Debates and Classification Struggles Regarding the Representation of Migrants Workers

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This article focuses on the ways in which migrants from the countryside were represented in the late 1980s and early 1990s, at a time when migration was becoming a major topic of public debate. Basing his argument on a close study of daily and weekly press articles, scientific journals, and reportage literature published between 1986 and 1991, he shows how a struggle has developed over the way the migratory movements are represented, and how it is articulated around an unresolved duality, namely the state and the market economy. The central issue in this controversy is the legitimacy of the migrants' presence in the towns, and this involves redefining the social and geographical hierarchy. The author also shows in historical terms how certain categories and labels like "blind migrant" have come into being; they participate in developing areas of state intervention (1).

For just over a year there has been a wide debate in the Chinese media over the dearth of labourers from the countryside, in the Pearl River Delta in the first instance but followed by other coastal regions. Although caution is called for in assessing the breadth and the causes of this situation, it is worth noting that the most frequently cited cause is the violation of workers' rights and the disastrous working conditions in the manufacturing sector (2). It would seem that a large number of workers are refusing to go to places where working conditions are too bad and the non-payment of wages too frequent. In order to have a better understanding of current debates concerning the "penury" of labourers from the countryside, it is helpful to consider the representations related to the "wave of *mingong*" (3) (, *mingongchao*) in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. It was during this period, marked by a socio-economic and political crisis, that the question of migrant labour began to make its way to the forefront of public debate. Previous works on the media representation of migrant workers have pointed to the largely homogenising descriptions of rural masses penetrating cities to threaten law and order, and social stability in general (4). While the press in the late 1980s and early 1990s conjured up a sudden and overwhelming rise in the number of migrants, statistical data for that time actually show a very moderate increase (5). At the same time, even certain representations that actually supported migrants have been described as contributing to the image of the migrant as an "inferior other" in contrast with the legitimate city dweller.

In this article, basing my argument on a close study of daily and weekly press articles, scientific journals, and reportage literature published between 1986 and 1991, I intend to show that, rather than a simple homogenising description of labour migration in terms of social disorder and urban disturbances, there is in fact a struggle taking place around the way such migratory movements are represented, and that this is centred around the contentious relationship between the state and the market economy. This struggle mainly finds expression through a debate over the terms that should be used to describe migrants, and in particular over the expression "blind migrant" (, *mangliu*). At issue is the very legitimacy of their presence in cities, and it involves redefining the outlines of the social and geographical hierarchy. In this article I will also reflect upon the way in which certain discursive categories, such as "blind migrant", have developed historically, to show how they contribute towards defining areas of state intervention (7).

After considering the extent of the continuity between the way migration was identified as a problem in the 1950s and again in the late 1980s, I will describe the characteristics of this whole discourse which links spontaneous migration with urban disturbance. I will then be able to attend to the logic informing the arguments of those writers who present a positive image of labour migration, essentially by associating it with the economic reforms and the market economy.

The context of the debate: social and political crisis

The situation in the late 1980s was one of social crisis coupled with political and ideological tensions at the highest levels of government (8). Since the beginning of the decade, reformists and conservatives had been clashing over the extent of the economic reforms, and more particularly over the role of the market within an economic system that was still largely planned (9). As major steps were taken towards deepening the reforms, the ideological tensions between reformists and conservatives increased correspondingly. The former were mostly young economists grouped around Zhao Ziyang, and opposed to them were the Chen Yun faction. From 1985 onwards, the clashes grew fiercer around the issues of growth rates, inflation, price reforms, and the fight against corruption (10). In 1987, the struggle between the Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Zhao Ziyang, and the Prime Minister,

Li Peng, escalated. In May 1987, in a situation of inflation and social dissatisfaction, measures were adopted to accelerate the price reforms, but in September of the same year state control over the economy was reinforced. Towards the end of 1988, conservative influence over economic policy reached its highest point, and in March 1989 economic policy was reoriented towards giving priority to the development of agriculture and basic industries, at the expense of the rural and manufacturing enterprises. In addition, state control over local affairs was strengthened. In this situation, following the financial constraints imposed by Prime Minister Li Peng, a number of rural enterprises went bankrupt. When the central government imposed an economic slowdown in 1989, a growing number of rural migrants from the countryside headed for the cities, particularly around the New Year period (11). Given the heightened social tensions and the large concentrations of migrants drawn to the main urban centres, the consequent reaction was panic in towns and cities (12).

