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**The Role of Willingness in Social Integration Process:  
a Study of Floating Population in Chinese Cities**

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Bachelor Thesis: UTKV03, 15 hp  
Spring Term 2013  
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## **Abstract**

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China is undergoing the rapid economic growth as well as the social problems brought about. The influx of floating population is a big supplement to the labor force in cities while the social integration process of these out-comers is not agreeable. Limited by *hukou* status and related social welfare system, the floaters find themselves even more difficult to get integrated into the cities with discrimination by locals. Whether the personal willingness will work is the main question of this research. With the respective analyses of two subgroups based on different education background, the thesis investigates the role of willingness as well as other non-structural factors in the social integration process. The finding is that willingness to get integrated is an important factor for floating population to achieve high level of social integration, while it is not the determinative one.

Keywords: floating population, social integration, willingness

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## **1 Introduction**

During every vacation for Spring Festival, which is the traditional Chinese New Year and a special day for family reunion, hundreds of millions of Chinese population are floating back to their families in hometown, forming one of the largest flows of migration in the world. With the implementation of a special household registration system named *hukou*, Chinese citizens who move to other places within the country for whatever reason without a local *hukou* are ‘floating’, indicating the difficulty they are facing to root themselves there. Theoretically, the Chinese floating population are categorized as migrants, while without a formal registration, the social integration process is obstructed from various parts of society. However, despite the structural factor which is the rules, non-structural factors such as personal willingness to be integrated into the city are also playing a role in the process.

### **1.1 Problem and significance**

According to Durkheim, in the primitive society the members are solidified mechanically by the homogeneous values and believes. While with the increasing capacity and population density of the society, competition emerges among the social members. Social division of labor reduces such competition and urges the society into changing from mechanic solidarity to organic solidarity, which means that the members of the society are solidified by their differentiated functions in the society. (Durkheim, 1933) However, the theory explains merely the transformation of a society from the macro perspective of labor division, while in the micro perspective of individuals, the divided labor would not necessarily lead to the social integration. Chinese society is going through the transition from mechanic solidarity to organic solidarity in the urban areas, while when it comes to the transition on level of individuals, the theory could not apply anymore.

The laborer should be counted as the member of society not only because he/she is contributing to the society on his/her role in the division of labor, but also receiving social benefits. In China, the existence of massive floating population in the cities well illustrates their importance to local development and their role in the labor

division, while the lack of social integration is easily leading to their discontent to the society, which would be very likely further linked to social disturbance. The problem of social integration of these floaters is in a state of emergency to the socially sustainable development.

## **1.2 Research question and objectives**

There are various perspectives to examine the issue of social integration, while this research is focusing on the personal willingness of the floaters, as well as factors other than the structural one, aka laws and regulations. Willingness to social integration in this research refers to the personal intention of being a member of the local society. Therefore the research question is what role would willingness and other non-structural factors play in the social integration process for floating population in Chinese cities. The objectives of this study by analyzing the two main subgroups are: i) to make a contribution to a clearer view of the ongoing social integration process of floating population, ii) to analyze the differences and similarities of the two subgroups of social integration and to summarize how willingness is functioning in the process, and iii) to propose policy implications to local and central governments.

## **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

Following the overall presentation of the floating population issue in the beginning, the background chapter is going to explain a series of definitions of key terms as well as to present the overview of related research. Following is the theoretical framework which is used as basis and assumptions of the analysis part, and the methodology chapter that introduces the methods applied in this research with their limitations. In the analysis part two subgroups of the floating population based on different education background will be analyzed separately. At the end of the thesis conclusions are made to answer the research questions, followed by policy implications to close.

## **2 Background**

In 2011, the number of floating population in China was nearly 230 million (Xinhua Net, 2012a). The large flow of migration contributed the rapid economic growth and

urbanization of China with cheap labor force for the past three decades. Contradictory to what they have done for the country and cities, they are not treated equally by the authorities as their counterparts who live in the cities with formal registration of *hukou*, a special household registration system connected to the social security and public service. Besides of the discrimination based on this administrative system by the authorities, some of the local residents are behaving negatively to them as well. The social integration process of the floating population is thus obstructed by the structural factors as well as the non-structural ones. In this chapter, definitions of key terms in the thesis would be made clear at first. An overview of previous studies is following with the their limitation presented at the end of chapter.

## **2.1 Definitions**

To make the thesis clearer and more reader-friendly, several common terms used in the text should be defined at first. Besides official definition and those from common-sense, some specialized terms used in this thesis are also defined by the author for better understanding.

### **2.1.1 *Hukou* system**

*Hukou* is the household registration system in China established in 1958. The initial purpose of *hukou* system is to ‘lock onto the land a potential underclass, ready to be exploited to fulfill the new state’s cherished project of industrialization’ (Solinger, 1999). There are two statuses of *hukou*, agricultural and non-agricultural (or more commonly mentioned as rural and urban *hukou*), which were based on the reality when the *hukou* system was first implemented, while afterwards a newborn’s *hukou* is inherited from the parents’ *hukou* statuses. Similar to this, the information about registered place of *hukou* is now determined by parents’ registered places rather than one’s birthplace per se. Before the introduction of market economy, Chinese citizens were bound to the registered place of *hukou* which was related to the food quota and social welfare. Since the reform and opening-up policies in the end of 1970s, citizens are allowed to move nationwide more freely, with the rights to the access of social welfare are only available in their registered place of *hukou*. After the implementation

for decades, *hukou* is counted as the root of a Chinese citizen (Cai, 2007).

### **2.1.2 Floating population**

All the migrants are somehow floating to the destination societies before they could formally settle down. Though not unique in the category of internal migration, Chinese floating population is different from migrants in other countries, for that with the restrictions set by *hukou* policy they are not possible to be formally registered as a local except for few cases. As presented previously, *hukou* has deeply rooted in the thought of Chinese people and been seen as one's root. Unless the registered place of *hukou* be transferred to the destination cities, these migrants are always floating in the cities, with their roots resting in hometowns.

