

# Issues and solutions on the development of suburban towns in Shanghai from the view of migration and social structure transition

(Development of Suburban Towns in Shanghai: Migration and Social Structure Transition)

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## 1. Introduction

Regional differences in economic development always drive the expansion of human migration activity. China is witnessing a large-scale population migration since the 1990s, as the migration control policies are gradually adjusted and eased. According to Report on China's Migrant Population Development in 2012, every year about 200 million people flow back and forth between the towns and villages periodically in the last five years. Large-scale migration exerts a remarkable influence on both the output areas and input areas. Shanghai is the economic center of China and the central city of the Yangtze River Delta city region, which plays an important role in the global economy. During the past decades, Shanghai has been undertaking the role of regional population input area.

The rapid increase in the population of Shanghai is mainly characterized by two features in the 2000-2010 decade. Firstly, population growth occurred mainly in the outskirts of Shanghai, especially in developed suburban cities, like Jiading, Minhang and Songjiang District. The population inflow rate of these three districts is over 150% (Figure 1). The notable growth of population is mainly contributed by migrants. In 2010, the population of people from other provinces has increased to 8977 thousand, increasing 193.6% compared with the amount in 2000. This rapid growth trend began in the late 1990s, while the population growth of natives over the same period was relatively stable (Figure 2). According to the latest statistics from the end of 2012, migrant population has increased to 9602.4 thousand, accounting for 40.3% of the whole residential population. Among them, more than 70% are rural workers.

With intense growth of the population in Shanghai as well as the lacking of construction land in the central city in the late 1990s, Shanghai has learned from the concepts and practices of new towns abroad. The urban system of Shanghai consists of one central city, 9 suburban cities (including Jiading) and 60 suburban towns according to the comprehensive plan revised in 2006, namely "1-9-6-6" system. The government hopes to strengthen the suburban cities and towns to evacuate the over-crowded population in the central city. But comparing to the foreign new town, most of the suburban cities and towns founded on the base of former counties or townships have long histories, absolutely not "new".

Both the local farmers' migration from villages to towns or suburban city and the migration of people from other provinces have produced a profound impact on the development of suburban towns and the spatial structure of suburban city as well. As an important component of the whole urban system of Shanghai, the urbanization process and urban development issues of suburban towns deserve some attention. This paper selected one of the suburban cities, Jiading city, as a case of empirical research. Several towns and villages within jurisdiction were discussed. The first part introduced the theoretical framework and analysis methods of this study. The second part was the detailed empirical study. The situation of migration and social structure were introduced first, and then we analyzed the issues of suburban towns in urbanization, public services, social governance, rural landscape, etc. The mechanism of these issues was discussed later. And the third part put forward some solutions to these issues and then drew the final conclusion.

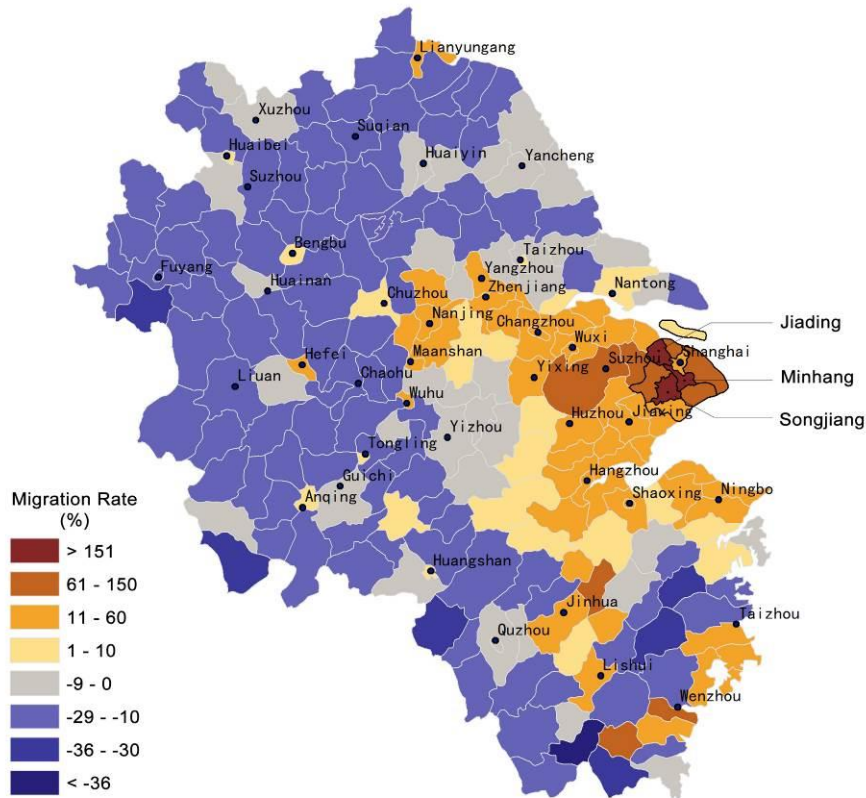


Figure 1: Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui region's population migration (2010)

