I used, but still I could find common issues that might be helpful here. I tried to summarize studies on RUMICI dataset (first wave) from Akaya, Bargainb and Zimmermann in 2012, Frijters and Meng on 2010, together with the report of migrant workers investigation as follows:

6.1 Age

Generally speaking, most of the migrant workers are male, which occupies 65.9 percent of the total migrant workers. More precisely, 6.3% of migrant workers age between 16-20, 32.7% for 21-30 age group 22.7% are 31-40 years old, 24.0% are 41-50 years old, and the rest 14.3% are more than 50 years old^①.

^① National Bureau of Statistics of China, report of migrant workers investigation in 2011 (in Chinese), http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjfx/fxbg/t20120427_402801903.htm

Also, as we can see from figure 1, the migrant workers are younger in comparison with urban individuals or rural non-migrants. Average ages for migrant workers, urban and rural citizens are 30:7, 46:7 and 42:5 respectively. (Akaya et al, 2012). While the features of an ageing population are emerging in urban areas, migrant workers in cities are relative young, mostly are between 20 to 40 years old.

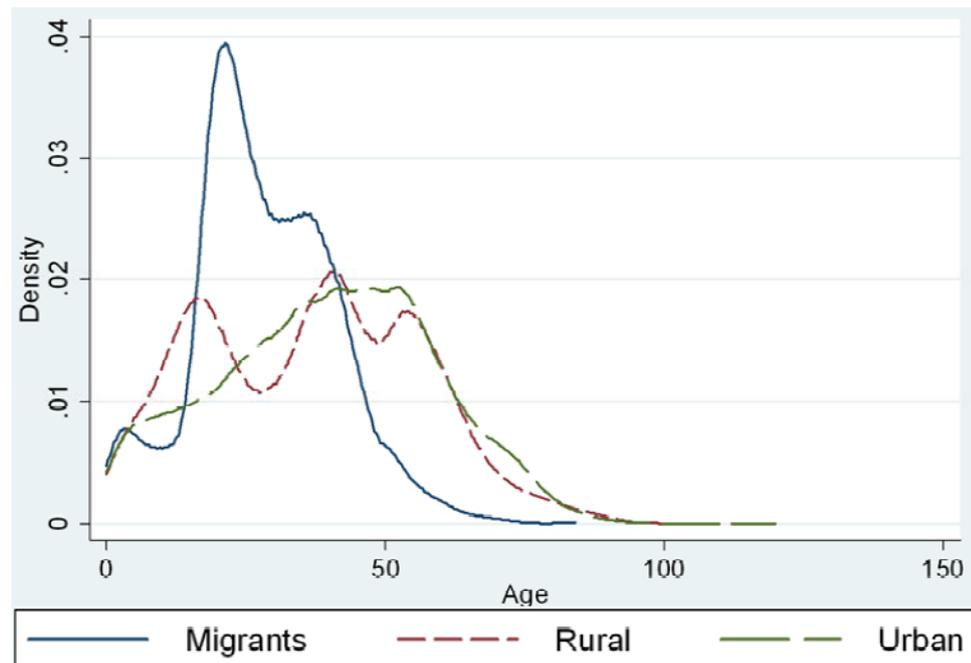


Figure 1: The age distribution of migrants, rural non-migrants, and urban individuals (figure from Frijters and Meng, 2010).

6.2 Education

The database shows the level of education among rural, urban and migrant residents (see figure 2). Compared with elderly residents, there is not so much difference in terms of education level among young people. Moreover we can see a universal increase in the total number of years of education. For example, the youngest children are having at least 3 more years of schooling than their father

or grandfather generation, regardless of which group they are in.

On the other hand, we spotted inequalities among those groups. Less migration children could attend public schools, compared with urban children. According to study by Wang and Luo, in the year of 2006, only “22.4% of the migrant children could entered the public schools in Shanghai, 47.1% of them had to go back to their hometown for education” (Wang and Luo, 2007).

Moreover, the average years of education increased in the past few decades, but we can still find a large gap between rural areas and urban areas in terms of education level (figure 2). Take 20 years old interviewees as an example: rural hukou holders, no matter they chose to stay in their hometown or migrate to urban areas, were less educated than urban hukou holders. Urban citizens received at least 3 more years of education than those who migrated from rural areas and those who stayed in rural areas (figure 2). Frijters and Meng believe the reason was that education, “especially university education is almost a city-phenomenon” (Frijters and Meng, 2010). Most of the universities are located in urban areas and there are more and more migrants admitted because of the expansion of secondary education; however the education in China, especially secondary education, are still focusing on the cities and urban students benefit more than rural ones. Indeed, we can find examples of migrants who succeeded in the university entrance examination and therefore became urban hukou holders (collective hukou holders). But I could not find statistics on the exact number of how many they are. Even for the report of National Bureau of Statistics, which reports only 9.8 percent of rural migrant workers received secondary education; also I couldn't find any words about the number of people who managed changing their household registration through university education.

So all in all, the data base indicates a clear gap between rural residents and urban citizens in terms of education level. For rural group and urban group in

figure 2, the gap between different age groups is average—urban residents receive about 3 years education more than rural residents; same difference could be seen between migrant group and urban group, but migrant group is better off than rural group.

Such gap reflects the differences between rural areas and urban areas; more depth, hukou system segregates rural and urban areas and causes an unequal redistribution of educational resources. Given the background that only native-hukou holders could attend local schools, we can accuse such diversity in educational level to hukou system. Definitely we could not blame everything to hukou system, there are many other factors such as political reasons; but I believe the RUMICI database and figure 2 are sufficient already for my research question.

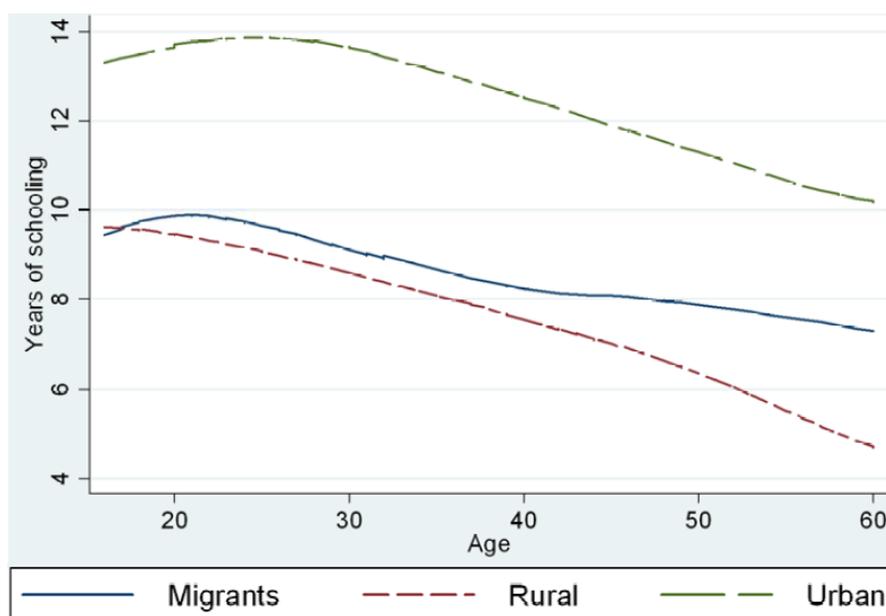


Figure 2: Average education by age for migrants, rural non-migrants, and urban individuals (Frijters and Meng, 2010)

6.3 Working conditions

6.3.1 Working hours:

The majorities of rural migrant workers were working as construction workers (17.7%), in manufactory sectors (36.0%), or in serving industry (12.2%)^①.

