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## Abstract

During the 1950s, the Chinese Communist Party created the hukou system to segregate urban workers in the cities and the peasants in the countryside. One of the reasons the CCP did this was to help jumpstart their economy by developing their industrial sector. After the reform and opening policies in 1976, China's rural populace was allowed to migrate to other provinces in China but could not receive public services due to their rural hukou status. Over forty years later, China's hukou system has gone through various reforms but still continues to prevent rural migrant workers from receiving an urban hukou. This is due to the discriminatory and decentralized nature of their hukou policies.

This master's thesis will attempt to track the implementation efforts made in China's most recent attempt to reform their hukou system as outlined in the 2014 National New Urbanization Plan. The research questions state: What progress has been made in Chinese cities towards distributing urban hukous since the 2014 National New Urbanization Plan? And in what ways does the progress vary across different tiered cities?

To address the research questions, the researcher collected existing statistical government data from central, provincial, and local governments websites, and secondary literature was gathered from online newspaper websites, US-China business websites, scholarly online articles, and printed books. Hukou implementation efforts were measured in terms of 1) whether rural migrants were given a local hukou or residence permit from 2015-2018; and 2) whether the local government created people-oriented schemes to help rural migrants feel more socially inclusive. The four cities analyzed were Shenzhen, Chengdu, Shijiazhuang, and Luoyang.

Shenzhen's hukou policies were elitist and discriminatory against rural migrant workers since their main focus is to continue developing their technological sector. Chengdu's policies were more accommodating towards rural migrant workers since the RDA theory allowed Chengdu officials to develop a new type of hukou system to meet their needs. However, the distribution of urban hukous remains incremental in Chengdu. Shijiazhuang's hukou policies have incrementally improved since 2015 to make it easier for rural migrant workers to receive an urban hukou. Nevertheless, not many rural migrant workers decided to obtain an urban hukou in Shijiazhuang due to their preference to go to more well-known Northeastern cities like Beijing and Tianjin. In comparison, thousands of rural migrant workers have received an urban hukou in Luoyang due to their local government's lax policies and positive/dependent views of the population. To improve the current 2014 NUP, the study recommended: higher financial investment and resource allocation to second and third tier cities; protection of rural migrant worker's land rights; greater coordination among central, provincial, and local governments; and an increase in accountability and transparency during the implementation process.

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## **Chapter One - Introduction**

### **Background**

In 2014, the Chinese State Council along with the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) created the National New Urbanization Plan (NUP). The focus of the NUP is to sustain economic growth and to continue modernizing the urban and rural areas still lacking behind in terms of infrastructure and services (State Council, 2014). By 2020, it seeks to grant 100 million rural migrant workers with an urban hukou mainly in second and third tier cities. It also predicts the urbanization rate will reach 60 percent and hopes the urban household registration rate of the total population will reach 45 percent by 2020. So far, there has been a 3.5% increase growth rate in the urban population of China from 2014 to 2018. At the end of 2017, the urbanization rate of population with household registration was 43.37 percent (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2018).

This applied research project will center on the reform process of the hukou system in China. The hukou system is a unique form of internal migration control that allows one to only receive public services in the locale they were born in. A fair number of rural migrants have obtained urban hukou in these selected urban locales and enjoy a higher standard of living. This includes: greater access to clean water, internet services, social insurance, transportation services, modern living spaces, and formal jobs. Nevertheless, this is not the status quo for rural migrants attempting to gain urban hukou across China's differently tiered cities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

China's regional decentralized regime is continuing to discriminate the efforts of rural migrant workers to obtain an urban hukou in their desired place of residence and work.

*Government constraints:* The 2014 reform of the hukou system continues to socially constrain rural migrants' access to an urban hukou keeping them with a continuing sense of instability and insecurity in their daily lives. According to Li, Wang, and He, this is "due to imperfect institutions and current condition of public finance, the large amount of migrant rural workers cannot enjoy equal opportunity of public service, education and healthcare as the urban inhabitants. There are also implicit troubles of difference of culture and social status between the two groups, migrant rural workers and existing urban dwellers" (2016, p.47). The 2014 hukou system makes attempts to provide fairer or equal access to urban hukou and its benefits for newly transferred urban residents; however, these policies vary widely across China. Tier one cities (i.e. Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou) promote scoring systems that favor highly-skilled rural migrant workers. For example, in Guangzhou they require a four-year contribution to their social insurance scheme, legal residence, ages 20-45 only, secondary school graduate, and a holder of local residence permit (Li, Chen, and Hu, 2016). The issue lies in the fact that most low-skilled, rural urban migrant workers want to migrate to the first-tier cities because of their prominent social institutions but cannot due to their restrictive policies.

*Public vs private problem:* On the surface, this seems like an obvious public problem the party-state needs to resolve. However, now that China has increasingly marketized and decentralized its economic and government institutions, it needs to rely on both sectors to address the current problem. The party-state must provide public services and facilities in the second and third cities the rural migrants decide to settle in. On the other hand, the private sector must provide employment opportunities, medical insurance, and steady wages. Both sectors need to work together to fund, monitor, and provide these services.

*Central vs Local:* The most influential stakeholders in the Central government are the State Council members and the leaders of various central government ministries. The members of the State Council and central government ministries jointly write the legislation to be implemented across China. In addition, they have the power to revoke the decisions made or implemented at the provincial and local level of government. The most influential stakeholders in local governments are local cadres and private businesses. China's local cadres interpret the law in a hierarchical manner, from the provincial level to the county-level of government; yet, the lack of a formal judicial system allows them to interpret the law according to their local setting. For many, this does not involve resettling rural migrants. Local governments would rather expand their profits through large scale agricultural enterprises and rural displacement, than provide hukou reforms. Andreas and Zhan state "in several provinces over the past decade, we have found local officials at all levels actively seeking to attract agrarian capital" (2016, p.807). On a similar note, private businesses should support government policies and abide by regulations that advocate for increasing opportunities and services for rural migrants. Nonetheless, on most occasions they ignore government policy in this regard and exploit rural migrants for their cheap labor and provide no employment stability and benefits. Its good business to maintain these exploitative practices to maximize profits and reduce costs that could result from steady wages or benefits (Li, Chen, & Hu, 2016). Lastly, the least influential stakeholders are the rural migrants themselves. Rural migrant workers helped spark the record numbers of economic growth through the cheap labor they provided to the southern and eastern coastal provinces of China, but largely remain powerless with no prominent voice on their behalves.

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this master's thesis is to track the implementation efforts made in China's most recent attempt to reform their hukou system as outlined in the 2014 National New Urbanization Plan. The research questions state: What progress has been made in Chinese cities towards implementing hukou reforms since the 2014 National New Urbanization Plan? And in what ways does the progress vary across different tiered cities? The following section will briefly explain the methods and procedures used in the study.

**Methods and Procedures**

To address the above-mentioned research questions, this study will focus on three measures: 1) whether rural migrants were given a local hukou or residence permit from 2015-2018; 2) whether the local government created people-oriented schemes to help rural migrants feel more socially inclusive; and 3) whether the differently tiered cities met the criteria of the 2014 NUP along with the researcher's interpretation of the 2014 NUP criteria. Existing statistical government data were collected from central, provincial, and local governments websites, and secondary literature was gathered from online newspaper websites, US-China business websites, scholarly online articles, and printed books. The descriptive data from the online government websites included hukou policies from each city, statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics of China, recent statistical communiques from each city; local government work reports, recent statistical yearbooks of each city, and local government announcements of policy. The cities selected from the differently tier cities included: Shenzhen, Chengdu, Shijiazhuang, and Luoyang.

## **Significance of the Study**

Tracking the progress of Chinese cities efforts to distribute urban hukous to rural migrant workers since the 2014 NUP is a necessary endeavor. Not much has been written on this specific topic. The results of this study will be an evaluation of the efforts to provide an efficient, effective, and accountable system across second and third tier cities in China. The ultimate benefactors of the study will be the rural migrant workers who are currently attempting to survive in these cities without the basic public services their urban counterparts enjoy. Rural migrant labor has helped catapult China's economy onto the world stage, it is past due time they received the basic services needed for a comfortable, modern life.

## **Summary**

In 2014, the Chinese State Council and the NDRC created the National New Urbanization Plan for the reallocation of 100 million rural migrants to second and third tier cities to further promote urbanization and economic development in China. Four years later, rural migrant workers are still having trouble obtaining an urban hukou. This master's thesis will attempt to track the implementation efforts made by Chinese cities to reform their local hukou system and specifically look at four differently tiered cities across China in this effort.

