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Changes in Floating Population:
A field study of Zhejiang Village in Beijing

Author: Yuchen Yang

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Supervisor: Olle Frödin

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Abstract

Zhejiang Village of Beijing is a unique migrant community in China, it used to be famous for its messy environment and the prosperous clothing wholesale cities. In recent years, there has been huge changes in the Zhejiang Village, but only little research and report on it. This thesis will seek the changes and the socio-economic impacts of the clothing cities there, discuss how the floating population uses social capital, seek the social integration and the strategies adopted by them to solve the issue of their children's school enrollment. All first hand data are gained from my two-month fieldwork in Zhejiang Village.

Keywords: Zhejiang Village, Floating population, Social integration

Table of contents

Acknowledgments	1
Abstract	2
Table of contents	3
Chapter I	4
Introduction	4
<i>Research questions</i>	5
<i>Thesis structure</i>	6
Chapter II	7
Background	7
<i>Zhejiang Village</i>	7
<i>Hukou System</i>	8
<i>Floating population</i>	9
<i>Guanxi</i>	9
Chapter III	10
Previous Studies	10
<i>Zhejiang Village</i>	11
<i>Floating population</i>	12
<i>Literature limitations</i>	13
Chapter IV	14
Theoretical Framework	14
<i>Xi</i>	14
<i>Social Capital Theory</i>	14
<i>Migration Network Theory</i>	15
<i>Social Integration</i>	15
Chapter V	15
Methodology	15
<i>Fieldwork</i>	15
<i>Interview</i>	17
<i>Interviewee Selection Criteria</i>	17
<i>Limitation</i>	18
<i>Ethical issues</i>	18
Chapter VI	19
The current status of Zhejiang Village	19
<i>Clothing Cities in Zhejiang Village</i>	21
<i>Legacy of the old times</i>	23
Chapter VII	25
Floating Population in Zhejiang Village	25
<i>Guanxi: A New Approach of Social Capital</i>	25
<i>The challenges of social integration</i>	27
<i>Discrimination</i>	27
<i>School Enrollment</i>	28
Chapter VIII	31
Conclusion	31
References	33

Chapter I

Introduction

With China's rapid growing economy and the acceleration of urbanization, a rising number of individuals from smaller cities or rural regions are migrating to larger urban centers to seek better living and job opportunities. 'Beijing is the capital of China, an international city with a total population of 21.84 million, where migration often happens.' (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2023) However, near Dahongmen in Beijing, there is a migrant community mainly consisting of people from Zhejiang Province, which is known as Zhejiang Village.

Over the past few decades, Zhejiang Village has attracted a large number of immigrants from Zhejiang Province, forming a unique community. It has a strong local culture and also faces various challenges in the urbanization process. It is hard for outsiders to reach the community, so it has become an isolated group rather than integrating with Beijing. Therefore, studying the development status and migrant population of Zhejiang Village has become an interesting and challenging topic.

The famous anthropologist Xiang Biao once conducted field research in Zhejiang Village, studying its formation and development about 30 years ago. However, there have been huge changes in China during the past three decades, and Beijing has experienced numerous migrations. In this context, it is important to study the current status of Zhejiang Village. It is necessary to understand how people in this special community adapt to rapid social changes and cope with the constantly changing urban environment.

My research topic was inspired by a friend from Wenzhou. During her work in Beijing, she stayed with relatives in the Dahongmen area. I was surprised to find that almost everyone in her community spoke the Wenzhou dialect. I grew up in Beijing, but I did not know such a place existed in the city before. I first heard the story of Zhejiang Village from my friend, which made me interested in the community. Afterward, I consulted literature, and read the works of Xiang Biao, which was also the first ethnography I read, and the book will be discussed in later chapters.

A lot of studies have been conducted about migration in China. Academics have concentrated on the phenomenon such as the rural-to-urban migration, the influence of the floating population on urban development, and the strategies adopted by the government to deal with these challenges.

However, there has been little research on the unique phenomenon of people migrating from one city to another and establishing their own communities there. Zhejiang Village is a representative example of such communities formed by the floating population under the influence of urbanization. These communities face many challenges in the process of integrating into cities. Therefore, studying them from a sociological perspective is essential for understanding the process of urbanization and the problems it brings.

Most of the existing research on Zhejiang Village was published before 2010. Liu (1999) and Meng (1997) attempted to analyze the formation and development of Zhejiang Village from the perspectives of geography, policy, and urban construction. They revealed the unique position of Zhejiang Village in China's rapid urbanization process. However, these studies are still relatively scattered and preliminary, lacking a comprehensive research system. Moreover, they often focus on describing the surface phenomena of the community, rarely deepening into the life experiences, values, and interactions of community residents. Scholars have not even had direct contact with the community itself, which makes their research lack empirical evidence. Therefore, it is necessary to follow up on the current situation of Zhejiang Village and conduct more in-depth research.

Research questions

The main research questions of this thesis are:

How have the clothing cities in Zhejiang Village evolved and what socio-economic impacts has it created?

How does the floating population of Zhejiang Village perceive and utilize social capital in their daily lives?

What are the strategies adopted by the floating population in Zhejiang Village to address the challenge of their children's school enrollment?

As a typical migrant community in China, Beijing's Zhejiang Village reflects the social changes brought by China's rapid economic development and urbanization. This study aims to fill the gap in the research field by investigating the current status of Zhejiang Village in Beijing. In recent years, there have been few studies on Zhejiang Village. However, many researchers are interested in Zhejiang Village, but unfortunately, most of them have not had the opportunity to enter this community. Therefore, my fieldwork will be valuable. This study will explore the current state of the past clothing cities in Zhejiang Village, and discuss the impact of them in aspect of social and economy. By deeply understanding this specific community, I hope to reveal some challenges the floating population in Zhejiang Village faces when integrating into Beijing, and mainly focus on the school enrollment of their children. On the other hand, this study also gives voices to the floating population of Zhejiang Village who are facing discrimination and difficulties, providing valuable insights for policy-makers and researchers through a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of this unique community, so as to better cope with the various challenges and problems in the urbanization process.