'Floating population' (*liudong renkou*) is a term to indicate those who are 'engaged in partial temporary relocation' while their 'legal residence registration remains in their original place of habitation' (Solinger, 1991:10). Another similar term referring to floating population and used more frequently in academia and daily life is migrant worker (*waichu nongmingong*), which refers to citizens with agricultural *hukou* engaging in nonagricultural production other than their registered places of *hukou*. Migrant workers, as the English term indicates, is also migrating (or in a more accurate term: floating) either temporarily or permanently. Zhang identifies that there is a common misuse that the researcher might use the term 'floating population' to refer to the group of 'migrant workers' (Zhang, 2001). Because of the similarity, the two terms are sometimes used incorrectly to indicate the specific group of rural-urban migrant workers, who are the majority of floating population currently in China. However, to be precisely speaking, the floating population is not only referring to the migrant workers who are with a rural background and engaging in manual work or are working in informal sectors because of their low level of education background.

### **2.1.3 Non-educated floaters**

As presented previously, floating population is not referring to the migrant workers merely. Therefore, this research divides the floating population into two subgroups based on the main differentiated factor in-between, the education background. Migrant workers, as the majority of floating population, are indicated with the term

non-educated floaters in this thesis.

#### **2.1.4 Educated floaters**

The other group of floaters are educated ones. They are the graduates of higher education institutions, while because of the restrict *hukou* policies, their *hukou* remains in their hometowns. In this sense, they too are floating.

Same as the non-educated floaters, these educated ones are also excluded from the local social welfare system because of their lack of local *hukou*. There is a scarcity of the academic studies of this group of floaters, not to mention a generally accepted definition of them. Therefore, this research set up its own criteria, that the floaters should be in born at places other than the current living cities, have been enrolled into higher education institutions without a local *hukou*. The further discussion for the denomination is to be found in Section 5.2.1.

#### **2.1.5 Willingness**

Willingness is a term more intrinsic and difficult to measure with extrinsic methods. In this research, willingness of floating population refers to the aspiration and inclination to know the host society and be part of its members. As a main non-structural factor to the social integration process, the role of willingness is the core of analysis in this research. The level of willingness is self-perceived and measured by the floaters with given criteria.

### **2.2 Research overview**

To understand the issue of Chinese floating population better, it is necessary to recognize that floating population, as a term for internal migrants in China, has some similarities with the international migration process. Besides the literature mentioned previously for the explanation of specific terms, some other studies concerning the issue are presented as followed.

#### **2.2.1 Migration theories**

Human behavior as migration has a long history, while the research over contemporary international migration has a rather recent development. The famous work *The Laws of Migration* (Ravenstein, 1885; Ravenstein, 1889) was the start of

the academic subject and the source of push-pull model for migration, which could be applied well in the case of initiation of floating population (see Section 3.1). Massey and others(1998) introduce and elaborate the initiation of the migration, the perpetuation of the movement and the adaption of migrants in receiving societies. It is a useful source to start such research on the relevant topics.

### **2.2.2 Floating population**

Research on Chinese internal migration is fruitful. Forming very likely one of the greatest migration that has ever taken place (Cai et al, 2008), the group brings attention from both domestic and international academic discourses, with very different perspectives. As a famous scholar who has been working on the issue of Chinese migrant workers for years, Solinger focuses more on the citizenship and related rights of those out-comers in the urban China (Solinger, 1999). Nielsen, Smyth and Zhang (2006) are more interested of the unemployment of the group. For the aspect of strategies that floating population have employed in the receiving cities, there are various studies illustrating the current conditions or explaining the ongoing integration process. Some scholars study the factors that influence the settlement decision of rural migrants, stating that those migrants who were younger when they migrated and who are currently married and self-employed tend to spend more years in cities (Connelly, Roberts and Zheng, 2011). Some are interested in the relative concerns for subjective well-being of migrants, arguing that the level of well-being that migrants felt depends on the reference groups (Akay, Bargain and Zimmermann, 2012). Yet some others try to explain that integration is the best acculturation strategy for migrant workers to achieve well-being in destination societies (Gui, Berry, and Zheng, 2012).

On the other hand, domestic scholars are conducting a wider range of studies on the floating population. Cai (2007) elaborates the transformation of labor flow in China since 1980s, focusing on the macro economy condition of the country. Xiang (2000) and Zhang (2001) conduct case studies respectively in the urban villages occupied by the migrant workers, studying their life and networks in the villages. Hou and Zhang (2010) look into the integration of floating populations, using large-scale surveys as

dataset to illustrate how the persons, families and communities reacting to the transition in Chinese society.

One of the few studies conducted with the emphasis on educated floaters is initiated by Lian in 2009. He and his team did a survey on the living condition of agglomerated settlement of the higher education graduates. He invented the word ‘ant tribe’ (*Yizu*) to identify those graduates who are living in the agglomerated settlement with inferior living condition and working hard everyday on their ordinary positions, just like the ants. The social integration process of the ant tribe is not described explicitly, but summary could be drawn that the floaters are not regarding themselves as locals.

### **2.2.3 Limitations of the literature**

After reviewing the relevant research, an obvious limitation could be found that among all the perspectives of the issue about social integration of floating population, subjective intention is not one of them. Another limitation is that literature about the educated floaters is rare. Some of the studies using the term floating population are actually focusing on the rural-urban migrant workers, while few have mentioned the other group of floating population, as defined previously, who have graduated from higher education institutions and been engaging in white collar jobs.

## **3 Theoretical approach**

As for the specific case in China, there are some theoretical approaches that could be applied to the study of social integration of floating population with a focus on personal intentions. Though Durkheim’s concept of social solidarity could apply to the Chinese case, it is not appropriate to be the base of analysis on the aspect of personal willingness, as discussed in the beginning. The research uses other theoretical perspectives. The motivation of migration is one of them to show how floating population being motivated to migrate to other places, abandoning their rights of getting access to social welfare; concept and theory of social integration helps to bound the process, making the analysis more precise and rigorous; explanation about the relationship between expectation and behavior is the precondition and the main

theoretical perspective of this research, stating that positive expectation about the outcome of a behavior could lead to high probability of carrying out such behavior.

### 3.1 Motivations of migration

There are several reasons for one's decision to leave his/her home to migrate. Besides of the passive migration for the reason of policy or climate change, the traditional push-pull model examines the factors in receiving and sending societies for those active migrants (Ravenstein, 1885; Ravenstein, 1889), which is most applicable for the majority of Chinese floating population. The pushing factors are the unsatisfying points in the sending societies that push the migrants away while the pulling factors are the ones that are attracting the migrants to the receiving societies with their comparative advantages. To the floating population in China, the factors that work are summarized in the following table.