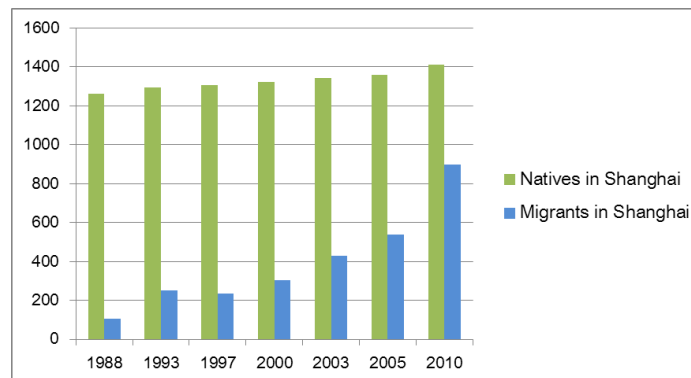


Figure 2: population growth of natives and migrants in Shanghai since 1988

## 2. Research method

### 2.1 Theoretical framework

Based on the classic migration law proposed by Ravenstein in 1885, the rural-to-urban migration is realized step by step. Farmers near the city move to the city first, so the rural area around the city becomes a vacancy, which makes it possible that rural population from remote areas can fill this vacancy. Through this process, the attraction of cities gradually spread to the edge of the city. The natives move out and the former living space become a "demographic vacancy zone" to attract new migrants. This is the first population "two-way flow" model.

This model will be expanded and used to explain the internal and external migration in suburban cities of Shanghai (Figure 3). Internal migration is presented by "Village - Town - City" progressive migration, namely the local residents can purchase real estate in towns and cities to achieve the "village - town", "village - city" and "town - city" residence changes. In recent years, great efforts have been made to develop high-quality public

service facilities and real estates in suburban city, leading to a rapid population growth there. And the suburban cities have been absorbing the population from the suburban towns, rural area and even the core city of Shanghai. So local farmers generally tend to choose "village – City" migration, rather than "village - town" migration. Meanwhile, because of the potential bonuses of holding rural household registration, those who have been living and working in cities still hold rural household and they tend to stay in the cities on weekdays and enjoy their holidays in rural area.

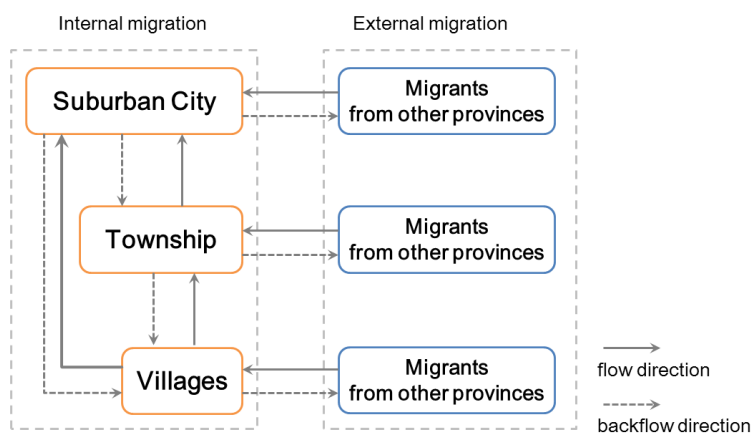


Figure 3: population "two-way flow" model

Many migrants from other provinces came to Shanghai to earn a better life, forming the external migration. Suburban towns' industrial development provides more jobs and attracts substantial population inflows. In addition to employment opportunities, the cost of living is also a vital factor considered by these migrants. Suburban towns and villages become the first choice for them to sojourn in because of migrants' low income and the low cost of living in towns and villages. "Vacancy zone" has also provided the living space for the migrants coming from other provinces. Rental housing in the villages produces mutual benefit between local farmers and migrants. The "two-way flow" migration had resulted in the dramatic changes in social structure, influencing the social and economic development. We try to analyze and interpret the issues of suburban towns from this perspective.