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter Two will review the literature to: explain the hukou system, its historical impact on China's economic and social development; and what theories explain how the hukou system has discriminated against migrant rural workers. Chapter Three will discuss the methodology and data collection procedures used to analyze the progress made by Chinese cities to implement the reforms of the hukou system issued in the 2014 NUP. Chapter Four will look at the results conducted from the analysis stated in Chapter Three and

discuss what the implications are from the findings. Chapter Five will summarize the study, provide conclusions of the results, and provide a few recommendations grounded in the findings of the study.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

In this chapter, the historical background of the hukou system from the founding of the PRC in 1949 to the present will first be explored. The focus of the historical background will be split into four parts: the Maoist years (1949-1976), the Deng Xiaoping era (1976-1997), the years since China's WTO membership (2001-2014), and the current conditions post 2014 NUP. The next section will review the relevant themes of the literature that include their findings, theories, methods, solutions and critiques. Chapter Two will end with a summary of the literature and a prelude to Chapter Three.

### **Historical background**

Maoist years (1949-1976): The hukou system has long been a part of China's history for migration control and census-taking purposes. What is a hukou? A hukou is a formal document of identification that determines your place of residence based on your place of birth. After defeating the Kuomintang Party (KMT), the CCP needed to regain control of China. Many provinces were still overrun by KMT military forces and needed to be brought under the umbrella of the CCP, so they could move forward in their pursuit to lead China towards a modern socialist state (MacFarquhar, 2011). One of the ways the CCP did was with the Directive Concerning Establishment of a Permanent System of Household Registration signed by Zhou Enlai in 1955 (Cheng and Selden, 1994). Cheng and Selden believe the hukou system

decisively shaped China's collectivist socialism by creating a spatial hierarchy of urban places and prioritizing the city over the countryside; by controlling population movement up and down the spatially defined status hierarchy, preventing population flow to the largest cities, enforcing the permanent exile of urban residents to the countryside, and binding people to the village or city of their birth; and by transferring the locus of decision-making with respect to population mobility and work from the transformed household to the work unit or danwei, specifically, in the countryside, to the lowest unit of the collective. (Cheng and Selden, p.645)

The CCP's goals were resource distribution and internal migration control (CECC, 2005). For example, they wanted to develop heavy industry in the urban areas and develop collectivization efforts through land reform in the rural areas. As the former Chairman of the State Planning Commission, Li Fuchun stated, "Socialism cannot be built on the basis of a small peasant economy; it must have a foundation of large scale industry and large scale collective farming" (MacFarquhar, p.44). To accomplish this, they gave urbanites a host of public services that included grain subsidies, free education, and medical care; while, their counterparts in the rural areas had to sell their harvest rations at a discounted price to the government and survive on meager rations and party ideology (MacFarquhar, 2011). These funds were used to provide the public services to the urban workers. The CCP emphasized that rural residents should stay in the countryside and work through collective efforts to reach an eventual state of Chinese egalitarianism. Trying to move up the social ladder was taboo in the Maoist years from the 1950s-70s. Young Red Guard members and counterrevolutionaries sent to the countryside were one of the few, controlled migration practices during the Maoist years (Dietrich, 1998).

Deng Era (1976-1997): After the charismatic and volatile leader Mao Zedong died in 1976, it took a few years for Deng Xiaoping to gain supreme power in China. Deng was one of the original members of the Politburo. He had twice been purged during the Cultural Revolution years, and regained support from various leaders in the military, party, and state organs. In 1978, he passed the reform and opening policies, making social mobility possible for millions of rural migrants who decided to move and work in the eastern/southern coastal cities such as Shanghai and Guangdong (Meisner, 1996). Some received an urban hukou in their place of work but most still could not receive the public services offered to urban residents. In 1997, rural migrants could gain an urban hukou in small cities and towns if they had stable job and place of residence for at least two years (CECC, 2005). Before continuing it is important to note that many of the rural migrants were from the impoverished central/inland provinces of Henan, Hebei, and Hunan. This should not be surprising since these provinces are relatively close to their cities of migration.

Post WTO era: For almost two decades, first tier cities across China have created point-based systems that set financial and educational criteria to attract the best and brightest of the rural migrants. Most rural migrants cannot qualify due to their unfair criteria. For example, in Beijing they require a temporary residence permit, social insurance payments for seven consecutive years, no criminal record, and to be under the legal retirement age (Galvez, 2016). The social and physical costs endured throughout the process for China's rural migrants have been twofold. On the one hand, they help provide monies for their families left back on the countryside but did so under dilapidated and menial conditions. Without the cheap labor migrant workers provided in the manufacturing, construction, and services sectors, there would be no Chinese economic miracle (World Bank, 2017). In response, the CCP and its local party leaders

reward them by increasing their purchasing power for material goods. Additionally, the State Council and the National Development and Reform Commission issued the NUP in 2014 to further reform the hukou system. However, local city governments and townships are still left to their own state capacities to provide public services. If local cadres continue to not place an emphasis on providing public services, then no real progress will be made. China's rural migrants have warranted the same basic public services (such as access to education, health care, social security, and housing) their urban counterparts receive at lower costs.

Current conditions: Many rural migrant workers who live in urban areas “have no access to urban social networks and social welfare programs, which isolates them from the rest of society” (Song, 2016). This causes a general sense of insecurity amongst most rural migrant workers coupled with their unstable housing conditions that involve lousy landlords and cramped quarters. Rural migrant workers living in the cities constantly feel the pressure to adapt and compete to make a decent living (Smith, 2014). Since they cannot rely on institutional forces, they must rely on mutual rural migrant networks to sustain themselves. This concept has further been explored in studies focusing on citizenship in China (Zhang, 2018). Zhang argues the hukou system has created a dual citizenship that has over time remained constant. Since the 1950s, citizens in China had either a rural/agricultural hukou or an urban/industrial hukou. This distinction was formally removed by the central government in the 2014 NUP but is still relevant for migrant workers trying to make a living away from their homes (State Council, 2014). Public actors (the CCP, local governments, media) and private actors need to work together and create media campaigns/programs that help rural migrants feel welcome and cared for. Currently, the southwest city of Chengdu does an exceptional job providing rural migrants with affordable

housing and relevant resources to obtain a local hukou (People's Government of Chengdu, 2018).

On a similar note, rural migrant workers must also give up their rural land rights if they want to obtain an urban hukou. Consequently, many choose to hold onto their rural hukou status in case things go awry in their present insecure and unstable conditions. Others do not get the chance to keep their land, as they are involuntarily dislocated to the urban areas that did business with their respective local governments to use their land for profit (Li, Chen, and Hu, 2016). According to Wang, Hui, Choguill, and Jia, "local governments have quickly expanded their urban land by means of land acquisition" (2015, p. 282). By increasing their amount of land, local governments can create ghost towns, places with extremely low vacancy rates, to meet set GDP targets by the central government (Wang et al., 2015). This approach, like the central government one, fails to consider the livelihoods of the rural migrant workers. The central government of China needs to redirect their incentive structure for local officials from economic growth to socioeconomic growth. If so, local officials can provide rural migrants with adequate compensation for their land rights and focus on making the rural-urban transition easier as well. The following section looks at the relevant themes in the literature.

### **Review of the Literature**

The bulk of the literature concerning China's hukou system or household registration system deals in areas concerning: discrimination, labor rights, citizenship, and rural land displacements. Themes to be considered include the decentralization of hukou reforms across China, and the central government's market reform agenda to increase urbanization and economic growth. The exploration of these themes is crucial to understand the current complex situation in China and the difficulties that arise when analyzing Chinese policy. These areas of

phenomena will be theoretically analyzed using the regional decentralized authoritarian regime theory (RDA) and the social constructions theory.

### *RDA theory*

To understand how policy works, it is important to know what kind of government one is analyzing. Typically, China is viewed as a communist authoritarian government with a rigid top-bottom hierarchical structure. The CCP and the central government is viewed as the most important decision maker when it comes to political or economic issues. The following theory by Xu will attempt to explain what type of governance system China has and how it correlates towards the 2014 NUP.

The regional decentralized authoritarian regime is a mix of political centralization and economic regional decentralization. The CCP is the pillar of the RDA regime and controls personnel matters of subnational governments and runs key economic sectors. This includes overseeing propaganda efforts through mass media and ideological campaign efforts. On the other hand, subnational governments compete amongst one another through experimental and pilot reforms to reach set GDP targets. They rely on their state capacities to tackle these reforms and get nationally recognized by the CCP whenever they find success. In turn, their successes are exported throughout Chinese provinces and adopted there according to their own capacities. i.e. household responsibility system (1980s) or special economic zones (1980s-present).

Provincial, municipal, county, and town officials are incentivized to push reforms forward by way of empowerment and autonomy given by the central government. This is most commonly seen through regional competition for performance rankings (promotion), fiscal matters, and through city status upgrading schemes. Officials who successfully implement

reforms are internally promoted and are relocated to other regions, so they can attempt to replicate their successes there. On a similar note, local officials at county and township levels are more fiscally motivated by maximizing property values in their jurisdictions through negotiated or forced land transfers from rural migrants. Lastly, “in the city status upgrading scheme, municipal governments are granted more administrative authority and the political position of a city is raised, thus more strongly incentivizing its officials” (Xu, p.1104). For example, upgrading county governments to city governments and upgrading prefecture level cities to the deputy provincial rank city. In each of these scenarios, autonomy in economic matters is substantially increased.