Table 1: Main push and pull factors to Chinese floating population

<b>Push</b>	<b>Pull</b>
Low income	High income
Less opportunity for personal development	More opportunity for personal development
Bad living condition	Good living condition
Less social resources (incl. education, healthcare )	More social resources
Old-fashioned values	Modern values

Besides the factors listed above that work for personal benefits, other motivations including the remittance for the family members who are left behind in the rural area, and influence from others who have already migrated are also important ones case by case. In other words, migration is not an isolated decision for individuals, but also arises from concerns for others.

The basic assumption of this research is that for most of the floating population, economic measures and opportunities for future life are the main considerations when

they make the decision about whether and where to go. Personal goal for floating varies, while social integration is not always within the goal.

### **3.2 Social integration**

The term social integration has various meanings from different perspectives (UNRISD, 1994). This research regards social integration as an inclusionary goal, implying equal opportunities and rights for all human beings (ibid.:5). In this sense, enhancing social integration means to promote harmonious interaction and solidarity at all levels of society (ibid.:6). To be more precise, the social integration of floating population is referring to the process that floating population are regarded by other parties as part of the receiving society and enjoying the rights and benefits equally with the local residents. Besides, for a better living experience, social integration also refers to the normal interaction between floaters and local residents.

Social integration, as a social phenomenon, should be focused on the patterns of group rather than individual causes of behaviors (Durkheim, 1933). Thus interviewees in two subgroups in this research are treated as the individuals who construct the society instead of isolated persons. The integration process is influenced by structural factors such as policies from authorities as well as the non-structural ones, including the subjective willingness of floating population.

### **3.3 Expectation and behavior**

Before conducting a planned behavior, one is always making the expectation about the outcome of the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The outcomes are incentive for a person to conduct the behavior, therefore the more positive the expectation is, the more likely individuals would be encouraged to conduct such behavior. Similarly, the more difficulties one predicts in conducting the behavior, the more likelihood that he/she would be discouraged to do so. Based on such a theoretical framework, the assumption of this research is that the more difficulties the floating population are assuming to face in the social integration process, the less willingness they would have to be socially integrated, because that the psychological costs are overrunning the outcome of being socially integrated, and that the positive outcome itself is not

definitely brought about through the painful process.

## **4 Methodology**

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods could be employed for social research (Bryman, 2008). But the question is that to what extent could the two type of methods be used for practical research. The topic of this research is about the social integration from individuals' perspectives about the willingness. Research concerning personal perspective could be better elaborated in a qualitative study than a quantitative one. Besides, quantitative research on the topic is nearly impossible without survey with a large amount of samples. In this research, both timeframe and spending are limited. Therefore it applies a qualitative rather than quantitative study.

Comparative study employed in social research is similar to the one in natural science, that through comparison between groups under experimental environment, a sequence of cause and effect is established (May, 2001:204). This research is doing a comparative study within the focus group because of the general attention of public and academic world paid to the subgroup A, and the similarities of current living experiences in cities between the two subgroups.

### **4.1 Research design**

This qualitative research is designed to find out the role of willingness in social integration process of floating population. The focus group is divided into two subgroups while their conditions in the cities are the same from the perspective of administrative system. The two subgroups are analyzed separately, and the patterns of social integration process with non-structural factors are compared to see if they are similar or not. By doing so, the role of willingness is explicit in the social integration process for the whole focus group.

The division of the group floating population is under the consideration that the population is too large and the intra-group deviances are huge, including education background, age, occupation and others. For this research, the variable is limited to the education background because of the general recognition of the positive

correlation between the education and income level (Griliches and Mason, 1972) and of their different routes of migrating to the city.

## **4.2 Methods**

In this research, several methods were used to collect and analyze data. Data for the two subgroups were collected separately. For subgroup A which are the non-educated floaters, research conducted by others and news articles from media archives are the main sources, as well as interviews conducted by the author during the summer of 2012 for another study purpose on migrant workers. On the other hand, data for subgroup B, the educated floaters, were collected exclusively by semi-structural interviews via online communication tools in January 2013, for the reason of the lack of relevant academic research on this subgroup. After having collected the data which are mostly qualitative, the analysis part is rather easy because that the interviews are semi-structured. The interview question itself could be seen as an indicator of coding the transcripts, which means to separate the content of interviews based on its subjects.

## **4.3 Interviews**

Interviews are designed as semi-structured in which ‘questions are normally specified, but the interviewer is freer to probe beyond the answers’ and thus ‘enter into a dialogue with the interviewee’ (May, 2001:123). It allows the interviewees to tell their own stories rather than follow the interviewer’s structure. Sampling for interviews are based on the principle of convenience sampling, in which ‘advantage is taken of cases, events, situations or informants which are close at hand’ (Punch, 2005:187). Except for the interview transcripts used as secondary data for part of subgroup A, both the interviews conducted for subgroup A and B for this research were semi-structured and designed with reference of large-scale surveys on migrant workers (Hou and Zhang, 2010; Zhang and Hou, 2009). The questions of the interviews were based on the assumption that personal willingness is correlated to social integration as well as other non-structural factors such as personal goal and attitude from surroundings. Intentions and behaviors were treated separately in the

interviews in order to see the pattern of their correlation within the interviewees.

Interviews whose transcript used as secondary data for subgroup A were conducted for another research about health condition in migrant workers' communities in June-July 2012 in Shanghai. The number of interviews used for this research is 10. Only the part of interview transcripts that is relevant to this research was used here. Another 5 interviews were conducted specifically for this research in Beijing in May 2013. Treated as a whole, the age group of interviewees in subgroup A was 21-50. At the moment of interviews, they were engaged in various jobs, including self-employment, nurse-maiding, and housewife. None of them were enrolled into any higher education institutions. Few had accomplished senior high school. The average living duration for the group in the current city was approximately 36 months, with the longest 96 months and the shortest 10.

For the subgroup B, the total number of interviews is 20. All contacted through personal connections, the interviewees are graduates who were working in Beijing at the time of interview. The age group was 21-40 and all of the interviewees were working in the formal sector. Among them, only one interviewee was having her master's degree while others were having a bachelor one. Another two are the only interviewees who were not enrolled into a higher education institution in Beijing. The average living duration in Beijing including the in-school period (if applied) is 62 months. The shortest is 27 and the longest is 120.