The life for rural hukou holders in cities was not easy. From the database we can see most of the rural migrant workers took up jobs which require lots of physical labor; even worse, migrant workers worked overtime, earned less than urban workers, and worked in poor conditions. Studies from Wang and Luo (2007) confirmed 55% of their interviewees worked more than 8 hours per day, about 20% work more than 10 hours. Moreover, only 30.9% of them defined their working condition as “safe, clean and comfortable”; other 62.1% choose “accessible”.

The database does not include the information indicating the direct link between hukou system and working conditions. In other words, I cannot tell if the high percentage of working as physical workers is caused by hukou system. Perhaps the educational level for (rural) migrant workers matters as well. Therefore I keep an eye on this point in my interviews.

6.3.2 Income

13.5% of the participants faced the problem of delayed wage payment; and the average wage for interviewees was 1422.04 CHY^② each month. The data was collected in 2006, and the average wage for urban workers in 2006 was

^① National Bureau of Statistics of China, report of migrant workers investigation in 2011 (in Chinese), http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjfx/fxbg/t20120427_402801903.htm

^② 1 USD equals about 633 CNY, and 1 CHY equals approximately 15.7 USD currently

2464 CHY per month, according to the Statistical Department of Shanghai ^① (Wang and Luo, 2007: 98).

Similar conclusions can be found on RUMICI dataset, which shows huge difference in terms of income and social insurance between urban workers and migrant workers. Studies from Akaya, Klaus and Zimmermann (2012) show the average monthly income for urban workers and migrant workers were 2,376CHY and 1,625 CHY respectively. Similarly, urban workers earned at least twice as much as migrant workers in terms of hourly wage (Frijters and Meng, 2010); for instance in Ningbo city, 5.95 CHY for migrant workers and 18.19 CHY for urban workers; Hangzhou 15.07CHY for urban workers and 7.37 CHY for migrant workers; Luoyang, 9.65 CHY and 4.33 CHY.

Similar with “working condition” aspect above, no evidences proving incomes of migrant workers are in correlation with hukou system have been found in RUMICI database. Macro approach only indicated that there are differences between rural and urban areas in terms of working condition and income.

6.3.3 Housing

According to National Bureau of Statistics report, most of the rural migrant workers are living in houses provided by their employees, about 32.4 percent; another 10.2% live in work shed, mostly are construction workers; 19.3 percent of the interviewees don't live in any kind of arranged houses, but they share rooms with other people so that the rent could be lower; 14.3% rent single room and live by themselves; only 0.7% rural migrant workers purchased commercial houses for themselves.

^① Data comes from Statistics Department of Shanghai (in Chinese),

<http://www.12333sh.gov.cn/gzba/zhengce/2007/2006zengzhanglv.htm>

Moreover, if we look at Wang and Luo (2007), most of the interviewees Wang and Luo interviewed in Shanghai reported they were “satisfied on the whole” in their housing (Wang and Luo, 2007). But we should notice that in the same year (2006) the average rent for renting houses in Shanghai was 297.4 CHY each month (Wang and Luo, 2007); given the background that average income for migrant workers at the same period was 1422.04 CHY/month, conclusion can be made that housing rent occupies large percentage in migrant workers’ monthly expense. Moreover, the condition of their accommodation is bad. Only 24% of them “had independent kitchens and bathrooms”. On the other hand 35.3% reported there are no libraries, gyms and other public facilities nearby, which indicated a relatively boring life in their spare time (Wang and Luo, 2007: 98-99).

The reason why I refer to the data of Shanghai is that it’s one of the biggest cities in China and Shanghai attracts migrant workers from all over China. The survey was conducted in Shanghai so I couldn’t generate the whole situation but the data of Shanghai could be good reference when compared with other places and when we study the nationwide situation.

6.3.4 General welfare coverage

Apart from the issues mentioned in part 1) to 3), the coverage of social insurances for migrant workers is also lower.

From a national level, the coverage for the five basic insurance, namely pension, industrial accident insurance, health care insurance, unemployment insurance and maternity insurance, are 13.9%、23.6%、16.7%、8% and 5.6% respectively ^①; more details could be found on figure 3 below.

^① National Bureau of Statistics of China, report of migrant workers investigation in 2011 (in Chinese), http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjfx/fxbg/t20120427_402801903.htm

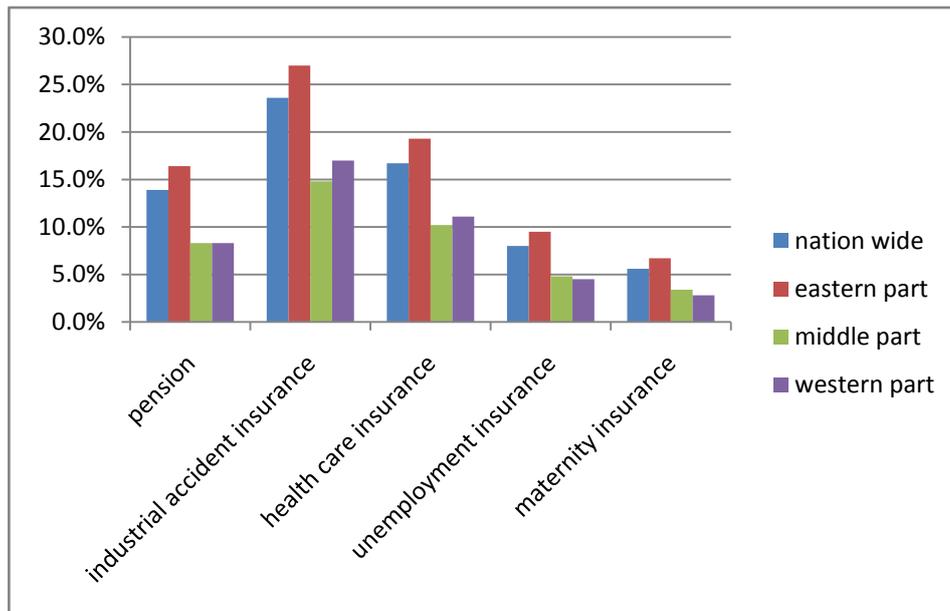


Figure 3: The coverage for migrant workers in different regions in China (from National Bureau of Statistics of China)

From more specific sphere, Figures 4 and 5 below from Frijters and Meng's study shows the coverage for pensions and for unemployment insurance is pretty much the same for urban citizens, but it differs so much among migrants. Basically, the coverage of welfare projects is affected by the financial conditions as well as the government policy of the city, for instance the statistical results from more developed regions like Guangzhou, are higher than less developed regions, such as Luoyang. And Wuxi has a relative high coverage in pension and unemployment insurance, for the reason that Wuxi has started offering welfare packages to migrant workers therefore the difference between insurance coverage is small.