Another important set of related actors are the various ministries in China that help write and implement policy. Like any entity, they have their goals and own interests that may conflict with another. However, when considering the delivery of urban hukous to rural migrants across China, it is crucial to note that these ministries must work together to ensure it is done appropriately. This includes sharing information, resources, and personnel to help implement the policy. Understanding how the governance system works in China is necessary when analyzing why certain provinces or cities are progressing in their ability to implement their hukou policies.

### *Social Constructions of Rural Migrants*

Schneider and Ingram argue that “social constructions of target populations influence the policy agenda and the selection of policy tools, as well as rationales that legitimate policy choices” (p.334). Social constructions of target populations discuss the cultural characterizations or popular images of persons or groups whose behavior and wellbeing are affected by public policy. Simply, they can be understood as stereotypes molded by culture, politics, and media. According to Schneider and Ingram, when power and social constructions converge, four types

of target populations are formed: advantaged, contenders, dependents, and deviants. Each type of target populations has positive/negative constructions and strong/weak powers.

In the case of China's rural migrant workers, they fit under both the negative social construction of deviants with little power and the positive construction of dependents with little power. For example, Zhou states, "long-established urban dwellers systematically associate rural migrant workers with high mobility, high crime rates and social unrest. Rural migrant workers are often viewed as a threat, competing for scarce urban resources" (Zhou, 2017). They are viewed as a blind flow of masses intent on making trouble wherever they go. Back to Schneider and Ingram, under each category they receive both benefits and burdens. Some of the burdens rural migrants endure are a result not having an urban hukou in their city of work. Since most rural migrants work in low-skilled professions, their employers do not provide them with a work contract. As a result, they receive none of the medical or work-related benefits that come with a formal work contract. According to the China Labor Bulletin, only 35.1% of migrant workers had a work contract, 22% had basic pension or medical insurance, 27% had work-related injury insurance, and only 17% had unemployment insurance (May, 2018). As Schneider and Ingram mention, the benefits are undersubscribed, and the burdens are oversubscribed for dependents. Additionally, since they do not have a local hukou, they cannot buy/rent housing in metropolitan areas and are forced to live in the outskirts of the city in dilapidated housing. Rural migrants are also affected by punitive policy through the point-based hukou policies throughout China. First tier cities have point-based hukou policies that only favor advantaged and contenders target populations. Most rural migrants cannot meet their criteria and are stuck in the same situation. This is another example of overburdening rural migrant workers because they are viewed as being unworthy to work in these cities. People centered urbanization was the new approach the

State Council took with the 2014 NUP as opposed to land centered urbanization. However, the resulting point-based residence permit policies continue to favor the advantaged groups rather than the powerless. Unlike other powerless groups in democratic societies, rural migrants do not have a political vehicle to voice their frustrations. The CCP's paranoia of social disorder causes them to censor and stomp any protests they may start. The paranoia stems from the historical tragedies that occurred during Mao Zedong's reign from the Great Leap Forward to the Cultural Revolution (Meisner, 1996). The decentralization of hukou reforms and the market reform agenda themes will be explored next.

Decentralization of hukou reforms: The unequal access of urban hukous for rural migrant workers in urban locales can be attributed to the way China develops and implements its policies. To start off, the "central government articulates the principles, and provincial or local governments adapt these in local policies that fit their particular interests or circumstances" (Li, Chen, and Hu, p. 521). This is known as the CMC model, or the City Managing City model and PMC, Province Managing County model. According to Yang and Wu, the former helped create overarching master plans, improved commodity flows between rural and urban areas, and increased redistribution of wealth (2015, p.332). As mentioned earlier, mega cities and larger cities prefer highly-skilled rural migrant workers and thus set quotas in accordance to level of education, housing, time of residence in city, etc. (Johnson, 2017). As a result, many rural migrant workers cannot achieve urban hukou status and are left living in the peri-urban areas with only the support of other rural migrant worker families that come from the same villages to live and work. Second and third tier cities and towns place less restrictions on receiving an urban hukou, but many rural migrant workers remain skeptical of the public services offered i.e. dibao system (Smith, 2014). Based on the RDA theory, the decentralization of hukou reforms across

China has allowed local governments to develop discriminatory policies according to their state capacities. Let's now look at the market reform agenda the CCP used to justify its 2014 NUP policy.

Market reform agenda: Market reforms helped influence the central government's plan to solve the unequal distribution of urban hukous across China by having them focus on increasing urbanization rates and economic growth. If more rural migrant workers became urban residents, then they could attribute to the local economy by spending more on services, houses, and consumer goods (Li et al., 2016). The central government, using market logic and language, sets the broad parameters of the system and then allows provincial and local governments to act according to their capacity and resources available (Zhang, 2018). The "people oriented" approach they outlined in the 2014 Urbanization Plan does not follow the actual realities occurring for migrant workers across China (State Council, 2014). Instead, local governments follow neoliberal practices of inclusion through exclusion by allowing rural migrants to temporarily reside in their cities to provide cheap labor and expel them whenever their work is no longer required (Zhang, 2018). As detailed in the social constructions theory, this practice is possible because the CCP has designated rural migrant workers as weak, dependent, and deviant actors. Higher tiered local governments competitively use the market reform agenda to their advantage in their efforts to reach new levels of economic growth. This is another example on how the RDA theory is used by local governments to help win the favor of the central government.

### *Present Solutions*

The central government needs to improve its governance and market reform agenda towards hukou reforms. It can accomplish this by improving policy transparency and

representation. There needs to be clear and consistent procedures, open publicity of policies, and formal consultation amongst both interested parties (Li et al., 2016). Rural migrant workers need to understand and be informed of the policies affecting their daily lives. Without proper policy outreach, many will remain living in their unfortunate conditions. As mentioned before, the southwest city of Chengdu and its sister city Chongqing are examples for the rest of China to emulate in terms of government transparency (Morgan, 2018). If this were the case nationwide, analyzing domestic policies in China would be less troublesome and accessible, i.e., comprehensive public data records. For the most part, domestic policy analysts rely on their language skills, location, and donor support (university or NGOs) to complete this task.

Improving policy representation already has its base with the people-centered approach outlined in the hukou reform section in the NUP. However, supplemental actions need to be implemented for this to happen. Relevant government ministries and private actors need to coordinate public relations efforts with the media to help improve the deviant public image of rural migrants in China. This can include: a TV news series on the livelihoods of a diverse number of rural migrants; interviews/footage in their places of residence and work are necessary to help demystify the deviant social construction of the rural migrants.

The central government must make changes in its market reform agenda to reflect the pressing needs of rural migrant workers. This includes: greater access to affordable housing, social insurance, and education. Smith also notes it is critical to invest in “education, health, and financial institutions that help residents achieve sustainable social resilience and better risk management” (2014, p. 380). Provincial and city governments need to take the lead in these efforts in terms of planning and implementation. As a result, migrants will no longer be viewed as second-class citizens by urban residents as they slowly integrate into urban society. The

central government's logic has always been that this would not be financially plausible for many cities due to various logistical problems; however, this mindset needs to change if it wants a citizenry to be socially and financially satisfied.

Another best practice is the urbanization of rural communities which provides millions of rural workers with urban-like amenities. For example, Rosenberg, a known China specialist, analyzed this event in Chenggu county, Shandong province. They created: public squares, sport facilities, and service centers that offered social security and welfare support (Rosenberg, 2013). Many of the rural inhabitants enjoyed the urbanized amenities offered since most never had access to paved roads or clean tap water. Urbanizing the countryside is a pragmatic method to curb the lack of public services offered in this locale; however, the case of Chenggu county is not the norm of these projects in the countryside. Most rural counties do not have high collective incomes to afford these projects. Thus, "the success of any redevelopment is heavily dependent upon the willingness of the villagers to pay for new infrastructure themselves (Rosenberg, 2013, p. 69). Officials in these counties delicately avert overburdening their residents with new costs to avoid social unrest.

In turn, local governments need to also change its market reform agenda by putting the citizens needs above their economic goals. This means allowing rural migrant workers to decide if they want to keep or sell their land if they change their hukou status and giving proper reimbursement to them if they decide to sell their land rights. The market reform agenda has led to an increasing push for local governments to remove rural workers off their land to increase local economic growth by way of large-scale agriculture business; however, local governments must acquiesce both their interests and that of their local citizenry if it expects to be

economically and socially stable (Andreas and Zhan, 2016). These solutions serve as a basis for any efforts to systematically reform the hukou system across Chinese cities.

### *Methods*

From previous research on the hukou system, the methods used tend to involve government work reports, policies, and surveys, in depth personal interviews, and tools of statistical analysis to measure the progress made towards hukou reform across China. Some of these methods can be limiting due to the opaque and inclusive nature of the CCP government towards sensitive topics of discussion. For example, a lot of the government ministries websites are difficult to sift through and do not always update their information for the public. Nevertheless, in depth interviews and surveys are usually completed over a year's worth of work. For example, from 2010-2012, Chan did fieldwork across seven cities across four regions in China. In her research, Chan "conducted over 130 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with government officials, doctors, teachers, and migrant workers. Because responsibility for managing migrants is spread across multiple bureaucracies, I spoke with provincial, municipal, and district officials representing health and family planning, education, human resources and social security, development, and public security" (2015, p.10). Conducting fieldwork in China also requires proficiency in Mandarin and a certain amount of guanxi (connections) to find an appropriate subset of the population to work with.