## 2.2 Case selection and analysis method

Jiading city which owns a profound history of nearly 800 years, is selected as a case study. Jiading County was set up in the Southern Song Dynasty (AD 1217). In 1958, Jiading became a county of Shanghai from Jiangsu Province through the adjustment of administrative division by State Council. In 1992, Jiading became a suburban district of Shanghai. Today, the administrative area of Jiading includes 7 towns ( Anting, Malu, Nanxiang, Jiangqiao, Xuhang, Waigang, Huating), 3 street committees ( Jiading, Xinchenglu and Zhenxin), Jiading Industrial Park and Juyuan New Area (Figure 4), consists of 126 neighborhood committees, 147 village committees, 2034 villages. Jiading city is positioned as an important node city within Yangtze River Delta. "1 core + 2 clusters" are the key constructing area of Jiading city. "1 core" means the center part of the city, including Jiading and Xinchenglu Street Committees, Jiading Industrial Park (southern part), Malu town and Juyuan New Area. "2 clusters" are Anting cluster, and Nanxiang Jiangqiao cluster.

The relevant census data and statistical yearbooks were used in macro-level analysis, while micro-level research was mainly conducted through field surveys of the township and village and interviews with residents.

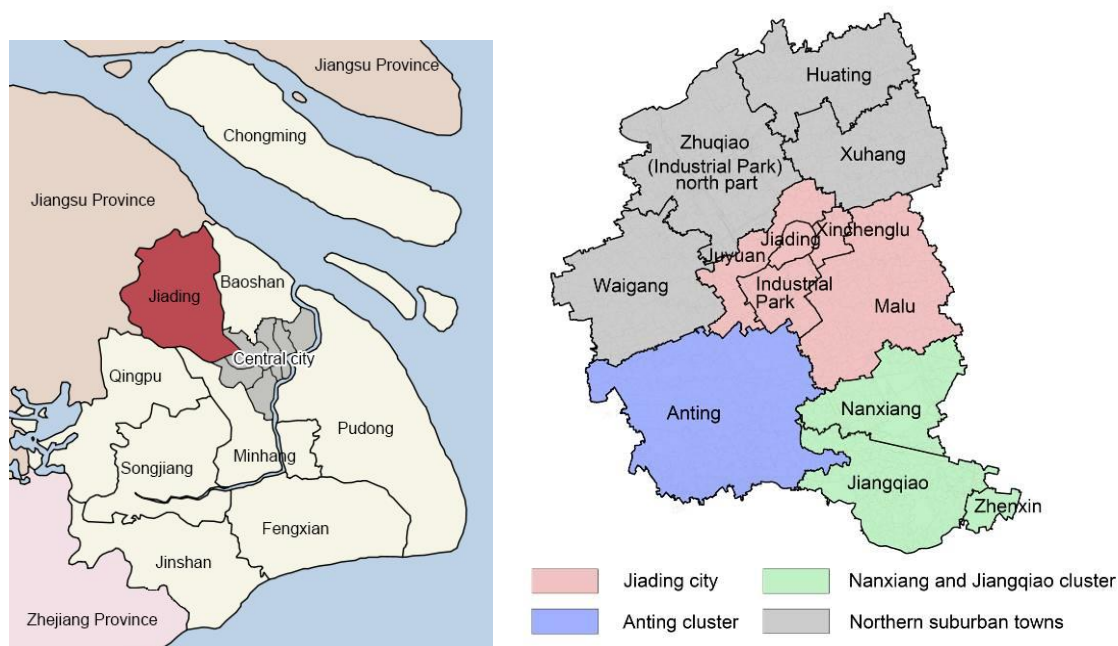


Figure 4: the location and internal administrative division of Jiading city

### 3. Case Study

#### 3.1 Population migration and social structure transition in Jiading city in recent years

Before 1990s, the scale of internal migration in Shanghai is relatively stable because of the strict policy constraints. People who move from village to towns and suburban city achieve their identity transformation mainly through marriage, schooling and other means. With the rapid economic and social development after the reform and opening, especially after the housing system reform in 1990s, rural people can purchase the urban real estate to become new citizens. Driven by the early welfare differences between the rural and urban household registration, such behaviors increased. In the past 10 years, the development of real estate in Jiading city has made it possible for rural people to settle in city. As the social welfare gap between the rural and urban household registration has been gradually reduced and the bonus of the rural identity appears, many rural people choose to retain the rural household registration. They may live and work in cities, but they will never change their identities and abandon what they own in their original villages including the farmland and house site, etc. On the other hand, with the expansion of downtown area of Jiading and the construction of suburban towns' industrial parks, a lot of village land were transformed into urban construction land. Many farmers passively moved to Jiading city, and the household registration and employment were transformed correspondingly.

