

**New forms of domination, inequalities and struggle for recognition
on the labour markets in Shanghai**

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Against the background of economic reforms, the new migration policies in mainland China have been redefined, the urbanisation process has gained momentum and there has been a sharp increase in internal migration. The urban labour markets are constantly changing, re-forming and segmenting with the mass influx of migrant populations in Chinese towns. Shanghai is one of the megalopolises or 'global cities' (Sassen, 1996) where the processes of economic, social and cultural differentiation – insofar as we are not dealing here with ethnic differentiation – reveal increasingly pronounced inequalities between the upper classes, the emerging middle classes, the working class and the peasant class within Chinese society where access to job markets is concerned. At the heart of this process a central figure has emerged, to whom we will be turning our attention: the low-skilled Chinese migrant. We will show how these low-skilled migrants access Shanghai's segmented urban job markets. Capable of mobilising and combining social, economic and symbolic resources within networks, these migrants are also subjected to various forms of domination in a situation in which the old socialist order is being overlaid by a capitalist one that is producing increasingly marked inequalities. While networks based around family, mutual assistance and acquaintanceship offer various forms of mobility from the Chinese provinces to the cities, we will see how these forms of mobility are associated with a diversity of paths towards economic and social integration, on the one hand, and marginalisation, on the other.

Methodological Framework

As part of the research programme "Migration, social disqualification and access to labour markets in Shanghai", which began in April 2002, co-financed by the international relations section of the CNRS (French national centre for scientific research), Mobilité Internationale Rhône-Alpes (MIRA) and the Maisons des Sciences de l'Homme (MSH) network, we devised a three-pronged methodological framework:

- an ethnographic description of Shanghai's migrant districts
- an approach to the job markets in Shanghai
- the production of migrant biographies

An ethnographic description of Shanghai's migrant districts

We started with an ethnographic description of the morphology, structure and urban and economic organisation of Shanghai's migrant districts in order to gain an understanding of the processes that distance migrant populations from the job markets, by

understanding the information, exchange and transaction networks that link them to their villages. Following on-site observations at the agricultural product markets of Shanghai's Zhabei district, and investigations on the streets of Zhabei, we began by meeting migrants, both men and women, from the provinces of Anhui, Jiangsu, Fujian, Jiangxi and Shandong. They were aged between 20 and 40, had few qualifications and displayed a wide range of occupations.

An approach to the job markets in Shanghai

We also analysed the latest statistics from the 2000 national census and the 2002 statistics for Shanghai's migrant population in order to pinpoint the job market sectors in which migrants are concentrated. We then proceeded with our fieldwork investigations taking into account the number of migrants in the different market segments:

- in the formal and informal markets of the working-class districts
- in building and construction companies
- in furniture manufacturing and restoration companies
- in the new service sectors, especially hairdressing salons
- in commerce and catering

The production of migrant biographies

We piece together the migrants' careers by asking them about their training, their level of education, their work experience in their towns or villages of origin, and their mobility experiences in different provinces. We identify all their job positions, the working conditions, the type of contract, if they have one, work relations and family relations. We gain an understanding of the networks of solidarity and belonging that enable them to obtain urban jobs.

We have already completed 140 biographical interviews with people from the provinces, frequently young men, most whom arrived in Shanghai from Anhui, Jiangsu and Henan, with a lesser number from the other provinces of mainland China.

1. Internal migrations and segmentation of the job markets in mainland China

With the relaxation of the *hukou* policy, forms of inter- and intra-regional rural-urban mobility have risen and the floating population in mainland China has continued to increase and diversify (Huang, 1997, Solinger, 1999). The arrival of migrants in Chinese towns has led to an increasing segmentation and differentiation of the job markets. And the migrants, particularly the low-skilled ones and especially the youngest ones, are becoming objects of domination. Nevertheless we are now seeing the emergence of employment agents who are attempting to fight against these phenomena by developing access routes to the private sector job markets.

a) Migration policies and forms of geographic mobility

Internal migrations in mainland China have risen sharply following the economic reform introduced in rural areas in 1979. The new 'family responsibility' system (*jiating chengbao zhi*) prompted peasants to leave the agricultural sector, where there was a surplus of labour. This first migratory movement in the 1980s was characterised by

intra-provincial mobility: leaving the land but not the countryside (*litu bu lixiang*). From 1984 onwards, production of cereals began to fall because of a decrease in purchasing prices, and farmers found themselves earning less and less from their agricultural activities. In addition, rural businesses, often small in size, were unable to absorb the surplus labour. In the second half of the 1980s the migratory movement changed its nature: leaving the land and the countryside (*litu you lixiang*), a movement that would lead to inter-provincial migrations (Aubert, Li, 2002). The coastal regions and the south of China became the major destinations, with millions of peasants coming to look for work in town from the mid-80s. This movement has continued to accelerate since the second half of the 1990s (Cai Fang, 2002).