All the interviewees were fully informed about the objective of study and that the interviews (and transcripts) are only used for academic studies with anonymity. Therefore, the interviewees mentioned in the following text are only with their personal information of gender, age, and interview channels (face-to-face or online).

#### **4.4 Limitations**

The limitations to this research is obvious. Social world, as an open system, is 'not amenable to such attempts at artificial control' used in closed systems (May, 2001:204). The limited variable in the research does not mean that in real world it is the only differentiated factor between these two subgroups. Thus the comparison in

this 'quasi-experiment' in the social life is not perfectly representative to the reality.

The methods applied for interviews are also problematic. Since all the interviewees for subgroup B were contacted through personal connections of author, they are likely to have similar living experiences. Besides, liability and validity of data collected from two different types of interviews (face to face vs. online) might be not the same (Bryman, 2008:640-1). Online interviews were conducted on instant message tools in text rather than video-chat, therefore the tone and mood of the interviewees was very likely to be concealed comparing to the face to face interviews, in which the unspoken words of interviewees could be read by researchers. Although most of the limitations of secondary analysis (such as lack of familiarity with data and no control over data quality) could be avoided for the reason that secondary data used in the subgroup A were also collected by the author, the absence of key variables for this research, which is willingness, might not be present for the different purposes of studies (ibid.:300). The division of two subgroups based merely on education level could also be problematic, for the complexity of reasons forming various type of floating population.

## **5 Analysis and cases**

Floating population is a general term with various categories. The two-subgroup division in this research was constructed under the fact that being a floater means the lack of rights in where one is living de facto rather than formally registered. The differentiated characteristic in the analysis is limited to the education background, where is the root of nomenclature applied in this thesis.

However, since that the collection process of data for two subgroups is not in an equilibrium, as discussed in the limitations of methods, the comparative analysis is not proper here. Therefore, the two subgroups would be analyzed separately in the following contents.

### **5.1 Subgroup A: Non-educated floaters**

There is a positive correlation between the education level and income level

(Griliches and Mason, 1972). Without a solid education background, the non-educated floaters are not only facing the threshold related to the diploma in the labor market, but their knowledge obtained through study process is also tending to be less comparing to their educated counterparts, leaving them inferior place in the competition. Under the pulling factors in the cities and pushing factors in the rural areas working together, migrant workers float to big cities in chase of higher income and better living quality. Being a ‘new citizen’ (*Xinshimin*) is the dream of some of them, while the road to achieve the dream is full of frustrations. Some others do not have the willingness to stay in one city for good, which is influencing directly to their living strategies. Elaborating the relation of personal willingness and other non-structural factors such as personal goals and surroundings and further social integration process, the following lines are divided into sections based on the attitude of non-educated floaters towards the city, with a special analysis for a group of young migrant workers with evident differences with others at the end.

### **5.1.1 Hostile surroundings**

The encouragement of township and village enterprises (*xiangzhen qiye*) and the release of restriction on migration in the 1980s brought about a large-scale rural-urban inflow during the first couple of decades after the implementation of reform and opening-up policies. In 2000, the number of floating population was approximately 140 million (NBSC, 2001). The sharp rise of urban population triggered the competition and even conflicts over social resources. Almost at the same time, the reform of state-owned enterprises in the end of 1990s resulted in a great number of laid-off workers in cities, most of whom were urban residents with local *hukou*. The increasing unemployment rate was accompanied with the worsening public order, and as a result even though there is no causal relation in-between, there is a stereotype among the urban residents about the migrant workers that they brought about worsened public order and even unemployment in the city.

Because of the previous reasons, when it comes to the perception of urban surroundings, the non-educated floaters with low income are often feeling a hostile attitude (Van Luyn, 2008). Even if one himself/herself is not experiencing such

attitude from around, he/she could still have the passive thought about the surroundings. Besides the real attitude of urban residents, this might also be because of the self-humiliation of the floaters when confronting the local residents, or bad experience other floaters have had in some cities with bad reputation, for example Shanghai where the local residents are usually considered by public as mean and not welcoming the out-comers. The fear towards outside world results in the negative expectation for the integration behavior, which further leads to a negative strategy of some migrant workers to their life in the city. A foreman with an inner decoration team in Shanghai said:

*I'm afraid of dealing with locals. They are so mean to us. But I have to deal with them because I have to make a living. Our whole team is counting on me, on those clients.... I met some nice local clients. But at most of the time the local clients are picky and looking down to us... They don't say it, but you can feel it.... I don't like to communicate with locals other than my work. (Male, 40, face to face)*

The expectation of the outcome for the behavior 'communicating with the locals' is rather negative for this interviewee. Thus the strategy he employed is to avoid private communication with the locals at all. Meanwhile this strategy does not influence his living in Shanghai much, because that he came to the city 'only for a better income'.

While in some other circumstances, the migrant workers themselves do not feel anything specifically in the city, but it is the local residents who proclaim that the migrant workers are not welcome in their city because they are taking away job positions from the locals, as well as the public services such as healthcare and education opportunities.

However, the proclamation is not solid with its foundation. Chinese scholar Cai has discussed about the migrant workers and macro-economies that there are substitution effect and aggregation effect functioning at the same time when the foreign labors entering into a labor market. The two are having opposite effects on unemployment of local labor forces, but the aggregation effect is always larger than the other one.

Therefore the foreign labor such as these floaters are not competing generally with the local ones in employment sector (Cai, 2007:103).

On the other aspects, the local residents have their reason to be anxious. With the increasing population sharing the invariable social welfare, they are worrying about losing their portions that have long been belonging to them (Solinger, 1999). However, the urban authorities has set up the barriers related to *hukou* for the floaters to get access to the local social welfare. The xenophobia is nevertheless the same and the locals are sometimes showing hostile attitudes to the floaters merely based on their stereotype.

A case in Shanghai could make provide empirical evidence for this argument. A teenage girl living in Shanghai but from other province was not allowed to take the enrollment examination into the local high school because of her lack of Shanghai *hukou*. Furthermore, when she argued with the local residents, she was called 'foreign locust' by her opponents to indicate that she was taking advantage of Shanghai residents, and they claimed that 'foreign locusts get out of Shanghai'. (Netease News, 2012) In fact, the unfriendly attitude in this case is not exceptional.