Thesis structure

I will provide a detailed introduction to the structure and content of each chapter of this research. I will first introduce the origin of Zhejiang Village and explain the definitions of professional terms. The chapter on previous studies will summarize and analyze the existing researches on Zhejiang Village and the floating population. I will also identify research gaps and directions that require further study. Then in chapter four and five, I will discuss the basic theoretical framework and methodology adopted in this study, including fieldwork and interviews. Ethical issues and limitations of this study will also be discussed to ensure the reliability and validity. In chapter six, I will listen to the stories of clothing cities in Zhejiang Village, and discuss the social and economic impact of these clothing cities at the present. In Chapter 7, I will analyze how social capital works in the floating population of Zhejiang Village, as well as how the floating population solves the problem of children's school enrollment. Finally, I will summarize the research results, and give a conclusion.

Chapter II

Background

Zhejiang Village

Wang (1997) argues that Zhejiang Village refers to the settlements spontaneously formed by Zhejiang people who came to Beijing for business (almost all came from the Wenzhou area). There are several such communities, and they are distributed in Chaoyang, Haidian, Fengtai, and other districts of Beijing. The most famous and largest one is located in Dahongmen, Nanyuan Town, Fengtai District. People usually call it "Zhejiang Cun" It means Zhejiang Village in English and the discussion in this research is mainly based on this Zhejiang Village.

Zhejiang Village is located directly south of Tiananmen Square, just past the South Third Ring Road, and only about 5 kilometers away from Qianmen. Xiang (1994) argues that Zhejiang Village stretches from Muxiyuan to Dahongmen from north to south; from Majiapu to Chengshou Temple from east to west, covering 26 natural villages in between. The concentrated part is the five administrative villages of Dahongmen, Guoyuan, Shiliuzhuang, Dong Luoyuan, and Shicun. Administratively, this area is the cross-administration area of 8 sub-district offices and Nanyuan Township, which is a typical intersection of urban and rural areas.

Due to the differences between residents in Zhejiang Village and local residents in Beijing, the name 'Zhejiang Village' may cause discrimination. This kind of discrimination may come from some stereotypes of Zhejiang Village. Xiang (2000) argues that Zhejiang Village is famous all over the country for its high-quality and cheap clothing, and it is also famous for its dirty environment and social chaos. Residents in these communities are also relatively low in terms of social economic status and educational level, and some scholars also believe that they have brought pressure on Beijing in the process of urbanization. However, such discrimination is not common today, and the residents of Zhejiang Village have accepted the term. Because the name not only represents the origin of the community but also reflects the residents' emotional connection to their hometown and identification with Zhejiang Province. 'In fact, this approach of naming a place is common in China, such as Xinjiang villages,

Henan villages, and Anhui villages.’ (Liu and Gu, 1999) This kind of name helps newcomers to feel a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar urban environment, while also facilitating the formation of social connections and mutual support networks among them. Therefore, this research will continue to use the term Zhejiang Village, it also aims to remove people's stereotypes of Zhejiang Village by exploring the current situation of it.

Hukou System

’The hukou (户口) system in China was first implemented in urban areas in 1951 and extended to rural areas in 1955.’ (Jason, 2013) Chan and Zhang (1999) argue that the hukou system is mainly used as a monitoring mechanism for China's population migration and also a statistical tool to keep tracking the population based on their place of residence. At the same time, the hukou system also serves China's economic growth and political stability. It restricts the population to country-defined segments and ensures the required manageability.

All individual hukou statuses are categorized according to two components: the place of residence and the social /economic qualifications. The location and status of the hukou are mainly inherited from the parents now. Chan and Zhang (1999) argue that the first category of hukou is the hukou registration location, it depends on the individual's usual place of residence. It is compulsory for each citizen to register at only one permanent residence location. The second category is the type of hukou, which is essentially divided into agricultural hukou and non-agricultural hukou. However, as the hukou system developed, it was not necessarily regard to citizens' occupations, but rather to their social and economic statuses. ‘On July 24, 2014, China began to implement a unified hukou system, abolishing the the agricultural hukou and non-agricultural hukou, and unified registered them as residential hukou.’ (The state council of PCR, 2014) These two categories do not interfere with each other, we could find both two categories of hukou in the urban area. It would be too complicated to classify, so scholars have developed a set of simple standards. Therefore, the Chinese population is classified as the rural population and the urban population.

Floating population

The legal conceptualization of immigration is very important in China. ‘The hukou system of China was implemented in the 1950s. Permanent migration is defined as an migration whose hukou is formally transferred to a new region. Population movement that does not involve a change of hukou is called the floating population.’ (Daniel and Loraine, 2002) The floating population is statistically not included in the permanent population of the destination, and they may face many discrimination in social security, medical care and education.

Permanent migration needs to go to the local public security organs in the original residence and the new residence to go through the formalities of hukou change. According to Chan (2010), China's hukou system allows each resident to register at a particular region (the place of birth). It also established the family status by the place of residence and type (agricultural or non-agricultural). ‘Changes in hukou must be approved by the local government. Migration from rural to urban region are more difficult to achieve.’ (Chan and Zhang, 1999) Cheng and Seiden (1994) argues that it was very important that hukou and residence coincide in the past. Only residents who holding a local hukou can have franchises such as better job opportunities, accommodation, education, and healthcare services.

Different from permanent migration, the floating population includes all people living outside the place of the official hukou, which is a relatively vague concept. Daniel and Loraine (2002) argue that 24 hours is the shortest actual duration of the floating population in the urban surveys of China. It means that family visits, tourism, and business trips are also counted as floating populations. In addition, floating populations also include those who are considered to be more important or more permanent away from their official residence. This research will discuss this kind of floating population who have been away from their registered location of hukou for a long time.

Guanxi

Guanxi is unique to China, and it is related to a kind of cultural heritage. Therefore, there is no equivalent term in English that can describe the concept and complexity of guanxi.

Guanxi is usually understood as "connection" or "relationship," but it refers to a specific form of these things. The connection between participants is enduring and involves various informal communication. They participate voluntarily in order to realize the benefits arising from guanxi.

Jack (2021) argues that guanxi plays a huge role in all areas of Chinese social and political life, as well as in the field of Chinese culture. Guanxi is also a social resource with cumulative effects, and one person tries to form guanxi with another because it is mutually beneficial to them. People who have a lot of guanxi are considered smart and reliable. They can not only solve their own problems through guanxi but also help others through their guanxi, thereby creating more guanxi. Their social status and prestige of them will also be high.