In this unprecedented migratory movement the new migration policies and the establishment of a new economy are reshaping the job markets in the transition from a planned economy to a market economy (Lemoine, 2003). The *hukou* system of registering people's place of residence and civil status was introduced in 1958 at a time when there was a shortage of cereals and farmers were migrating to the towns. This anti-migration policy relied on controlling the geographic mobility of individuals outside their place of registered residence. The *hukou* policy split the Chinese population into two distinct categories according to their place of residence (urban or rural), and the nature of their employment (agricultural or non-agricultural). For a long time the *hukou* policy constituted a panoptic system (Foucault, 1975) that enabled the rural populations, who were perceived as a threat to the urban order, to be categorised, ordered and monitored. Later, faced with decollectivisation in the countryside, a surplus of rural labour and inter-provincial migration, the Chinese government began redefining its migration policies from 1979, lifting the restrictions on movement, abolishing food rationing in towns and authorising people to live in town on a temporary residence permit. The *hukou* as a panoptic system therefore began to weaken.

According to the 2000 census of Shanghai's migrant population, the total number of people from the provinces was 3,871,100. This means that their numbers in Shanghai have increased by 40.3% since 1997. Migrants coming from the countryside probably represent 15% of the active population in Chinese towns today (Li, 2000, 2001). The main provinces of emigration are Henan, Anhui, Sichuan and Hunan (Henriot, Zheng, 1999); the most popular destination provinces and cities are Guangdong, Zhejiang, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Beijing. Since 1997 the *hukou* reform has begun to take effect in the smaller towns, and in certain provinces the differences between an urban *hukou* and a rural *hukou* are gradually disappearing. Similarly, someone with an agricultural status can live in a town and apply for a temporary residence permit. Whereas forms of geographical mobility used to be restricted by the *hukou* policy, this is no longer the case today. Nevertheless, different types of *hukou* give different access to rights like medical care, education, housing, subsidised basic foods and employment. Although the *hukou* reform displays a political desire to reduce the inequalities between people from the towns and those from the provinces, forms of urban segregation are still very apparent in Chinese towns.

b) Segmentation of urban job markets and forms of discrimination

In the planned socialist economy, up to the economic reform of 1979, the labour market in China was administered by the central government. In the 1950s the state first promoted the collectivisation of agriculture and then the nationalisation of the industrial sector. We therefore need to distinguish between a rural labour market and an urban labour market, separated by the almost impermeable boundary formed by the *hukou* policy. Inequalities between the two labour markets centred on access to jobs for life, to medical care and to the city-dwellers' pension scheme. Then, from the mid-80s, the state decided to carry out a far-reaching reform of the labour market. In 1986 two laws were promulgated authorising dismissals and bankruptcy in state enterprises, and the contract of employment made its appearance in Shanghai. The abolition of the concept of a job for life represents a dramatic upheaval in the transition from a planned economy to a market economy. A labour market for private sector jobs developed, and a new phenomenon – unemployment – appeared for the first time in the history of communist China. The public sector job market narrowed to focus on a nucleus of the big public enterprises and institutions. However, the new private sector job market has not replaced the public sector job market. They exist side by side, or even overlap (Li, Zhang, Zhao, 2000). The private sector job market covers the industrial sector and especially the tertiary sector, which accounted for nearly half of employment growth between 1978 and 2001 (Lemoine, 2003). For example, in the early 1990s Shanghai brought in a large number of migrants for the development of the new Pudong economic zone and the new residential districts in the outlying areas, as well as the construction of new infrastructure (underground railway, raised roads, etc). In 1993 the number of migrants had increased by 2,810,000 from 700,000 in 1984. Faced with an ever-increasing number of migrants, Shanghai city council introduced measures to protect the job market for the Shanghai people by distinguishing between jobs reserved for the urban workforce and those reserved for the provincial workforce (*wailai laodongli shichang*). In 1995, the Shanghai authorities differentiated between three areas of employment. The first (heavy industries and textiles) was open to migrants; the second (mass consumer goods, mostly electronic) was open to migrants only in the case of pressing need; and the third (administration, security, banking etc.) was completely closed to migrants. In the same year, the Shanghai bureau of labour and social security published a list of twenty types of employment forbidden to migrants (they could not be taxi drivers, telephonists, insurance or bank clerks etc.). This list was merely modified in 2001 in accordance with the demand for labour. In spite of their status as temporary residents, migrants are still excluded from five types of employment. They may not work for official or public services, for public security or environmental protection services, for the management of joint property in the city districts, for the sales departments in State-owned stores, or for the cleaning services in airports, railway stations, and harbour facilities. (Rouilleau-Berger, Shi Lu, 2005).