In addition to the internal migration, the external migration continues to grow with the rapid economic development in Jiading, especially the boom of manufacture. According to the latest demographic census, 1471 thousand people live in Jiading in 2010, among which 828 thousand are from other provinces. The amount of migrants is far beyond the natives. In 2000, only 162 thousand migrants live in Jiading. 89% of these migrants come from rural area in other provinces. In terms of the age structure, most of the migrants are of prime-working-age, slowing the aging process in this region (Figure 5). Most of these migrants are of low-level education, 77% of the population are uneducated or just have finished their primary school or junior middle school education. Migrants who have got bachelor degree or above account for only 2.84% (Figure 6). In addition, the vast majority of migrant workers distribute in manufacturing, construction, retail and wholesale trade, accommodation and catering industry and other low-end industries.

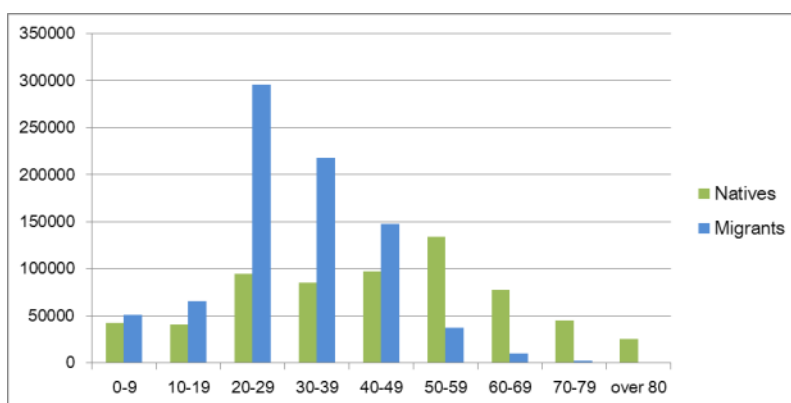


Figure 5: the comparison of age structures of natives and migrants in Jiading

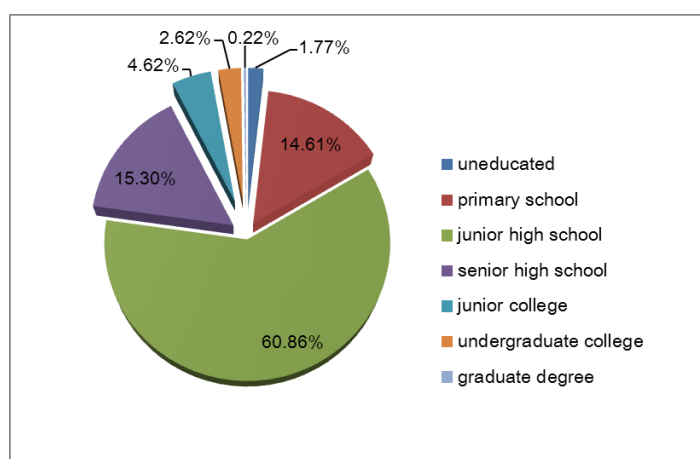


Figure 6: the foreign resident population level of education

Jiading District was listed as an important industrial, scientific and technological satellite suburban city by Shanghai government in 1958, which laid its early industrial foundation. Since reform and opening, the accelerated economic development, especially in the manufacturing industry, attracted a large amount of migrant workers. So the migration dynamic is industry-driven. Since 2000, Jiading becomes a key suburban comprehension city in order to evacuate the dense population of Shanghai central city. Urban construction and public service facilities are also highly valued in addition to industrial development, so living quality and city scape have been greatly improved. Migrants come to Jiading not only to make more money but also to enjoy the good public services. So the migration dynamic is both industry-driven and welfare-driven while the local rural people’s migration is driven mainly by high-quality welfare in Jiading city.