Then we can understand guanxi through an example. A and B used to be roommates in college, A is a doctor in a municipal hospital, and B is the leader of a key primary school. Unfortunately, B's father was seriously ill, and he hoped that A could help him transfer his father to the municipal hospital and provide high-quality treatment, and A agreed to help B. In addition, A's child has reached the age of the primary school, but the education quality of the primary schools near A's home was not good. So A also asked B for help, hoping that the key primary school where B worked could provide a place for A's child, and B agreed to A. In this example, A's child is admitted to a key primary school, and B's father is also treated in a municipal hospital. A and B used their guanxi to help themselves and their families resolve problems, and their guanxi grew stronger in the process.

Chapter III

Previous Studies

In this section, I will divide the previous research into two categories, one is the research on Zhejiang villages, and the other is the research on China's floating population, and we will discuss the influential academic works separately. Finally, the limitations of the previous literature will be summarized, and this thesis aims to draw on the experience of previous studies and fill their gaps.

Zhejiang Village

There are not many studies on Zhejiang villages in the field of sociology, and they were conducted quite a long time ago. Xiang Biao (2000) conducted deep research on the formation and operation of Zhejiang Village. Wang Chunguang (1995) investigated the community space of Zhejiang Village and left a lot of data on these aspects. Since then, Zhou Xiaohong (1998) has conducted research on Zhejiang floating population and paid attention to the difficulties and challenges they faced.

Xiang Biao's *Transcending Boundaries* is the most famous study on Zhejiang villages. Xiang Biao's identity is quite special, he was born in Wenzhou, Zhejiang, and studied at Peking University. As mentioned before, most of the residents of Zhejiang Village are from Wenzhou, Zhejiang, and they can speak the Wenzhou dialect. This dual identity makes it easier for him to get in touch with Zhejiang Village. Time is also the key to the success of Xiang Biao's research. He spent six years conducting fieldwork in Zhejiang Village and Wenzhou, he truly integrated into this unique community.

Xiang Biao (2000) defines Zhejiang Village as an economic system and social space that transcends the limitations of social boundaries such as regions, institutions, and identity systems. It is a way of survival and social organization for migrant farmers to adapt to society, and it has become a new social space outside the system. This self-contained community with strong traditional characteristics and strong cohesion has typical geographical, psychological, and cultural boundaries with Beijing society.

Wang Chunguang (1995) defined Zhejiang Village as a community system formed by the gathering of Zhejiang people who came to Beijing for work and business. It had self-regulation and self-service capabilities. From the perspective of demography and geography, he analyzed the spatial features of this community by studying the street layout and housing conditions in Zhejiang Village. It is worth mentioning that Wang Chunguang proposed the special status of Zhejiang villages in the process of urbanization, and analyzed the role of the government and community management in coping with urbanization. He pointed to the important role of government policies in promoting the development of Zhejiang villages and solving residents' problems, such as reform of the hukou system and social security system.

He believes that the government and community managers accelerated the development and reform of Zhejiang villages.

Zhou Xiaohong (1998) not only discusses the changes in Zhejiang Village but also focuses on the floating population. Zhou Xiaohong also investigated the history of rural migration in Yueqing City, Wenzhou, which is one of the main sources of residents in Zhejiang Village. In addition, Zhou Xiaohong's research also mentions the identity and culture of residents in Zhejiang Village, and the personality and social psychology of the floating population. She believes that the life experience of the floating population plays an important role in promoting personal modernity.

Floating population

China's floating population is an important research field with a wide range of research topics, involving many aspects such as migration, urbanization, and social integration.

At first, China's floating population is the most difficult group to define and measure. Goodkind and West (2002) discuss different definitions of China's floating population, review some important empirical findings, and discuss some factors that may influence future trends in floating migration. Since the reform and opening up, China has experienced rapid urbanization. The growth of the floating population and the frequent migration promoted the urbanization process. Weiping Wu and Piper Gaubatz (2012) paid special attention to China's urbanization process and migration. They analyzed the dynamics and impact of rapid urbanization and discussed the issues of rural-urban migration and urban expansion. Moreover, they looked forward to the future direction of China's urban development, the sustainability of urban development, and the challenges of making policies and plans.

Liu and Gu (1999) summarized the structure and functions of floating population settlements that appeared in Beijing in recent years and analyzed their evolution characteristics and formation mechanism. They believe that the emergence of floating population settlements has broken Beijing's social territory, making Beijing a trend of diversification. The communities of the floating population are obviously different from the mainstream urban communities in terms of spatial form, functional structure, and evolution mechanism. In addition, even in the

same floating population settlements, different geographical combinations will lead to different spatial forms, and this factor is often closely combined with geographical orientation to make an effort.

The research of Wang Chunguang (2002) focuses on the challenges faced by the floating population after migrating to cities and discusses the relationship between the social identity of rural migrants and social integration. He believes that the group characteristics of the floating population are not constant, but are in the process of being constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed. Social space-time and social memory have become two key factors. Social space-time is not only a factor of social construction, but also a factor of deconstruction, and social memory makes the mechanism of social space-time concrete and becomes an important dimension of people's lives and actions.

Literature limitations

Most of the existing studies focus on the early development stages of Zhejiang Village, and less attention has been paid to the changes and development of Zhejiang Village in recent years. With the acceleration of urbanization, the problems and challenges faced by Zhejiang Village may have changed, so it is necessary to conduct follow-up research on the latest situation of Zhejiang Village. Most studies on Zhejiang Village focus on its formation and development, or only study the urban society's identification with the rural floating population, but ignore the rural floating population's identification with the urban society. The specific challenges and issues still need to be further explored. Moreover, most scholars mainly analyze the development of Zhejiang Village from the perspectives of policy, economy, and geography, and only a few studies are from the perspectives of sociology and anthropology. In addition, the research on Zhejiang Village lacks in-depth fieldwork and interviews, which makes new research over-dependent on the data obtained from previous studies. Fieldwork and interviews can help us get in touch with Zhejiang Village and better understand the life experiences of residents and the challenges they faced.

Chapter IV

Theoretical Framework

Xi

Xiang Biao proposed the concept of xi (系), which refers to the combination of various guanxi centered on one certain actor. He found that xi mainly includes two circles in Zhejiang Village: the circle of relatives and friends and the circle of business. These two circles are the basis for everyone in Zhejiang Village to live, produce, and expand their business. There is an overlap between each person's two circles, and this overlap constitutes the most important relationships in people's lives. People not only formed the Zhejiang Village through xi but also formed a nationwide flowing population network.