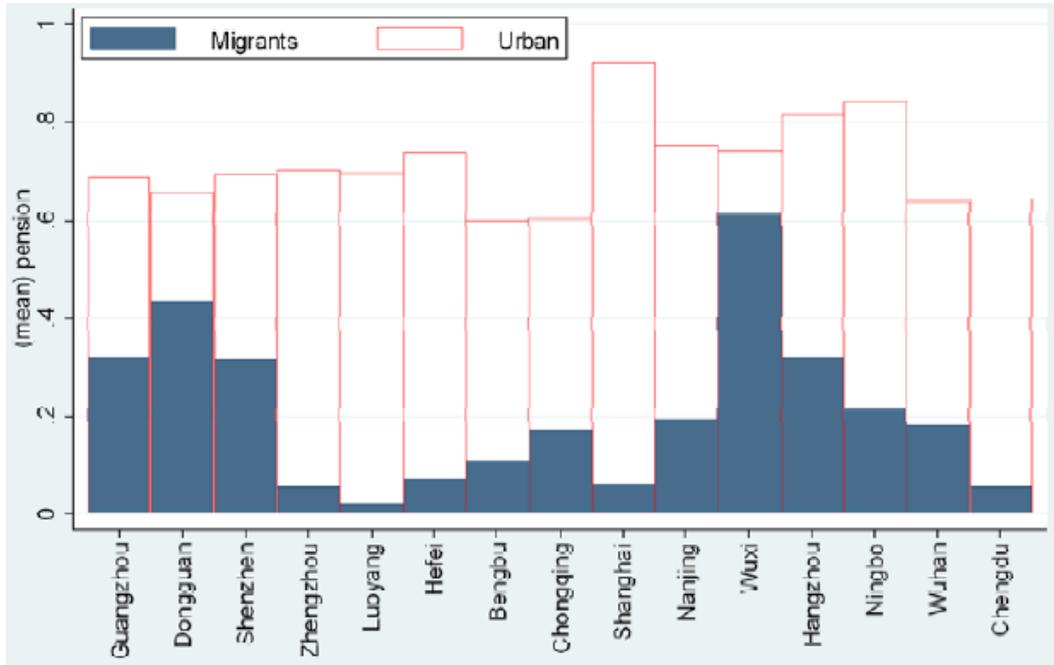


Figure 4: Percentage of migrant and urban workers with pension coverage (Frijters and Meng, 2010)

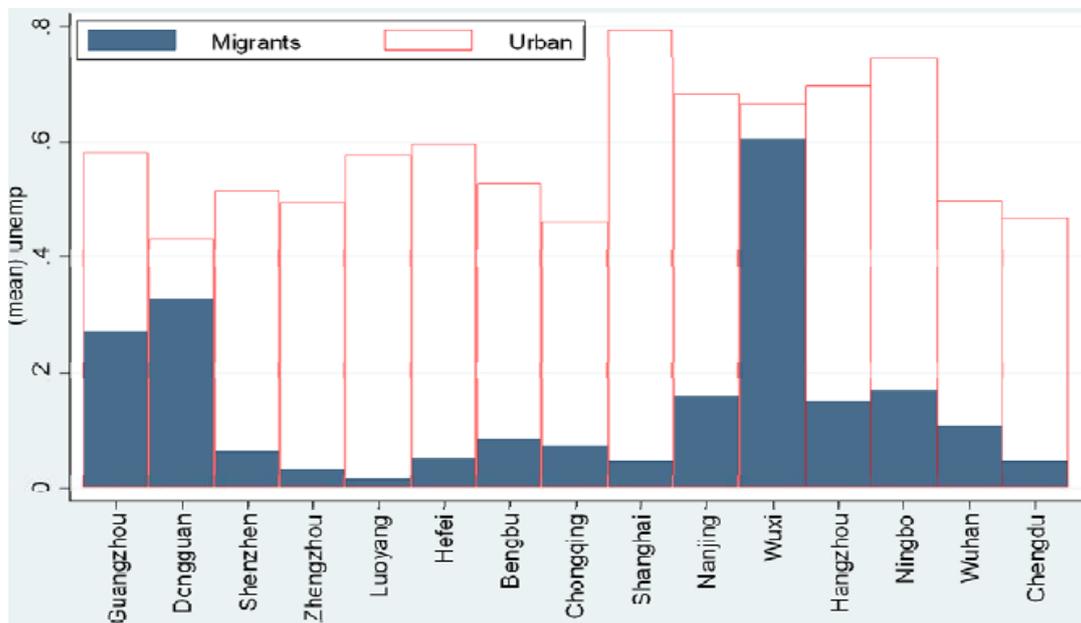


Figure 5: Percentage of migrant and urban workers with unemployment insurance coverage (Frijters and Meng, 2010)

The data of Shanghai shows that in China, the coverage of welfare service is not relevant with economic growth. Moreover, the number doesn't mean that migrant workers in Shanghai didn't join any social insurances. Actually 53.8% of the interviewees joint a "comprehensive insurance" for non-native workers, which covers fewer aspects and benefits less for participants compared with regular 5 basic social insurance and other welfare projects; on the other hand 29% of those interviewees didn't join any kind of social welfare of social protection regimes; only 9.5% migrant workers had industrial accident insurance and 10.7% had elderly care insurance. (Wang and Luo, 2007:99-100).

The previous researches provide me the basic context of rural migrant workers, from a top-down perspective. I found out that the main problems for migrant workers, especially rural migrant workers, concentrate on: their working condition, their access towards social welfare services and the education for their children.

However, the RUMICI database and macro approach only indicate that there are inequalities between rural migrant workers and regular urban citizens, in terms of welfare services and their working and living situation. There is no evidence showing hukou system should be accused for this situation. In order to continue my research, I turned to individual level, thus from a bottom-up perspective, in order to hear the experiences of rural migrant workers and seek the answer of my research questions. Therefore I introduced interviews towards rural migrant workers which I found on QQ platform.

6.4 Interviews and online resources

And as I described above, I focus on the internet for my data collection, because it's time-saving and money-saving; the data can be collected quickly; and I can ignore the distance between me and my interviewees as long as the

research participant only has to be accessible by computer (Bryman, 2008:632)—it is essential because all of my interviewees are across the world; more importantly, very few scholars use e-research on migrant worker issue in China, therefore I would like to have a try and see if I could find something new.

Moreover, if I want to introduce e-research methods, I should consider whether to choose web-based method or communication-based method (Bryman, 2008:632-633), synchronous mode or asynchronous mode (Bryman, 2008:642). In my study, I interview rural migrant workers by using an instant messenger called “QQ” (the same function as MSN), from which my data-collection instrument is launched. Therefore what I have chosen is a communication-based method. Meanwhile, because QQ is a kind of instant messenger platform, which means the communication between me and my interviewees occurs in real time, I as an online interviewer ask questions and my respondent, who is also online, replies immediately, as in a chatting room. So I would define my method as synchronous mode. Asynchronous mode is utilized as well, but not very much; only when I tried to go back to my interviewees and look for more detailed answers. I sent them small batches of questions, just in case if I send too much questions, the respondents might reply only to those they feel they can make a genuine contribution (Bryman, 2008:642).