### **Conclusion**

The social mobility of rural migrants has historically been limited by the CCP to reach grandiose social and economic goals. In 2014, they created the NUP and decided to place a people-centered emphasis in their urbanization efforts. However, rural migrants are continually

being constrained in their efforts to gain an urban hukou resulting from China's regional decentralized regime and by their social constructions created by the CCP. Nevertheless, second and third tier cities are making incremental strides in their efforts to provide urban hukou to rural migrants. In Chapter Three, the study will look at four differentiated tier cities across China and compare/contrast their hukou policies to determine if their methods can be replicated in similar settings.

With all this in mind, there has not been much publicly written on the progress made towards implementing the reformed hukou system as stated in the 2014 NUP. Reports on the topic may be available but are not easy to find due to the CPC's censorship of government data or because it may come at a price, i.e., Economist Intelligence Unit data. This paper will attempt to fill the gap in knowledge by examining four differently tiered cities in China. Borrowing from previous scholarly work, this paper will use the most recent statistical data from all government levels, and relevant secondary sources to analyze the progress being made towards hukou reform in their cities.

### **Chapter 3 Methodology**

The purpose of this master's thesis is to track the implementation efforts made in China's most recent attempt to reform their hukou system as outlined in the 2014 National New Urbanization Plan. The research questions state: What progress has been made in Chinese cities towards implementing hukou reforms since the 2014 National New Urbanization Plan? And in what ways does the progress vary across different tiered cities? According to the literature review, migrating rural populations continue to face obstacles in their endeavors to receive an urban hukou in their place of work. Migrating rural populations consistently deal with social

exclusion, and social dislocation practices all attributed to the CCP's market reform agenda to further increase China's urbanization rate.

In this endeavor, hukou policies of four differently tiered cities were examined across China. The cities included: Shenzhen, Chengdu, Shijiazhuang, and Luoyang. As mentioned before, the 2014 NUP allows cities across China to implement their own hukou policies according to their local capacities; so, each of their hukou policies was analyzed to see what type of progress was being made according to the criteria of the 2014 NUP and the researcher's own criteria based off it as well. The criteria of the 2014 NUP will be explored in the next section (State Council, 2014).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Existing data from People's Republic of China (PRC) government websites were collected. The data were descriptive and included: hukou policies from each city, statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics of China, recent statistical communiques from each city, local government work reports, recent statistical yearbooks of each city, local government announcements of policy, and newspaper articles explaining hukou policy updates.

### **Understanding Hukou Implementation**

The PRC government along with the CCP wants to continue increasing its urbanization process. The PRC government hopes to accomplish this by: promoting the reform of the household registration system, setting up a unified land market for urban and rural areas, and integrating planning and design with provision of infrastructure and services for urban and rural areas. One of the core pillars of legitimacy for the CCP is healthy, consistent economic growth rates. By implementing the 2014 NUP, the CCP seeks to continue this trend by resettling over 100 million rural migrants to second and lower tiered cities by 2020. Through these efforts,

newly urbanized rural populations can formally contribute their efforts into the economy while receiving public services.

Below is a list of criteria set by the State Council and the NDRC for the 2014 National New Urbanization Plan (State Council, 2014). It is followed by a short critique on how it can improve given the current conditions facing rural migrant workers.

#### 2014 NUP Criteria:

- persist in being pro-active yet prudent, standardized and orderly.
- Persist in being people-oriented and respecting the public's wishes i.e. respect their autonomy in determining their residency; safeguard their lawful rights and interests of migrant rural populations
- Persist in adjusting measures to local conditions and differential treatment.
- Development goals: make further adjustments to household registration relocation policies, unify the registration system for urban and rural household registries, and comprehensively implement a residence permit system. Accelerate the construction and publicly sharing of a national population database. Steadily promote advancement in the coverage of basic public services for all permanent residences, such as compulsory education, occupational services, basic elderly care, basic medical services, and housing security.
- By 2020, establish the basis of a new type of hukou system that is people-oriented, rational, efficient, standardized, and orderly, that is built comprehensively to adapt to moderately prosperous society, effectively supports social management and public services, and protects civil rights in accordance with the law. Strive to have about 100

million migrating rural populations to and other permanent residents to settle in urban areas.

The following changes need to be added to the criteria of the 2014 NUP: develop an evaluation system, remove distinction between temporary and permanent registration, and omit differential treatment in the third criterion. By developing an evaluation system for the development goals of the NUP, it holds government officials accountable and provides the public transparency. By removing the distinction between temporary and permanent residence registrations, migrating rural populations are given an opportunity to start on equal footing with their local permanent residents. Lastly, in the third criterion the researcher omitted 'differential treatment' because it allows certain local governments to continue excluding migrating rural populations rather than provide them with actions specific to their needs. Using existing PRC government data and primary/secondary literature on hukou policy, the 2014 NUP can be analyzed based on their criteria and with some additional changes. In this analysis, incremental progress is expected in some criteria and less progress in their attempts to develop an evaluation system to track their progress. This hypothesis is common regarding social policy development in China. Economic development is the primary focus while social development remains secondary at best. Based on the 2018 Statistical Communique of China, there remains 286 million rural migrants (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). That's about 22% of China's population living without a stable place of residence and without access to public services. For this reasoning, CCP and PRC government officials need to be held accountable for their implementation efforts of the 2014 NUP. Without a prominent actor to voice their concerns on a national scale, these efforts seem unlikely to develop in a holistic manner.

## **Variables and Measurement**

Measuring these various criteria was no easy task. Hukou implementation efforts are measured in terms of 1) whether rural migrants were given a local hukou or residence permit from 2015-2018; and 2) whether the local government created people-oriented schemes to help rural migrants feel more socially inclusive. Official statistics on a few of these measures are not publicly available and may not demonstrate whether rural migrants can access an urban hukou or residence permit. For example, the local governments selected still do not have a comprehensive hukou system that allows them to evaluate their progress. And, all the relevant information is scattered throughout their local government websites with no formal standards or procedures to be discovered.

## **Cases of Cities**

The cases are differently tiered cities throughout China. As mentioned earlier, the central government creates the overarching policy and the local governments are responsible for planning, administering, and funding the services. This research focused on one tier, new one tier, second tier and third tier cities. The next section explains what is meant by the tier system.

According to the South China Morning Post, “Tier systems are widely used to classify Chinese cities. The tiers are used by analysts to study consumer behaviour, income level, politics, and local trends to help tune strategies to local conditions” (SCMP, 2016). China has a four-tier system for its 613 cities and the tiers are usually defined by their gross domestic product, politics, and population. The GDP of Chinese cities ranges from under US\$20 billion to US\$350 trillion. For example, the GDP of second tier cities ranges from US\$68 billion and US\$299 billion. The second classification of the tier system is the political administration of

cities. Tier one cities are directly controlled by the central government; second tier cities include provincial capital cities and sub-provincial cities; third tier cities consist of prefecture capital cities; and tier four cities are county level cities. The third classification of the tier system is population. Tier one cities have more than 15 million people; second tier cities range from 3 million to 15 million people; third tier cities include cities from 150,000 to 3 million people; and four tier cities are populated by less than 150,000 people (SCMP, 2016). Rural migrants tend to migrate towards areas of high economic growth where the opportunities are higher in terms of jobs, wages, and education (The China Labour Bulletin, 2018). However, these also happen to be the cities where it is more difficult for rural migrants to access public services.

Since China is so regionally diverse, cities were selected across different provinces to provide comparisons of the 2014 NUP. Shenzhen was compared with Chengdu, and Shijiazhuang with Luoyang. Shenzhen is a hi-tech megalopolis in Guangdong province on part of the Pearl River Delta and Chengdu is the capital megacity of Sichuan province located in southwestern China. These cities were compared due to their relative population size and because of their unique people-oriented schemes for rural migrants. Shijiazhuang is the capital and largest city in Hebei province and Luoyang is a prefecture level city located in Western Henan province. According to The Economist Intelligence Unit, both Shijiazhuang and Luoyang are emerging cities in terms of urbanization and economic growth (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2017; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018).