Social Capital Theory

Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as the sum of actual or potential resources. According to Portes (2010), social capital refers to the ability of individuals to get advantages through their participation in networks. The benefits is not only owned by the individual, but is a form of capital embedded within the relationships between individuals. Social capital is a result of embeddedness. Lin Nan (1999) argues that social capital is obtained from resources embedded in social networks. The concept of social capital includes three components: resources entrenched within a social framework; the ability of individuals to reach these resources; and the utilization of these resources through targeted actions.

According to Zhang (2003), social action concludes instrumental action and affective action.

Lin Nan (1999) also defines social capital as "investing in social relationships with expected returns". The theoretical framework of social capital has three stages: At first, investing in social capital, then accessing and using them, finally gaining the benefits from social capital. Instrumental action refers to the process of acquiring resources that the individual does not have at the present, and affective action is keeping resources that already belong to the individual.

Migration Network Theory

De Haas (2020) argues that the migration network theory explains how migration forms and maintains social connections with other immigrants, and how it leads to the emergence of social networks. ‘Immigrant networks can be defined as the set of relationships linking immigrants, former immigrants, and nonimmigrants in areas of origin and destination through relationships and the common community origins’ (Massey et al., 1993). Migration networks tend to reduce the costs of migration. ‘Migration can also be defined as a expanding process that developing networks in order to fall the cost and rise the opportunities of migration.’ (Massey, 1990: 8).

Social Integration

Cheng (2013) defines social integration as the process of the floating population are accepted by the local society, and has equal rights and benefits with local residents. In "*Assimilation in American Life*" , Gordon (1964) proposed seven dimensions for measuring ethnic relations: (1) Acculturation; (2) Structural assimilation; (3) Amalgamation; (4) Identification assimilation; (5) Absence of prejudice; (6) Absence of discrimination; (7) Civic assimilation. Wang Yijie and Liang Zilang (2007) stated that these seven dimensions has brought us into a quantifiable stage for research in this field, allowing us to conduct specific and empirical analysis of this field. This thesis will mention the social integration of the floating population from the perspectives of structural assimilation, amalgamation, and identification assimilation.

Chapter V

Methodology

Fieldwork

Fieldwork gives me opportunities to observe the daily activities, feelings, and challenges of floating people in Zhejiang Village. ‘As an insider, the field worker gains insight into the meanings of people's behaviors from their perspective. As an outsider, the field worker can

observe and experience in manners that may not be achieved by the insiders.’ (Sluka & Robben 2012: 2).

I conducted a two-month fieldwork in Zhejiang Village, located in the Fengtai District of Beijing. Before beginning my fieldwork, I obtained a fieldwork permit from the community manager of the Dong LuoYuan Community, Dahongmen Street. It allowed me to collect valuable first-hand data for my research. I flew from Sweden to Beijing in January 2023 and successfully arrived at Zhejiang Village. This was actually not the first time I had visited Zhejiang Village. Since I was born in Beijing, I entered Zhejiang Village inadvertently when I was a child. At that time, I did not even know Zhejiang Village as a specific community, but I only remembered there was a place in the south of Beijing that had many clothing markets and stationery markets. It was not until the summer vacation of 2022 that I learned about the existence of Zhejiang Village from a friend who was doing an internship in Beijing. During my fieldwork, I lived in an apartment near Puhuangyu, Fengtai District, Beijing. It is only a 10-minute drive from Zhejiang Village, the transportation is very convenient. There is also a subway station downstairs from the apartment, which can quickly reach various areas of Zhejiang Village.

However, my fieldwork coincided with the Spring Festival, the most important traditional festival in China. In 2023, China's Spring Festival break was scheduled from January 21 to January 27. During this period, people usually go back to their hometowns to celebrate the holiday with their families. Due to the huge floating population during, it is hard to buy an air ticket or a rail ticket. Therefore, many people have already asked for leave and returned to their hometowns before January 21. The Spring Festival break affected my fieldwork in January. Many residents of Zhejiang Village had already returned to Wenzhou, Zhejiang. Zhejiang Village was deserted during the Spring Festival, prompting me to initially focus on investigating the geographical environment of Zhejiang Village. After January 27 as the holiday ended, it gradually became lively again, allowing me to start contacting residents and conducting interviews.

Interview

Interviews are designed to be semi-structured, ‘as a research method, interview involves the researcher leaving questions and receiving responses from interviewees.’ (Robson & McCartan, 2016)

The interview started with the guiding questions I designed. First, I listened to the interviewees tell their backgrounds and life stories, and then decided on the follow-up questions based on their answers. The reason for adopting the semi-structured interview is that it is more flexible than other interview methods, and I can adjust the questions at any time during the interview. In addition, the semi-structured interview helps to create a comfortable atmosphere, so that I can establish a trusting relationship with the interviewee, so as to obtain more real and in-depth information.

I conducted a total of 16 interviews. Most of the interviewees are merchants in Zhejiang Village, they work in garment cities or restaurants. They are usually very busy, so they do not have enough time to go to a quiet place like a cafe with me for an interview. Therefore, I chose to interview them at their workplace during their lunch break. The length of the interviews varies depending on the interviewee, and each interview lasts approximately 20-30 minutes. All interviews were later translated from Chinese to English by myself.

Interviewee Selection Criteria

The criteria for selecting interviewees were as follows. First of all, the interviewees must have hukou in Zhejiang Province, even if there are other residents in the community, they will not be considered. Interviews with other residents may provide us with some information from different perspectives, but this research should focus on the view of the floating population. Secondly, interviewees must live or work within the Zhejiang Village. They can be residents of Zhejiang Village or employees of local restaurants and markets. They know Zhejiang Village better than others. Many residents moved out of Zhejiang Village or left Beijing for various reasons, and interviews with them can provide more comprehensive data. However, it is difficult to obtain their contact information, and it is too late to contact and interview them within a limited time, so the research should focus on the existing residents.

Finally, the interviewees need to be over 18 years old. Adults who have lived in Zhejiang villages for a long time will bring more mature and reliable answers. I hope to understand the perspectives of people of different age groups and genders, so three generations of old, middle-aged, and young adults will be interviewed. The elderly have experienced the rise and fall of Zhejiang Village. The middle-aged grew up in Zhejiang Village, stayed in Beijing to work, got married, and had children. Young adults cannot stay in Beijing to go to high school because of their hukou. They usually choose to go back to Zhejiang province to study in public schools or stay in Beijing to study in private schools, and then study abroad in higher education.