With such an hostile surroundings, the floaters' willingness for social integration is highly discouraged in most of the cases. The unsatisfying experiences throughout the integration process could be expected in advance, therefore the actual behaviors of social integration, such as knowing the city and interacting with the locals, are avoided by these non-educated floaters. While on the other hand, 'if they were friendlier, I would love to know them and be a friend of them', said one of the interviewee in his 20s (Male, 22, face to face). The mutual stereotypes about the opposite side obstruct the social integration process, while the administrative system as structural factor formalizes the obstruction. Although the personal goals of floaters are various, to be integrated into the host society is not always one of it.

### **5.1.2 Willing to know the city**

Despite the unfriendly attitude perceived by the migrant workers, the life-long goal of staying in the city encourages some migrant workers to know the urban life and culture. Contradictory to the assumption that the more difficulties one expects about

the process of conducting a behavior, the less willingness he/she would have to carry out such behavior, some of the interviewees expressed their eagerness and determination to be part of the host society. For the question that how one is perceiving about the urban society, one male interviewee from Hunan province in his 30s answered:

*I've come to Beijing for 10 years. I have my own business here, and I brought my wife and children over from my hometown last year. I think we'll stay in Beijing for good. ... I know how they (Beijingers) think, because I need to do business with them, ... but I started my tactic (learning to know the city) long time ago. I was determined to stay in this city when I got off the train at Beijing Station. I told my families to learn the local knowledge as much as possible. I know this will bring them good one day. (Male, 34, face to face)*

This interviewee was not talking much about the difficulties living in the city. Instead, he brought about his personal goal of long-term residence, and showed proudness of himself about fulfilling it. For him, family reunion in the city was one big step towards his goal which helped him to come across the difficult and unsatisfying living experience in the city. The attitude from surroundings was not affecting the interviewee, and he gained confidence through his social integration process by knowing the surroundings and struggling to be part of it.

Some other interviewees expressed the same logic: since they are determined to stay in the city, the best way to achieve high living comfort level is to have good interaction with locals. One of the effective way for such interaction is to know the city, the culture and the dialect. Acting as a urban resident, they feel themselves as urbanites comparing to the other floaters. Nevertheless, without a local *hukou* and access to the related social welfare, the administrative barriers such as discriminative policies on rights and benefits of the floaters set them apart from real urban residents.

### **5.1.3 No willingness to be involved into local life**

Besides the non-educated floaters with willingness to be a member of the city while facing some obstacles, there is another group of floaters who are not having such

willingness to be involved into the local life at all.

For those non-educated floaters whose resources in the city are limited, social capital is one of the most crucial ones. Chain migration (Zhang, 2001) is one of the names used to indicate such process that floaters are motivated and encouraged by the network with their countrymen who have already settled in a city, and choosing this city as the destination. After arriving in the new society, these floaters are usually living nearby for the convenience to get necessary information, including living and work opportunities. With the chain migration proceeding, some communities occupied mostly by the floaters become enclaves in the city. In China such enclaves are often villages in the city (*Chengzhongcun*) where the accommodation is fairly cheap.

These enclaves are helping the floaters settle down at the beginning of living in a strange environment. However, at the same time, the convenience that enclaves provide could also be the trap for floaters, diminishing the willingness to be integrated into the urban society outside the enclave. Guijing Village, a typical village in the city and enclave in Shanghai, demonstrates well such restriction for the floaters living there. In 2011, there were more than 12,000 floaters without a local *hukou* living in the village, while the residents with a local *hukou* were only approximately 3,000 (Sohu, 2011). Locating right next to the Expo Park in central Shanghai, the residents were seemingly not taking this geographic advantage to know the rest part of the city. One female who was living in the village and came from rural area of another province told the author that she had never been out of the village since she moved in with her husband several months ago:

*I don't know why I should go out of the village. Everything I need for everyday is been selling here. Besides, my husband does not allow me to go out alone, because I can't understand the local dialect. And I don't want to go out. ... I'm not the only one [who have never been out of the village] here. We are usually chatting together and I don't feel the necessity to go out. (Female, 23, face to face)*

She was a housewife and dressed like other rural females. By the time of interview,

she did not know how to take the metro even though the station is less than a kilometer away from her home. For her, the reason she came to the city was to follow her husband, and the environment of enclave limited the growing of willingness to be integrated into the urban society. The level of social integration in general did not mean anything to her.

As seen in this case, for most of the non-educated floaters, their primary goal of moving to the city is to gain more in economic terms. A large amount of these floaters are seasonal migrants, looking for short-term work in the city for several months when the agricultural production at rural home is not in lack of labor force, and moving back for harvest in autumn (Wen, 2006). Some others are changing the destination cities for better working condition and higher income. The difficulties for being transferred to a local resident with *hukou* stop floaters' steps to know more about one city. Anticipating the potential barriers, their willingness to be socially integrated and to be a local citizen is strongly discouraged. The role of personal goal is also explicit here that without an objective of long-term residence, the willingness of social integration is not strong.

#### **5.1.4 Neo-generation migrant workers**

Neo-generation migrant workers (*xinshengdai nongmingong*) is a specified group in non-educated floaters. The term refers to those floaters who were born after 1980s and floated into the cities in the later 1990s (Liu and Xu, 2007), often with a rural background and low level of school education. This section analyzes the social integration process of this young group of floaters with the relation to their willingness.

Unlike the old generation of non-educated floaters who were brought up in a society full of rural-urban dichotomic thinking, their offspring are living in a new era with much easier access to the outside world. Some of these neo-generation floaters were even born in the cities while because of the *hukou* rules, their *hukou* statuses and registered places have to be integrated from their parents. Although stated as a rural *hukou*, they know almost nothing about knowledge on agricultural production (Qiu, Xie, and Zhou, 2004 cited in Fan, n.d.). Other young floaters who were born in rural

areas decide to move to cities rather than continue their study because of the inferior household income condition or the pursuit for modern life.