From "hooligan" (*liumang*) to "blind migrant" (*mangliu*)

In the late 1980s, the Chinese media were already raising concerns about the "flood of migrants" (*mingongchao*) causing disturbances in cities. The term "blind migrant" (*mangliu*) played a major role in these reports. The term itself is a homophonic inversion of *liumang* ( ), a pejorative expression roughly equivalent to "hooligan". The inverted term consists of two characters: the first, *mang*, means "blind", and is itself made up of the character (, *wang*), which in classical Chinese means "disappear" or "lose", and the character (, *mu*) which means "eye". The second character in the expression is *liu*, meaning "flow" or "float", as opposed to everything rooted, fixed or stable. The character *liu* is to be found in a whole series of expressions referring to wandering or migration, all of which are historically associated with disturbances bringing about population displacements (13). *Liumang* likewise includes the same character *liu*, combined with *mang*, which in former times meant "leaving or being forced to leave one's native land". Under the Qing dynasty, the term *liumang* acquired the meaning of "hooligan". So this term, and indirectly its homophonic inversion *mangliu*, are loaded with symbolic associations.

But attention should also be paid to the way in which the term *mangliu* was mobilised in the early years of the communist regime and, more to the point, when the first measures were taken to handle the presence of the peasants in cities, and population mobility in general. *Mangliu* is a term closely linked to official disapproval of migration from the countryside to the cities.

At first, in 1950, freedom of movement was guaranteed by Article 5 of the common programme, but on August 3rd 1952 the first official resolution aimed at "dissuading the peasants from entering blindly into the cities" (14) was adopted. At that time, the logic underlying this position was a deep anxiety about possible social instability in the towns, which was a reaction to movements from the countryside to the main urban centres within a still precarious situation. Cheng Tiejun notes that two threads can be detected running through this document. The first of these is the idea that there is a difference between under-employment in the countryside and in the cities, the latter being the only real under-employment to be avoided. The second is simply typical of the way all governments have understood spontaneous movements by the population: they are blind and need to be controlled.

This first resolution was followed on March 17th 1953 by an official "directive concerning the discouragement of the blind influx of the peasants into towns", which was published in the *People's Daily* on the following day by the Premier Zhou Enlai. The reasons were clearly spelt out: "(…) At present, since urban building has hardly started, the demand for labour is limited. Consequently, the arrival of peasants in cities means that the number of unemployed in towns is increasing, which causes administrative problems, while in the countryside the reduced availability of labour means that agricultural work is disrupted, leading to losses in production (…)".

Seven measures were adopted. The authorities at the different levels of the administration were requested to "patiently explain matters to those peasants who wish or intend to move to a town, and to dissuade them from doing so … When the time comes for urban construction to seek more workers, the governments of the townships and prefectures will be officially notified, [so that] they can recruit in a planned and organised manner". They are advised "to show prudence when sending the peasants back, to pay the transport costs of those in difficulty (…) and to provide appropriate aid to those facing immediate constraints". The last part of the directive concerns recruitment by work units, stipulating that they must communicate their manpower needs to the departments of labour and construction management, in order to receive an organised and planned allocation of labour (15).

A series of articles published in the *People's Daily* sets out the details of this resolution and comments upon it. These commentaries show a tougher official attitude to unorganised migration, which will dominate the thinking of the urban elite right into the 1980s and 1990s. In fact it was as early as 1953 that expressions such as "blindly leave the countryside" (, *mangmu waichu*), "blindly penetrate" (,

mangmu liuru) were endlessly repeated in newspaper articles and official documents, becoming more or less automatically associated with peasant mobility and presence in the towns. This gave birth to the term "blind migrant" (*mangliu*), which can be considered as a contraction of "blindly penetrate" (*mangmu liuru*). The different levels of the administration were required to show their skill in persuasion by "patiently explaining to any peasants preparing to head for towns, that going blindly into the towns held out no advantages, either for the country or for the peasants themselves, and that they should stay peacefully at home and develop agricultural production" (17). It was also from 1953 onwards that the government set out its targets for the first five-year plan (1953-1957) and gradually introduced a system for restricting access to towns. The consequences of the peasants' moving to towns were listed: increases in excess labour in towns, a decline in social order, negative effects on agricultural production, pressures on urban infrastructure etc. To remedy these problems, within the framework of collectivisation in agriculture, the primary need was defined as "resolving all the problems in peasant thinking (….). Dissuading the peasant from blindly penetrating into towns is not only imperative for the task of raising national consciousness but is also in the true interests of the peasants" (18).