Limitation

The limitation of the study is that I can only interview people currently residing in Zhejiangcun, but I cannot get information about people who have left. Why did they leave Zhejiangcun? Is life in Zhejiang Village no longer suitable for them? Questions about Zhejiang Village as a whole or over a longer period cannot be answered through a limited number of interviews; this requires more detailed and extended fieldwork in combination with other methods. Field study and interviews will take a lot of time, which makes it difficult for me to conduct a large number of interviews within a limited time.

Ethical issues

To conduct fieldwork in Zhejiang Village, it is necessary to obtain the permission of the community. I applied to the neighborhood committee for a fieldwork application and was permitted by the manager. Most of the residents in Zhejiang Village are from Wenzhou, Zhejiang. They usually speak the Wenzhou dialect, and the manager can also play the role of translator at some times.

Residents of Zhejiang Village do not like to be called 'outsiders', and the isolation between Zhejiangcun and Beijing is inevitable in interviews, these topics may make interviewees uncomfortable. Kvale & Steinar (2007) argue that we should consider the interviewee's situation when identifying research topics. Therefore, we

need to tell the participants the overall purpose of the research and inform them that they have freedom to end the interview whenever they wanted. Scheyvens & Regina (2014) argue that the research is confidential and we cannot disclose personal information about the interviewees. Before the interview, I will ask the interviewees if they would like to disclose their names and personal information. The interview may involve the interviewees' family and work status. Although this information is helpful for this study, the interviewees have the right to maintain their privacy.

Before the interview, I also introduced my identity and the purpose of the interview to the interviewees, the interview requires their consent. In addition, I will also ask the interviewees if they agree to record the interview. The interview will be recorded by taking notes if they mind. Due to the noisy environment, the recording may be blurred, so it is necessary to take notes. I respect the interviewees, and they cooperated with me very well. The interview went very smoothly, and I obtained rich first-hand data.

During my fieldwork, Beijing was in a severe period of COVID-19, and people tended to isolate themselves at home or wear masks to go out. Some public places may also be closed due to COVID-19, which makes my research challenging. Under such circumstances, in order to ensure the success of the fieldwork, I actively cooperated with the Chinese government's COVID-19 control. After arriving in Beijing, I was isolated at the hotel for 5 days and paid for the fee. In order to protect the health and safety of myself and my informants, I always wear a mask when I go out and take part in the COVID-19 test every three days as required.

Chapter VI

The current status of Zhejiang Village

Zhejiang Village is located in the Dahongmen area of Fengtai District, Beijing. I got off at the Dahongmen South subway station and walked north to Bairong World Trade Center next to the Muxiyuan subway station.

When I stepped into Zhejiang Village, the current situation was very different from what I imagined. In the past, my understanding of Zhejiang Village was based on academic papers and past news reports, but the lag of these second-hand materials made me misunderstand Zhejiang Village. While the past vibrancy is no longer here, traces of its history still exist.

I wanted to go to the clothing building to find interviewees, but the result was unexpected when I followed the map to Dahongmen. Clothing stores are open along the street, they are dilapidated, which makes it hard for me to believe that I am in the urban area of Beijing. The former clothing buildings stand around, and most of them have been closed or transformed.

The informant told me that with Muxiyuan as the center and within a distance of nearly three kilometers around, there were once 24 modern malls similar to Bairong World Trade Center. This largest clothing distribution center in North China, which mainly focuses on clothing wholesale and retail, is already one of the famous business centers in Beijing. However, after Covid-19, many shopping malls have temporarily or permanently closed down.

I found that the road near Dahongmen is quite wide, and the design of the pedestrian bridge is also a bit special. The accessibility channels of the pedestrian bridge are more spacious than other places, and there are even a few vendors on the bridge, selling some textiles and handicrafts. My informant told me that there are a total of six ring road highways in Beijing, named from the First Ring to the Sixth Ring according to their distance from the city center, covering an expanding area. The six ring roads are interconnected, linking many important areas in Beijing. Zhejiang Village is located next to the South Third Ring Road, and its geographical location is quite special. Although it is not far from the city center, it is connected to roads leading in multiple directions. This is not only the junction of urban and rural areas, but also the connection of roads from Beijing to other places. There used to be a direct bus from Haihutun to Zhejiang, but this bus has been discontinued and has now been replaced by a more convenient high-speed train. Therefore, the location of Zhejiang Village is an important traffic hub in Beijing, carrying a large amount of traffic flow. Considering the needs of various traffic modes, the design of the roads here is different. The accessibility channels on the overpass are designed to facilitate the passage of tricycles carrying goods, and the design of the main road is certainly related to cargo transportation.

Clothing Cities in Zhejiang Village

According to Beijing Daily (2021), Dahongmen Clothing City was founded in 1998, with a business area of nearly 350,000 square meters and more than 8,000 stalls. It used to be one of the largest clothing wholesale markets in Beijing. The wholesale market had a daily peak of 100,000 visitors, with an annual turnover of 16 billion yuan.

My informant told me that he started a clothing business in Beijing in 2007. He said that the "morning market" of Dahongmen Clothing Trade City had the most people, and the transactions started at 5 o'clock in the morning and ended around 11 o'clock. At its peak, more than 7,000 practitioners gathered here. In the past, half of the customers were from Wenzhou, but now they have all left, so business is not good.

The "morning market" is another name for the third phase of Dahongmen Clothing City, which was completed in early 2005. For a long time, there have been voices criticizing the morning market for causing local traffic jams and garbage dumps. In 2014, the Beijing Government decided to gradually clean up the wholesale format and alleviate non-capital functions. In May 2017, the morning market was announced to be closed, and all merchants were required to vacate within two months. After that, a large number of merchants left Beijing or changed their business methods to adapt to the new market.

Now Dahongmen Clothing Trade City has successfully transformed and has been remodeled into the South Central Axis International Culture and Technology Park. The past large-scale clothing advertisements has become a modern glass curtain wall and bronze grilles, it is a modern architecture now. It has landed high-tech enterprises, mainly in the fields of metaverse AI and high technology.

