The Social Integration of Migrants in Shanghai's Urban Villages[*]

Mingfeng Wang and Yuemin Ning

Abstract

Through questionnaire investigation and factor analysis, this article explores the status of social integration of migrants in Shanghai's urban villages. The results show that social integration of migrants can be mapped on four dimensions: social relation integration, economic integration, psychological integration, and cultural integration. According to the factor scores, the overall level of social integration of migrants is not high, and economic integration is the lowest. Furthermore, the results of multiple linear regression analysis show that, on the whole, the destination place factors of migrants exert more influence on social integration in urban villages than the individual factors. Individual factors play the most important roles in determining the status of psychological integration, while destination place factors are more

Mingfeng WANG is Professor at the Center for Modern Chinese City Studies and the School of Urban and Regional Science, East China Normal University. His research focused on urban and economic geography, information and communication technologies, and regional development. Correspondence should be addressed to: mfwang@re.ecnu.edu.cn.

Yuemin NING is Professor at the Center for Modern Chinese City Studies, East China Normal University.

helpful in explaining the variation in both economic integration and social relation integration. The study also shows that the social integration of migrants is closely related to their living space. Finally, some policy suggestions are given.

1. Introduction

Urban areas in China have large migrant populations, and more and more migrants have relocated their families into cities with a growing length of residence in urban areas. According to the statistics of the sixth census, the floating population of China had reached 0.242 billion by the end of 2010, about 0.15 billion of whom are rural-urban migrants. Based on the current statistical method for urban population, rural-urban migrants are the main force behind the newly increased urban population in China. Nevertheless, rural migrants are outside the urban system as a result of the long period of Chinese separation of city and countryside, which renders most of these migrants, unlike ordinary citizens, unable to enjoy social security and services in cities,[1] and they often encounter systemic or nonsystemic discrimination as they relocate to cities.[2] Therefore, promoting the integration of new migrants into society during the rapid urbanization process is an important and urgent topic that has attracted the attention of local and international researchers.[3]

The rapid growth of population and the economy has increased social and living space differentiation in Chinese cities,[4] especially in several international metropolises such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou.[5] All kinds of gated communities are on the rise,[6] while living spaces such as the urban village, shanty town, factory dormitory, and migrant apartment have formed in cities.[7] Due to their special geographical location and social background, urban villages have become the major settlements for low-income migrants.[8] As Li and Wu have argued, urban villages are normally sites where rural migrants start their urban lives and integrate into cities.[9] Urban villages are typical case areas to examine the daily practices and lives of migrants and further understand the mechanism of rural migrants' integration in China's urbanization.

This article investigates the social integration of migrant population in the urban villages of Shanghai, which is the largest Chinese city. Compared to Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Beijing, and some other large cities, few studies have concentrated on the urban villages in Shanghai. In the past decade the main research interest in Shanghai from academia has