### 3.2 Issues of the development of suburban towns

Migrants from other provinces have become the majority of inhabitants of Jiading in the past 10years. In terms of quantity, they are the "protagonist" of the city. These young labor force have made significant contribution to the economy development of Jiading, providing a primitive of capital accumulation and making up for the local insufficient labor supply. In this process, a lot of problems have emerged in suburban towns. Many industrial zones which are just in the administrative area of suburban towns attract a lot of migrants. Most of the migrant workers live in villages nearby, not being able to enjoy the urban life. The place they live in and that they work in are totally different. Driven by the different level of public services provided by Jiading city and suburban towns, the local people in rural area are eager to have good public services in Jiading city, which further expanding the imbalance between supply and demand of public service facilities. The great increase of migrants also bring burdens to the social governance of suburban towns and villages, the intersection of natives and migrants sparked a lot of social contradictions. Since both the local



population and migrants are not of the "Entire Migration", the social structure of rural area is not stable and the autonomous capacity of villages decreases. The physical environment of rural areas features a sharp decay. These problems will be discussed in detail hereinafter.

### 3.2.1 Urbanization lags behind economy development

The industry of Jiading is scattered in each suburban town. The economic growth is mainly driven by secondary industry rather than agriculture in each town. As can be seen from the above-scale industrial output value (Table 1), the suburban towns have solid foundation for industry development. Since the GDP of each administrative unit has not been published, above-scale industrial output value and agricultural output value are used to characterize the industrial strength. The industrial output value of suburban towns is not low. Especially the industry strength of Zhuqiao town where Jiading Industrial Park (north part) is located leads the city's townships.

Spatial unit	Administrative unit	Above-scale industrial output value	Agricultural output value
Jiading city	Jiading	260244	0
	Xinchenglu	5214	0
	Juyuan	312239	1159
	Malu	4356024	7609
Anting cluster	Anting	8230165	8830
Nanxiang and Jiangqiao cluster	Nanxiang	1681236	1746
	Jiangqiao	1823061	3277
	Zhenxin	3134	0
Suburban towns	Xuhang	1474829	21582
	Zhuqiao	6391473	31095
	Waigang	1322556	28765
	Huating	602879	25122

Table 1: industrial output value and agricultural output value in 2012 (10 thousand yuan)

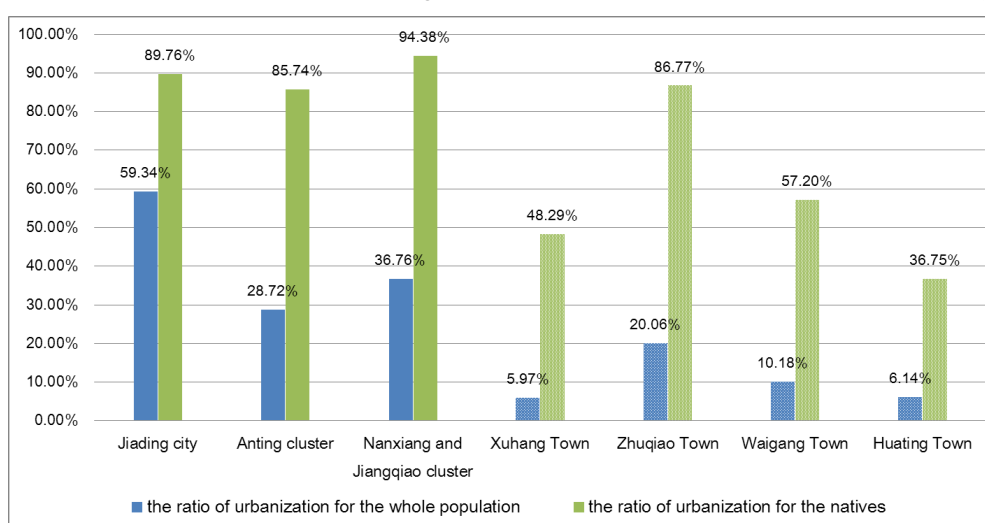


Figure 7: the ratio of urbanization for the whole population and for the natives

Despite the high level of economic development, the level of urbanization in suburban towns is relatively far below that in Jiading city (Figure 7). People who live in

rural area are considered rural population by the statistical department. So those migrant who work in town and live in villages are counted in rural population, resulting in a relatively low rate of urbanization. Through the ratio of urbanization for the natives, we can easily infer that most migrant workers live in rural areas of suburban towns (Figure 7).