Based on these, I chose my interviewees from some of my friends who are rural hukou holders and are currently migrant workers; the others are from chatting groups in QQ platform. The reason why I use QQ for my platform is that QQ is not only an instant messenger, it's the biggest communication platform which contains above 400 million active users, by Aug. 6th of 2010, 110 million users are online. QQ has become part of people's life; if I want to conduct an e-research, QQ is a perfect platform for selecting interviewees.

Talking about my interviewees, I interviewed 5 persons in total; all of them are

rural hukou holders and are currently working in other cities far away from their hometown. Due to the classification I mentioned at the beginning of my thesis, all my interviewees belong to the third kind of migrant worker, in other words they are employed migrant workers. Mr. Lin, 24 years old, he has a bachelor's degree and currently work in Dongguan city in Guangdong Province, as a social worker; Mr. Wang, 24, has bachelor's degree and work as a sales man in Fuzhou city, Fujian Province; Mr. Chen, also 24 with a bachelor's degree, is now working in Tsinghai city in Gansu Province, as a construction worker; Mr. Xiaoguan, 23 years old, he came to work after finished his 9-year's compulsory education and only has a junior middle school degree, work in Beijing as a salesman; and the last one, I prefer to call him Mr. A because he refused to tell me his name, he is 34 years old and are working as salesman in Dongguan city.

My 5 interviewees come from different cities and have very different background and social experiences. And they are in different situations due to the differences in where they live and what they are doing. The basic information for them, such as financial conditions, housing, is pretty much the same as what the previous researches claimed. They are aging from 24-34, and they are all working at basic level in the labor market. But not very low level. Mr. Lin is a social worker, Mr. Wang, Mr. Xiaoguan and Mr. A are salesmen, the monthly wage for those people range from 1800-3500CHY. Mr. Chen is a construction worker, but he earn about 3500CHY each month in Tsinghai. However, I found something more detailed than those articles in my interviews.

And none of them have purchased commercial houses; even for Mr. A, who has been in Guangdong Province for about 10 years, he still couldn't afford a commercial house. As the housing price keeps raising and their incomes almost remain the same, the opportunities for purchasing their own houses become smaller.

In order to answer my research questions and proceed my interview, I made a list of questions (you could find the list in appendix at the end of the thesis). The purpose of my interview is to figure out the links between hukou system and migrant workers, in other words answering what database cannot prove in previous parts. My interviews were conducted as the follows:

Firstly, I asked my interviewees about their social insurance coverage. 2 of my interviewees don't have social insurance (Mr. Wang and Mr. Xiaoguan). Because they don't have contract and they work as temporary workers, their companies don't purchase social insurance for them. What's worse, they themselves don't pay attention either. Mr. Wang, who is working as a salesman told me that currently *"I prefer to focus on improving myself and making more money, that is my main target; and if I become more experienced and skillful, the company will surely provide more welfare services for me"*. I got similar answer from another interview, Mr. Xiaoguan, who is also a salesman in an IT market in Beijing.

"I think it would be proper to purchase health care and other social insurance at the age of 30. If I were sick, I can just buy some medicine and cure myself. I am young now, how sick I will be?"

This is a very interesting thinking, and personally I think it's common among young people. They don't earn much, therefore they have to focus on making more money and ignore welfare services, thus making profit for their companies; however, their companies don't provide them the necessary welfare services. So they are trading their short-term security in return for longer-term vulnerability (Wood and Gough, 2006:1699).

Even for those who have social insurance, they have different thinking about the whole social welfare system. Mr. Chen believes welfare service is relevant to

employees' personal capabilities, if employees improve themselves, they could get better welfare service. On the other hand, Mr. Lin and Mr. A have better understanding about welfare services and social insurances. But they all told me their worries about their purchases of welfare services: a worry that their money for welfare services might be embezzled by government officers. Just like Mr. A said, "buying social welfare services is donating money for officers". Also, they are worrying about the social insurance system, because it's still problematic. In Guangdong, Mr. Lin said, people "have to pay for 15 years' fee so that they could get access to the social welfare services, but migrant workers usually don't stay that long". As I introduced in chapter two, social welfare system is separated for different regions; in other words if migrant workers move to other cities, the amount they have paid in their social insurance will be "zero clearing" and start from the beginning. So most of the migrant workers prefer not to join any kinds of social insurance or social welfare regimes, except their companies pay for them.

There is one thing I believe that deteriorate the situation is the passive attitude towards the need of welfare. As far as I learnt, many of the young rural migrant workers including Mr. Wang and Mr. Xiaoguan don't pay enough attention on their welfare needs. Mr. Wang focuses on earning more money; he told me directly that "I don't concern about my social welfare issues, currently I have so many things to care about". Mr. Xiaoguan cares a little bit more,"well I think I will start to consider my welfare at the age of 30", which means currently he focus on money-making. There might be thousands of explanations why they don't pay attention to welfare issues; but there is one thing I am quite sure, is that they have not faced problems related with social welfare. For example they don't have kids, or they are quite healthy so that they don't have to worry about their medical care. My reason is that, Mr. A, who is also a salesman as Mr. Wang and Mr. Xiaoguan; he cares about his welfare and he joint social insurances, because he has to support his family and he is 34 years old and he has been in Dongguan

long enough (it's his 10th year in Dongguan) to experience the importance of social insurances and welfare services.

Secondly, I asked if they ever experienced any influence from hukou system, in order to answer my research question. Except Mr. A, who is 34 years old, said his rural household registration influences his life in terms of his resident permit in Dongguan city and his kid's education. Other interviewees (Mr. Xiaoguan, Mr. Chen and Mr. Wang) agreed that as rural hukou holders and as migrant workers, they don't feel any difference currently, because they are young and they haven't really face problems that are relevant to hukou system. But they all admit that people with a rural household registration does differ from those who are urban hukou holders.

Mr. Lin told me an urban hukou registration is essential for those who want to find jobs in monopoly field, such as power supply companies (State Grid Corporation) or governmental depart, especially for provincial level. He also told me some advantages for urban household registration: the local government burdens more and individuals pay less; reimburse for urban citizens would be higher compared with rural migrant workers; a better quality of authorized hospitals in health care insurance, and so on. As a social worker, Lin pays attention to social welfare system and did lots of surveys on this issue. Therefore his answer is truth worthy and highly reliable. What Lin said is exactly what I found in the case of Mr. A. He is quite unsatisfied with his health care insurance.

“You ask me if we, rural migrant workers, have access to medical care and maternity care. The answer is yes, but, we need to pay by ourselves if we don't go to the authorized hospitals in our social insurance card. That's not even a hospital, just a clinic, how am I supposed to trust them?”

On the other hand, Mr. A, complained about the education problem of his kid.

He wishes his kid could be able to attend public schools in Dongguan city, where better facilities are provided. However, because of his status as rural migrant worker and rural hukou holder, his children will have to attend private schools, where the tuition fees are high; or sending his kid back to his hometown.

Chinese government attempted to set up migrant children schools to fulfill the need for education for those migrant children, but according to what I have found, it doesn't help. One migrant worker in Sichuan Province posted his/her story on line, using the id "*//123321abc*" in the poster; his/her 7-year-old child has problem getting access to local migrant children school. It's a kind of school specified for rural migrant workers in the city. According to the policy, the author should be able to send his/her kid for education, but the school authority refused because they haven't received the documents for this policy. According to the policy, children of non-native hukou holder are not able to enter public schools, they can choose private schools which require large amount of money, go to this kind of specified schools for migrants, or attend schools back in their hometown. From this perspective, hukou system does influence the education of rural migrant children.