Trends in the urban job market reveal increasingly marked discriminatory processes where low-skilled migrants are in open competition with the unemployed. In 2000, 82.9% of migrants were working in sectors looked down on by the people of Shanghai: shipyards, textile, construction and services. From the start, the transition from a

planned economy to a market economy has been accompanied by a segmentation of the labour markets, where inequality, discrimination and evictions of unwanted Chinese coexist.

c) The emergence of new operators in the labour markets

The rapid development of the private sector job market resulted in the 1990s in the emergence of employment intermediaries who are developing measures for the professional insertion of migrants. These intermediaries fall into two categories: public intermediaries and private intermediaries.

Public intermediaries work in employment bodies set up by the state and local government. Until 1993, migration in Shanghai came mainly under poverty alleviation policy. The recruitment of migrants in public and collective enterprises in Shanghai was often organised by public employment agencies in the migrants' provinces of origin. In 1993 in Shanghai, 53% of migrants were recruited by state enterprises and 20.3% by collective enterprises. This type of recruitment primarily concerned the industrial sector and construction. But from 1993 this form of migration changed its nature, with migrations organised by local government falling in favour of spontaneous migrations.

This meant that a large number of workers made redundant or laid off by their companies found themselves up against competition on the job market from the provincial migrants, who were paid much less. To prevent urban unrest, Shanghai city council set up professional reinsertion centres (*zai jiu ye fuwu zhongxin*) in each division that deal exclusively with the urban unemployed. In the public sector, workers' unions can also set up reemployment centres for laid off workers. And in the districts the old residents' committees, which for years formed the basic social control structures of the communist regime, have also become employment agencies, offering jobs in people's homes. For example, migrant women use this network to find work as cleaners for private individuals (Zhu, Yuan, 2001).

In China there are no private employment agencies in the strict sense of the term, since they are frequently set up by civil servants with support from the authorities and networks of professional contacts. These agencies often wear several hats in order to get round government regulations. For example, we interviewed the director of an agency that was both a private human resources company and the official office of the government of Yunnan in Shanghai, providing a migrant recruitment service to Shanghai businesses. These private agencies maintain close links to the local government, which also controls them.

I used to be a civil servant. In 1998 our department organised a study trip. We were invited by the department of employment of Yunnan Province. I realised that this province had lots of human resources. So on my return in 1999 I decided to set up this temporary employment agency. I recruit people for different businesses according to their requirements. I obtained my permit to set up this agency at the beginning of 2003. Actually, this permit only authorises me to recruit people with the Shanghai hukou. But when businesses need people from the provinces they contact me. I'm not allowed to recruit people from the provinces for companies, because that creates competition between the people of Shanghai and the people from the provinces. But in reality it's impossible – when there's too much demand I can't recruit only people from Shanghai.

There are also people from other provinces who register with our agency, so I ask them not to write their place of origin on the registration form.

I used to work in the textile sector. I worked in human resources management for more than 30 years in a large state enterprise. In March 2001 Shanghai city council's department of employment developed a new policy to encourage the creation of private structures for the management of human resources. Today we have a market economy and there are more and more private enterprises. The market needs intermediaries. I set up my agency with my own funds. My agency is also a member of the association of the Shanghai department of employment. Every year I pay more than 1000RMB in subscriptions to keep my place. They hold meetings from time to time to give us information. This association is organised by the government, but it's financially independent.

Apart from these semi-private, semi-public agencies, there are legal and illegal private agencies. They offer poorly paid casual jobs and are the first port of call for migrants, although once they have settled in Shanghai they then use their networks of contacts to find better paid work.

As well as contributing to the segmentation of the job markets, where social inequalities and discriminatory phenomena are increasing, this major internal migration movement in mainland China has led to the development of ways of accessing employment based on professional solidarity networks. Although the issue of domination in the new forms of employment remains blatant where the migrant population is concerned, migrants may nevertheless be partially integrated in the economy on the strength of social ties within networks.