Nowadays, neo-generation migrant workers are forming the majority of the non-educated floaters (SCPRC, 2006). Comparing to the older generation of floaters, their willingness of staying in cities is much higher. Some scholars examine the two generations by conducting a large-scale survey, noting that the willingness rate of staying in cities of the neo-generation migrant workers is 46.21%, while the figure for the older generation is 18.09% (Liu and Xu, 2007). For those young floaters whose birthplace is the city, their goal of living in the city is simple: this is their home. While for others who were grown up in the rural area and migrated to cities after or even before the accomplishment of 9-year compulsory education, coming to the cities is a way to change their destiny other than the economic rewards. The aim of broadening one's outlook influences the youngs to be willing to know the urban modern life and conduct more interaction with the locals. However, some urban residents tend to look down on them due to the fact that they are with rural origin and low education background. A girl less than 20 years old and working as a waitress in an ordinary restaurant in Shanghai told the author that:

*Usually, I go out with my sisters (good female friends) during the off time. I want to meet more local friends but I have no means. The only way to know the locals is at working time. But those customers are mean to me and other out-comers. Some are nice and respectful but others are treating us as inferior servants. (Female, 19, face to face)*

For these neo-generation migrant workers, the goal of being a local and not going back to the rural areas induces a very high level of willingness to be integrated into the urban society, while the willingness is destroyed by the brutal reality constructed by stereotype and structural factors. The self-humiliation bought by *hukou* status of peasant and the lower social status which is determined by their lower economic status, is forcing them back from the interaction with local residents. As time goes on these floaters are living their life in a closed circle and low level of social integration. For them, their strong willingness to be a local resident does not help to the social

integration process unless they are granted a formal urban identity and feel confident when confronting the local residents.

## **5.2 Subgroup B: Educated floaters**

The finding that almost all the current literatures are about non-educated floaters and the misuse of similar terms indicates the fact that educated floaters, who are invisible to the academia in most of the time but do exist in the cities, participating the urban life and making large portion of contribution to the society, are excluded from the lens. A survey by the author on the mass media archives overview in February 2013 showed the same result. People Net ([www.people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn)) is the online news platform of People's Daily, one of the top ten newspaper in China. On the in-site search for key words 'floating population' in news titles, among the first 20 results there were 18 of the news were about non-educated floaters (migrant workers), and among the first 60 results this misusing phenomena occurred in more than half of the cases. The rest of results were either about the infectious disease among the people who are mobile, whose meaning is sharing the same Chinese term 'floating population' (*liudong renkou*), or about the child-bearing policies in receiving cities, regarding the population without local *hukou* as a whole group. None of the case was about educated floaters specifically. The similar result was also found in the search on Xinhua Net ([www.xinhuanet.com](http://www.xinhuanet.com)), which is another important official website of China. This small survey shows the focus of the public on floating population with rural origin and lower-education background, who are normally seen as vulnerable group. Educated floaters, excluded from the public concern, are the focus of this section. Since the absence of relevant studies, the denomination and criteria for the subgroup is discussed at first, followed by the analysis of the important role of education period in social integration process, and how the empirical data support/argue against such theoretical analysis.

### **5.2.1 Denomination and criteria**

The term 'ant tribe' introduced in Section 2.2.2 is not proper and would not be used for the subgroup educated floaters in this research. 'Ant tribe' indicates specifically

those who are living in dormitories (Lian, 2009), while there are still other graduates invisible because of their different living strategy. Some scholars use the term ‘foreign urbanite’ (*Wailai Shimin*) to identify those floating population with a urban *hukou* from other cities (Hou and Zhang, 2010). The term is not suitable for this research either because that not all the educated floaters are with a urban origin.

One of the evident differences between the floaters with a rural or urban *hukou* is that usually urbanites have less economic burden than their rural counterparts, which leads to different living strategies in the city other than their home. However, the huge inequality is not simply reflected on the *hukou* registration status, for that one from the city with lower administrative level is not necessarily more affluent than another from the rich rural area. Even in one single administrative area, huge differences in living condition and annual income could be present despite all are having urban *hukou* of that city. It is difficult to steer away from such ambiguity, therefore this research applies the categorization that subgroup B includes educated floaters with either urban or rural *hukou*.

In this part a series of interviews with the educated floaters who meet the criteria were conducted - born at places other than current living cities, without a local *hukou*, and has enrolled in higher education institutions. Generally speaking, from the results it is hard to tell whether they have a relatively higher level of willingness to integrate into the city comparing to their counterparts. However, when they do have the willingness, they are more determined than their non-educated counterparts with the negative expectation of the social integration process.

### **5.2.2 Education: a way to change *hukou***

In China, there are very few opportunities to change one’s *hukou* registration place. The only ways are via job, marriage, getting enrolled in the army or higher education institutions, or other special permissions. Once getting enrolled into the higher education institutions (for example colleges or universities), one would be granted a local collective *hukou* whose unit (*danwei*) is this institution. The *hukou* is valid during the study period until graduation, when one has to transfer his/her *hukou* out of the institution to the working unit or back to the origin place. Therefore, one would

not be permanently granted a local urban *hukou* merely by enrollment, while he/she has more opportunities to change the *hukou* status by employment than their non-educated counterparts who have never been in the city. Besides, the fact that all the higher education institutions are located in large- and middle- size cities means that being enrolled equals obtaining an urban *hukou*. Even for the educated floaters with a rural background who would transfer the *hukou* back to origin after graduation, his/her *hukou* would be transferred back to the administratively higher-level district city which covers his/her home village. In other words, once get enrolled into the higher education institutions one would permanently change his/her *hukou* status from rural to urban.

The statistic shows that the number of college and university enrollment was approximately 0.27 million in 1977, which was the first year the higher education institutions resumed to enroll the students nationwide after the Cultural Revolution. In 2012, the number was more than 9.1 million (Xinhua Net, 2012b). The policy promulgated in 1999 to encourage the enlargement of enrollment too contributed to such increasing number. There are more and more rural families regarding the higher education institution enrollment as the best way to change the doomed destiny of their offspring.

After the enrollment, the students would usually spend 2-5 years for campus life depending on the nature of major the students have got enrolled in. This relatively long period gives the students abundant time to know the city as the same time as not being pressured too much by living cost comparing to the residents living outside the campus. During the period, almost all the students would set up a familiarity to the local city. Some of them could even form personal connections with local residents. For most of the educated floaters who are with a rural background, staying in the city after graduation is their main goal. Therefore, they have a stronger willingness to integrate into the urban life, as one of my interviewee said:

*I came from a very remote village in Jilin province. ... My father told me to never go back to our village, just stay in Beijing. ... I want to stay here, though my work and accommodation are not satisfying. But I*

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*want to say. I have to stay. I have siblings who are depending on my remittances to continue their studies.* (Male, 25, online)

Being burdened with hopes from family and own pursuit for better life, the interviewee choose to stay in Beijing despite the full recognition about future obstacles in urban living. The motivation of coming to the city is not only about personal desire, but for a great number of educated floaters with rural background, their families are depending on them. Strong pushing factor overruns the pulling factors in cities which are weakened by the obstacles in social integration process. The willingness to be integrated is strong.

