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Migrants and the new stage of public housing reform in China

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5. The New Urbanisation Plan and permanent urban settlement of migrants in Chongqing, China

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ABSTRACT: *For over 30 years, urbanisation in China went along with policies that discouraged migrants from permanently settling in cities. Since 2014, however, policies have shifted towards the encourage-ment of the urban settlement of migrants. This change has triggered new academic research aimed at re - understanding the urban integration. Findings of this paper are based on a survey conducted in Chongqing, the first municipality to implement elements of China's New Urbanisation Plan. The focus was on the preference for permanently settling in the city among migrants. Situations before and after the policy transition have been compared, while special attention was given to the impact of 2 key institutional factors—hukou reform and access to public rental housing. The other key to the investigation was whether migrants who have accessed public rental housing seek to buy such housing in order to eventually achieve permanent urban settlement. Results show that the policy transition has had positive effects on the preference of migrants for permanent urban settlement. However, the influence of public rental housing occupancy was quantitatively limited and the impact of the hukou reform has not yet fully crystalized. The policy transition has brought certain equity to disadvantaged and intra - provincial rural - urban migrants, but this in turn has had negative effects on more advantaged and inter - provincial migrants. The latter categories appeared to have fewer incentives to approach permanent urban settlement via accessing public rental housing.*

KEYWORDS: China, *hukou* reform, migrants, New Urbanisation Plan, permanent urban settlement, public rental housing

Introduction

As in other developing countries, since 1978, urbanisation in China has been associated with significant internal migration. Unlike in other countries, due to the Chinese household registration system (*hukou*) established in 1958, Chinese migrants have been consistently treated as “second-class

” residents in their destination urban areas, no matter how long they have actually stayed there (Wong, 2005; F. Wu & Webster, 2010). The *hukou* system registers a new born Chinese person as being either agricultural or non - agricultural of a fixed administrative region, with the term migrant referring to those whose *hukou* status does not belong to the urban area of their city of residence (Chan & Zhang, 1999). The *hukou* is thus bound to the place of origin and social identity of each Chinese person. Although migrants have provided welcome cheap labour and facilitated rapid urban growth, local governments have been reluctant to officially register them as residents with permanent urban settlement. This has meant that such migrants have been treated differently in terms of job opportunities, full working remuneration, urban welfare, and social security,(including public housing), in their destination cities (Wang & Murie, 1999; Zhu, 2003). The *hukou* - based permanent urban settlement regulation has drawn clear economic and political hierarchies between local residents and migrants, resulting in an imbalance between the economic contributions and benefits of migrants in urban China (S. Chen & Liu, 2016). In such an inhospitable environment, in order to secure their own social security, the majority of migrants have lived an itinerant life, minimising both their social integration and consumption pat-terns in urban areas (Chu, Liu, & Shi, 2015; Jiang, 2006).

The consequences of denying urban citizenship to migrants in China have been well documented, especially the social inequalities it has created between migrants and local residents (F. Wu & Webster, 2010). However, very few scholars have addressed issues regarding permanent urban settlement, as it has been referred to as the most unattainable right for migrants since 1958 (Cao, Li, Ma, & Tao, 2015; Hao & Tang, 2015; Liu, Wang, & Chen, 2016). In response to widespread criticism, from 2008 onwards, the Chinese state gradually established a New Urbanisation Plan (hereafter also referred to as, the Plan), which announced the expansion of welfare benefits for migrants and the aim to grant permanent urban settlement to 100 mil-lion migrants by 2020 (Kim, 2015; B. Li, Chen, & Hu, 2016). The Plan aims to transform the Chinese economy from the current infrastructure investment - based model into a consumption - based model. Regardless of human factors, the Plan has a productivist strategy that acknowledges that migrants who obtain permanent urban settlement will significantly raise their consumption. The consumption expenditure of urban residents is around two to four times that of rural residents in China (National Bureau of Statistics of China [NBSC], 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). The strategy is expected to cover the losses from export decline and to stimulate growth of the domestic economy. To better realise it, the Plan prefers to provide permanent urban settlement to migrants who have lived in cities for over 5 years, who have moved with their family, or who moved to study or join the army.

The top priority of the Plan has been to continue the elimination of the *hukou* restriction. However, its implementation has been poor and mostly benefited professional and affluent migrants (Y. Huang & Tao, 2015; Kim, 2015). To further promote the Plan and especially to increase confidence among migrants to try to gain permanent urban settlement, the state has sought to extend basic urban public services, particularly public rental housing. The planned coverage of public housing is set at 23% of the whole urban residents by 2020, a doubling of the proportion in 2012 (Kim, 2015; B. Li et al., 2016). Although reforms have begun, knowledge of whether and to what extent equity and inclusivity have been achieved (and accepted by migrants) is lacking (X. Huang, Dijst, van Weesep, Jiao, & Sun, 2017). Moreover, as the institutional environment has changed, previous findings on how different factors related to permanent urban settlement among migrants also require further investigation.

This paper aims to address these knowledge gaps using a survey conducted in the central metropolitan area of Chongqing in 2013. In the remainder of the paper, this area is called “the core of Chongqing.”¹ Chongqing has been the first and, thus far, only city that has carried out two key reforms from the New Urbanisation Plan on a broad scale: opening both access to local urban *hukou* and public rental housing for migrants. The paper follows a general method in this research tradition that focuses on migrants' stated preferences as a determinant of their actual behaviour (Mulder, 1996). The revealed preference is not included as the study period was carried out at a very early stage of the policy transition, the first two years since the announcement of the reforms.

By building binary logistic regression models, the paper addresses several questions: First, it tests whether the policy transition and actual access to public rental housing have increased migrants' preference for permanent urban settlement; second, it compares the ways in which institutional and non - institutional factors relate to the preference for permanent urban settlement before and after the policy transition; third, it tests whether migrants who have accessed public rental housing seek to realise their preference for permanent urban settlement by buying public rental housing. By analysing data before and after the policy transition, the study aims to contribute to the evaluation of reforms related to migrant settlement. It is hypothesised that in the more relaxed institutional context of the Plan, the barrier of *hukou* and the superiority of migrants with higher socio - economic status will be reduced, resulting in more frequent permanent urban settlement. Specifically, migrant occupants of public rental housing might significantly increase their preference for permanent urban settlement.