Thirdly, I asked if my interviewees ever faced discriminations because of their rural household registration; their answers are the same, no discriminations. But from my own perspective, they are facing social segregation to some degrees. I will explain more in the next section.

Generally speaking, through my interviewees we could find clear impact that hukou system has on migrant workers, in aspects such as education and health care. There are cases that rural migrant workers refused to admit the restriction of hukou system, but it is only because they have no awareness of their household and that they have not met such situation.

6.5 Analysis of data (Theories):

Basically, I will use 2 concepts in this part: the concept of social segregation and the theory of welfare regime.

6.5.1 Hukou and social segregation

As summarize of my interviews, the main influence that hukou system has on rural migrant workers is the segregation between rural migrant workers and urban citizens. There are several kinds of segregation due to different ways of categorizing; in my interviews I can at least find social segregation in 4 aspects:

6.5.1.1 Segregation in labor market

It doesn't mean rural migrant workers couldn't get access to the labor market in cities, but rural migrant workers have limited access to job positions in monopoly fields. Moreover, most rural migrant workers have to take up jobs that require long working hours, low and unstable wage, and poor welfare benefits; namely unattractive to urban citizens. Evidences could be found in my empirical data and interviews. Most of the rural migrant workers are working at the basic level, or medium level of labor market. For example, Mr. Chen works as construction worker, even he has a bachelor's degree; Mr. A has been in Dongguan for several years but he is still working as a salesman, not in a management department. There are examples that rural migrant workers get promoted and become managers, however I don't have the exact number about how many are they.

6.5.1.2 Segregation in housing

As I mentioned above, very few of the rural migrant workers can afford to buy housing for them. 48.5 percentages of the rural migrant workers are living in

apartments or rooms arranged by their companies, including company houses and work sheds, only 15% rent individual houses^①. The data shows spatial segregation between rural migrant workers and local citizens in their host cities. As I introduced in previous parts, an urban household registration is both cause and solution for housing in urban areas. In order to become a urban hukou holder, rural migrant workers need to buy houses in cities; but their status as rural hukou holders become obstacles for their purchasing of housing, because of the segregation in labor market in terms of wage gap and limited job opportunities .

Apparently, most of rural migrant workers don't have problems in their housing, but as we can see, in one hand, most of them don't live with local communities; on the other hand, all they have is a place for rest, not a community for social interacting. Take the example of Shanghai, 35.3% report there's no libraries, gyms and other public facilities nearby, which indicates a relatively dull life in their spare time (Wang and Luo, 2007:98-99). Just like Mr. Xiaoguan.

“During work days, I stay in my room at night, and I play basketball with my friends on weekends, kind of indoor man.”

Or like Mr. Nie, who works as a delivery man in Beijing. He lives in a basement room with no windows and only 2 electronic equipments: fan and electronic stove, and no internet or TV. He only reads newspapers or chats with his neighborhoods, who are also rural migrant workers^②.

6.5.1.3 Segregation in social interaction and social integration

^① National Bureau of Statistics of China, report of migrant workers investigation in 2011 (in Chinese), http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjfx/fxbg/t20120427_402801903.htm

^② From the poster in Tianya forum, <http://www.tianya.cn/publicforum/content/no04/1/828220.shtml> (in Chinese)

Rural migrant workers do have problems in social interaction with local people. In my interviews, some of them complain about the difficulties in communication because of different dialect, such as Mr. Lin, who told me Cantonese blocks his communication with local people. Whilst other interviewees, for instance Mr. A don't even notice segregation; because his main socializing focus is on his colleagues who are also rural migrant workers.

There is no evidence from my research showing that a rural household registration leads to segregation in social interaction or discrimination. At least, none of my interviewees ever face discriminations; even if they do, they won't blame hukou system. Like Mr. Lin said "region discrimination is a historical problem, it's been part of regional culture and has nothing to do with the policies".

But if we focus on social integration, that would be another case. According to what I got so far, hukou system has strong impacts in terms of education and marriage.

The segregation in education is quite obvious. Migrant children/teenagers, as long as they don't have local household registration in host city, they have limited access to public schools. The function of hukou system in education system is the distribution of education resources, including facilities, teachers, and so on. Basically, public schools have better resources and cheaper; private schools, however are not so well facilitated and are usually costly. Therefore if migration children couldn't attend public schools, in one hand that means they don't have equal access to good education resources as urban children/teenagers. On the other hand, the tuition fees for attending private schools will be heavy burden for their families. So in most cases, those children will be sent back to their hometown. Or, in some cities, for instance Beijing, local government set up special schools for migrant children, which is another kind of educational segregation for migrants. Because those schools only accept migrant children,

and regular urban kids don't go to those schools. As a result, rural migrants are kind of separated with urban citizens from very early age, which brought endless troubles for the integration of the next generation.

Marriage of young migrant couples is also an important aspect that reflects how hukou system affects social integration. As I mentioned in chapter two, some rural migrant workers transfer their household registration from their hometown to their host cities as so-called "collective household". It belongs to urban household but it's different with regular individual urban household. The local labor market department takes control of collective household, instead of governmental department. If those collective household people want to become regular urban household holders, either they purchase houses, which are far more beyond their affordability, to prove that they are under administration by local government; or turn to their relatives in the host cities, which most of them don't have. Only in that case will the labor market department approve your request of transferring to urban individual household registration.

The problem comes when young couples with collective household registrations. Usually, due to the rules of labor market departments in China, if collective hukou holders are married, they need to transfer their hukou within one month; and the department won't give applicants their collective household card if they are not eligible. In that case, the department of civil administration which takes control of marriage certificate will not give certificate. That stops many young couples with collective household registration from getting married because they don't have their own houses and relatives. Miss Yang in Guangzhou is a good example; she could not get the marriage certificate. And she tried everything she could do but it turned out to be in vain, even for back-entrance approaches^①. Personally I think that's the reason why so many

^① Sources from Sina News: <http://news.sina.com.cn/sd/2009-08-06/110818377696.shtml>

rural migrant workers don't want to transfer their rural household registration, including my 5 interviews.

6.5.1.4 Resident card (the former temporary living card)

This is one of the most distinctive segregation that hukou system brings. A resident card is a special kind of ID for non-native migrant workers, just like resident permit in Europe. But resident card is so different with resident permit. Resident card holders are like “second class” citizens in urban areas. Firstly, resident card is usually valid for 1-5 years. In Guangdong Province for example, migrant workers have to pay about 45CHY per year to continue the permission. Except the validity, resident card segregate almost every aspect in aspect of life: welfare services, education, pension, and so on. I have not found any official documents that compare resident card and urban hukou. But I do find some non-official comparisons online. For instance in Shanghai, except the validity, the main differences of resident card are as follows: resident card holders could not enjoy pension in Shanghai; and if migrant workers lose jobs, they will lose their resident card as well; resident card can't be used for marriage registration; and students with resident card are not eligible for college entrance examination in Shanghai, they have to go back to their hometown and take the exams there^①.