Like Chen, this research expects that crucial variation occurred over time within the cities rather than between the cities of comparison. Nevertheless, regional differences in their hukou policies and schemes were apparent (Chen, 2015). The higher tiered cities unsurprisingly had

more tech friendly websites and rural migrant friendly hukou schemes. Shenzhen has the highest percentage of residing rural migrants, while Chengdu was a part of the pilot hukou schemes in 2015 (People's Government of Chengdu, 2015)

### **Limitations**

Most of the limitations of this research were related to data collection procedures. All the government websites the researcher investigated were confusing and tedious. Initially the government websites URLs searched for, ended with /en, meaning the information was translated in English. However, after much frustration and searching the researcher discovered an alternative version of the government websites with the URLs ending in /cn. These websites were easier to navigate and provided much of the information used in the research. The language constraint made it difficult to discern peculiarities in their policies and yearly statistical books. For example, the 2018 statistical communique and 2018 yearly statistical book of Chengdu was mainly in Mandarin with the exception of the table of the contents in English. Similarly, due to the decentralized regional regime, local governments do not have pressure to regularly update their statistics of rural migrants. The NBS prefers to regularly update their economic indicators of growth on a yearly basis (Leng, 2019). On a different note, the type of cities the researcher chose are regionally diverse and comparative in terms of size and population. As a result, it partially represents the lower tiered cities where many are encouraged to migrate. These cities were chosen due to their historical connections to rural migrants and because of their potential to become cities of residency for rural migrants. The following chapter will explore the results of the analysis and discuss the importance of the findings for the rural migrants and the CCP.

## **Chapter Four - Results and Discussion**

The researcher initially faced some obstacles in terms of data collection procedures. However, after consistently digging into CCP government databases, the researcher found relevant sources of data. These sources of data served as the basis for analyzing the implementation efforts of the 2014 NUP. The first section in Chapter Four answers the research question: What progress has been made in Chinese cities towards implementing hukou reforms since the 2014 National New Urbanization Plan? It includes the roles played by the Ministry of Public Security, the National Bureau of Statistics, and the National Development and Reform Commission. The following two sections address the research question: And in what ways does the progress vary across different tiered cities? This is done by comparing Shenzhen with Chengdu and Shijiazhuang with Luoyang. The end of each section will discuss how the theories used in Chapter Two are applied to the findings and evaluate how each city has implemented the criteria of the 2014 NUP along with some of the changes added by the researcher.

### **Incremental progress of 2014 NUP**

According to the Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on the 2018 National Economic and Social Development, urban permanent residents numbered 831.3 million, accounting for 59.6 percent of the total population (the urbanization rate of permanent residents), 1.1 percentage points higher than that at the end of 2017. And the urbanization rate of population with household registration was 43.37 percent, 1.02 percentage points higher than that at the end of 2017 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). The following sections discuss the roles played by the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), and the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) to help explain this outcome.

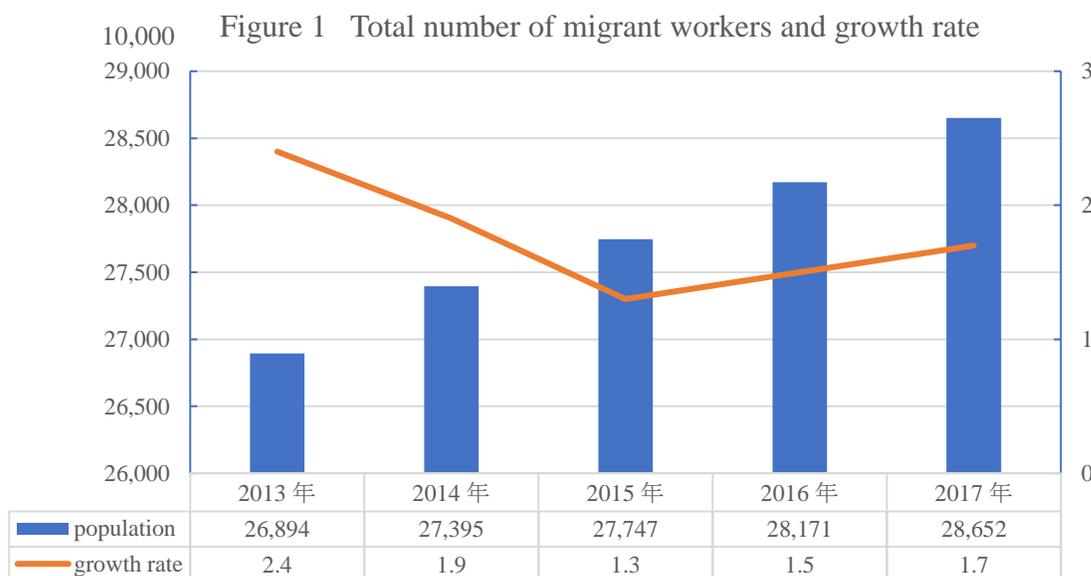
*Role of MPS*

Since the implementation of the 2014 National New Urbanization Plan, the MPS has led the street level bureaucratic work to reform the hukou system throughout China. In 2015, the MPS implemented the “three systems” for the acceptance of resident ID cards, loss reporting and lost recruitment systems, so that the masses no longer travel back and forth for handling identity cards and prevent lost documents from being lost (MPS, 2017). According to a 2017 news release by the MPS, “the people’s licenses have been more convenient, and the use of documents has become more secure and has been well received by the masses” (MPS, 2017). It also states that 11.49 residence ID cards have been handled for the people in all regions since 2015. To add, a third-party evaluation report titled *Evaluation Report on the Implementation Effect of Some Public Security Reform Projects* announced the “satisfaction of the masses in handling ID cards in different places reached 98.2%” (MPS, 2017). The three-month long report was conducted by the School of Government Administration of Peking University, the People's Public Security University of China, and the Social Opinion Survey Center of the National Bureau of Statistics. It looked at “whether the public security reform measures were promoted and carried out as scheduled, whether they were fully implemented, whether problems and problems existed in the process of advancement, whether they saw actual results, and whether the people were satisfied, etc., assessed the policy content itself, and evaluated policy implementation and policies” (MPS, 2017). Similarly, a Xinhua news reporter discovered that thirty-one provinces have established specific implementation measures for the residence permit system and have made it available to the public. The reporter also found that since 2016 over 50 million residence permits have been issued nationally (Xinhua News, 2017). The MPS’s role is straightforward, to control the outflow

and inflow of the masses. However, over the years their role has slowly become more socially conscious to help rural migrant workers in their efforts to obtain an urban hukou. To further track the implementation efforts of the 2014 NUP, the *2017 Migrant Workers Monitoring Survey* report issued by the NBS will be discussed next.

### *Role of NBS*

For the past few years, the NBS has issued a *Migrant Workers Monitoring Survey* report to help track the movement and citizenization of migrant workers in China. Citizenization occurs when rural migrant workers receive the same rights enjoyed by urban residents after they obtain an urban hukou. According to the NBS, “the survey covers rural areas in 31 provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government). In 1,527 survey counties (districts), 8,890 villages and 237,000 rural laborers were selected as survey samples” (NBS, 2017). Some of the factors it discusses is the scale, distribution, and flow of migrant workers; and the social integration of migrant workers in cities. Figure One displays the total number of migrant workers and their growth rate since 2013.



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017

As stated above, in 2017 the total number of migrant workers reached 286.52 million, an increase of 4.81 million over the previous year. In terms of flow, the China Labour Bulletin found “The number of short-distance (本地) migrants increased by 2.0 percent in 2017 to reach 115 million, while the number of long-distance (外出) migrants rose by 1.5 percent, to stand at about 172 million” (2018). The China Labour Bulletin conducted their own analysis of the 2017 NBS survey and helped clarify some of the confusion found by the researcher. The 2017 NBS survey also found that most rural migrants still prefer the eastern region in China, but there has been an increasing growth of migrant workers in the western and central region. The eastern region accounted for 36.4% of the total number of rural workers; the central region accounted for 33%; the western region accounted for 27.3%, an increase of 3.3 % from the previous year; and the Northeast accounted for 3.3%, an increase of 3.1%. Through these efforts, varied progress is being made throughout China’s regions to reform their hukou systems. Table One illustrates these findings in greater detail.

**Table 1 Regional distribution of migrant workers at the output and import locations**

Unit: 10,000, %

	2016 Nian	2017 Nian	Increment	Speed increase
According to the output location:				
East area	10400	10430	30	0.3
Central Region	9279	9450	171	1.8
Western Region	7563	7814	251	3.3
North-east area	929	958	29	3.1
Press the input location:				
In the east	15960	15993	33	0.2
In the central region	5746	5912	166	2.9
In the western region	5484	5754	270	4.9
In the Northeast	904	914	10	1.1
In other regions	77	79	2	2.6

Note: Other regions refer to Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and foreign countries.

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017

In terms of the social integration of migrant workers in cities, 38% considered themselves to be local in the cities they are residing in, an increase of 2.4% points over the previous year. 80% stated they were “very adapted and adapted to local life, 18% in general, and 1.3% in uncomfortable and very unsuitable” (NBS, 2017). However, it was also reported that the larger the city size, the more difficult it was for rural migrant workers to feel a sense of belonging and adapt to local life. Table 2 illustrates these findings.