### **5.2.3 Advantages for social integration**

For the educated floaters, the most evident reason for their seemingly easier social integration process is the high positive correlation of education level and employment. More than one study confirmed that the higher education level one has received, the higher income one could possibly obtain (Griliches and Mason, 1972; Zheng, 2008). Because of overall higher income per capita in urban areas than rural areas, and that higher financial status brings one confidence in other aspect of social statuses, floaters could feel more like a local urbanites with relatively higher income. The self-identification and confidence ease the way to social integration, encouraging the growing of willingness to be integrated despite the structural factor.

Familiarity to the local city is especially vital for the educated floaters with a rural background. Modernity is the crucial rural-urban difference in current China (Wang, 2007). Generally speaking, rural area represents backwards and traditional culture, and the social solidarity there is mechanic using Durkheim's concept. On the other hand, urban society is with organic solidarity that social division of labor is on a high level. In urban area the role of geographical and blood relations is not as important as in rural area for constructing trust between individuals. Individualism is the extreme example of the competition in the cities. Though sometimes labeled inhospitality, cities are still full of symbols of modernity and rural area is struggling to catch up. For those rural-urban floaters, 'cultural shock' right after arriving in the cities would be reduced as the duration continuing, and a period in campus with urban living

experience would be helpful for the constructing of familiarity and decrease of presumed potential difficulties in social integration process.

#### **5.2.4 Role of willingness**

Despite the common acknowledge about the positive correlation of education and income, and further easiness of social integration, the willingness of floaters is nevertheless a key factor. If there is no willingness to be socially integrated, educated floaters are in the same condition as the non-educated ones, self-perceived as being excluded from the urban mainstream society. As shown in the interviews, some educated interviewees expressed their unwillingness, for example:

*I don't have any interest of getting integrated into this city. I don't have Beijing hukou, nor the boyfriend, I will not stay in Beijing forever. If there is no possibility to buy my own apartment here, why should I choose to stay. Besides I don't like Beijingers. ... I will go back to Tianjin [her hometown] one day, maybe after I have earned enough money and be totally tired about this damn city. (Female, 25, online)*

The interviewee is from another large city of China, and chose to work in Beijing only because that she had been studied in this city and would like to challenge herself in this competitive city. Almost all her friends were floaters though she had Beijinger colleagues. She did not communicate much in private with those colleagues. Her resistance was from nowhere, as she stated herself. Therefore, for this interviewee, the integration process would be the last thing she would like to be willing to do.

As presented previously, Chinese people's *hukou* status is related to the parent's *hukou*. Having the parents both without local *hukou* means that even born in the city the child is not allowed to registered there. The related social welfare and public service are by no means open for this 'outsider'. Therefore if the parents are not anticipating the possibility to get a local *hukou* in the future, they are probably not staying in the city for a long time, considering the tomorrow of children and the family. Without the incentive to stay in the city, one would less likely to have the willingness to get integrated into the city, as seen in this interview and in previous discussion of subgroup A as well.

For those who are with high level of willingness to be integrated, the personal intension is not always bringing about the high level of perception of social integration. One female interviewee in her 30s from Sichuan province answered the question of how she feels about the life in Beijing:

*I do like the city, for it's the capital and a modern internationalized metropolis. I got married in this city, but my husband is not a Beijinger either. We've bought an apartment a few years ago. This city is where I've settled down. ... I took a lot of time talking with neighbors and colleagues who are Beijinger, and I practiced my accent hardly. But you can always find someone who's not nice to you, right after your provincial accent of speaking.* (Female, 36, online)

The couple was struggling to act as locals to avoid potential discrimination. The fact of possessing a real estate and prospect of obtaining a Beijing *hukou* determined their final destination would be nowhere other than Beijing, therefore the couple was trying to be part of the city. Setting up their goal, they were doing their best to be integrated while the world is not always as they wished.

Despite of the same trait of lacking a local *hukou*, which means in terms of social welfare the educated floaters are under the same condition with non-educated floaters, they are hardly receiving any public concern only because of them having a degree of higher education and not as vulnerable as the non-educated ones. Nevertheless, the educated floaters, though deviate much within the subgroup, are having comparative advantages based on their education experience. The familiarity to the city encourages the willingness to social integration because that the outcomes are expected with easier process. However, different personal goals also differentiate the level of willingness. Educated floaters with a rural background are struggling to stay in the city because of their family burdens, while floaters with an urban *hukou* other than the current living city are not having the willingness to be integrated as much as their counterparts. Willingness is largely determined by the personal goal of floating in the city despite the expectation of tough integration process.

### 5.3 Summary of analysis

The two subgroups divided by the education level have similarities as well as disparities other than education. The fact of lacking of formal *hukou* registration leave them under the condition that there is no proper social welfare nor the deserved respect based on their work. The patterns of social integration process for two subgroups are almost the same regardless of the different living conditions and other mental disparities brought by the education level. The only difference found in the analyses of two subgroups is that having expectation of difficulties and obstacles in the social integration process, the non-educated floaters are not always firm in the willingness to be integrated as the educated floaters are, as long as the latter is having such willingness.