Research Context

Chinese migrants and the meaning of permanent urban settlement in China

Generally, migration is either voluntary or involuntary. The former includes workers, students, and so forth, with rural–urban migrants dominating; whereas the latter primarily refers to rural migrants involved in land acquisition, who gained their permanent urban settlement automatically (Zhu, 2003). This paper focuses on households of voluntary migrants who move to cities to obtain work, including migrants of local agricultural *hukou*, non-local agricultural *hukou*, and non-local non-agricultural *hukou*. Drawn by higher wages, better job opportunities, and the promise of a decent urban life, migrants have steadily moved to cities since 1978. They have largely engaged in the manufacturing and construction industries, housing and catering services, and so forth (F. Wu & Webster, 2010). Early migrants usually clustered in low - skilled and low - paid jobs, working long hours. The inflow of migrants has helped cities to cope with a shrinking and ageing labour force (Knight, Deng, & Li, 2011). Local governments have been authorised to encourage migration independently, in accordance with their economic priorities (Zhou & Ronald, 2017b). In 2014, the number of migrants overall increased to around 260 million, equivalent to over 40% of the urban population (NBSC, 2016). Meanwhile, the profile of the migrant population has also changed. Due to the expansion of higher education and economic restructuring in big cities, a large number of young and professional migrants have emerged (Cui, Geertman, & Hooimeijer, 2016; Z. Li, 2010). More migrant students have stayed in cities after leaving education, and most have never been involved in agricultural work. Meanwhile, a group of more affluent migrants has emerged. Some of them have left employed work to start their own business. These migrants who bear more resemblance to local residents in terms of higher educational and income achievements, and stronger aspirations to integrate into local society, have generally been called new migrants (Connelly, Roberts, & Zheng, 2011). In recent years, issues of new migrants have attracted wide attention in the Chinese public and academic debate. Indeed, research usually uses the term new migrant to contrast migrants with advantageous socio - economic status with traditional migrant workers, and Chinese statistics usually use the “new generation of migrants” (*xinshengdai nongmingong*), to distinguish migrants who were born after 1980 from older migrants (NBSC, 2016).

The desire for, and access to, permanent urban settlement among Chinese migrants show similarities with the needs and desires of migrants following international migration (Hugo, 2016). (International) migrants who aim to live an urban life for a longer time, in order to collect economic capital as well as to achieve a stronger labour market status, social connections (*guanxi*), and a new cultural and psychological identity, have a close relationship

to permanent urban settlement (S. Chen & Liu, 2016; Zhu & Chen, 2010). However, the notion of permanent urban settlement for migrants in China is complex and has a great significance. First, job opportunities and welfare benefits such as medical care, pensions, and minimum income are usually better in urban compared with rural contexts. As permanent urban settlement is a prerequisite for equally access to these benefits, migrants may aspire to it (Zhu & Chen, 2010). Second, in Chinese culture, the educational opportunities of the next generation are considered extremely important. Unfortunately, in most cases, the children of migrants, whether they grow up in cities or in their parents' hometown, have to inherit their hukou status from one of their parents, and thus are restricted when accessing good local senior high schools, and have to gain higher scores than local students to enter local universities. For the sake of their children's education, migrants may thus make efforts to achieve permanent urban settlement. Third, in sharp contrast to migrants in many other countries where landless rural migrants may have to seek shelter in urban slums and take up low - skilled and low - paid jobs, new Chinese migrants have a stronger bargaining power when accessing local citizenship and may be more interested in permanent urban settlement. Fourth, in order to gain socio - economic rights to obtain permanent urban settlement in the destination cities, some rural - urban migrants have to give up their long - term (almost life-long) socio - economic rights tied to their original *hukou*, including free contract rights on their agricultural and residential land. Thus, there has been a trade - off. Migrants have been typically given a transitional period, usually several years, after which they have to decide whether to settle permanently or not. During that period, they are allowed to sublet their farmland to companies of industrial farming and thus often enjoy the benefits of both rural and urban areas (Kim, 2015; B. Li et al., 2016).

Therefore, in China, the preference for permanent urban settlement has become linked with the disparity of incomes and living conditions between the destination cities and the rural hometown of migrants. With the improvement of rural-urban land market in recent years, especially in more developed regions, the value of and income from rural land have become more consistent and significant, and thus, rural-urban migrants appeared less likely to prefer permanent urban settlement (Hao & Tang, 2015). The situation in Chongqing is unclear, as disposable income of residents in the core of Chongqing is only two times higher than that of rural residents (Chongqing Municipal Bureau of Statistics [CMBS], 2013). Below, we introduce other key factors related to a preference for permanent urban settlement, the migrant-friendly *hukou* and housing systems in the core of Chongqing.

Access to permanent urban settlement, the role of the hukou, and public rental housing

In China, official access to permanent urban settlement is completed through obtaining the

non-agricultural *hukou* of the destination city. Local governments have been obliged to provide citizenship only to residents with the *hukou* in their jurisdiction. They have made use of this policy to ignore the increasing life expectancy of migrants and minimise the cost of providing public welfare and social security for migrants (Zhu, 2003). The policy transition towards the New Urbanisation Plan was announced in order to relax the differentiation of migrants based on their *hukou* identity. Although regulations vary across cities, for voluntary migrants, the common application criteria for the local non - agricultural *hukou* require evidence that they have had a formal stable residence (rent or own), a stable employment contract (at least 1 year), and social security payments (at least 1 year; Kim, 2015; B. Li et al., 2016). In practice, with the improvement of the labour market, the last two requirements have been easier to fulfil than the first one. Over 75% of migrants live in either private rental housing or employer supplied dormitories, and most of these houses do not have a proof of the formal and stable housing (NBSC, 2016). Although buying commercial housing on the open market could be a solution, this is only affordable for those who achieve business success or secure a stable career (Liu et al., 2016; Tao, Hui, Wong, & Chen, 2015). In 2016, around 18% of Chinese migrant workers had bought a dwelling in their destination cities (NBSC, 2016). Consequently, access to public rental housing has become an important way for the majority of migrants to obtain a local non-agricultural *hukou*.