**Table 2 Sense of belonging to migrant workers in the city**

Unit: %

	Considered to be local Proportion of migrant workers		The proportion of migrant workers who are very comfortable with local life	
	2016 Nian	2017 Nian	2016 Nian	2017 Nian
total	35.6	38.0	16.0	18.4
By city type:				
More than 5 million cities	15.3	18.7	12.1	14.3
300-500 million cities	23.9	25.3	14.6	17.5
100-300 million cities	39.2	43.1	16.1	19.7
50-100 million cities	46.7	48.7	18.1	20.1
Cities and towns with a population of less than 500,000	63.0	63.2	21.0	23.0

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017

In addition, the 2017 NBS survey found that of the migrant workers who entered the city, 56.1% were very satisfied and satisfied with the current living conditions; 36.8% were neutral, down 2.3% points from the previous year; and 7.1% were not satisfied and very dissatisfied. The next section looks at the role played by the NDRC.

### *Role of NDRC*

Since 2013, the NDRC has been leading the way to help formulate, organize, implement, and monitor the progress of the 2014 NUP. In 2014, the State Council approved the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Joint Conference System for Promoting New Urbanization

Work which consists of 15 government departments including the NDRC. Members of each department have yearly plenary meetings to: determine key tasks of NUP, implement key decision-making measures of the State Council, and to nationally promote high quality development of new urbanization. In their most recent meeting, the “Key Tasks for New Urbanization Construction in 2019 was issued and approved by the State Council on April 8, 2019 (NDRC, 2019). It announced that local governments of cities with an urban population of 1 million to 3 million will eliminate all restrictions for hukou. According to Siwei and Shen, the NDRC also said “governments of cities with an urban population of 3 million to 5 million should also ease restrictions for farmers-turned workers who have lived there for more than five years, as well as technicians, college and vocational school graduates and people who have obtained overseas degrees” (Caixin, 2019). This is a big step forward for rural migrants attempting to obtain a hukou in second and third tier cities. The following sections will dive deeper and look at how four differently tiered cities fared in their efforts to implement the 2014 NUP.

### **Shenzhen and Chengdu Comparison**

#### *Shenzhen*

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Shenzhen is a tier one city leading China forward in terms of technological innovation and business. Like all searches conducted for local government websites on google.com it takes the researcher to their English language website that gives the bare minimum of information needed in terms of policy and statistics. To fix this issue, the researcher made a search for the Chinese language local government website which displayed the relevant information and data. According to the 2018 Shenzhen Statistical Communique, the city's permanent population at the end of the year was 13.62 million, an increase of 498,300 from the end of the previous year. Among them, the permanent resident

population was 4.54 million, accounting for 34.9% of the resident population; the resident non-resident population was 8.48 million, accounting for 65.1% (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, 2019). In 2015, Shenzhen's permanent population was 11.38 million, the permanent resident population was 3.55 million, accounting for 31.2% of the resident population, and the resident non-resident population was 7.83 million, accounting for 68.8% (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, 2016). To add, in 2016 Shenzhen issued 1.71 million residency permits (Sheehan, 2017). Thus, over the past four years the permanent resident population has increased by 3.7 percentage points due to Shenzhen's incentive policies in its hukou system. Shenzhen's hukou application process is online, clear, and contains all the relevant hukou registration applications needed for one's needs. Additionally, its talent rental and living subsidies program attracts highly skilled workers such as: university graduates, overseas graduates, and mid-to senior level professionals (Wu, 2018). For example, applicants with a bachelor's degree can receive an RMB 15,000 (US\$2,162) housing subsidy and applicants with a doctorate degree can receive a housing subsidy worth RMB 30,000 (US\$4,323). While Shenzhen is making tremendous progress to attract highly skilled talent, it still is difficult for migrant workers with little education to receive a Shenzhen hukou. Many migrant workers are deciding to go westward to cities like Chengdu which will be delved into next.

### *Chengdu*

According to a 2016 report by Yicai Global, Chengdu was reclassified as a new tier one city according to "five indexes: concentration of commercial resources; the city as a hub; urban residents' activity; diversity of life; and future predictability" (Yicai Global, 2016). While still classified as a second-tier city by the central government, Chengdu has proven itself exceptional by the standards typically seen in tier one cities. Like Shenzhen, Chengdu publishes an annual

statistical yearbook or statistical communique to summarize some of the main data points for economic and social development. However, unlike Shenzhen, Chengdu does not have theirs published in English for the public. To circumvent this issue, the researcher located the local statistics bureau website and found announcements of main population data from over the years. In 2018, it announced the resident population was 16.33 million, of which the resident population of urban areas was 11.94 million. The registered population was 14.76 million and the rate of urbanization of permanent residents was 73.12%; the urbanization rate of household registration population was 60.94% (Chengdu Bureau of Statistics, 2019). In 2015, the resident population was 14.65 million, of which the resident population living in urban areas was 10.48 million. The registered population was 12.62 million and the urbanization rate of permanent residents was 71.47%; data on the urbanization rate of household registration population was not found (Chengdu Bureau of Statistics, 2015). To add, a 2019 China Urban Development Potential Ranking Report stated the registered population in 2018 increased by 40.8% due to the mechanical growth of its hukou system (Chengdu Business Daily, 2019). Similar to Shenzhen, Chengdu offers straightforward hukou application opportunities for individuals with at minimum an undergraduate degree (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018). Table 3 by The Economist Intelligence Unit displays the various criteria needed for individuals to receive a hukou.

**Table 3 Talent policies in eight mid-tier Chinese cities, 2018**

City	Permanent residence permit (hukou)	Housing	Employment	Entrepreneurship	Other supporting policies
<b>Chengdu</b>	Persons eligible for direct hukou registration must have an undergraduate degree and be under the age of 45.	1) Apartments for young professionals may be rented out at 75% of the market price. 2) Upon residing in Chengdu for five years, the candidate may purchase the apartment at the market price from five years earlier. 3) Out-of-province fresh graduates are granted free accommodation at "young talent stations" for seven days.	Graduating students are eligible for subsistence allowances, and graduating students with handicaps are granted a job-searching subsidy of Rmb800 (US\$121)	The city offers varying amounts of funding to support start-ups led by university students.	The city has introduced a green-card system offering fast-tracked access to healthcare, education, and hukou registration

Sources: local government reports; The Economist Intelligence Unit

On a similar note, hukou restrictions have steadily been lessening for migrant workers ever since the State Council designated Chongqing and Chengdu to be pilot reform cities for coordinated urban-rural integration efforts in 2007 (China Daily, 2007). In 2010, both cities abolished the urban-rural hukou distinction and have since provided migrant workers with a host of services (i.e. land transfer compensation, access to public education for children) and local institutions to help them receive either a resident ID card, temporary residence permit, or permanent residence permit (Chengdu Public Security Bureau, 2019).

### **Discussion of Shenzhen and Chengdu**

By the numbers, Shenzhen and Chengdu have both had similar net-positive growth rates in their permanent resident population. However, Chengdu's registered population has grown at a quicker rate and it remains a greater part of its permanent residence population. This is due to the difference in their hukou policies. Shenzhen hukou policies are elitist since they prefer to rely on their point-based hukou policies to attract higher-educated individuals. Shenzhen's point-

based application requires individuals to reach a minimum of 100 points, a criterion unattainable for rural migrant workers. On the other hand, Chengdu's hukou policies tend to be more liberal in their efforts to equalize basic public services for both rural and urban workers in the city.

Chengdu was one of the first cities in China to remove the rural-urban distinction and to devise an updated residence permit system. As a result, Chengdu's migrant workforce is more diverse in terms of age, demographics, and size (Yang & Gallagher, 2017). The majority of Chengdu's rural migrants are from Sichuan province, but intra-provincial migration has steadily increased over the years (NBS, 2017). Nonetheless, a recent collaborative report headed by the National Health Commission's Migrant Population Service Center discovered that Chengdu was one of 50 cities where less than 4% of migrants were able to obtain permanent residence in their new cities (Huizhao, Shulun, & Qiuyu, 2019). Looking back at the social construction's theory by Schneider and Ingram, one can assume the government of Chengdu still views its rural migrant worker population as powerless and a burden to its society explaining why progress has been so incremental. In Shenzhen's case, the RDA theory is illustrated in their power to control their floating population for their economic needs and to dispel them when no longer needed. They can continue to exploit this sector of the population as long as they have the backing of the central government. In terms of meeting the updated criteria of the 2014 NUP, Chengdu surpasses Shenzhen. According to the RDA theory, Chengdu's hukou system has developed at a quicker pace due to the competition it faced with neighboring Chongqing to pilot the urban-rural integration system in the early 2000s. As a result, Chengdu's hukou system has made increasing efforts to become pragmatic, transparent, and socially conscious as stated in efforts above. Shenzhen's hukou system was transparent, selective, and rigid. The next section will compare the cases of Shijiazhuang and Luoyang.