2. Strength of social ties and domination on the Shanghai labour markets

Within this context of increasing migration, networks based around family, mutual assistance and acquaintanceship are constructing forms of geographic mobility, which are themselves creating strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1994). These ties help the low-skilled migrant populations in Chinese towns access the segmented labour markets. But when migrants do find employment, it is usually in the form of a casual job that deprives them of workers' rights. As a result, they usually find themselves forced to cope with exploitative situations that expose new forms of economic domination in Chinese society.

a) Segmentation and social disqualification in Shanghai's job markets

The fight for social positions represents an economic problem in China, where the current reforms are actively contributing to social divisions in the urban job markets in which people from the provinces play a central role. In 1997 the state and collective enterprises recruited around 40% of migrants in the public sector (Zhang, 1999), in heavy industry, textiles and construction. The situation was the same in 2000. Today, migrants are concentrated in discredited segments of the job market, like manufacturing,

clothing, construction, catering, goods transport, etc. We can therefore talk of economic niches similar in form to ethnic niches (Waldinger, 1996, 1997). At a time when the traditional sector is reviving, the service sector is also developing, bringing with it a casualisation of the labour markets with jobs paid by the hour or by the piece, for which in most cases people from the provinces are recruited (Li, 1996). Many people from the provinces make their living from crafts and home help or develop services (home deliveries, removals, etc.).

In Shanghai, according to the 2000 census, people from the provinces were concentrated in discredited segments of the labour market: as workers in industry (25%) and construction (19%), and as employees in commerce (14%), catering (7%), goods transport (3%), agriculture and pisciculture (7%). A few (2%) were involved in reclaiming used objects and 4% were employed in skilled trades. But the 2000 census of Shanghai's migrant population shows no conclusive link between migrants' occupations and their provinces of origin.

Nevertheless, in Shanghai a high proportion of migrants from Zhejiang appear to be developing their skills in commerce, and those from Anhui are often employed as workers in industry or agriculture. Migrants do not therefore gain access to attractive positions in the urban job markets. Their working conditions are more degrading and their pay lower than those of the local people. They are stigmatised and, as a result, are developing resistance strategies to the stigma (Goffman, 1975), and survival strategies by taking on a second or even a third job, knowing that contracts of employment only really exist within state enterprises.

Migrants could also form associations in accordance with their provincial origins, and they organise themselves within their respective economic enclaves, or else they engage in small-scale operations, such as rubbish collection, or door-step deliveries of drinking water ¹. They could produce worlds of "small-scale urban production" (Rouleau-Berger, 1999). As a result, a hierarchy emerges, dividing the economy into worlds of legitimate production and worlds that have less legitimacy. The worlds of legitimate production equate to the inter-personal, the market, the industrial and the intangible worlds (Salais, Storper, 1993). These worlds of legitimate production conceal those that have less legitimacy by rendering invisible. These worlds of "small-scale urban production" are never perceived as worlds in themselves but rather as marginal zones that are supplanted by the mainstream economy at those points where they impinge on the worlds of legitimate production (Sassen, 1998). Thus it is their mode of organisation which appears to produce marginality, rather than the activities and goods produced within these worlds (Sassen 1994). Migrants mobilise in order to develop economic survival strategies and to put together and bring into circulation resources of various kinds. The worlds of small-scale, urban production are a locus for the development of a polymorphous economy

¹ For the same phenomenon in Beijing, see Jean-Philippe Béja, Michel Bonnin, Feng Xiaoshuang and Tang Can, "How Social Strata Come to Be Formed. Social Differentiation among the Migrant Peasants of Henan in Peking", *China Perspectives*, No. 23, May-June 1999, pp. 28-41, and No. 24, July-August 1999, pp. 44-54.

b) The role of strong social ties in accessing urban jobs

Traditional Chinese society had a system of tontines – *tongxianghui* – that were used to develop family or clan strategies for the organisation of migrations. Today this type of organisation no longer exists, but the tontine spirit is still active in the process of accessing employment. Networks based around mutual assistance, family and acquaintanceship hold economic, social and symbolic resources that provide access to jobs in a variety of sectors (Zhang Li, 2001). The process of selecting a destination takes place at the point of departure based on the migrants' know-how and skills. They make their choice according to whether or not a destination offers activity sectors linked to their skills. However, the relaxation of the *hukou* policy is providing an opening for inter-provincial mobility and migrants now move from one province to another in response to vague opportunities. Acquaintanceship networks are playing a decisive role in helping migrants access urban job markets. These are reciprocity networks, defined as the structured set of social relationships between individuals (Lomnitz, 1977).