The public rental housing scheme was established in 2008 as the largest and most flexible form of public housing in China. It provides decent and cheap homes with stable tenancy, and up to now has been the only type of official rental housing available for migrants (J. Chen, Yang, & Wang, 2014). In principle, migrants could use their public rental housing occupancy as a proof of a formal stable residency to apply for permanent urban settlement. This can reduce the *hukou* and economic barriers that prevent migrants from obtaining permanent urban settlement (Kim, 2015; B. Li et al., 2016). Thus, the extent to which migrants can apply for permanent urban settlement has depended on the stock of public rental housing and the openness of local public rental housing policy.

However, like the implementation of the *hukou* reforms, the development of public rental housing has also been suppressed at the local level due to a lack of material inputs from both national and local governments (Zhou & Ronald, 2017a). Public rental housing usually was found to have higher rents and be at remote locations, and has, typically, poor facilities (S. G. Lin, 2012). To fulfil the quota that national government has assigned at the local level, local governments have invented a number of strategies. They require, for example, employers to build or rent housing for their employees as public rental housing. In other cases, some authorities have started to allow rural communities to build public rental housing on rural construction land that is much cheaper than urban construction land (Y. Lin, De Meulder, Cai,

Hu, & Lai, 2014). The former strategy has been a long standing “solution” while the latter, strictly speaking, is against the land management law of China.

In order to meet state directives, local governments have often counted every possible resource of housing as public rental housing, such as recycled public housing, vacant and unpopular commercial housing, and even illegal housing (Zhou & Ronald, 2017a). In cities with a sustained real - estate market boom, such as Beijing and Shanghai, strategies can be more direct, and real estate developers can be required to provide 5% to 10% of their newly built commercial housing as public rental housing. Local governments also coordinate public sector and private sectors in order to build limited amounts of public rental housing. The property rights of public rental housing are split based on contributions of different developers. However, local governments monopolise the distribution of public rental housing, making it the most important aspect of marginalisation among migrants (W. Wu, 2004).

The core of Chongqing and its hukou and public rental housing policies

The general principle of the New Urbanisation Plan is to intensively encourage permanent urban settlement among migrants in towns and small cities, and developing more controls in overcrowded large cities, especially those with a population over five million. This principle is actually in conflict with what migrants prefer: moving to large cities. Although the smaller municipalities have offered migrants equal residence status, public services and urban benefits in these places have remained severely limited or lacking (F. Wu & Webster, 2010; Zhan, 2015). In between them, medium - sized cities, especially regional capital cities, have been more accessible for migrants with a preference for permanent urban settlement (B. Li et al., 2016; L. Lin & Zhu, 2016). From this perspective, the core of Chongqing is representative of a broad group of second-tier capital cities and is a suitable case for our study.² The core of Chongqing has been designated the transportation centre and industrial powerhouse for the vast western part of China. Like other cities, it has experienced rapid urbanisation and industrialisation and a large inflow of migrants. In 2010, of its eight million inhabitants, nearly 40% were migrants (CMBS, 2012). In 2013, its urbanisation rate increased to over 87% (CMBS, 2013).

Since 2007, Chongqing (and Chengdu, the sub-provincial capital city of the province next to Chongqing, Sichuan) has been utilised as a pilot city to explore experimental ways to break the rural–urban *hukou* gap and thus provide equal rights to migrants. When other local authorities were still searching for ways to carry out the New Urbanisation Plan, in 2010, Chongqing implemented a significant version of the Plan (Zhou & Ronald, 2017a). Its *hukou* barriers were eliminated to allow migrants to access public rental housing. Applicants for public rental housing only needed to be over 18 years old, hold stable employment, and have

made pension contributions for over 6 months (Chongqing municipal people's government, 2010). In terms of the access to permanent urban settlement, applicants needed proof of stable residency, 5 year's work experience, and 1 year's payment of pension in the core area of Chongqing.

The public rental housing programme in Chongqing targeted the construction of 40 million square metres of public rental housing, about 670,000 units (approximately 60 square meters per unit) by 2013. The programme sought to overcome some common shortcomings of public rental housing in other parts of China, but also had weaknesses (Zhou & Ronald, 2017a). First, public rental housing in Chongqing has been newly built housing rather than “recycled” housing. Second, the construction and allocation of public rental housing has been under the direct control of the public sector, which has made the whole work more efficient, but also, in many respects, more radical. Indeed, the municipality has sought a rather excessive expansion of public rental housing. This was done in a context in which the (previous) secretary of the Communist Party in Chongqing planned to use the success of the public rental housing programme as a political trophy, in a bid for a seat at the top table of Chinese politics (at the 18th party congress in 2012; Gore, 2012). Between 2011 and 2012, the floor space of completed public rental housing represented 40% of the total completed residential housing in the core of Chongqing (CMBS, 2012, 2013). By 2013, Chongqing had established the largest public rental housing programme in China (People, 2013).

There have also been a number of weaknesses associated with this scheme. Instead of being attached to commercial housing neighbourhoods at mature locations, public rental housing in Chongqing has largely been formed of independent neighbourhoods in areas undergoing development. The government expected that the economy of these areas would be boosted after residents had moved into its public rental housing. However, the development of the facilities and surroundings subsequently fell behind the construction of public rental housing. Survey research shows that migrants were, in general, unsatisfied with basic services such as health care, preschool education, cultural and sports facilities, and public security in public rental housing communities (Gan et al., 2016). Lastly, in order to repay the large loans taken for initial construction, in 2010, the government announced that public rental housing will be available for sale to qualified low - to - middle income households at a discounted price after a 5 - year rental period. Until now, we have not seen real regulations regarding the sale of public rental housing. Nor has it been clear how many residents will participate in this policy. The second modelling of this paper explores this question.

Although there have been problems, public rental housing as such has been very popular in Chongqing. By the end of 2016, Chongqing has finished its 17th distribution of public rental housing. The housing management bureau has received over 983 thousand applications,

and 306 thousand households have moved into public rental housing, equivalent to nearly nine per cent of the total households in the core of Chongqing in 2015 (HMBC, 2012–2016). In 2016, 48% of the public rental housing tenants were migrants (National Development and Reform Commission, 2016). Its low rent (60% of average prices in the neighbourhood), stable lease (1 to 5 years in each round), and the scheme of ownership - oriented public rental housing may all be used by migrants to realise permanent urban settlement. This paper also addresses this issue below.