Most of these migrants do not work in agriculture, but in the industrial park, so the urbanization rate is underrated. But it's also not appropriate to count these typical "semi-urbanization population" in urban population. Limited by their income level, most of them choose to live in poor-quality but cheap rental housing in villages (Figure 8). These houses are lack of separate bathrooms. Migrants live tough lives in the Chinese style "slums".



Rental Housing in villages

Figure 8: the rental housing in rural area of suburban towns

In addition, the industrial parks and suburban towns are split in space and function, lacking of good connection. Public services and commercial facilities are not sufficient in industrial parks, which give birth to a lot of spontaneous informal market to provide catering, retail and other commercial services for industrial workers. Because of the lack of updates and maintenance, the space quality of townships is just declining. The inadequacy of support systems and lack of updated power have restricted the healthy development of suburban towns.

### 3.2.2 Low level of public service provision in suburban towns

Over a long period of time, the public service provision levels are similar in each town and the spatial layout is flat. The educational, medical facilities covers the whole administrative area of suburban towns, and people can get long time education from kindergarten to high school education and basic health care services. Since 2000, along with the public service facilities construction in Jiading city, public service facilities show a polarization trend. The supply capacity of public service facilities in towns gradually weakens, while the public services supply level of Jiading city continues to strengthen. New high-quality schools and hospitals were set up in Jiading city. By 2012, Jiading No.1 Senior High School is the only key high school in Jiading defined by the Shanghai education department. From the composition of students enrolled in 2010, namely where they had their junior high school education, we can see most of the students came from Jiading city, Anting cluster and Nanxiang and Jiangqiao cluster. Very little students had their junior high school education in Xuhang, Zhuqiao, Waigang and Huating town (Figure 9).

The sharp difference stems from the agglomeration of high-quality education resources (both in hardware and software) in Jiading city. The education quality in suburban towns cannot be compared to that in Jiading city in terms of teachers, hardware and other aspects. Another factor can't be ignored is that migrants students who do not own local household registration are not allowed to participate in the entrance examination in Shanghai. In recent years, the migrant students account for a large proportion in primary and junior middle schools in towns. For example, over 60% of the students in Loutang primary school located in Zhuqiao Town are children of migrant workers. The natives are reluctant to send their children to these schools full of migrant children for the quantity of local students in these

towns' public school is limited. Though these public schools have already enrolled many migrant children, it cannot meet the needs of all school-age migrant children. So 14 private primary school were set up for these migrant children to receive basic education.

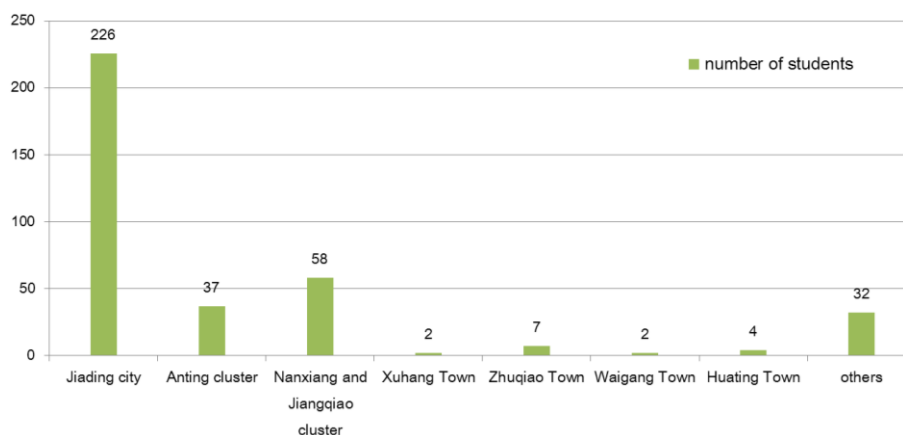


Figure 9: composition of students enrolled in 2010 by Jiading No.1 Senior High School

The expanding gap of the public service quality between Jiading city and suburban towns is becoming a key drive for the natives to purchase housing in Jiading city to let their children receive high-quality education. In this process, the social segregation thus forms.

### 3.2.3 The arise of social conflicts increase the burdens on social governance costs

Massive floating population increases the difficulty of social governance, directly bringing great pressure on public security, city management, etc. Social security has aroused public concern because immigration crime has become an important restrictive factor to the social development. According to the data by Jiading Prosecutor's Office, among all the accepted crime cases, 84.8% of them were immigration crime in 2007. This proportion continues to enlarge in recent years (Cheng and Wang, 2009). Although the number of migrants who conduct crimes is very small, it has greatly disturbed the social order and affected people's sense of security. Despite the explosive growth of floating population, the corresponding growth of the number of administrative staff seems very inadequate. Taking the police as example, there are 1,400 policemen in 2000, and in 2005 the number reached 1,500. While at the same time, the floating population has increased from 26 million people in 2000 to 52 million in 2005, an increase of 100%, increasing the police department's workload and difficulty.