## **Shijiazhuang and Luoyang Comparison**

### *Shijiazhuang*

Shijiazhuang is the provincial capital of Hebei province and the province's political, economic, scientific, financial, cultural, and information center. Administratively, Shijiazhuang City governs 8 districts and 13 counties (Shijiazhuang City People's Government, 2019). Collecting data from Shijiazhuang's government website had mixed results. To start off, the main population data stemmed from its 2018 and 2017 announcements from its Municipal Statistics Bureau webpage. Its yearly statistical yearbooks were only published in Mandarin and the population data needed from the 2016 Shijiazhuang Statistical Communique was minor. In addition, web access to its Municipal Public Security Bureau was not possible. The same result occurred when attempting to reach the Hebei Provincial Statistics Bureau to provide further relevant data. Access to its 2015 hukou policy was possible as were additional documents from prior years to help explain how its hukou system functions. Nevertheless, let's look at the population data. In 2018, the permanent resident population was 10.31 million, the registered population was 9.82 million; and the residence permit population was 378,700. Its urban resident population was 6.92 million, an increase of 218,800 from the previous year. The resident population urbanization rate was 63.16%, an increase of 1.52% points from prior year, and 6.73% points higher than provincial average (Shijiazhuang City Statistics Bureau, 2019). In 2017, the total resident population was 10.88 million and the registered was 9.73 million. The urban registered population was 4.53 million accounting for 45.78% and the rural registered population was 5.28 million accounting for 54.22% of the population. The urbanization rate of permanent residents was 61.64% and the urbanization rate of the registered population was 45.8% (Shijiazhuang City Statistics Bureau, 2018). Corresponding urbanization rates for the

registered population were not found, but one can assume the rate increased to at least 46% due to the incremental rise seen in the 2018 numbers. According to the 2016 Statistical Communique of Shijiazhuang, its permanent resident population was 10.71 million at the end of 2015. In 2015, the Shijiazhuang Municipal People's Government published Implementation opinions on deepening the reform of household registration system. One of their main goals was to achieve an urbanization rate of more than 45% of the city's registered population by 2020; as of 2018, Shijiazhuang has achieved that goal with time to spare (Shijiazhuang Municipal People's Government, 2015).

In regard to their hukou system, Shijiazhuang has eliminated the rural-urban hukou distinction, it has relaxed conditions for urban settlement, and has standardized their residence permit system. Relaxing of restrictions include: lowering the standards for legal residency, technical workers with immediate and above professional titles can apply, and a minimum of three years of residency and two years of social participation is required for a residence permit (Shijiazhuang Municipal People's Government, 2015). All of these efforts were made for rural migrant workers to face fewer social constraints as they attempt to integrate into urban life. While access to the Shijiazhuang Municipal Bureau of Public Security was not possible, the researcher was able to find related documents to track any updates made to its hukou system. They included: shortening the time limit and approval process for a resident ID card, simplifying the approval conditions and procedures, and providing emergency identification service for those interested (Shijiazhuang Municipal People's Government, 2017). Shijiazhuang has made incremental progress reforming their hukou system but now let us look at the final case of Luoyang.

### Luoyang

In 2019, The Economist Intelligence Unit published their 2018 City Rankings report and ranked Luoyang third in terms of their growth potential. The previous year, Luoyang ranked 20<sup>th</sup>. Luoyang tops the rankings in future consumption growth because of their robust investments made in transportation infrastructure. For example, the 2019 Luoyang Government Work Report stated, “the investment structure was continuously optimized, and investment in high-tech industries, infrastructure, and technology services increased by 27.8%, 35.5%, and 72.7%, respectively” (Luoyang Municipal People’s Government, 2019). Table 4 by the Economist Intelligence Unit gives us various indicators of Luoyang’s growth potential.

**Table 4 China’s Emerging City Rankings, 2018**

#### China Emerging City Rankings, 2018

Province	City	Ranking by growth potential (ranking from the previous year in bracket)	Rankings by sample of sub-indices				
			Real GDP forecast, 2018-22 (% av change)	Metropolitan population forecast 2018-22 (% av change)	Urban consumption expenditure forecast, 2018-22 (% av change)	Foreign direct investment, 2012-16 (% av change)	Fixed-asset investment, 2012-16 (% av change)
Anhui	Suzhou	1 (5)	3	3	53	6	1
Hunan	Yueyang	2*	20	79	7	11	26
Henan	Luoyang	3 (20)	2	41	2	41	5
Hubei	Xiangyang	4 (2)	39	38	8	8	20
Hunan	Xiangtan	5 (15)	36	46	12	14	6
Xinjiang	Urumqi	6 (12)	37	18	23	50	2
Jilin	Changchun	7 (67)	74	90	50	1	25
Guizhou	Guiyang	8 (14)	1	70	4	4	56
Shandong	Tai’an	9 (26)	65	50	9	3	44
Henan	Xinxiang	10 (35)	9	60	19	21	17

Note: The China Emerging City Rankings covers 98 cities in total. Cities forecast by The Economist Intelligence Unit to have a core metropolitan population of at least 1m in 2022 are included. \*Yueyang was not included in the previous year’s ranking as its population forecast was below 1m. Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

According to the Statistical Communique of the National Economic and Social Development of Luoyang City in 2018, the total population was 7.34 million, an increase of 35,000 from the previous year, of which the urban population was 2.03 million. The urbanization rate of permanent residents reached 59.2%. Its resident population was 688,800, an increase of 66,000 from the prior year, of which the urban population was 2.25 million. The urban resident

population was 3.97 million, accounting for an urbanization rate of 57.57%, an increase of 1.55% points from the previous year (Luoyang Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2019). According to the Statistical Communique of the National Economic and Social Development of Luoyang City in 2015, the total resident population was 6.74 million, of which the urban resident population was 2.16 million, the rural resident population was 3.55 million, and the urbanization rate was 52.65%. The total registered population was 700,280, of which the urban registered population was 1.97 million (Luoyang Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Over the past few years, Luoyang has increased its urbanization rate by 4.92% points. In regard to their hukou system, its restrictions are lax compared to the bigger cities analyzed before. There is no age limit to apply; academic qualifications range from skilled workers to college graduates; rural-urban hukou certificates were abolished; forced land transfers are prohibited; and the residence permit solely requires residency in the city for more than half a year (Luoyang Municipal People's Government, 2015). Luoyang's Municipal Bureau of Public Security also has a straightforward hukou registration application process for all individual needs that include: birth registration, adoption, hukou migration certificate and many more (Henan Provincial Public Security Department, 2016). The penultimate section of this chapter will compare both Shijiazhuang and Luoyang.

### **Discussion of Shijiazhuang and Luoyang**

By the numbers, both Shijiazhuang and Luoyang have made incremental strides reforming their hukou system to allow rural migrants to settle down in their cities. Of the two, Luoyang has slightly made more progress with less people, resources, and state capacity. This can be attributed to both its location and hukou policy. As mentioned in the *2017 Migrant Workers Monitoring Survey Report*, migrant workers have begun to migrate more towards

Central and Western China because of the lower cost of living and rising levels of economic and social development (NBS, 2017). Luoyang's hukou policies are also better organized and updated on a semi-annual basis to reflect the new data gathered from the population. On the other hand, Shijiazhuang's northern locale is not attractive and its online hukou policies were seemingly unorganized since access to its Municipal Bureau of Public Security was censored. For example, in 2017, the Investigation and Analysis of the Change of Resident Population in Shijiazhuang City was published by the Municipal Bureau of Statistics to help explain why its resident population has been decreasing over the past decade or so. The report was summarized as follows:

In recent years, the total resident population of the city has maintained a low-speed growth trend and the characteristics of population development have changed: the trend of population concentration in the city's main urban areas is relatively obvious; the number and proportion of the working-age population are falling, the population is aging, and the population is influx. The attraction is relatively weak; the education level of the young and middle-aged population is mainly in the primary and secondary schools; the labor force in higher education has begun to spread to the information, finance, and health industries (Shijiazhuang City Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Luoyang's progress can also be explained by the social construction's theory since a greater portion of their population is rural. Thus, the rural-urban transition is easier for migrant workers because the Luoyang government views them in a positive-dependent manner evident in their lax hukou policies. Residing in the northern region of China, Shijiazhuang does not need to compete with neighboring cities or provinces to implement the reform measures of their hukou system as stated in the RDA theory. However, Shijiazhuang is defying the RDA theory and has

regularly updated its hukou system in preparation for any possible changes to rural migrant inflow. Thanks to the State Council, Shijiazhuang's attempts to attract rural migrant workers is changing in a more positive direction with the recent acceleration of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Integration Plan (Jing-Jin-Ji). According to Preen, "the Jing-Jin-Ji plan looks for different areas in the region to focus on their own comparative advantages so that duplication is avoided, areas complement each other, and synergies are maximized" (Preen, 2018). In terms of meeting the updated criteria of the 2014 NUP, Luoyang slightly surpasses Shijiazhuang. Luoyang's hukou system was transparent, pro-active, and people-oriented while Shijiazhuang's hukou system was semi-organized, and a bit censored.