Moreover, the municipality, through implementing *hukou* and public rental housing reforms, has expended considerable energy in encouraging—especially—intra - provincial rural - urban migrants, who have worked in the core of Chongqing for several years, but have not been able to afford commercial housing to obtain permanent urban settlement. It has set an aim to absorb 10 million intra - provincial rural - urban migrants into the urban areas of Chongqing between 2011 and 2020 (Chongqing municipal people's government, 2010). The *hukou* reforms offer considerable compensation for those intra - provincial rural - urban migrants who give up their rural rights (mainly on their land) in exchange for local urban *hukou*, such as one-off payments for rural assets, free job training, school transfers, privileges in accessing public rental housing, and other social insurances. The strategy is two-fold: in the short term, settlement of these migrants will boost urban growth; in the long term, more importantly, these migrants will return their rural assets to their rural communities after 3 years, whereupon these land resources can be used to further the development of Chongqing. Advantages that local governments get from inter-provincial migrants are less. Although making inter - provincial migrants settle down in Chongqing would also help boosting local domestic demands, their property rights of rural land have to be returned to their hometowns which are not Chongqing.

Analytical Framework

The section above discusses two main institutional barriers to permanent urban settlement: the *hukou* differentiation and access to public rental housing. This section not only outlines the analytical framework for understanding these barriers for migrants in the core of Chongqing but also addresses the household characteristics that may play a role in obtaining permanent urban settlement. Insights so far have been derived from economic, sociocultural, and political perspectives (S. Chen & Liu, 2016; Hao & Tang, 2015; Zhu & Chen, 2010). The institutional factors indicate options available for migrants, whereas household characteristics reflect the needs and capabilities of migrant households in attaining permanent urban settlement. These factors are expanded as below.

Institutional barriers: The hukou and access to public rental housing

The stage of political - economic development and housing market conditions, are considered important to settlement efforts (Zhu & Chen, 2010). Unstable circumstances and slow economic development can play a negative role. In the study period (2009 - 2012), the economic position of residents in the core of Chongqing (indicated by disposable income and consumption expenditure per citizen) grew steadily (CMBS, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). This paper therefore pays specific attention to changes in the city's *hukou* system and housing market conditions.

Similar to prejudice and discrimination towards migrants found in western countries, in China, the institutional obstacles of *hukou* have had a strong impact on discouraging migrants from obtaining permanent urban settlement (Zhu & Chen, 2010). Though the paper focuses on the circumstances following the elimination of *hukou* barriers, it still includes *hukou* status as an independent variable to test whether *hukou* has had a lag effect on migrants' efforts to achieve permanent urban settlement. Based on the attributes of *hukou*, the paper created two dummy variables to represent *hukou* differentiations. First, regarding the place of origin, it distinguishes migrants between intra - provincial ones and inter - provincial ones. The former have more preferential rights to urban citizenship and permanent urban settlement and have stronger cultural identity and sense of belonging in the core of Chongqing. It is also assumed that intra - provincial migrants will be more likely to pursue permanent urban settlement in the core of Chongqing. Second, based on the social identity, migrants are divided into those with an agricultural *hukou* or a non-agricultural *hukou*. The former is assumed to be more concerned with losing rural assets in their hometown (Hao & Tang, 2015). This is especially true if social discrimination, living costs, and job insecurity are high in destination cities (as in Beijing and Shanghai). This could also be the case for migrants from suburban areas, where the potential value of rural land continues to increase (as in China's coastal areas). We assume, however, that rural landholding may not pose such a strong barrier for migrants in regions like the core of Chongqing, because these regions are still in a stage where life pressures have not been extremely high and their migrants mainly come from regions characterised by a comparatively lower socio - economic status.

Being an occupant of public rental housing is selected as a key factor that indicates housing market status in the core of Chongqing. Research has shown that formal housing tends to provide migrants with more opportunities for social integration and gives more confidence in urban life (Liu et al., 2016). However, few studies in China have directly investigated the role of public rental housing in city settlement (Liu et al., 2016). In the core of Chongqing, occupying public rental housing helps migrants to provide proof of formal and stable housing with lower costs compared with commercial housing. It is hypothesised that

compared with migrants who have not accessed public rental housing, migrants who did may have a stronger preference for permanent urban settlement. It is also hypothesised that residents may be more likely to realise this ambition through buying public rental housing. The model-ling focuses on access to public rental housing, excluding other welfare benefits, such as access to formal education, retirement insurance, and basic health care, which may also affect the realisation of permanent urban settlement among migrants. The reason is that compulsory education is already open for migrants in the core of Chongqing, and according to the regulations, qualified applicants for public rental housing usually have participated in the other two forms of welfare.

Finally, a time variable is used to divide the institutional context into two stages: 2009 – 2010, indicating conditions under the strict *hukou* policy and with no public rental housing programme (pre - reform period); and 2011 – 2012, reflecting conditions under the relaxed *hukou* and the public rental housing policies (post - reform period). Due to difficulties in obtaining longitudinal data, there has been a lack of research examining changes in migrants' settlement behaviour during the policy transition period. Although the study period only covers the first 2 years of the policy transition, we suspect that the influence of the policy transition should be visible. Migrants' preference for permanent urban settlement in the pre - reform period was expected to be lower than in the post - reform period.

Household characteristics related to permanent urban settlement

The analysis also includes household characteristics and tests whether their roles in approaches to permanent urban settlement have changed along with policy transition.

Demographic factors include age, gender, marital status of the family head, and cohabiting status with children, parents, and/or a spouse. Findings, especially those regarding age and gender, were not always significant and consistent across cities (L. Lin & Zhu, 2016). This emphasises the significant influence of contextual factors concerning permanent urban settlement among migrants (Zhou & Ronald, 2017b). Some studies found that migrants are less likely to aim for permanent urban settlement as they get older because it is more difficult for older migrants to find decent employment and thus access the local welfare system in big cities (Tang & Feng, 2015). The situation in the core of Chongqing might be different however, due to its relaxed *hukou* and public rental housing policies. Indeed, it is assumed that permanent urban settlement might be favoured by older rural–urban migrants who are of, or are approaching, retirement age. As they will not be able to participate in either urban manufacturing or agricultural work in the near future, they may consider exchanging their rural assets for permanent urban settlement in order to benefit from the local old - age pension programme.

