

# **Where is home: The Interplay of Migration Career and Housing Career of Chinese rural Migrants Under the Life Course framework**

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Abstract: China has more than 200 million migrants among whom rural migrants account for over 70 percent. However, principally constrained by the household registration (hukou) policy, they are disadvantaged vis-a-viz their urban counterparts, like their children's education, medical care, and particularly housing. Not only is housing offers them shelter, it is also key for their access to public service and social welfare of the host city. Owning a house is pivotal to rural migrants to break the institutional barriers and to settle down in the host city. Yet, the majority of rural migrants, who have stayed in the same city for a long time, are unable to achieve homeownership nor able to change to local hukou. On the contrary, a small minority of rural migrants who have successfully attained homeownership in the host cities still keep their original hukou. Hence, it is difficult to predict the "final stop" of these rural migrants and to define where their "home" is as a result of the misalignment of the location of hukou, household, housing, and settlement.

Therefore, this research intends to explore the interrelationship between housing career and migration career of Chinese rural migrants and seeks to answer the following questions. 1) Does the migration career of Chinese rural migrants affect the transition of the housing career and if so, how? 2) Does the housing career of Chinese rural migrants affect the transition of migration career and if so, how?

The life course theory, with its five principles (social context, human agent, timing, related lives, and life span), will be adopted to organized this study. The study will be supplemented by the new economic theory of migration and the multi-locational household livelihood strategy theory, will be adopted. Whilst the life course

theory has been applied in previous studies, little has been done on the misalignment of the location of hukou, housing, household, and settlement, nor to explore the meaning for Chinese rural migrants. This research would help to fill up the knowledge gap in these areas.

Mixed method of sequential nested triangulation design of the mixed model will be employed in this research which is based on quantitative databases, policy documents, and in-depth interviews. The documentary analysis will be used to position the social contextual factors of the study and to generate boundaries of the “cohort” groups for subsequent quantitative as well as qualitative analysis. In the quantitative analysis of the databases, unrelated bivariate probit model and the recursive bivariate Probit model will be constructed to test respective the endogenous problem between homeownership and settlement and the interrelationship between housing career and migration career. Qualitative analysis of the study will be done by in-depth interviews in three cities: Shenzhen, Tianjin and Changsha with a target of 10 interviewees in each city to explore rural migrants’ understanding of housing, home, hukou, and settlement.

This research will contribute to our knowledge on rural migrants’ complicated interrelationship between the housing career and migration career from their subjective perspective. The research will inform policy makers on the connection between the “new-type urbanization strategy” and the “rural revitalization strategy” from the micro perspective.