Factories and supply chains are also the key to the clothing cities. One of my informants told me the story of the Jingwen clothing market. He said that the Jingwen clothing market was completed in 1994, and it is regarded as the first batch of clothing markets in Beijing. However, it was closed in 2017, so it is really not caused by the COVID-19. The goods here are imported from the factory in the Daxing District of Beijing, but in 2017, a fire broke out there, and more than a dozen people died.

Natural disasters will not only destroy goods and directly cause economic losses, but other equipment will also be destroyed. Severe casualties will attract the attention of the government, and enhanced safety review can also increase costs and have a huge impact on the way of operation. After the fire, the Beijing government made up its mind to rectify the situation and completely cleared the clothing supply chain here from the city. The Jingwen clothing market was finally closed.

The most successful transformation is the Fucheng Clothing Building. It is located on the south extension line of the central axis in Beijing. It is one of the buildings with the best conditions and the best layout in Dahongmen. Fucheng Clothing Building is positioned on the high boutique route, with a total of nearly 600 merchants. Today, Fucheng Clothing Building has become the current Fengtai Government Service Center and Fengtai District Library. Looking at the scene in front of you, it is hard to think of the old clothing wholesale market. It has transformed from its original commercial function into an urban integrated space that combines functions such as government service centers, providing services to enterprises and the public.

Compared with the previous clothing cities, Fuhai Building and Tianya Building are somewhat different. They have both transformed from clothing wholesale markets to Internet fashion centers. After the transformation, the number of merchants was halved, and all spot wholesale merchants were eliminated. Instead, they primarily focus on brand display and introduce offline experience stores that incorporate the internet. Internet celebrities or store owners try on new clothes in person and sell them through online live broadcasts. This sales method is very popular in China now. Citizens can shop here and place orders on the Internet after experiencing the products in person. The production and logistics of the goods are directly completed by the manufacturers.

One of my informant said that: Many merchants have changed their business strategies in recent years. There are not many customers on ordinary days, so it is better to start a webcast at the store and sell clothes on the Internet.

I observed that the purchasing power of China's online shopping is astonishing, and the government also supports merchants who intend to change their mode. But here comes the

problem, they have to pay high rent to live in Beijing. Unless the business is booming, why don't they go back to Zhejiang and sell clothes online? During Covid-19, there became a lockdown area many times. Business could not be done, so merchants went back to their hometown and sold clothes in live broadcasts.

Although there are two lion statues standing at the entrance and a bronze bull standing on the square, the Fuhai International Building has been closed and upgraded, and only the restaurant at the bottom is still open. But the entire Fuhai International building is still imposing, while the nearby Tianlan Wei clothing City has become ruins.

Before entering Zhejiang Village, I always thought that most of the clothing cities in Zhejiang Village were still open, but the business was not as good as before. Now I realize that the dispersion of Beijing's Non-capital Functions has already been implemented in Beijing, and there are very few clothing cities still in business, which is different from what I imagined. When I was worried about my research, I discovered Bairong World Trade Center.

Legacy of the old times

I had heard of the BaiRong world trade center before, but my impression of it was just an outdated garment trade center. When I actually entered the BaiRong world trade center, I was once again amazed. Four malls, each with six floors are connected together, with a total area of 600,000 square meters and over 6,000 merchants.

Merchants here told me that Bairong used to be a clothing wholesale and retail market like other malls, and it was only transformed into a shopping center a few years ago. In the past, it was more lively and crowded with tens of thousands of merchants. After the transformation, there are only more than 5,000, and the average daily consumer flow has also dropped by half. In the past, only businessmen from all over the country came to Bairong, but now there are basically only local consumers in Beijing.

The entire Bairong world trade center is like a beehive. I have never seen such a large-scale clothing market before. More accurately, Bairong world trade center is a huge modern shopping center. A few university students said: "When we were young, Bairong was still a

wholesale city, which felt quite messy and was not a suitable place for shopping. Now it is completely different, it's a good place for shopping. And the restaurants here are also well-developed, there are many choices, and we haven't decided what to eat yet." These students have witnessed the transformation of Bairong world trade center, a lot of restaurant opened here and even China's most popular new retail representative, Hema Fresh settled here as well. I had to rely on the map to visit Bairong, and running around in such a large-scale shopping center made me sweat.

Although Bairong world trade center is large and has successfully transformed into a modern shopping center, I still found Bairong retains the heritage of the old era. Bairong gathered many national brands and international brands, some of which are actually transformed from past merchants. These merchants used to do wholesale at Bairong and have their own factories and design teams.

However, to my disappointment, I still found some merchants selling fake goods at the Bairong world trade center. Judging from the appearance, these fake goods look almost the same as real products, but the selling price is much cheaper, with the cheapest being less than 1/10 of the real products.

What is even more ironic is that some brand names also play word games, such as NiuBaiLun (the Chinese pronunciation of New Balance), and Burbury (Burberry). Obviously, I could not directly interview the merchants about this phenomenon. I tried to ask the manager of Bairong world center how to select the brands to settle in. He said that for high-quality national goods and merchants who intend to transform, Bairong would increase support to provide more opportunities for brand promotion. For low-quality brands, Bairong is also gradually removing them. This indicates that the formalization of the market is ongoing.

The clothing cities are historical carriers of Zhejiang Village, recording the various changes of Zhejiang Village over the years. It vividly proves the transformation of Zhejiang Village from a chaotic migrant community to a bustling center of the clothing wholesale business, and now into its new stage. The factors leading to these transformations are numerous, including the impact of the Covid-19, government policies, social security, and natural disaster. This change not only represents the transformation of the market economy in

Zhejiang Village but also shows the trends of urban development and socio economic shifts in China.

Through interviews and investigations, I have gained insight into the glorious past and various present of clothing cities in Zhejiang Village. It is hard to find this information in other research or news. The development and changes are deeply etched into these buildings. Today, although the BaiRong world trade center is also transferred towards a modern shopping center, it combines the past wholesale business of Zhejiang Village with the current trend of retail. It represents the way Zhejiang Village survives in today's society. Therefore, I call the BaiRong trade center the legacy of the old times.

Chapter VII

Floating Population in Zhejiang Village

Guanxi: A New Approach of Social Capital

Migration network theory explains how immigrants establish and keep connections with others, and how social networks formed. The formation and development of Zhejiang Village rely on the vast and tight social network of people from Wenzhou. The most basic structural characteristic of Zhejiang Village is that it has a strong ability to develop horizontally through the combination and expansion of everyone's interconnected and overlapping small networks. Based on this phenomenon, Xiang (2000) proposed the concept of "Xi". In this community dominated by the clothing industry, people from Zhejiang Village operate their inherent guanxi and gradually construct new guanxi in the process of mobility.