The need and aspiration to achieve permanent urban settlement rise through progression in life course, from living with parents, to marriage, and then to having children reaching school age, for example, Cui et al. (2016) and Hao and Tang (2015). Furthermore, the paper assumes that the working status of the spouse plays an important role: Having a spouse working in the same city decreases a family's job insecurity and enhances its financial ability to afford the increasing costs of urban living. As discussed above, children's schooling may be the primary concern for migrants who try to settle there permanently. This factor could also drive migrants to prefer commercial housing rather than public rental housing, because schools in neighbourhoods associated with commercial housing are better than those with public rental housing (Liu et al., 2016). Finally, urban kinship ties also influence migrants' preference for permanent urban settlement, through providing information and other support.

Socio - economic factors affecting the family head, such as education, occupation status, and income, usually reveal positive influences on the decision to settle permanently among migrants. These factors reflect migrants' ability to cope with increasing urban living costs and the fear of losing assets and opportunities in their hometowns. To emphasise the occupational hierarchy that closely influences migrants' capacity to meet the requirements for obtaining permanent urban settlement, the study classifies migrants into three groups according to their work contract status: informal contract migrants, formal contract migrants, and self - employed entrepreneurial migrants.³ The first group usually accesses temporary employment from small - scale private companies, which rarely support the social insurance contributions of employees; the second group mostly experiences the opposite situation; and the third group finds itself in between. Previous studies have argued that advantages of socio - economic status raise migrants' self - confidence in adapting to the local society and improve opportunities for migrants to stay longer and keep their families together (Cao et al., 2015; Cui et al., 2016). However, we suspect that, in Chongqing, the greatly relaxed hukou and public rental housing policies may holdback socially and economically advantaged migrants from achieving permanent urban settlement via accessing public rental housing, as policies largely undermine the superior position of these migrants in the whole process.

The circumstances of migration, such as the duration of stay and place of origin, have also been found important (Piotrowski & Tong, 2013). Length of stay and an origin from a place with poorer socio - economic conditions may positively influence the preference for permanent urban settlement (S. Chen & Liu, 2016; Liu et al., 2016). The study ranked all 31 Chinese provincial - level regions based on the relative disposable income per capita per year in their capital city in 2014 (Yan & Fan, 2016). In descending order, Chongqing ranked 15th. We define regions with a ranking above 15 as “better regions” and those below as “not better

regions.” It is hypothesised that migrants from the latter may have a stronger preference for permanent urban settlement in the core of Chongqing.

Experiences of difficulties in the housing market may affect migrants' attitudes towards permanent urban settlement (Liu et al., 2016; Tang & Feng, 2015). The analysis therefore also includes the quality and satisfaction scores of previous housing. The quality score is measured through a composite index of six qualitative aspects of housing (W. Wu, 2004) and ranges from 0 to 10. Each sub score have equal weight, ranging 0–2: energy, including the availability of electricity (0 no, 1 yes) and piped gas (0 no, 1 yes); water, including the availability of tap water (0 no, 1 yes) and water heating (0 no, 0.5 shared, 1 private); kitchen (0 no, 1 shared, 2 private); bathroom (0 no, 1 shared, 2 private); and toilet (0 no, 1 shared, 2 private). For the satisfaction score, migrants were asked to rate their satisfaction with their most recent previous housing. The scores range from 1 to 10 and indicate the following: 1–4 bad; 4–6 not bad; 6–8 satisfied; 8–10 very happy.

Data and Survey

The data are derived from a retrospective survey conducted in February and March 2013 in the core of Chongqing. The research interviewed 605 respondents who had worked in the core of Chongqing without a local non - agricultural *hukou* for over half a year, and gained 546 valid responses. As our interest was in general interactions between migrants and the market, the survey excluded migrants living in factory dorms. A trial survey was conducted with 20 respondents in *Shapingba*, a district of “Chongqing city.” As it is not possible to select migrants based on housing units in China, the study performed a stratified random sample to obtain representative data. The total sample was split into districts based on the share of migrant population in each. Within each district, five neighbourhoods were randomly selected as the primary sampling units, and their population informed the sample size in each. All interviewers spoke fluent Mandarin and Chongqingnese and conducted face - to - face interviews, mostly with migrants who made housing decisions for their family (the family head). The interviews were audio recorded, and the final response rate slightly exceeded 80%. Those migrants who declined to join in the survey mostly stated “lack of time” as the reason. Some essential survey data (the proportion of Chongqing *hukou* migrants, average age, and average years of education) is very close to the 2010 census data for Chongqing, supporting sample representativeness. According to the commonly used sample size formula ($SS = z^2 * p * (1-p) / \sigma^2$, $z = 1.96$, $p = .5$, $\sigma = 0.05$), and given the fact that the migrant population in the core of Chongqing was 2.6 million in 2010, the minimum sample size should be 385. The survey thus qualifies. “Recall error” is expected to be small because migrants' circumstances

would not change considerably within 4 years. Data were converted to person - year format, and thus, the final sample used in the analysis included 982 person-year units.

Descriptive Findings

Consistent with findings from other cities (Z. Li, 2010), the migrants in the core of Chongqing in our study tended to be young (on average 33 years old) and characterised by intra - provincial and agricultural *hukou* holders (nearly 70% of the total migrant population; Table 1). To some extent, this reflects the common situation in most Chinese provinces that consist of vast rural areas. There was a group of migrants with longer durations of stay, more cohabitation with family members, and more formal, secure employment. However, disadvantages in socio - economic factors still persisted. Moreover, their average years of schooling came to 10.09, only 1 year beyond that of compulsory education. They gave an average housing quality score of around 6 (indicating shared housing) and graded their housing satisfaction as between “not bad” and “satisfied.” Finally, very few (17% of respondents) had accessed public rental housing in the post - reform period.

Table 5.1 reveals that, across both the pre - reform and post - reform periods, on average, 42% of the migrants stated the preference for permanent urban settlement, consistent with the average rate in China (L. Lin & Zhu, 2016). Specifically, the rate increased from nearly 35% to over 48% during the policy transition. This implies that the contextual changes have affected the preference for permanent urban settlement among migrants. Below, the paper explores the relationship between the independent variables and the preference for permanent urban settlement in more detail.