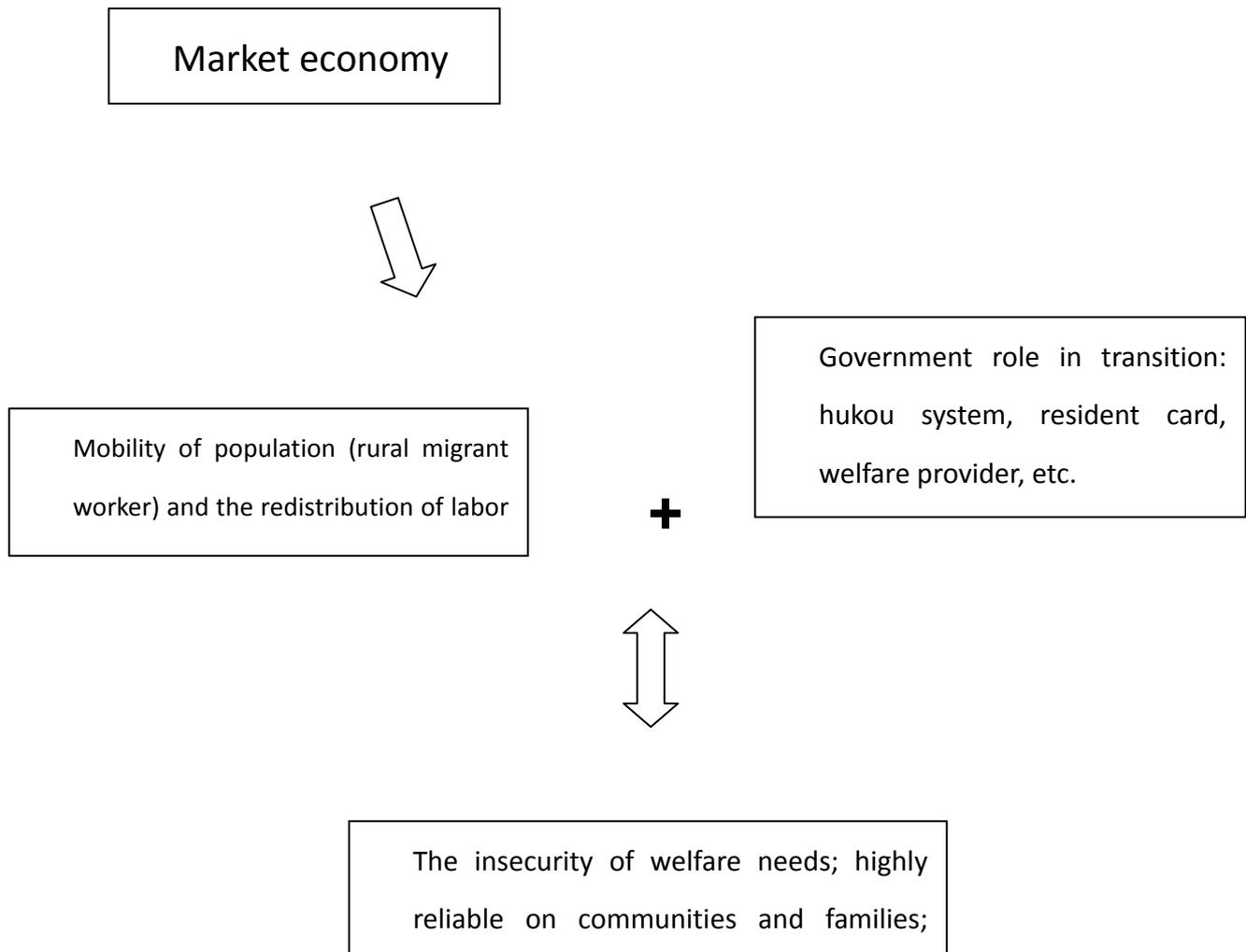
All in all, resident card system segregates migrant workers with native residents in very large scale. There have been strong debates about whether to abolish this system, together with hukou system. But there is one thing quite sure here, migrant workers are still suffering from the system.

6.5.2 Mapping the theoretical framework

Based on previous parts, I made the following framework to explain the

^① Source from <http://sh.sina.com.cn/citylink/ed/l/2009-06-18/11012442.html>

dilemma within migrant workers.



Let us begin from top of the figure. As we can see, during social economic reform the government introduced market economy to replace former planned economy. As a result the mobility of population, once were forbidden, became possible and common. Giving the situation that there are unequal opportunities and welfare benefits between urban areas and rural areas, people start to migrant for better livelihood from 1980s till today. And this wave of migration, unlike the previous waves in China which were policy-oriented, is market-oriented activity. As a kind of redistribution of labor force, people move automatically and freely in search of better job opportunities and higher income.

On the other hand, although the role of government is in transition during the reform, it is still a centralized government. Many of the regimes or systems that are used as population administration, such as hukou system, are still valid; but together with the introduction of capitalist factors in economic sphere, Chinese government starts to lose control, especially in terms of welfare services providing. The social welfare services, once controlled by the government, are now experiencing decentralization, marketization, commercialization and privatization. That's a debatable issue in China, as I said in chapter two, marketization policies and hukou system are sort of contradictory with each other.; on the other hand marketization means people have more choices in terms of welfare services and marketization brings more flexibility on welfare services providing. As a consequence, those changes reduce the accessibility of welfare services, especially when a huge income gap and hukou system still exists. Chinese government, both central and local governments, used to be the only provider of welfare services and welfare projects; with the marketization and privatization, government, employers and individuals burden the welfare need together. One consequence is that welfare services provider become more and more profit-oriented, especially for employers. Evidences can be found in my interviews that Mr. Wang and Mr. Xiaoguan don't get any welfare services from their companies.

What's more, rural migrant workers receive limited or even no help from local government in terms of welfare services, because they don't have local household registration and they are resident card holders, and they are not eligible for most of the welfare services; like I mentioned above, in Shanghai resident card holders could not join the pension regime. And if going back to my interviews, Mr. Wang and Mr. Xiaoguan would be good examples here. Their companies don't provide them any kinds of welfare service, because in that case companies pay less to their workers.

The contradictory role of Chinese government influences internal migrants. And a special welfare state regime, which mixed with traditional welfare state regime and informal security regime, has emerged. Firstly, Chinese people have a centralized government and at the same time China is commercialized state. The access to the labor market is the dominant source of livelihood. And a mixed social welfare system, which government, employers and individuals share responsibilities, has been established. Secondly, people rely heavily on their family and community to fulfill their needs for security. It is not only because they are facing social segregations result from institutional factors, but with some other historical reasons such as region rejection of “non-native” residents. In other words, they don’t feel home when living in other cities. In one hand, rural migrant workers have problems in getting involved with local people. As I found in my interviews, all of my interviewees admitted they have very little friend who are urban hukou holders in their host cities. And most of their social interaction in their spare time happens within their colleagues and people who are also rural migrant workers. It seems that the communities of colleagues and migrant workers play important roles in rural migrant workers’ daily life. They help each other and sometimes hang out together. And when they have troubles with their employees, they usually unite together and negotiate as a group. For example, there is a poster about wage delaying for 15 years for 197 rural migrant workers. They selected representatives, Mr. Wang and 5 other migrant workers, but they unite as a group^①.