Almost everyone I interviewed in Zhejiang Village has their own social network and has used guanxi to gain benefits.

One merchant told me, "I was doing foreign trade business before, but Covid-19 has been severe these years. Is it hard to ship to China? The goods can not arrive at all. I have been losing money. I can not keep this situation, so I had to ask my friends for help. I came to Beijing earlier than them. My business was really good at the time, I made a lot of money and

bought a house in Beijing. Seeing what I have done, a few friends from my hometown also came to Beijing to do business.” His friends were attracted by his success in Zhejiang Village and came to Beijing to pursue a better life. The merchant is a pioneer, and his choice influenced the location selection of subsequent immigrants. The merchant's migration network facilitated the migration of his friends, and ‘common elements like culture, language, and origins have a significant influence on the beginning of the migration process’ (Massey et al., 1998; Skeldon, 1997).

“When they first arrived, they were unfamiliar with the city, so I helped them set up their stalls. Now I am in trouble, they introduced me to some domestic factories, and we buy and sell goods together. Actually, I can not make a lot of money from domestic goods, but I can earn back a bit of the money I lost in foreign trade. This is like my friends sending charcoal in snowy weather.” Initially, the merchant and his friends were just a circle of friends, but later they had business with each other, adding a cooperative relationship. The *guanxi* between them has come to the core circle, and their *guanxi* is stronger than before.

The relationship established by this merchant and his friends is actually a kind of social capital. In the story, he actually invested his social capital by helping his friends set up stalls in Beijing. He established a firm social connection in this way, which supported him when he met difficulties. Mutual aid and mutual benefit are one of the main characteristics of social capital. Later, when the merchant had difficulty due to Covid-19 and the foreign trade business, his friends helped him to transform and introduced him to the domestic market. This is the mobilization of his social capital. They not only provided financial aid but also helped him find new business opportunities. This is the return of social capital, which can be seen in various forms, such as economic benefits and social support. In general, social capital is a powerful tool that can help people deal with challenges in life, find new opportunities, and improve their life and career.

One student living in the Dahongmen community told me:

"I am from Wenzhou, currently interning at a company in Beijing, and temporarily living here. The landlady used to be my father's student. My father used to help her family a lot, and we have been close for a long time. When they heard that I was coming to Beijing, she was also willing to host me and let me stay at her house temporarily."

Although this student does not have a direct relationship with the landlady, she has established a migration network with the landlady through the *guanxi* between her father and the landlord. The investment of social capital have done by her father in the past. Chain migration is no longer applicable to Zhejiang Village now. Over the years, people in Zhejiang Village have constantly established new relationships, and the social network has also expanded. Only network migration can reflect the complexity of Zhejiang Village's migration. Migration networks also reduce the economic, social, and psychological costs of migration. (Massey, 1990:8). The return of the investment of social capital for the student reflects in different ways. She avoids the high rent in Beijing through the migration network with the landlady. With the benefits of her *guanxi* with the landlord, she can integrate into the new environment faster and her safety will also be protected.

The challenges of social integration

Discrimination

Social discrimination is a major challenge for the floating population of Zhejiang Village in integrating into Beijing. Beijing is the capital of China, and its residents naturally have advantages in terms of social resources and competition. Many prejudiced citizens regard the floating population as "outsiders," believing they have no right to have the same rights as the locals.

When I asked a informant about the difficulties he faced integrating into Beijing, he chuckled bitterly and said:

"To be honest, even though I've been in Beijing for over a decade, I still do not feel a sense of belonging. My business is not good now, if it weren't for my child studying in Beijing, my wife and I would have returned home. This area used to be a bit chaotic, and we did not have a good impression in the local's minds. Our Wenzhou people have a strong accent, sometimes when we start talking, you can see the scorn on the locals' faces. However, after struggling for so many years, I have gotten used to it. My social circle is primarily people from Dahongmen."

Feelings of inferiority and lack of confidence exist among the floating population when they interact with local residents, it will hide their willingness to integrate into Beijing. The floating population of Zhejiang Village tends to socialize within their own circles, they are not willing to step out of their comfort zones. Lin (2009) pointed out that the media, on the one hand, propagates the unequal status of the floating population in society and the difficulties in defending their rights, and on the other hand, introduces them to negative information, such as criminal activities and low quality. Zhejiang Village used to make the news for its social chaos, which further exacerbated the mutual conflict and distrust between the floating population and the locals of Beijing.

School Enrollment

Through my interviews, I have learned that the majority of the floating population in Zhejiang Village is currently facing issues of their children's school enrollment. The student mentioned in the previous chapter before said:

"The landlady's child is still in primary school. In a few years, he will probably have to go back to Wenzhou to attend middle school. My father has discussed this issue with her before, and he will definitely help her when the time comes."

The landlady's child is about to return to Wenzhou because he does not have the qualifications to be admitted to high school in Beijing. Therefore, the landlady hosted the student as an investment for social capital, and in return for her child's admission, attempting to use *guanxi* to solve the enrollment issue. This example also reflects the role of *guanxi* at different social classes. This phenomenon is not common in the under class *guanxi*, people do not have enough resources to return for the investment. But in the upper class, *guanxi*'s influence has been expanded, power and resources are in their hands. Therefore, using *guanxi* to solve enrollment problems does not work for the most people.

Gaokao (高考) is a selective examination for high school graduates and the entrance examination for higher education institutions in China. However, candidates are only allowed to take Gaokao in their registration place of hukou. The number of participants in Gaokao and

the difficulty of the examinations varies across the country, so the pressure faced by candidates in different regions is also different.

As reported by Beijing Daily (2017), although more than half of the children of the floating population were born in their original registration place of hukou, nearly 80% of the children of the floating population had already migrated to study with their parents when they were in the first grade of primary school. During their growth, the phenomenon of changing schools has been happening constantly. Those children living in large cities with their parents have a much higher chance of changing schools during their entire primary and secondary school stages than children with local hukou. 75% of the children of the floating population will have at least one-time changing schools before graduating from high school, and returning to their original registration place of hukou to attend high school for Gaokao is the main reason.

One informant said: "Because we don't have a Beijing hukou, we not only have to pay tuition fees but also a fee for studying away from our registration place of hukou. We do not want our children to become left-behind children. As parents, we should be by their side."