Table 5.1 Descriptive statistic of all samples (percentage/ mean)

Variables	Definition and coding	Per cent	Mean
Preference for permanent urban settlement	Had an intention for permanent urban settlement in 2009-2012	42.26	
	No intention for permanent urban settlement in 2009-2012(R)	57.74	
Institutional context			
Time variable	#intention emerged in pre-reform period	34.63	
	#intension emerged in post-reform period	48.35	
The hukou status	intra-provincial migrants	70.77	
	inter-provincial migrants (R)	29.23	
	Agricultural <i>hukou</i>	69.96	
	Non-agricultural <i>hukou</i> (R)	30.04	
Occupant of PRH	*Accessed PRH	16.67	
	*not accessed PRH (R)	83.33	
Household Characteristics (family head)			
Age	Average age		33.10
Gender	Male	79.74	
	Female(R)	20.26	
Marital status	Spouse works in the city	20.88	
	Spouse does not work	13.44	
	Spouse separated	33.60	
	No spouse (R)	32.08	
Child cohabitant	Living with school age child	28.31	
	Do not live with school age child	62.63	
Parent cohabitant	With at least one parent living together	37.37	
	Without parent living together	62.63	
Urban kinship	Average number	1.19	
Socio-economic factors			
Family income	Average		¥2279.41
Education	Years of schooling		10.09
Occupation	Self-employed entrepreneur migrants	24.95	
	Formal Contract Migrants	34.52	
	Informal contract migrants (R)	40.53	
Migration experience			
Place of origin	Better regions	11.71	
	Not better regions (R)	88.29	
Duration of stay	Average months of stay in the Chongqing city	72.14	
Housing experience			
Score of the previous housing	Average amount of the score index	6.18	
Satisfaction on the previous housing	Average amount of the score index	7.85	

Notes: # calculated based on the responses investigated in the pre and post periods respectively

* calculated based on the 546 responses collected in post-reform period (2011-2012).

Modelling the Preference for Permanent Urban Settlement among Migrants

Three binary logistic regression models were built to understand how various factors relate to migrants' preference for permanent urban settlement in the whole study period, the pre-reform period, and the post reform period, respectively. The first model is based on information gathered on all 982 respondents, and the other two models are based on information from 436 and 546 respondents, respectively. The dependent variable generates the difference between migrants who preferred permanent urban settlement (coded as 1) and those who did not (coded as 0). Outcomes are presented in Table 5.2; here, we present the core findings.

As expected, in Model 1, when other migrant characteristics are controlled for, the post-reform period positively relates to the preference for permanent urban settlement. This supports speculations about positive influences of the *hukou* and public rental housing policies. However, to our surprise, in Model 3, living in public rental housing does not greatly relate to the preference for permanent urban settlement. This may be caused by dissatisfaction with public rental housing and uncertainty about buying public rental housing, and it indicates that there has been a gap between the expectations of and experiences in public rental housing among migrants. Moreover, we may not be able to support the hypothesis about the reduced influence of the *hukou* in the post-reform era, as the *hukou* differentiations still reveal positive results in Model 3. Nevertheless, as *hukou* status represents not only the institutional identity of migrants but also factors such as “localness,” sense of belonging, and rural assets, it might also be possible that the hypothesis stands. This requires further research.

In the three models, intra-provincial migrants reveal a consistent positive link with the preference for permanent urban settlement. This confirms the common argument that ‘localness’ has always played an important role in obtaining permanent urban settlement (Du, 2015). More importantly, Model 3 shows that in the post - reform period, intra - provincial migrants, the agricultural *hukou*, as well as being an occupant of public rental housing, all positively relate to the preference for permanent urban settlement, with the first factor revealing the strongest influence. Indeed, as stated above, the recent *hukou* and public rental housing policies in Chongqing have given intra - provincial rural - urban migrants greater privileges and benefits to achieve permanent urban settlement. Specifically, in Model 3, the positive result from the agricultural *hukou* supports the assumption that even though there has been an increase in the value of rural assets in recent years, migrants were not

Table 5.2 modelling migrants' preference for permanent urban settlement by period, with odds ratios shown

Independent Variables	Study period 2009-2012 (Model 1)	Pre-reform (2009-2010) (Model 2)	Post-reform (2011-2012) (Model 3)
<i>Institutional factors</i>			
<i>The time variable</i>			
Post-reform (R: pre-reform)	1.793**		
<i>The Hukou status</i>			
Intra-provincial (R: inter-provincial)	3.712**	3.184**	4.033***
Agricultural <i>hukou</i> (R: Non-agricultural <i>hukou</i>)	1.217	1.204	1.376*
<i>Occupant of PRH</i>			
Accessed PRH (R: not accessed PRH)			1.014*
Household Characteristics(family head)			
<i>Demographic factors</i>			
Age	1.299	0.956	1.357**
Gender (R: female)	2.258**	2.071**	2.369**
Marital status			
Spouse works in the city (R: no spouse)	2.194**	2.038**	2.308***
Spouse does not work	1.466	1.145	1.746
Spouse separated	0.914	0.892**	0.925
Child cohabitant			
Living with school age child (R: without)	3.409**	3.389**	3.454**
Parent cohabitant			
With at least one parent living together (R:without)	1.589	1.521	1.668
Numbers of urban kinship:	2.061*	2.011*	2.181***
<i>Socio-economic factors</i>			
Family income	1.031***	1.034**	1.036**
Years of schooling	1.202***	1.447***	1.058
Occupation (R: Informal contract migrants)			
Self-employed entrepreneur migrants	1.748**	2.016**	1.463***
Formal Contract Migrants	1.677***	2.369**	1.251***
<i>Migration experience</i>			
Place of origin			
Better regions (R: Not better regions)	0.872*	0.851*	0.903**
Duration of stay in the Chongqing city	1.121	1.191	1.364*
<i>Housing experience</i>			
Housing score of the previous housing	1.516	1.887*	1.469
Housing satisfaction on the previous housing	1.624	1.696*	1.312
N	982	436	546
Nagelkerke R Square	0.523	0.507	0.513
-2 Log likelihood	246.958	189.982	213.629

Notes: R means reference in each independent variable; *p<0.5; **P<0.01; ***P<0.001

particularly encumbered by their rural assets when stating a preference for permanent urban settlement in regions like the core of Chongqing.

By comparing the role of household characteristics between Models 2 and 3, the results show that the roles of demographic factors (such as marital status, child cohabitation, parent cohabitation, and the extent of urban kinship ties), socio - economic factors (such as family income and occupation), and migration experience (including place of origin), all remained

consistent before and after the policy transition and are in line with the literature. Contrary to prior expectation, advantages in occupation and income still have positive influences, as in other cities. Fortunately, it shows that certain equity has been brought to disadvantaged migrants. For example, higher education levels and better housing experiences, which related positively to the preference for permanent urban settlement in the pre - reform period, play no roles in the post - reform era. Moreover, as hypothesised, in the post - reform era, unlike in other cities, there is an increase in older migrants stating a preference for permanent urban settlement.