In the micro-level rural surveys, social conflicts and security has become a topic of great concern to local villagers. Pan Village (Figure 10), located in Zhuqiao Town, is an example to reveal the problems of rural area in suburban town. There are currently 26 families, including 56 natives living in the village. According to the village leader, around 158 migrants rent housing to live in the village. The migrant population has greatly exceeded the local population. About 10 years ago, there were only a dozen migrants here.





Figure 10: the layout of Pan Village

The local interviewees said they were concerned about the security condition and they had to frequently check whether they had locked the door. To prevent theft, cash and valuables are not safe to put in home. In Chinese traditional countryside, people don't need to close the doors at night because people are familiar with each other, namely "acquaintance society". But such state has ceased to exist after the inflow of migrants. The conflicts between landlords and tenants often emerge due to some trivial matters. Some crimes conducted by migrants did happen in the past few years. The migrants are discriminated in villages. Some of the migrant interviewees said that once the landlord or other villagers lost some belongings, the migrants were always under suspicion. The innocent migrants are therefore "stigmatized", and they think it's unfair, but helpless. The massive influx of migrants as well as the young people moving out from villages have brought great change to the social structure, and the original "acquaintance society" is broken, which reduces autonomy ability of villages.

### 3.2.4 The physical environment of rural areas features a sharp decay

The social structure is totally changed in some major holidays, like the Spring Festival. In these days, 80% of the migrants will go back home and stay around one month. At the same time, people who have the ability to move out of the village will also return to spend New Year with family relatives. Therefore, the social structure shows a seasonal replacement process. Migration also affects the rural character and physical environment. On one hand, those young and capable people have moved out or just return on holidays, the self-renewal ability of the rural area is diminished. The rural housings were mainly built in the 1980s to the 1990s, so most of the housing has been very dilapidated. Furthermore, driven by the temptation to rent, the local villagers try to build more cottages on the ground or transform the first floor of their main house to provide more rental housings. We found that every household had built several rental housings in the past decade. Each house has the average of 5 rooms to rent, and few families even have as many as up to 20 rooms (Figure 11). Since the existence of market demand and interests, this phenomenon is difficult to forbid. The Government is also very clear that migrant workers cannot rent such low-cost housing in the formal market. If the government dismantle these illegal buildings rigidly, it will not only stimulate the conflicts between local farmers and government but also affect the industry development of Jiading city. However, profit-seeking behavior of individuals has brought in the overall decline of physical space in rural area. On the other hand, the rental housing is just a temporary residence for the migrant workers. The lack of local identity will not restrain their misconduct to the physical environment, like littering, spitting, etc.



Figure 11: inner space of rental housing in rural area

With the gradual increase of migrant workers, the potential market demand is gradually emerging. Some migrants start to operate grocery stores, providing basic commodities for the residents around (Figure 12). During the investigation, we found that these grocery consumer groups showing a significant geographical features, namely people from one specific province will only consume in the store operated by people from the same province. These informal organizations are very cohesive. Various social groups formed their own sub-culture, giving rise to conflicts and collisions in the traditional enclosed village.



Figure 12: spontaneous formation of commercial facilities

### 3.3 Interpretation of these issues

#### 3.3.1 Administrative power conduct a great effect on the urban and rural development

In China, the urban construction is always influenced by administrative power. Suburban towns are always neglected by the government, while the government has attached particular importance to the construction of suburb cities, like Jiading, in the past decade. Anting cluster and Nanxiang-Jiangqiao cluster are also valued as these areas are adjacent to the central city of Shanghai. The northern suburban towns can hardly obtain permission for construction lands from superior government. Over the years, some towns have no public construction projects involving education, health care and other social undertakings. The migrants living in the villages around the township cannot get high-quality public services. The level and quality of urbanization lags behind the economy development. New industrial projects in these towns have taken up a lot of farmland and village land, but most of resettlement sites are in Jiading city, which makes a lot of local villagers move to Jiading city. Suburb towns can hardly attract local people to live there.