As the principal factors affecting mobility (jobs, housing, food supplies) passed under state control, in tandem with the establishment of a national population registration system, the tone of the official directives and other measures dealing with migration from the countryside to the towns, progressively hardened. The "blind" individual interest of the peasants moving to the towns on their own initiative was contrasted with the collective interest represented by industrialisation and collectivised agricultural production. Forced repatriation was added to the tasks of persuading and educating the peasants. In December 1957, a directive laid down that, alongside the tasks of educating the rural masses and organising agricultural production, emphasis should be given to controlling towns through residence permits, establishing reception centres (, *shourongsuo*) there, organising work for the arrested to enable them to pay for their return journey, and effecting their repatriation (19).

The directive concerning the registration of the population in January 1958 (20) formally abolished the freedom to choose the place of domicile, and getting a permit to migrate from countryside to town became a matter of tortuous procedures which made it very difficult (21). This directive was one among many other official documents, which led to setting up a fundamental opposition between rural migrations on the one hand and the actions of the state on the other. The former were perceived as non-organised phenomena (, *wu zuzhi*), unplanned (, *wu jihua*), disordered and even irrational—since migrants who blindly left the countryside (, *mangmu waichu*) and plunged equally blindly into cities (, *mangmu yongru*), were the cause of urban disorders (from security to food supplies),—while the state's actions restored "strict control" (, *yange kongzhi*) over these population flows, by sending migrants back to the countryside, now that their presence in towns had become illegal (22). Within this logic, sending the peasants back to the countryside was aimed at enabling them to "work peaceably" at their agricultural tasks (, *an'an de wunong*).

Struggles in the late 1980s: the legitimacy of peasant migration *versus* the pejorative term *mangliu*

The dominant ways in which migrations and migrants themselves were represented in the late 1980s and early 1990s shared a number of similar traits with those of the 1950s. There is the same opposition between spontaneous migrations, which were necessarily disorganised, and those planned and organised by the state. Another factor reminiscent of the 1950s is the range of measures stipulated for the incarceration and repatriation of migrants. An article in the journal *Society* in 1990 proposes that the reception centres be expanded, and that labour camps be set up, together with a system of compulsory repayment of the costs of repatriation. It states that in Shanghai "among the population from outside the city are a large number of people belonging to the *mangliu* category who should be locked up and thrown out". To deal with this need to incarcerate more, the Shanghai authorities "must undertake the renovation and enlargement of the closed labour centres (…). To handle those elements who persist in their errors, but whose criminal behaviour is not sufficient to draw the attention of the police, the policy to be followed must combine education with work provision, investigation and repatriation (23). Thanks to education through labour and a short period of education in the law (lasting three to six months), they must be made to understand the harm caused by their migration, so that they become aware of the error of their ways, amend them, and migrate no more (…) (24).

In a number of articles, spontaneous migrations to towns are frequently labelled blind for being opposed to the Party's policy of controlled migration. Even a publication like *Nongmin Ribao (Peasants' Daily)*, which has a reputation for defending the peasants' cause, takes up the dominant terminology when it is a matter of setting out a policy for "encouraging the transfer of rural populations

to the townships, as well as to the small and medium towns, so as to get control of the blind migration of peasants to towns" (25). The *Nongmin Ribao* journalists very rarely refer to "blind migrations", and in this particular instance it is used to refer explicitly to illegal peasant movement. From being legal and encouraged when officially directed towards the townships and small and medium towns, peasant migrations become "blind" when they clash with the official line.

In describing these "blind migrations", the stress is often placed on their irrational character, and this is linked, among other factors, to the assertion that the peasants are *driven* out by poverty, which could lead to an "endless multitude of peasants" arriving in towns (26). In most cases, the decision to leave their village is said to be taken lightly by these "blind migrants", as they are prompted by rumours to make for the towns and try their luck. The poverty of the countryside is invoked to explain the blind irrationality of this behaviour, as well as their unrestrained lust to get money by any available means. The writers of *Mangliu! Mangliu!*, for example, affirm that the teams of migrant workers in the construction industry "operate in a totally blind manner. They go where there is work, where there is money to be earned, and money is their only motive. They have no feasibility study [*sic*] . They have no collective sense, and respond only to their thirst for money …". Likewise, their poverty is said to be the reason why they see no point in signing contracts. The same goes for the way the women are exploited in domestic service, for "[if] these people agree to be bossed about, it's because they are too poor". The "child labourers" are also "too poor"; they have to rely solely on their physical strength, because "their cultural level is too low". This is also why "they accept unequal treatment like cattle, putting up with hard labour and insults" (27). In many descriptions of the illegal activities of the *mangliu*, their thirst for money is linked to moralistic condemnation, whether it is a question of prostitution, begging, drug trafficking, or other petty crime. Their lust for money is seen as defining them, depriving them of individual will and unfailingly pushing them into illegal acts. That is why a number of newspaper articles and books provide "typical portraits" of people capable of morally reprehensible and sometimes legally punishable behaviour.