Modelling the Realisation of the Preference for Permanent Urban Settlement among Migrants

Homeownership, especially first - time ownership, is closely related to the permanent urban settlement (Cui et al., 2016). A long - standing cultural tradition in Chinese society is that legally owning an urban residence greatly increases one's sense of security when living in the city. Furthermore, in the context of house price inflation, buying a home is considered an effective way for a family to accumulate wealth (Kochan, 2016; Zhan, 2015). As previously explained, the public rental housing programme in the core of Chongqing is ownership oriented, which provides migrants with a reliable and affordable pathway to realise their preference for permanent urban settlement through buying public rental housing. Thus, another binary logistic regression model is built to understand the extent to which migrants intended to buy public rental housing in order to realise their preference for permanent urban settlement in the near future. The dependent variable is the plan to realise the preference for permanent urban settlement through buying public rental housing, and the key independent variable is the occupation of public rental housing. Only the 264 migrants who had a preference for permanent urban settlement in the post - reform period are included in the model. Outcomes are presented in Table 5.3.

Surprisingly, among migrants who had a preference for permanent urban settlement in the post - reform era, those who did not reside in public rental housing were more likely to state a plan to achieve that through buying public rental housing. This further indicates the gap between the expected and actual role of public rental housing in facilitating the realisation of a preference for permanent urban settlement among migrants. It is assumed that before entering public rental housing, tenants might already have planned to achieve permanent urban settlement through buying their public rental dwelling. However, after having lived in such a dwelling for a while, they might have changed their mind, as the community facilities in predominantly public rental housing neighbourhoods remain largely underdeveloped (Yan,

2014). Indeed, the link between buying public rental housing and achieving permanent urban settlement is not only a matter of obtaining shelter, but is also about the quality of the obtained citizenship rights and the investment of the family. As mentioned before, schools and hospitals in the public rental housing neighbourhoods have been poorer in quality than those in commercial housing neighbourhoods. Moreover, due to the sharp increase of house prices, the strategy of buying public rental housing may not be cost-effective for migrants, because, in the future, public rental housing could only be sold back to the local government at cost prices.

Table 5.3 modelling the realisation of a preference for permanent urban settlement among migrants, with odds ratios shown

Independent Variables	Through buying PRH
Occupant of PRH	
Accessed PRH (R: not accessed PRH)	0.973**
The Hukou status	
Intra-provincial (R: inter-provincial)	1.255
Agricultural <i>hukou</i> (R: Non-agricultural <i>hukou</i>)	2.210*
Household Characteristics(family head)	
Demographic factors	
Age	1.984**
Gender (R: female)	1.416
Marital status	
Spouse works in the city (R: no spouse)	0.657**
Spouse does not work	1.226*
Spouse separated	1.014
Child cohabitant	
Living with school age child (R:without)	0.846***
Parent cohabitant	
With at least one parent living together (R: without)	1.348**
Numbers of urban kinship	1.384
Socio-economic factors	
Family income	0.998***
Years of schooling	0.795**
Occupation (R: Informal contract migrants)	
Self-employed entrepreneur migrants	0.656**
Formal Contract Migrants	0.889**
Migration experience	
Place of origin	
Better regions (R: Not better regions)	0.293*
Duration of stay in the Chongqing city	0.681**
Housing experience	
Housing score of the previous housing	1.044*
N	264
Nagelkerke R Square	0.457
-2 Log likelihood	198.436

Notes: R means reference in each independent variable; *p<0.5;**P<0.01;***P<0.001.

Table 5.3 also shows that those migrants who planned to realise their preference for permanent urban settlement through buying public rental housing mostly exhibited certain disadvantages, including being of an older age, having less education, having an agricultural hukou or an informal work contract, originating from “not better regions,” having shorter stays in the core of Chongqing, having a lower family income, not cohabiting with school age children, living with parents or having an unemployed spouse, or being single. This confirms the argument that migrants with stronger ability to purchase commercial housing may not take public rental housing as a pathway to realise permanent urban settlement.

Discussion and Conclusion

Urbanisation has been seen by the Chinese state as the key factor in the development of China's economy since the early 1980s, and it has also meant allowing millions of migrants to work in cities without providing them the right to either access local social services or settle in cities permanently. The priority of the New Urbanisation Plan, which officially took effect in 2014, has been to change these previous circumstances and encourage a substantial portion of migrants to settle in cities permanently. To achieve this, the Plan reduced discrimination in *hukou* and public rental housing contexts that has prevented migrants from obtaining permanent urban settlement for over 30 years.

In the near future, the extent to which migrants participate in the New Urbanisation Plan will influence the socio - demographic, economic, and residential landscape of urban China. Although a substantial number of studies have predicted a positive effect of opening up public rental housing for migrants, due to the lack of empirical data, few have actually looked at the link between access to public rental housing and the preference for permanent urban settlement (Liu et al., 2016). This paper aimed to narrow that knowledge gap. Based on individual data collected in Chongqing, the first and only city that has opened access to both the local urban *hukou* and public rental housing for migrants at a broad scale, the paper examined how the key institutional factors—such as policy transition, *hukou* status, and public rental housing occupancy—and non - institutional factors related to the preference for permanent urban settlement among migrants before and after the policy transition. Furthermore, the paper looked at factors that related to the plan to approach permanent urban settlement via the purchase of public rental housing among migrants.