Moving to schools in Beijing can provide an opportunity for children to live with their parents, which is beneficial for the children's growth. However, the disadvantages are also obvious. The floating population's children have to pay extra tuition fees, and in some areas, the score line for migrant children in the middle school entrance exam is even higher than for local students. Even if they are admitted to a high school in Beijing, without a Beijing hukou they can not take Gaokao in Beijing. If they study high school in Beijing and finally Gaokao in the registration place of their hukou, they might get unsatisfactory scores due to the differences in exam content.

A housewife told me, "Twenty years ago, I came to Beijing with my husband. He was not doing business here, he was an architectural designer. Actually, we do not live here now, I am here just to pick up some things. The salary of an architectural designer is quite high, so we bought a new house in the city center later, and I dedicated myself to raising two children at home. My children went abroad for high school. My elder daughter is now working there, and my younger son is still studying in college in Australia. In a few years, when my son finds a job, we might buy a house in Australia and move the whole family there. Our lives are too busy and tired, it is time to retire and enjoy."

Most parents of floating populations will transfer their children to schools at their registered place of hukou before they graduate from high school. Families in good economic conditions will send their children to expensive private schools or to high school abroad.

Although it is difficult to change the hukou in China, some floating migrants have successfully changed their children's hukou. One informant told me that her husband is a Beijing native and their child inherited the father's hukou, so she does not need to worry about their child's school status. Wang (2007) argues that marriage is also a form of social integration, which is structural integration. It refers to the occurrence of more intimate personal contact between members of different ethnic groups or their embedding in each other's daily group life. More accurately, this belongs to amalgamation marriage.

In Chinese marriages, one party can change their hukou to that of their spouse. Marriage provides a way for migrants to gain social capital. This informant's hukou has been changed to Beijing, so she can enjoy the same rights and opportunities as the local Beijing people. Secondly, amalgamation marriage can not only help floating populations in Zhejiang Village better integrate into the local society of Beijing, but also their children can have a Beijing hukou when they are born, without having to go through the process of social integration again, and future education problems can be solved more easily.

A university student told me that he came to Beijing when he was a child and grew up in Zhejiang Village. He transferred back to a Wenzhou high school in the second semester. The pressure in Wenzhou high school was huge, and the boarding school he attended was strictly managed. After Gaokao, he successfully got admitted to a university in Beijing and transferred his hukou to Beijing. Why did you choose to apply to universities in Beijing?

‘Although my registration place of hukou is not in Beijing, I grew up in Beijing and I consider myself a Beijinger. Moreover, I studied in a boarding high school in Wenzhou alone, so I wanted to be closer to home for university, and I missed my parents so much.’

In China, college students can transfer their hukou when they enroll in university, and they can enjoy the benefits of the local hukou during their studies. After graduation, they need to transfer their hukou back to their original registration place. If they had an agricultural hukou

before enrolling, they will be transferred to a city hukou after graduation, and they will no longer be able to enjoy the benefits of an agricultural hukou. The university student told me that he transferred his hukou because he wanted to use his new status to find a job in Beijing, and he has already decided to stay and integrate into Beijing.

From the perspective of social integration, he has a deep understanding of and affection for Beijing's culture and life. He sees himself as a Beijing native, which is an identity integration. There are many external factors affecting the identity of migrant children, such as the high tuition fees for public schools in cities, the non-acceptance of their student status by cities, and their interactions within the group of migrant children in schools. These factors may distinguish the group of migrant children from other groups, exacerbating the perception of the gap between the two (Wang Yijie, Liang Zilang 2007). Therefore, this university student's identity integration is not easy. Although his parents' social status limits him, he is actively exploring the variability of social status. This also reflects that the younger generation of floating populations in Zhejiang Village is actively integrating into the big city of Beijing.

Chapter VIII

Conclusion

Through the investigation of the current situation in Zhejiang Village, I have observed significant changes. The vibrant clothing wholesale market no longer exists as it once did. Xiang (2000) described Zhejiang Village as not only a sample of population migration and urbanization but also a result of the self-development of China's market economy. The government skillfully intervened in the market rules of Zhejiang Village, not marketizing the administration but maintaining and deepening the existing power relationship through interest means. The COVID-19 has prompted the rise of e-commerce and live-streamed sales as a new sales method widely adopted, many merchants have changed their business strategies. The original wholesale market has transformed into other different business models, and the market is gradually standardizing. The former prosperity of Zhejiang Village also brought security issues to Beijing, the government has increased regulatory efforts, and implemented Beijing's non-capital function dispersion action, accelerating the process of urbanization.

Although Zhejiang Village is facing standardization, its economy is still growing, showing infinite potential.

Through interviews and analysis, I approach to the floating population in Zhejiang Village, and their lives are deeply affected by the changes. Some people have already left Beijing and returned to their hometowns, some people have gone to other cities and formed new communities, and some people have decided to settle in Beijing. The floating population shows us the way Zhejiang Village is formed and how social capital operated there, everyone's guanxi is interconnected, and overlapping migrant networks gradually form Zhejiang Village. Even though Zhejiang Village has experienced standardization, the floating population still does business and lives in their own way. The social integration of the floating population faces many challenges. Discrimination from the locals makes it difficult for them to step out of the community. The government should strengthen community services, and make the floating population feel at home. In addition, the development of retail businesses oriented towards the locals could also attract them to consume in Zhejiang Village, which could help eliminate their prejudice against the floating population. Due to the existence of the hukou system, the basic rights of most of the floating population are not protected, and their lives are full of inequality. In response to the unequal school enrollment, the floating population in Zhejiang Village also has positive strategies. In the upper class, they try to use guanxi to solve the issue of school enrollment in return. Rich people even send their children to private high schools or go abroad directly. Amalgamation marriage and university hukou transformation can provide relatively equal education and employment opportunities for the younger generation. In fact, many of the floating populations in Zhejiang Village have already integrated into Beijing in terms of roles, but their identities are not recognized by the government and locals. For the government, implementing policies to move the floating population out of Beijing is not a good solution. They should adjust policies so that the floating population can also share the city's public resources and have the same chances for education and employment. Surprisingly, the younger generation in Zhejiang Village shows a pursuit of a better life and a desire for the local system in Beijing. They are actively integrating into Beijing, and the future of Zhejiang Village is still bright.

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