

QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

BECOMING URBAN? RURAL MIGRANTS' PRACTICE OF SETTLEMENT IN AN URBANIZING SMALL CHINESE CITY

ZHAO HAOYU, SOCIOLOGY

Abstract

Contemporary urbanization processes have continuously challenged our rigid understanding of what is urban and what is rural. In the last four decades, China has experienced rapid urbanization predominantly through rural-urban migration, territorial expansion of urban land, and administrative reclassification of rural areas into urban areas, which has significantly shaped the experience of everyday life in cities. This study proposes to examine rural migrants' lived experience of urbanization in a small city named Jiaonan on the northern coast of China that has been undergoing continuous urbanization with dramatic changes to its physical environment since the 1990s.

Homeownership in the city plays an important role in shaping rural migrants' subsequent access to urban resources, identity formation, and their sense of belonging in the city. Hukou reform, housing reform, and relatively lower housing prices in small Chinese cities have offered rural migrants a greater chance to settle. Thus, in contrast to rural migrants' livelihood strategies and settlement patterns in larger cities in China, where permanent settlement in the city is rare due to both structural constraints and personal choices, many rural migrant families in small Chinese cities have bought apartments and settle there. At the same time, these rural migrants in small Chinese cities, similar to those elsewhere in developing countries, still maintain certain relationships with their villages of origin, such as managing to keep their ownership of houses and land in the villages, and regularly going back to their villages.

Friday
23 Oct 2020

2pm

Venue:
TEAMS Meeting

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This study uses multi-sited ethnography to trace rural migrants' practices of settlement in both the city and in their villages of origin. Drawing upon Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, this study asks how rural migrants negotiate the rural-urban divide through their housing aspirations and decisions on homeownership in both the city and in the village. In this way, this study contributes to the theorizing of the meaning of being and becoming urban from the perspective of rural migrants' lived experience of urbanization.

Proceedings

Duration	Session
5 mins	Chair Welcome & Introduction of Panel
30-45mins	Presentation by Student
15 mins	Q&A (by audience – faculty / students)
Break	Audience to leave the meeting
30 mins	Q&A by Panel
15 mins	Chairperson to ask candidate to leave the meeting Private Panel Discussion and Decision on the Qualifying Examination
15 mins	Candidate invited back by Chairperson Feedback and Outcome of Qualifying Examination

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