The results show that, although barriers in education and age have been reduced, other socio - economic barriers, such as income and occupation, still strongly relate to the preference for permanent urban settlement among migrants. Therefore, it is not enough to simply reduce the barriers of *hukou* and access to public rental housing. Local governments

need to further strengthen migrants' economic capacity to achieve permanent urban settlement. The relaxed *hukou* and public rental housing policies have encouraged more migrants to state a preference for permanent urban settlement in the core of Chongqing. However, occupying public rental housing did not greatly encourage migrants to prefer permanent urban settlement. This indicates a gap between the expected role and the actual role of public rental housing among migrants. Migrants have been dissatisfied with public rental housing and uncertain about buying these homes. Among those who had a preference for permanent urban settlement in the post - reform era, only disadvantaged migrants would be more likely to will to end their housing career in public rental housing. Those migrants with more bargaining power in the housing market would not take public rental housing as a necessary ladder towards permanent urban settlement. This finding supports concerns over the strategy of repaying loans via selling off public rental housing. This strategy might be especially unrealistic for second and third tier cities in which housing prices have not been increasing rapidly, and homeownership thus remained accessible for the majority of migrants. However, these cities have been earmarked as the major cities that will enforce public rental housing and *hukou* reforms. Thus, local governments of these cities should be aware of the risk of selling off public rental housing to fund large scale new public rental housing programmes. They have to either work out other ways to finance the construction or establish policies to attract migrants to buy public rental housing. For example, they have to ensure that migrants gain the value appreciation of investment in public rental housing when the sitting public rental housing is sold back.

Another concern is with the concentration of disadvantaged migrants in independent and undeveloped public rental housing neighbourhoods. As disadvantaged migrants extend their leases for permanent urban settlement and other more disadvantaged residents move into public rental housing, segregation in housing may emerge and it may prevent migrants of higher social - economic status accessing public rental housing. An investigation has shown that 40% of public rental housing in Chongqing has been occupied by unemployed or retired residents (Kaifeng Foundation, 2011), and this proportion is rising. A considerable number of low - skilled migrants have become jobless and are living on government compensation after achieving permanent urban settlement in the core of Chongqing (Gan et al., 2016). This phenomenon has run counter to the fundamental ideology of the New Urbanisation Plan. Being guided by elements of productivism, the public rental housing policy is supposed to serve the goal of absorbing migrants who will be conducive to enhancing domestic consumption and demand. To deal with this contradiction, local governments need to keep the social mix of public rental housing neighbourhoods. They need to draw lessons from the experiences of other countries that have already undergone such urbanisation processes. For

example, in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, the rapid pace of urbanisation led to many farmers with no land and no regular job becoming new urban citizens, which caused serious conflicts in terms of urban polarisation and social integration (Portes, 1989). Municipalities need to make public rental housing also attractive for advantaged migrants and control the proportion of disadvantaged residents in public rental housing. To do so, it is not recommended to blindly distribute public rental housing with incomplete facilities and more efforts need to be put in improving the living conditions.

Lastly, the results also show that, by providing discriminatory privileges for intra - provincial rural - urban migrants in obtaining permanent urban settlement, the *hukou* reform has created a dichotomy between these migrants and the rest. As argued above, the likely strategy behind this relates to the urban development strategy in Chongqing: The government expects the settlement of intra - provincial rural - urban migrants to boost urban growth, while also providing more rural land for the further development of the region. The key behind this problem is the Chinese land management law that restricts the trade of land among administrative regions (Mullan, Grosjean, & Kontoleon, 2011). Regions receiving inter - provincial rural - urban migrants who achieve permanent urban settlement have to bear all costs for integrating migrants as urban citizens, while regions sending migrants out gain their rural assets. The better the living conditions a region has, the more attractive it becomes for migrants, and the more it has to spend in receiving migrants. To offset the cost of expanding public services for migrants, land becomes an important compensation for local authorities, and thus, in the core of Chongqing, preferential conditions have been given to intra - provincial rural - urban migrants. Although, in recent years, the Chinese state has adjusted its distribution of land for urban construction based on the increase of migrants in cities, this has not fixed the uneven situation between receiving and sending regions. Therefore, more reforms are needed to solve the problems related to the land of migrants so that the inter - provincial migrants—who accounted for nearly 55% of all Chinese migrants in 2010—can improve their share in permanent urban settlement (NBSC, 2010).

Limitations of the study must also be mentioned. One drawback is that the paper excluded migrants who returned to their hometowns during the study period; another is that the study selected a city where *hukou* and public rental housing reforms have been the most extreme in China. These factors may have caused some bias in our results. Another limitation is that our research findings are based on data collected during a specific time, namely, the very early stage of *hukou* and public rental housing reforms. The full aftermath may still be influenced by some more recently enacted regulations and policies. Finally, as the actual achievement of permanent urban settlement among migrants was still rare when we collected

our data, the study could only reveal migrants' initial attitudes towards policy transition. We should be aware that these initial preferences might not always result in actual behaviour.

A recent national report has revealed that the implementation of policies on permanent urban settlement has fallen behind the expectation of the government (NDRC, 2016). Of course, fundamentally, both the selective permanent urban settlement policy and the extent to which the migrant population is willing to settle in cities need to be further discussed. Apart from that, this study makes an important contribution to knowledge on the relationship between the recent *hukou* and public rental housing policies and the preference for permanent urban settlement among migrants. As more Chinese cities have adapted more relaxed *hukou* and public rental housing policies in order to encourage migrants to settle in cities, an understanding of migrants' decisions and preferences regarding permanent urban settlement in the first case where this new policy was enacted—Chongqing—may be important in guiding other cities' efforts in this sphere.

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Notes

1 Chongqing, one of the four direct - controlled municipalities of China, is governed at the provincial level. Although being named as a city, its territory is 82,400 km², with 94% constituted of rural areas. To make the study comparable with other city - level studies, in terms of urbanisation stage, population structure, and economic development, the empirical analysis is based on a survey conducted in the core of Chongqing, including the districts of *Yuzhong*, *Shapingba*, *Jiu longpo*, *Yubei*, *Jiangbei*, *Beibei*, *Banan*, and *Da dukou*.

2 The latest grading of Chinese cities has located Chongqing between the Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities. However, there is a bias as the evaluation used the data of the entire territory of Chongqing and thus compared a province - size city with other normal cities. This paper uses the data of the core of Chongqing. Its GDP per capita and population density in 2015, and its housing price - to - income ratio and rent - to - income ratio in 2017 have been close to the average level of Chinese cities.

3. Our clarification is based on the work of Z. Li (2010), who divides migrants into three socio - economic groups: labour migrants, entrepreneurial migrants, and intellectual migrants. The paper argues that since the first two categories are defined based on occupational status and the third on educational level, there could be overlaps among the three groups. Thus, this paper defines migrants based on occupational status and work contract, both of which

represent migrants' affiliation with (or support from) employers and their participation in social insurance schemes, which are essential for migrants to prove their eligibility to access public rental housing.

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