“When I arrived in Shanghai I immediately joined this company. A friend from my village introduced me to the director. In our company we are all from Taixing, from the same district. Some of us are related. Others are schoolfriends. Everyone got in through contacts. Working together is easy. If we need someone we call the village and our friends come straight away. We don't want people from other provinces because they don't have the same habits. It's difficult working with them”.

This system presupposes a certain degree of social, geographic and economic proximity. In the case of reciprocity networks of migrants from the same village, they are formed within the migration experience. They tend to be formalised more in strong ties at the point of destination, rather than at the point of departure.

“I'm 40. I come from Shandong, from the Huaiyong region. People were very poor there. I wanted to earn more money. I heard that Shanghai was a big city and that it was developing fast, so I came here. In 1987, after finishing secondary school, I went to Hebei for a few years. I had a relative there. He made sofas and I trained with him. But the pay was very low, so in 1999 I came to Shanghai. A friend from my village was working in this factory. He presented me to the boss and I was taken on. When I arrived there were only 50-60 people in this factory. I started learning how to make bronze decorations for furniture. The boss is a very good man. I can eat and sleep here for free”.

By contrast, family networks involve strong ties between migrants who can access segments of the job market. Within the family the dissemination of information and established contacts contributes to the definition of migration strategies. It is also within the extended family group that contacts become really effective. For instance, we pieced together a newspaper distribution chain in Shanghai run by the members of one extended family from a village in Jiangsu. We have also noted the relative ease with which interpersonal ties can be stretched, despite the vast distances between Chinese provinces, demonstrating the strength of family ties and the connections between sets of locations within a family's circulatory space (Faret, 2003).

Acquaintanceship networks, like family networks, define a social space where people, goods and information circulate. Ties to the villages of origin are maintained and determine the migrants' access to employment while at the same time redefining the organisation of social relationships. These networks operate by providing information regarding job offers, people to contact and places to go, but also in a more direct manner when someone presents a close relative or friend to an employer or when an employer asks a migrant to find him some trustworthy friends or relatives. The trust relationship varies in intensity according to the combination of ties and resources, but it appears central in the process of accessing employment for migrants in China's cities. Access to jobs is organised around systems of exchange, favours, return favours, influence and information, but is greatly dependent on the mobility and circulation know-how (Tarrus, 2000) of migrants in mainland China, which varies according to individual and family resources. Some migrants may find jobs as skilled workers in distant provinces as part of a multi-migration process constructed around a central occupation, while for others the route to inter-provincial migration lies in multiple changes of occupation.

Migrants' access to jobs is therefore organised within a symbolic economy based on word of mouth, trust and flexibility of roles using various combinations of strong and weak ties, depending on the market segment and the migrants' skills, occupational sectors and provinces of origin. In a transition economy it is interesting to see that face-to-face exchanges (Geertz, 1979) play a decisive role in accessing employment, but more generally, that individual, acquaintanceship and family networks play a dominant role in accessing employment for low-skilled Chinese migrants. Conversely, when networks have only a limited repertoire of resources and roles, access to employment becomes very difficult.

c) Economic and symbolic violence and domination in the job markets

Since the economic reforms, the closing down of state enterprises, the intensification of work, new quality requirements and rising demand from abroad have led to an exploitation of the workforce of low-skilled migrants in mainland China. Where migrants are concerned we can talk of a return to the unprotected sale of labour (Selim, 2003), i.e. without a contract, despite the fact that employment law stipulates equality between migrants and city-dwellers. Migrants are recruited only when there is an inadequate supply of local labour, and most of the migrants we spoke to do not have a contract of employment, except for those in state enterprises. For those that do have contracts, the terms appear variable and arbitrary. In some sectors, like construction and industry, migrants are paid by the year and the absence of a contract sometimes prevents them from claiming their salary at the end of the year. However, while employment law is poorly implemented in small and medium-sized enterprises, it is applied all the more thoroughly in the state and Chinese-foreign enterprises. In addition, access to social welfare does not appear to be guaranteed. The working day can be as long as fourteen hours in private enterprises. The absence of breaks for meals, the impossibility of sleeping for those who work at night, non-payment of the correct overtime rates and piece-work are all part of daily working life for these men and women, who develop strategies for survival and to combat poverty.

Migrants earn less than city-dwellers for the same work; find it difficult to obtain a contract of employment. They are relegated to the 'dirty work' and to dangerous tasks

and are subjected to different treatment not only with regard to sectors of activity, but also as regards workers' rights, remuneration and working conditions. People from the provinces accept these degrading and humiliating tasks but do not always appear to consider them *infra dignitate* (Hughes, 1994). There are, however, some work situations where migrants appear to be better protected because they have been recruited by migrants who have themselves become employers.