It sometimes happens that this irrationality is bolstered by abnormal behaviour, as suggested in the following analogy used to describe migrant women: " … although their hopes are blind and baseless, they still come … At first they are like headless flies banging into things at every turn". The author then goes on to describe the activities of two *mangliu*: "These *mangliu* have no need to seek a temporary residence permit, or to worry about where they will spend the night. They possess a great deal of personal freedom and adaptability, enabling them to think of nothing but profit and getting money; they will do anything to put money in their pockets (, *laoqian* (28))". In another article, the changes experienced by peasants who have moved to the towns are compared with the changes experienced by "monkeys who have come down from the trees" (29). In another article, a migrant woman is described as "an innocent goat", and young women who have left their village are portrayed as "little birds in search of food, far from their ancestral land and their cosy nest" (30). This kind of representation helps to create an image of migrants as fundamentally "other", in absolute contrast with the citizens who alone have the right qualities and attributes to live legally in a town. A simplifying cause-and-effect relationship linking poverty to migration, apart from contributing to the image of migration as a manifestation of disorder, masks the historical and political aspects of the polarity of town and countryside. But in fact, studies have shown that migrations in China, just as elsewhere in the world, are only rarely undertaken by the poorest and least educated (31). Moreover, many investigations have established that, even as early as the 1980s, most migrants do not set out on a blind quest but, on the contrary, rely on networks or "chains" of support between their native village and their destination (32). To explain the causes of migration by reducing them to economic factors alone gives a very partial account of this complex phenomenon (33).

The fairly frequent recourse to hydraulic metaphors to describe the flow of migrants penetrating into the towns is yet another procedure which contributes towards homogenising and "othering" them. Articles talk endlessly of "floods of migrants" (*mingongchao*), the "flood tide of migrants" (, *mingong dachao*), or "great waves of migrants" (, *mingong langchao*). Other expressions also refer to their large numbers, such as "the immense floating population" (, *pangda de liudong renkou*), the "ceaselessly growing floating population" (, *buduan zengjia de liudong renkou*), the "huge army of *mangliu*" (, *mangliu dajun*), the "horde of social burdens" (, *baofu duiwu*), the "hordes of over ten thousand egg-sellers" (, *shangwanren de maidan duiwu*), the "great army of millions of *mangliu*" (, *baiwan mangliu dajun*), and the "shock troops of excessive births" (, *chaosheng youjidui*) etc. In most cases such expressions invoke disorder (, *luan*), filth and crime, enabling the emphasis to fall on the sudden, violent and overwhelming character of the migrants' arrival in towns. Such descriptions reinforce the idea of towns being literally under siege.

The arrival of rural migrants, and their continuing presence in towns, is frequently associated with pressures on urban infrastructures and threats to social order in the towns. A front page article in the

daily *Guangming Ribao* is a good illustration of this: "Once the New Year festival is over, masses of migrants from the provinces of Sichuan, Henan, Hubei, Shandong, Shaanxi, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang emigrate. Most of them float blindly on the current, naively believing every rumour (…) The large number of these blind migrants puts enormous pressure on the railways, and causes chaos (, *hunluan*) for the security services. Consequently, this enormous crowd of *mangliu* is of no benefit to the country or the people (…). This extraordinarily violent flood of *mangliu* batters the four corners of Hainan Island like a tidal wave, and disturbs the political and social order of even that large Special Economic Zone (34).

In a great many articles, the various harmful effects of the migrants' presence are listed, even though the point is often clearly made that it also brings benefits. The pressures on urban infrastructure affect urban planning, transport, housing, markets, security, the environment, hygiene, birth control etc. (35). The need to control, incarcerate, and expel them is generally asserted. Some of these articles are veritable models of how to homogenise, stigmatise and even demonise. An article in *Renkou Dongtai* appearing under the headline: "The influence of the floating populations on city life and environment, and an analysis of its causes", summons up images of saturation or super-saturation, pollution and destruction. The major damage alleged by the author is the irrational use of urban spaces, due to the fact that migrants live in cabins which "ruin the urban landscape and, more importantly, take up large areas (…)" These barbarian take-overs "are an ever-present danger to agricultural production, causing a scarcity of water and other resources" (such as grain, firewood, green spaces). The environment inhabited by the floating population is "polluted and chaotic" permitting "all sorts of contagious diseases to flourish, and causing a rise in infections and mortality". Moreover, migrants are described as introducing "infectious diseases which are normally rare in towns". Another charge is added: "The floating population adds to noise pollution in cities" because the cries of the street peddlers "disturb the lives and the calm of the citizenry". In addition, "they increase air pollution" because of the extra public transport required, plus that caused by their own vehicles, plus the coal they burn for heating.