What’s worse, rural migrant workers’ needs for security are not fulfilled. They don’t earn much compared with urban hukou holders, and their participant rate of

^① Poster from Tianya forum (in Chinese),

<http://www.tianya.cn/publicforum/content/news/1/241404.shtml>

welfare projects and social insurance is quite low. That means, their links with their company is quite important in bringing them security. As long as they get paid, their needs for security will be fulfilled. Under this circumstance, they will trade some of their short-term security in return for longer-term vulnerability and dependence (Wood and Gough, 2006: 1699). In this case we can understand why Mr. Wang and Mr. Xiaoguan are willing to stay in their current companies, even they are low-paid and without any social insurances. They give up their social insurances temporary in exchange of money, and put them in trouble when they need medic care and maternity care for example. As a return, they could focus more on their job and become more dependent to their companies.

All in all, market economy encourages internal migrants; people are driven to become migrant workers by better job opportunities and better income. However the “socialist side” of Chinese society blocks population mobility and migrant workers are tied with and sometimes are even driven back to their original birth place by hukou system as well as many other social factors. A strong reliance on their family shakes their willingness of being a migrant worker; moreover the social segregation caused by institutional factors deteriorates the situation. Hukou system and resident card block the link between migrant workers and social welfare system. They are treated differently compared with urban hukou holders. From that sense, rural migrant workers are not fully accepted by urban areas.

6.5.3 A mixed welfare regime

Now that I figured out how hukou system influences rural migrant workers in previous parts, I would like to go more theoretical about this issue; in other words, I would like to try a social policy perspective. During my study, I find it hard to categorize China into a certain model. As Esping-Anderson (1996b:2) noted himself, we may “interpret East Asia in two ways: seeing it either as a hybrid of

liberal and conservative models or as an emerging fourth welfare regime”. Moreover China is neither a capitalist country nor a welfare state. But China is becoming more capitalist-like after social economic reform; not only in economy part, but in the field of social welfare services. The government was trying to establish a capitalist market, at the mean time maintain their socialist governance. So we can see 2 different social systems are now affecting China. Politically, China has a socialist government, which is centralizing and is trying to play a role as administrator. That is how hukou system was established—it’s a tool for allocating social resource and control the mobility of population. Economically, we are more capitalist. The market economics require highly mobility of labor forces, which is to some degrees in conflict with our political system.

All these make China a special case for welfare state regime because it is neither a capitalist country nor a welfare state. Therefore in this part I would like to summarize what I have found during my study on this issue, with the hope that my research could be helpful for future studies in modeling the case of China.

When talking about social policy sphere, one of the most distinctive theories is Esping-Anderson, three world of welfare state regime. In his theory, Esping-Anderson classified capitalism as 3 models: social democratic, conservative and liberal model.

The liberal model societies rely heavily on the market of the provision of social welfare services; and the government supports only to those who cannot afford welfare services in the market. So this model encourages private welfare schemes. Usually, liberal model leads to a dualistic social order, “with a minority dependent on state welfare and a majority reliant on market-differentiated welfare” (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

The conservative model gives priority to the family “in the provision of welfare

services”; similar with the liberal model the government intervenes only when the family couldn’t fulfill its needs for welfare. The family relationship plays an important role in this regime. However the disadvantage of conservative model is, most social benefits are delivered through “social insurance schemes that are organized according to narrow, occupation-based solidarities” (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

The social democratic welfare state regime “seeks to free the individual from both the family and the market through universal state-sponsored social rights”. The regime focuses on social equality and economic redistribution; also it tries to “secure its citizens' welfare for the entire life”. Under this regime the welfare benefit is universal but in return the economic burden for the government increases (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

In the sense of three world welfare state regime, China did have a system that was similar to social democratic model. The social economic reform can be treated as the division line for the case of China. Before the reform or we can say during planned economy era, government arranged “health care, education, job retraining, and unemployment insurance”. In such circumstances “the power of the market over laborers is rendered marginal” (Stephen, 2007). In other words, if workers were employed, they had access to “state funded health care, pensions, unemployment insurance, a minimum wage which exceeds poverty wages, guarantees of full employment”; in other words, they become less dependent on the labor market for their living (Stephen, 2007). From my own understanding, it is another kind of decommodification; but the price is, the function of market economy was minimized.

After the reform, the situation changed. The most distinctive change, as I mentioned above, is that the whole society became a kind of “hybrid” society, half-capitalist and half-socialist. Here I would like to borrow the concept of

decommodification from Esping-Anderson and as my focus for analyzing the case of China.

The situation is special in China because instead of decommodification, Chinese people experienced recommodification after the social economic reform. Most of SOEs went bankrupt due to their low profit and low efficiency. Meanwhile private companies were founded, with the assumption that “greater efficiency would result in cost cutting and profit maximization” (Stephen, 2007); moreover the universal welfare benefits were cancelled by government. Instead of government’s providing the whole, companies and individuals nowadays have to share this responsibility. Moreover, with the process of marketization, commercialization and privatization, market has more influence on Chinese people. The access to welfare services are more reliance on employment status.

Definitely, before the social economic reform it was the same—people need to be employed so that they could enjoy welfare services. But most people did not have problems with welfare services because, as Stephen (2007) pointed out, at that time the social welfare system was established “based on the presumption that work was available to all and that the most advanced sector of production (heavy industry) would be the site of the most generous social insurance benefits”, and “the goal of the CCP was the elimination of private ownership of the means of production, which is considered as key feature of socialism” (Stephen, 2007). At that time the job vacancies were distributive and the labor contract lasted for the entire working period; in other words, no unemployment and no losing jobs, so basically people did not have problems with welfare services.

After the reform, the linkage between employment and welfare access does not change; but private ownerships have been introduced in many aspects such as labor market and welfare service providing. In other words, at the same time

government loosed control towards market, the role as welfare service provider is also weakened. So according to my understanding, re-commodification brings inequality between the employed and unemployed. Together with hukou system, migrant workers could not have the same access towards welfare services as native urban hukou holders do. As a result, some needs for welfare services of migrant workers might not be fulfilled, for example needs for education, needs for employment or needs for security.

More specifically, during my study on migrant workers, I found features for different welfare state regimes in different groups of people. Social democratic and insecurity models, as I mentioned above, does not exist after the reform in China. For most migrant workers, they are living under a liberal model, especially for young workers, who are not living with their family. And their wages determines how “liberal” they could be. Most of my interviewees behave individually, that is to say they prefer to rely their wage and their companies to buy their needs for welfare service, instead of relying too much on government’s help. But it is not typically liberal model; it contains both features of conservative and liberal models.

Like I quoted above, conservative model “gives priority to family in the provision of welfare services”, and that is also the features of eastern Asian welfare regimes—“the family is required and expected to take more welfare responsibility for its individual members” (Lee and Ku, 2007). Take the examples of my interviewees: most of them are young migrant workers and are employed.

According to Chinese laws, government, company and individuals share the responsibility of fulfilling their needs for social welfare services. Companies and government take up the main proportion. And the government intervenes “only when those families could not fulfill their needs for social welfare services” (for example the family members lost their jobs and the family went

bankrupt)--government has “minimum livelihood guarantee system (Dibao)” that gives certain amount of money to those who have difficulty in daily life. On the other hand, those young migrant workers are currently living in urban areas, but their relationships to their families are still tight. Either they support their parents financially, or their families support them in aspects such as child caring. Actually, many of my interviewees choose to go back in the future. There is a tendency in my interview and in previous research, that the older the rural migrant worker is, the less willing they would like to leave their family and become migrant workers^①. Same result is also found in the interview with Mr. Lin:

“I will surely go back to my hometown, I have my parents to take care of and I need to get married.”