“When we want to recruit workers for a building site, we call the village. We don't want foreigners (people from other provinces), because they don't have the same habits, so it's difficult to get them to work. 95% of the workers come from our district, Taixing. They all have specific skills. If we need low-skilled workers we recruit locally”.

The conditions of access to the labour markets for migrants and the treatment they suffer give an idea of the new forms of social and economic domination and symbolic violence in Chinese society today, where the labour markets are re-forming as the socialist order is overlaid by a capitalist order that pits the better off against the worst off.

3. Migration routes, forms of mobility and captivity on the job markets

Despite the various forms of economic and cultural domination, the migration routes present a range of different paths to economic and social integration. The geographic mobility of low-skilled migrants is constructed through the linkage between the point of departure and the point of arrival (Bretell, 2000), based around forms of multiple jobholding. Depending on social capital (Faist, 2000), geographic mobility may produce cases of professional and social mobility and may lead to the emergence of entrepreneurial figures. So we will see here how the strength of ties linked to membership of networks based around the family, mutual assistance and acquaintanceship in a socialist context transforms these low-skilled migrants into agents of their migration. But we will also see how they can lead to urban marginalisation (Rouilleau-Berger, Shi Lu, 2004).

a) Multimigration and multiple jobholding

Whereas in the socialist economy an employee in a state enterprise would find it almost impossible to hold several jobs at once, today, because of a return to the unprotected sale of labour, low-skilled migrants in urban job markets can develop careers in which various different types of market and non-market activity (industrial, agricultural, service) alternate or overlap. For a majority of both male and female worker-peasants inter-provincial pendular migration is characterised by an alternation between industrial and agricultural activities, with pendular migration being more marked among women (Morokvasic, 1984). When migrants can no longer find industrial work in firms in Shanghai, they return to their villages at harvest time to work in the fields. Here we can talk of seasonal migration (Gonzalez, 1961). Other low-skilled migrants combine different types of activity in town, usually combining a service with a worker's job.

These low-skilled migrants are also producing what we – from a western point of view – would call an *informal economy*, in a context in which Chinese economic reality has become increasingly multifaceted and elusive, in which the market and non-market,

monetary and ‘natural’ economies (Weber, 1971) interact in various ways, overlaying each other at certain points and moving apart at others (Roulleau-Berger, 1999 2003). The operators in this informal economy can be described as ‘hobos’ (Anderson, 1923) who circulate from one province to another in a nomadic fashion, creating forms of economic and social micro-organisations in a social context in which they appear invisible to the naked eye. These ‘hobos’ can be compared to the transnational migrants in Europe (Morokvasic, 1991, 1993, 2003; Portes, 1993, 1995). These migrants develop for example distribution networks for agricultural products (ginger, rice, etc.), but also for very expensive consumer products like tobacco and wine.

“I’ve sold cigarettes and bottles of wine in bulk. I worked for a year as an agent. I used to offer a good price because I knew the suppliers. Traders from other provinces used to come to the market car park to look for brands. I would find them, but I didn’t earn enough money”.

In their paths to survival these low-skilled migrants are constantly developing skills in new work situations. They accumulate know-how and skills according to their migration experiences, developing new contextualisation, adaptation and integration skills in work spaces in different provinces where they may receive economic and social legitimisation. As a result we are seeing the emergence of autodidacts who are proving themselves capable of extending their repertoires of roles and resources in a cumulative manner based on sharply contrasting migration experiences that are new to these worker-peasants, who are now free to move throughout the Chinese mainland with the relaxation of the *hukou* policy.

“I know painting, carpentry, building. I also know how to work with steel rods. I taught myself everything. I’m a master craftsman in my village, where I’ve trained dozens of apprentices. I didn’t finish secondary school, but when I see furniture I understand immediately how to make it. I’ve worked in ten provinces. I went to Changzhou to work as a carpenter, then to Nanjing in 1979, then to Xian where I stayed for a few years. In 1994 I worked on several construction sites in the North-East. Then I met a boss who was working on a construction site in Beijing. He’s a very famous entrepreneur in China. He has business everywhere in China, in Japan. I worked for him on a seven-storey building. Then this boss recruited me in 1995 to restore the Jiuhuashan buddhas. Then I worked in a chemical factory...”