## **Summary**

Chapter Four analyzed the research question: What progress has been made in Chinese cities towards implementing hukou reforms since the 2014 New Urbanization Plan? And in what ways does the progress vary across different tiered cities? Based on the analysis, Chinese cities have broadly made incremental progress towards reforming their local hukou system. Most cities have followed NUP guidelines and have formally reformed their hukou policy guidelines. However, not all Chinese cities have implemented their reform measures because of their varying state capacities. Shenzhen's elitist based policies remain highly exclusionary for migrant workers while Shijiazhuang's efforts to reform its hukou system have been hampered by their locale, evident in the recent decreases in its total resident and non-resident populations. Chengdu has created an integrative hukou system for migrant workers, but many are still wary of obtaining an urban hukou in exchange for their land rights. Luoyang's lax hukou reform system has attracted thousands of migrant workers and can be viewed as an early success story as a

third-tier city destination, as stated in the 2014 NUP. Chapter Five will summarize the study, provide conclusions, and make specific recommendations.

## **Chapter 5 – Summary and Conclusions**

### **Summary**

After the 2008 global financial crisis, millions of rural migrants living in the big cities in China decided to go back home as the need for labor diminished. Local governments were hard pressed to meet the social and economic needs of the returning rural migrants given their limited state capacities. In response, the Chinese State Council along with the National Development Reform Commission issued the 2014 National New Urbanization Plan. The top-level design of this policy responded to the call of local governments by focusing on reforming the hukou system, setting up a unified land market for urban and rural areas, and integrating planning and design with provision of infrastructure and services for urban and rural areas (Li, et al, 2016).

This master's thesis focused on two research questions: What progress has been made in Chinese cities towards implementing hukou reforms since the 2014 National New Urbanization Plan? And in what ways does the progress vary across different tiered cities? Chapter Two reviewed the literature to explain the hukou system and its historical impact on China's economic and social development; and discussed theories that explained how the hukou system has discriminated against migrant rural workers. Chapter Three focused on three measures: 1) whether rural migrants were given a local hukou or residence permit from 2015-2019; 2) whether the local government created people-oriented schemes to help rural migrants feel more socially inclusive; and 3) whether the differently tiered cities met the criteria of the 2014 NUP along with the researcher's interpretation of the 2014 NUP criteria. Chapter Four provided the results from

analyzing the measures created in Chapter Three and provided a discussion of the results in conjunction with the theories used in Chapter Two.

### **Conclusions**

Over the past four years, the reform process of the hukou system has incrementally made progress in its implementation efforts. At the end of 2015, urban permanent residents numbered 771.16 million, accounting for 56.10 percent of the total population. The total number of migrant workers in 2015 was 277.47 million (NBS, 2016). At the end of 2018, urban permanent residents numbered 831.37 million, accounting for 59.58 percent of the total population. The total number of migrant workers in 2018 was 288.36 million. The urbanization rate of population with household registration was 43.37 percent, 1.02 percentage points higher than that at the end of 2017 (NBS, 2018). From 2015-2018, the number of urban permanent residents has increased by 60.21 million and the number of migrant workers has increased by 10.89 million. These numbers can be explained by the NBS definition of rural migrant workers that are categorized as those who are employed outside their villages and towns for more than six months in the year and those who do non-agricultural work in their villages and towns for than six months in the year (NBS, 2018). Many of the rural migrant workers who obtained urban hukou also have families and those numbers are added to the number of urban permanent residents. For example, the population living in places other than their household registration areas in 2015 numbered 294 million and in 2018, that number decreased by 8 million to reach 286 million. Not all permanent urban residents need to be employed (children, elderly), which explains why the number of urban permanent residents has increased in four years while the number of migrant workers has also risen since 2015.

The MPS, NBS, and NDRC have worked together to help nationally implement the process; to evaluate the progress that has been made or not made; and to continue further reforms of the hukou system. The MPS is managing the hukou application process and ultimately delivering the urban hukou to interested migrant workers. The NBS is yearly evaluating the results of the hukou reform process by surveying the rural migrants themselves. And the NDRC is further reforming the hukou system by continuing to ease the restrictions to obtain an urban hukou in small and medium cities. In April 2019, the NDRC announced that local governments of cities with an urban population of 1 million to 3 million will eliminate all restrictions for hukou. Restrictions were also eased “for farmers-turned workers who have lived there for more than five years, as well as technicians, college and vocational school graduates and people who have obtained overseas degrees” (Siwei & Shen, 2019).

In this study, Shenzhen and Chengdu were compared due to their similarities in population, GDP, and political administration. Chengdu’s hukou reform system proved more adept to the criteria of the 2014 NUP as well as the researcher’s 2014 NUP criteria. Over the past four years, Chengdu’s number of registered populations has increased at a higher rate than Shenzhen because its hukou system allows rural migrants of various educational, skills, and work levels to apply. Shenzhen is the opposite, since its hukou system tends to favor highly skilled and educated populations. The case of Shijiazhuang and Luoyang was different because of the disparity in their tier systems and geography. Nonetheless, Luoyang’s hukou system slightly edged Shijiazhuang’s hukou system due to its lower restrictions, location, and evaluation process. Shijiazhuang’s hukou system is semi-organized, and unfortunately located in a region unattractive to migrant workers. All in all, all four cities have made positive efforts to increase their urbanization rates over the past few years. Chengdu is an example for second tier cities to

emulate, while Luoyang can be similarly viewed as a model for third tier cities. The final section of this chapter will reemphasize already established policies to help further along the hukou reform process across China.

### **Recommendations**

To improve the current NUP system will require:

- (1) higher financial investment and resource allocation to second and third tier cities;
- (2) protection of rural migrant worker's land rights;
- (3) greater coordination among central, provincial, and local governments; and
- (4) an increase in accountability and transparency during the implementation process.

To fix the resources imbalance in China, there needs to be substantial investment in public service provision and infrastructure building in smaller cities. This can be facilitated by a mobility of factors, in terms of labor, credit, and land in these smaller cities by the Ministry of Finance and Commerce. They can use investment subsidies and service procurements to help provide investment in social capital from the private industry (Ming, 2014). Unattractive second-third tier cities for migrant workers like Shijiazhuang will benefit from this recommendation by further increasing its level of state capacity.

Rural migrant workers will also be given the choice to either keep their land rights or sell their land rights to their local governments. A number of cities in China have this written in their policies, but it does not always get consistently implemented. There needs to be greater coordination among local governments, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development to ensure this process is implemented in a professional manner. In the local government of Chongqing, their land exchange system issued land development certificates to rural migrants, which were sold to land developers and in exchange,

they received 85 percent of the net revenue (Qian, 2017). The rest of the revenue was used by the local governments, in coordination with the nearby governments, to help fund the provision of public services. Qian (2017) also notes that the most productive rural migrants collateralized their land to apply for bank loans to either rent or buy a home (p.58). The use of credit increases consumption rates, income levels, and in turn GDP to afford these services. If migrant workers view consistent efforts on their behalf, then they would be more willing to let go of their local hukou to obtain an urban hukou. This can also help dispel any uncertainties based on their negative social construction of deviants with little power.

On a similar note, incentivizing cross-coordination between all three levels of government need to prioritize transparency, accountability, representation, and rule of law to properly implement these changes. This involves clear and consistent procedures on their behalf, and a formal system of complaints which allows rural migrants to voice their complaints or opinions to improve their respective systems. This means working with internet and technology companies to help modernize their IT systems. The city of Chengdu has a great website with plenty of relevant information for rural migrants which are interested in applying for a local hukou. It posts yearly government work reports, statistical communiques, and a host of information not usually accessible to the public (Chengdu People's Government, 2018). Shenzhen, Shijiazhuang, and Luoyang also have decent websites with the small exception of some of Shijiazhuang's censored webpages. Cities across China, which do not already have a transparent and accessible website, should adopt the format created by Chengdu. People-centered urbanization should remain the NUP slogan not just in words but also in practice.

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## Appendix

### IRB Letter

California State University, Bakersfield  
Human Subjects Institutional Review Board  
FWA00013908

**Date:** March 18, 2019

**To:** Gabe Arellano, Department of Public Administration  
Jinping Sun, Department of Public Administration

**cc:** Chandra Commuri, IRB Chair

**From:** Isabel Sumaya, University Research Ethics Review Coordinator

**Subject: Master's Thesis Project 20-17: Not Regulated Research Status**

Thank you for bringing your Master's Thesis Project, "2014 New Urbanization Plan: What progress has been made in Chinese cities towards implementing hukou reforms?" to the attention of the HSIRB.

On the submission form you indicated the following:

I want to interview, survey, systematically observe, or collect other data from human subjects, for example, students in the educational setting. **NO**

I want to access data about specific persons that have already been collected by others [such as test scores or demographic information]. **NO**

Those data can be linked to specific persons [regardless of whether I will link data and persons in my research or reveal anyone's identities]. **NO**

Given this, your proposed project will not constitute human subjects research. Therefore, it does not fall within the purview of the CSUB HSIRB.

If you have any questions, or there are any changes that might bring these activities within the purview of the HSIRB, please notify me immediately at (661) 654-2381.

Good luck with your project.

Thank you.

Isabel Sumaya, Ph.D.  
University Research Ethics Review Coordinator  
California State University, Bakersfield