Elaborated with the cases, the finding from the analyses is that the patterns of relation between willingness (and other non-structural factors) and social integration process of the two subgroups are similar. The pattern could be summarized as the following figure:

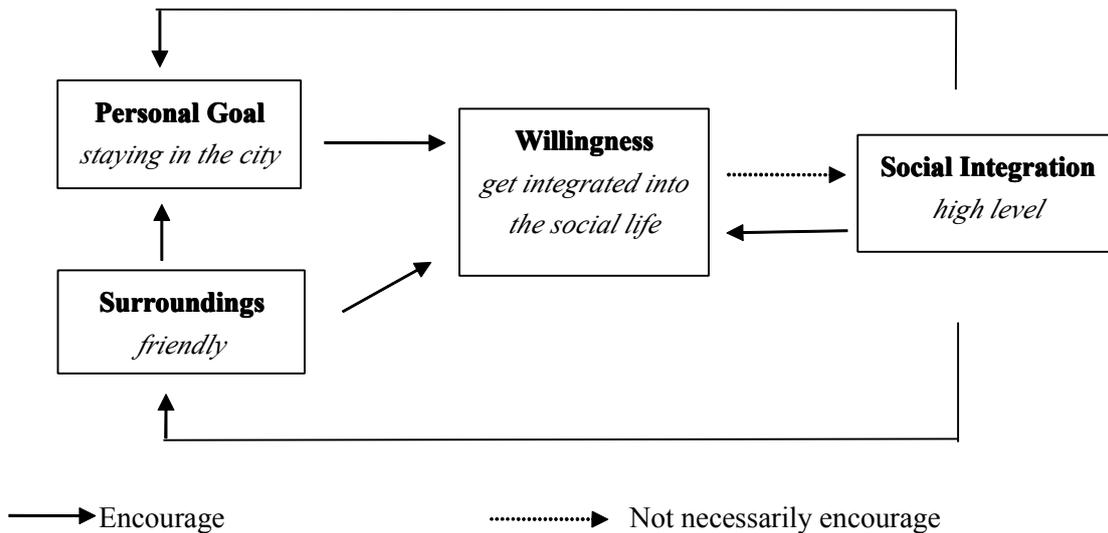


Figure 1: Relation between non-structural factors and social integration process

Personal goal when living in the city is influenced by the attitude of surrounded

people, both by other floaters and the locals. The determination to stay in the city for long-term and friendly surroundings would encourage willingness of integration respectively, and at the same time be encouraged by the high level of social integration in reverse. The willingness to get integrated into the urban social life is a key to social integration. Strong willingness would help to the social integration process, while it is not the determinative factor.

## **6 Conclusion and policy implications**

The social integration of floating population in urban China is always a challenge to the policy-makers. Derived from value differences, the regional discrimination to the outsiders by the locals have been existing from the old times. Durkeim's concept of social solidarity is meaningful to the Chinese case that in cities the organic solidarity driven by the labor division is existing while in rural area the social solidarity is mechanic formed by the shared values of social members rather than social division of labor. However, the theory is not sufficient to analysis the social integration process in urban China. Nowadays the mutual stereotype between urban and rural residents has taken shape, and is reinforced by the *hukou* system which officially separates Chinese citizens into two social strata. The influx of floaters contributes to the development of the cities as well as strengthens the xenophobia of the locals. The formal integration process is hindered by the high transition costs on the social welfare system and management expenditure. The lack of motivation for the local governments is rooted in the complex Chinese political and fiscal structure.

By analyzing the cases in floating population, the application of push-pull model is found in most of the interviews, that they are encouraged by the pulling factors in the cities to leave their homes and come to the cities. The social integration process for them is not easy, with the exploit of basic rights to get access to the social security and public services. However, although without the equal opportunities comparing to the urban residents, they are not discouraged by the low level of material well-being in cities. Agreeing to the assumption that positive expectation would lead to high probability of conducting the behavior, the high level of social integration in a society

is found to be the source of willingness of floating population to integrate. However, conversely the willingness is not having a direct and decisive effect on the social integration process. This is partly because of the systematic barriers set by the governments to block the increasing inflow of floating population, and partly because of the psychological resistance from local residents whose stereotype is reinforced by such systematic barriers.

For the central and local governments, how to get these floaters integrated into the society is an urgent issue for the stability of society. Because of the resistance by the interest groups, the radical reform of *hukou* system is not possible in the near future, while on other dimensions of integration, there is something governments could do to improve the living experience for the floating population. With the principles of basic human rights and for a solidary society, central and local governments should make their efforts no matter they are willing to do so or not.

For the central government, even though there are several documents concerning the social integration process of floaters in cities that have been published for years, the reactions of the local governments are various. The large cities that are already absorbing more labor forces than appropriate are resisting the integration of floaters, fearing about the larger scale of rural-urban inflow. On the other hand, social integration process is facing less resistance in the cities where the labor forces are in need. Because that the active floaters are moving relatively freer than before, the development of middle and small cities would redirect the flow of labor force with facilitating the social integration process of the floaters and attracting more laborers with greater pulling power. Therefore policies that encourage the development of these cities are necessary as well as other redirection means, for example raising the income of peasants to reduce the outflows currently pushed out of the farms by the inferior economic rewards in agricultural production .

For the local governments in charge of cities where the floaters have already settled, efforts should be made for locals and floaters respectively. The current discrimination towards the floaters are to some extent encouraged by the discriminative policies, including that laborers without local *hukou* are excluded from certain job positions,

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and that floaters are queuing after the locals for healthcare in some emergencies. As the response to the documents of central government, some cities are including floaters into the local social security system. Yet in most of the cases the inclusion is conditioned. On the aspect of public services (not including education), the conflict between the locals and the floaters is rather moderate, therefore the local governments are opening the door for floaters to the public institutions such as libraries and sport facilities.

For achieving social integration, the core is to encourage the boost of floaters' willingness to be integrated. To achieve so, the encouragement of the floaters to get familiar with the local culture is crucial as well as the introduction of an inclusive environment. The knowledge imparting to locals and rectification of floaters' name would reduce the discrimination derived from ignorant fear. The integration of living habits and urban values, specifically for the non-educated floaters, would eliminate the discrimination derived from the stereotype. Policies about social welfare should detached from the *hukou* system, with the fiscal problems on transaction costs should be fixed by the intra-region collaborations.

A big challenge to such policies in local areas is that whether the local governments are inclined to encourage the willingness of floaters for long-term habitation. Another topic for further study is to what extend the policies of social integration would be achieved within the limit of *hukou* system. Studies with specific focus on single city or educated floaters would also make contribution to the field of social integration of floating population in urban China.

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## **Appendix: Interview guide**

- Basic information
- Education background
- Habitation duration in current city
- What the interviewee usually does during off hours
- Whether the interviewee is having local friends
- What is interviewee's usual pattern of interacting with locals
- Whether the interviewee is willing to know the city, especially local culture/language
- Whether the interviewee is willing to get integrated
- What the interviewee has done to get integrated
- What the interviewee think about the city/locals
- What are the future plans