These migratory paths constructed around varying degrees of multiple jobholding force us to return to the distinction between activity and work, paid and unpaid work, formal and informal work – categories that appear to have been shaken up in the transition from a socialist economy to a market economy. In particular, the forms of multiple jobholding we observed appear to go hand in hand idiosyncratic forms of under-activity, under-employment and survival activities.

b) Internal migration and forms of mobility

Migration can be seen as a resource when it produces forms of professional mobility or social mobility in which migrants find themselves forced to carry out economic

activities in very different activity sectors as dictated by the opportunities that present themselves along their migration paths.

"We transported goods. We went to different parts of China. My father bought a truck and we used to work in transport. I worked with my father for 3 months, but the work was dangerous so I trained as a cook in a hotel in our canton. And after the apprenticeship I left my village to look for work. The first year I went to Nanjin in Jiangsu where I worked in a restaurant in a market in the town centre. The manager was from Shanghai. I worked for him for a year. I made noodles. I had to start from scratch because I didn't know how to make them. The pay was too low and I decided to go back to my village for the Chinese New Year. Then I went to Jiaxing in Zhejiang where I worked in a restaurant for a year".

Forms of professional mobility can move towards forms of social mobility. With the process of social stratification that is taking place across Chinese society, some low-skilled and poorly qualified migrants are managing to become upwardly mobile in the urban job markets under development.

"I come from Anhui and I'm 25. After finishing secondary school I stayed in the village for a year. My parents thought I was too young to go and work somewhere else. I didn't have a job. I worked in the fields, helped my parents with the cooking, and when I was 18 I left for Shanghai with a cousin. First I worked on a building site for two months, but had to go back to my village because of health problems. The second year I went to Changzhou with another relative. I worked for six months in a factory that made brakes for cars. I worked eight hours a day. And because I worked hard, the boss moved me to a different section. I moved to the transport department. I was responsible for transporting goods for six months. Then my cousin who was working in Shanghai asked me to come back to Shanghai, saying the pay was better, so I went. I worked for my cousin who had his own team. I then came to this furniture restoration company where there were only ten people. There was no entrance exam. I was very conscientious in my work and my boss seemed to appreciate me and seemed to think I was intelligent. After just a year he offered me the job of personnel manager. Today I am responsible for the production security and discipline conditions. I work in the workshops a lot. I feel important in this role of managing others".

Internal migration produces routes to social mobility for peasants and workers from the provinces who find jobs in commerce, catering and services. There are four clear types of social mobility:

- peasants who become traders in town
- peasants who become workers in town
- workers and peasants who enter service jobs
- young migrants who develop emancipatory paths.

Peasants become traders in agricultural markets where they rent a stall that often forces them to live on the spot because of a lack of financial and material resources. They leave very difficult work situations to gain work in the urban area that brings them more social and economic resources but does not guarantee them social status. Peasants who become workers follow a classic route to social mobility but have difficulty acquiring permanent status. They occupy a place for a limited, but undefined length of

time. They appear to be in the process of acquiring social status, but everything depends on the activity sector and the migrants' ability to get themselves recognised as competent. Workers and peasants who enter service jobs generally find casual jobs in distribution or catering. The youngest often leave the countryside after compulsory education (end of secondary school). In contrast with their elders, the desire for personal and social emancipation, the search for a job that provides training and for contact with 'modern life' represent new aspirations among this new generation of young migrants who have never worked as peasants (Roulleau-Berger, Shi Lu, 2004).

However, women do not migrate in the same way as men, being involved in both family and working life (Green, 2002, Kofman, 2000). They either migrate on their own, leaving their husbands and children in the countryside, or they start by joining their husbands, and send for their children afterwards. Or, after having joined their husbands in town, leaving their children in the country, they decide to go back to the village.

c) Migration, commercial and entrepreneurial dynamics

Geographic mobility is also producing *entrepreneurial migrant* figures (Péraldi, Perrin, 1996; Missaoui, 1995). Here the Chinese migrant appears as an economic agent possessing and developing knowledge in the area of migration; capable of seizing opportunities, mobilising resources and taking socially significant initiatives (Ma Mung, 1992, 1996, 2000). For reasons of economic survival these migrants develop commercial and entrepreneurial dynamics in the context of major economic development. The more highly skilled migrants, especially the young people, develop these dynamics on a more individual level, while the less highly skilled activate networks on a collective level. In fact, on a collective scale, the feeling of belonging to the same village and the network of trust that this implies, provide conditions for the success of economic activities in commercial or entrepreneurial situations.