Although the construction of suburban city is very important, suburban towns are also key units of the urban system in the process of the spatial structure optimization.

#### 3.3.2 Incomplete "two-way flow" migration causes the instability in social structure

For the migrants, they come to Shanghai for better economic benefits and good public

services, but it's hard for them to complete the total migration and become "urbanized". First, they cannot adapt to the local culture and language immediately and they have to endure the exclusion of the natives. They tend to choose spontaneous isolation, namely living in those informal social groups formed by people from the same place, and then some similar "ethnic enclaves" are formed. Under this process, the traditional rural society has changed from the original closed community into a heterogeneous community composed of several isolated social groups. They hope to receive an ethical and social exchange and mutual assistance through these spontaneous formation of "social circle". In fact, for those just moving in Shanghai, this is also a special kind of social capital (Zhang, 2008). Although many migrants have settled and gradually adapted to the local life, but it is difficult to achieve complete assimilation. On the one hand, they will face some institutional barriers for welfare, leading to social group segregation. On the other hand, the traditional Chinese people have deep local complex, so they cannot totally leave their hometown where the elders live, that's why there's always large scale transport during the traditional Spring Festival.

For the natives, they want to enjoy the urban life and convenient services and facilities, but also hope to return to the quiet villages at the weekend to enjoy the countryside life. The local people is not willing to give up their rural household registration and homestead. In fact, there lacks of formal withdrawal mechanism. In many rural families, only the elder people hold rural household registration. When the elderly die, although the government can legally reclaim homestead, housing as the attachment of homestead can be inherited by their children.

#### 4. Discussions and Solutions

In this part, we put forward some suggestion for the future development of suburban towns.

##### 4.1 *Welfare enhancing is the priority of urbanization*

Aspirations for a better life is the motivations of migration. The migration dynamic is both industry-driven and welfare-driven in Shanghai suburbs. The living environment and public services in suburban towns should be enhanced, otherwise these suburban towns can hardly attract high-level talented persons to work and live there, which will affect the process of industrial structure adjustment and optimization. High quality of public services and service levels will also attract local peasants to live in towns. So welfare enhancing and people-oriented idea are always the priority of urbanization. A good township will also support the industry development.

##### 4.2 *"Smart shrinking" strategy should be implemented in rural area*

In Shanghai, most of those who hold rural household registration are hardly engaged in agriculture. According to the statistical data, the agricultural income of rural family is less than 5% in average. Their lifestyle is almost the same as those living in cities. The gradually reducing number of farmers will finally result in the shrinking of rural areas. Despite the dwindling number of farmers, the housing area continues to increase. It can be inferred that farmers tend to build more housing even if they do not live in, they can rent these housing to migrants. In fact, some rural area is never traditional countryside scenes. For those chaos and dilapidated rural area, "Smart shrinking" strategy should be implemented. Farmers should be guided to abandon the homestead in rural area and live in new housing in towns provided by the government. At the same time, those migrants living in villages cannot be ignores. The government should increase the supply of low-priced housing market.

##### 4.3 *Self-management system of migrants is expected to be explored*

The invasion of migrants changed the original social structure in suburban towns and rural areas. The increase of conflicts between natives and migrants and the difficulty of social governance cannot be ignored. Self-management system of migrants should be explored to

guide these migrants to integrate into local communities. They should be allowed to participate in community management. In this way, the self-management organization will guide them regulate their own behavior, which is helpful to avoid social conflicts and promote harmony.

## 5. Conclusion

Suburban towns have become main settlements for migrant workers under the circumstance of "two-way flow". In the process of dramatic social structure transition, the development problems of suburban towns emerged. The root of the problem is both related to the neglect of suburban towns by the superior government and the incomplete "two-way flow" migration. Facing with these dilemmas, we argue that the welfare of migrants should be valued and people-oriented idea should be always the priority in urbanization process. Public service facilities and physical environment in suburban towns should be strengthened to attract more local people to live in towns. The self-management system for migrants should be explored to avoid social conflicts and promote harmony. Considering the lasting decline of rural population, "smart shrinking" strategy should be implemented in some decaying villages.

It is a common way to redistribute urban residents through the development of suburban cities and towns, but it becomes more complicated in this migration age. The case study of Jiading illustrates the importance of analyzing the migration and social structure transition process to figure out the mechanism of these problems.

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## Endnotes

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The main sources of data related to this article are local statistical yearbooks and the sixth national census.

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