It is a long way before Chinese government set up a social welfare system that covers the whole population. Even if they do establish such system, I don't think the role that family plays in Chinese people's life would change a lot. No matter for urban residents or rural residents, family is still acting as providers for welfare services: it is very common in China that migrant workers support their parents financially while their parents save money for them for emergency use; or as I said before, parents take care of their grandchildren for their kids because of their heavy workload.

Apart from Esping-Anderson, it would be interesting also bring Gouth and Wood when talking about welfare state regimes, who developed welfare state regimes and added two more kinds: informal security regime and insecurity regime.

An informal security regime refers to the situation when “people rely more on

^① National Bureau of Statistics of China, report of migrant workers investigation in 2011 (in Chinese), http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjfx/fxbg/t20120427_402801903.htm

community and family relationships instead of labor market to fulfill their needs for welfare services". This model creates "inequalities between family groups". The relationships between people and their community/family groups are "hierarchical and asymmetrical". The poor "have less control over the formal and informal institutions through which they must seek their livelihoods" (Gough and Wood, 2004:50-51).

The insecurity regimes describe "institutional arrangements that generate gross insecurity and block the emergence of stable informal mechanisms". This regime emerges in areas where "powerful external players interact with weak internal actors to generate conflict and political instability" (Wood and Gough, 2006:1699).

I have been thinking about implying both regimes in my research, however during my study I did not find "powerful external players" when talking about hukou system and migrant workers. Chinese government (including central and local governments) could be treated as a powerful player but it arranges and organizes the whole welfare system, therefore I think it belongs to internal element.

I would like to imply informal security regimes instead. It can be used to explain the relationships among migrant workers, their families and their companies. From one aspect, Chinese people rely heavily on their family/community for welfare needs, regardless of their social status. At the same time company purchase welfare services for their employees, from this point in the case of China companies could be regarded as welfare providers, indirect ones. It would be important to mention here that I find it difficult to really distinguish between community and company in China because to some degrees company shares the responsibility that community has, for example some companies provide housing for their employees; and, companies should pay

certain amount of fees if their employees get sick. But here comes the problem about “inequalities between communities and family groups” (Gough and Wood, 2004). Different companies have different criteria for their employees. Except for profit matters, hukou system influences the equalities also. Just like my interviewee Mr. Lin said, “*The difference between native and non-native hukou holders is that native hukou holders get more benefit for reimbursement than non-native ones*”. In other words, for example if people get sick, company would pay more of the treatment to their native-hukou employees and pay less to non-native workers. That is exactly what Gough and Wood said “hierarchical and asymmetrical” relationships between people and their companies (Gough and Wood, 2004:50-51).

So as a conclusion of this part, the universal coverage of welfare provision during planned economy era seems like social democratic model: the government provides welfare package for urban and rural residents. This model diminished after the social economic reform. And nowadays the situation in China looks like a combination of liberal model, conservative model and informal security model. From that sense, the case of China is not so different with Japan and other eastern Asian counties/regions.

From my personal point of view, I think Esping-Anderson and Gough & Wood provide a very interesting angle for studying the case of China in terms of internal migrant worker.

General speaking, Chinese society consists features of conservative model, liberal model and informal security regime. And according to my studying, migrant workers differ slightly according to their incomes and their companies. For example, the life of migrant workers with higher wage is more close to liberal model. Definitely they are still under the influence of hukou system that segregates them from the regular welfare system. But they have sufficient money

to at least minimize such influence or even change their household as local hukou holders. Companies also affects a lot when categorizing which model migrant workers belong to. In China there are always differences among companies in terms of welfare provision: some companies could provide most of the insurances required by government but some do not.

I would take my interviewees as example to explain this. All my interviewees are not wealthy and have tight budgets for their life. The highest wage for those rural migrant workers is 3500CNY per month (Mr. Chen in Tsinghai city); 1500CNY the least (Mr. Wang). If we only take their wage into account, their salaries are not sufficient for a liberal model life. Instead, their situation is more likely to be conservative and informal security model—even for Mr. Wang, who earns 1500CNY each month, his salary is higher than the minimum wage line. That is to say, the government will not provide him extra money. Migrant workers under this situation would turn to their family for help if they have welfare needs, or try other approaches.

But I would not categorize them as the same model because their employers provide them different benefits. The wage of Mr. A, Mr. Chen and Mr. Lin are slightly higher than Mr. Wang and Mr. Xiaoguan; but the difference is that Mr. Wang and Mr. Xiaoguan do not have social insurances provided by their company. Perhaps there is not so different when everything is fine. But if they suffer from incidence, for example accident or sickness; their situation would be different. Those who did not join any social insurance projects will have to rely on their family or other informal approaches such as donation (conservative and informal security models). What is worse, their status as non-native hukou holders deteriorate the situation because local government will not giving them help since they are not within their coverage. On the contrary, migrant workers who have joint the social insurance projects would be better off because their companies, as well as the local government sill support them financially; and they

will focus less on their family and informal security approaches. In other words their situation is more close to liberal and conservative model.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, firstly I think hukou system does influence rural migrant workers' life in urban areas, in terms of their access of welfare services and a serious of social benefits such as education for kids, health care and pension. Differences between urban residents and rural migrant workers have been spotted in my study.

Rural migrant workers are affected by hukou system in the form of segregation. As a tool of social administration, hukou system separates urban areas and rural areas into 2 worlds. They have very different social welfare systems, and different ways of livelihood. In current situation it is really hard to get rid of such kind of separation and also hard for people to step over the obstacles set by hukou system. Even they migrant to urban areas, they are still suffering from being differentiated by government and its systems and regimes. In my thesis I examined and analyzed such differentiation and explained how it affects rural migrant workers from a theoretical perspective. Thus, the “pushing forward” of market economy and “pulling back” of government sphere on rural migrant workers.

My study went smoothly overall; but still there is not enough data, especially the number of my interviewees. And as I described above, on one hand that is the disadvantage of e-research. No matter how large the amount of data is, researchers will never be able to cover the whole. When I was doing my interviews, I could not get access to rural migrant workers who are living at the bottom of the society and working at the bottom of labor market, for the reason that they have no access to the internet. That is the weakness of my research

and that is what I will pay more attention to in my future researches.

Appendix: Guide for interviews

Basically the interview contains three big questions and several branch questions as follows:

1. social insurance coverage
 - a. Do you have contract with your employers?
 - b. Does your contract include any kinds of social insurances? (regular 5-insurances, migrant specific insurances, or any other kinds)
 - c. Can you tell me your living condition?
 - d. Can you tell me your wage?

2. (open question)Did you experience any influence from hukou system? If so, could you tell me more details about it?

If not, what do you think of the relationships between hukou system and your current situation?

3. (open question)Did you ever face discriminations because of their rural household registration?

As you can see No. 2 and No.3 are open questions. More questions were asked according to different responses from interviewees. Because it differs so much therefore I cannot list them all.

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