She is 36 and comes from Jiangsu. Her husband arrived before her and she came to join him. Her husband started off working on a building site, then he became the manager of a small interior design firm for private individuals. Then he set up an employment agency with his wife. They pay a tax and have recruited about forty young people from their province, each with their own area of specialization, who have learnt their trades in the village. They always choose young people with experience. A few of them are doing continuing education courses at night school. The employment agency is doing very well. Today they work for private individuals and institutions.

We met small business owners in various sectors: professional insertion (employment agencies), new urban services, hairdressing salons, shops and restaurants. These migrants quickly learn the rules, conventions and norms of their market segments, develop new know-how in the creation of new business areas, and display a great ability to develop economic cooperation networks and mobilise various resources and social ties.

d) Evictions from the labour markets

When migratory paths involve an increasing dispersion and thinning of activities at each step of the migration process within inter- and intra-regional migration, inter- and intra-

provincial migration and rural-urban migration, migration comes to signify above all a loss of economic, social and identity resources for the migrants, as they see their work experiences fade away until they find themselves evicted from the labour markets.

I come from Lianyungang, from Jiangsu. It's quite a rich part of China. I came to Shanghai to sell fish, but we've lost everything in this business. So I said I wouldn't go back and that I'd look for work here, or I'd be a small trader but it's difficult to find a job here. For my wife and daughter things are still okay. We're applying for a temporary identity card. It's easier with the card. It's not important for my wife to find a job. She can make things to eat, like pancakes. But I'm done for. I'm 38, my wife's 37. It's hard for me.... When I was in the country I used to work in fish farming. That was going well until a few years ago, but not now. In the country I used to go to Qingdao and Tianjin to transport a truckload of fish to sell at a wholesale market. In our region we farm oriental prawns. They're famous. In the 1980s it was very easy to make money. Now, whatever we do, we don't succeed because the seawater is very polluted. A bowl of prawns will be in good condition today and tomorrow morning they'll all be dead. Everyone has lost something. Me too – I've lost tens of thousands of yuan.

I'm not doing anything at the moment. My wife sells pancakes. We have to pay 400 yuan for the vending site, 300 yuan for rent, and we only just manage to afford enough to eat. My daughter can't go to school – there are too many expenses. When I arrived in Shanghai I sold thermos flasks and plastic chairs. I chose a bad position. It was in a road that had just been built and there was no one. To sell those things you need to go to the outskirts of a market. I paid 700 yuan a month for my vending site. I didn't even manage to earn 700 yuan. There weren't any customers.... I came to Shanghai with 6000 yuan and I've lost almost everything. If I had those 6000 yuan now, I could rent a spot. Now I intend to get a site to sell snacks. In Shanghai if you know how to make specialities, typical things, you will always find customers" (A former fish farmer from Jiangsu, 38).

At each migration stage and with each new experience, migrants move further away from their economic and social moorings; their repertoire of roles shrinks (Hannerz, 1983), they are increasingly viewed as low-skilled and unemployable. They progressively lose all possibility of finding a place on the job markets and become the subject of stigmatisation, deprived of economic, social and moral resources. Here, the experience of internal migration in mainland China is creating processes of economic eviction and social disaffiliation (Rouilleau-Berger, Shi Lu, 2003) that may force the migrants to leave Shanghai or to return to their places of origin (Stack, 1996). But returns today rarely appear final and are generally followed by other migrations within the mainland.

Conclusion

Although forms of social, economic and symbolic domination have always appeared to be structurally linked to capitalist societies, we have seen here how they are forming in a socialist society at the same time as forms of internal exclusion, segregation and discrimination in the migrant populations' access to the job markets. So the issue of access to employment for migrants, particularly low-skilled migrants, gives rise to the issue of the denial of social and public recognition at the heart of an inegalitarian society,

where access to a place in society, to social status, is becoming increasingly difficult – a country in which, in Maoist society, roles used to be distributed in a less exclusive manner (Roulleau-Berger, 2003). Some western figures described by Robert Castel² appear to be emerging here – the ‘*individual by virtue of excess*’, who has acquired a surface, a social position and property and is his own master, and the ‘*individual by virtue of want*’, not covered by the collective systems, having few resources and little support. But through the various forms of economic integration, differentiation and social hierarchisation we can also see how the struggle for recognition in a society in full political and economic transition is taking shape. We can see individual and collective agents acting, reacting, mobilising and building resistance in order to develop complex economic organisation strategies within the migratory experience.

²R. Castel, C.Haroche (2001): *Propriété privée, propriété sociale, propriété de soi*, Fayard, Paris.

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