The second part of the same article moves on from the sheer size of the floating population to put forward the "cultural" and "moral" reasons which explain why they ruin the urban environment. The writer argues that the floating population "does not possess the necessary attributes for living in a modern town (…). As for its cultural level, it lacks the public morality and civic qualities that city dwellers must have (…). In short, the problem is that the low cultural level of the floating population leads to chaos in the living spaces of the town and pollutes its environment". Finally, once again the migrants' short-term behaviour and exclusive focus on money is described as a defining characteristic. The writer concludes with his solution to these problems, that control and education are needed for "people who blindly penetrate into cities" (36). These articles put most of the responsibility for the problems they raise onto the shoulders of migrants themselves, blaming their attitudes, mentality, morality, and poor education. What we find in fact is an essentialising process, through which the origins of the problems are found to lie in the culture of the individuals concerned.

Zhang Li describes the three principal modes of representing migrants firstly as unifying and homogenising, secondly as dehistoricising and dehumanising, and thirdly as abnormalising (38). On the whole I would agree with this typology. However, there are some writers who criticise these ways of misrepresenting them, by introducing historical and political perspectives into their analyses, as well as structural approaches, in an attempt to bring out the unique specificity of the path followed by each individual migrant. The latter is no longer seen as simply merged into a mass, fleeing from poverty and frantically scrambling for money.

Migration and the reforms

A number of writers criticise the way migrations are linked with disturbances, and the categorising use of the label "blind migrants" (*mangliu*). Their prime point is to insist on a difference between contemporary and past migrations, the latter being synonymous with unrest (39). They establish this difference by linking modern mobility with the economic reforms and the shift to a market economy (40). This association between mobility and economic reforms allows them to dismiss the usefulness of the term "blind migrants" (41). These writers argue for the adoption of "new solutions for new problems", meaning the need to guide and direct instead of obstructing and expelling (42). This is a very important point. They attack the use of terms like *mangliu* because they recognise and emphasise that it is linked to the practices of incarceration and expulsion, which they consider indiscriminate. (43). As one writer explains: "For the last month or two, the phenomenon of peasants trapped in several towns has appeared. All of a sudden, rural labourers have become "burdens" and *mangliu*. (…) Is this a fair judgement?" In the next paragraph he lists the benefits brought by the mobile rural labour force. He

goes on to admit that there is inevitably a "blind" element in this mobility, but he affirms that in general it shows a certain regularity, and that consequently one cannot call the body of migrant peasants *mangliu*. He distinguishes present day migrations from those of the past, because "their mobility is an economic activity within the framework of the market economy". He acknowledges that the presence of migrants in the town poses certain problems, and that some measures need to be taken. Nonetheless, he continues, it is not right to "flush them all out of town" (44). The refusal to use the term *mangliu* to describe migrants is linked to questioning the way migrations are explained solely in terms of poverty and a single-minded pursuit of profits. The explanation becomes more complex when structural, historical and psychological factors are taken into account. The writer of an article published in the journal *Society* in 1991 highlights "the rather frequent but mistaken outlook involved in discussing the question of the *mingongchao*: the very term *mingongchao* is the equivalent of *mangliu*, and *mangliu* means disaster". As for the motives behind the migrations, he puts forward a desire, not only for a higher income but "to see the world". He cautions against a simplistic causal link between demographic pressure and migration, criticising superficial analyses which take only demographic pressure and economic recession into account. He concludes that this leads to the view that "unemployed peasants have become an unorganised force attacking the medium-sized towns and coastal cities, that is to say, the *mangliu* on everybody's lips". Actually, migrations should be explained by the dual structure of society and the economy, and by the disparities between town and country. He argues that the thesis which equates the *mingongchao* with blind migration and chaos is "clearly a reflection of urban value judgements", and these ought to be seen "in direct relationship with the policy which, up until the present, has favoured the towns and heavy industry" (45). So there are indeed some writers who, rather than setting up a direct causal link between the essential characteristics of migrants and the problems facing cities, draw attention to the historical and political dimensions in order to explain contemporary labour mobility and the problems encountered by the towns (46). Their criticism is directed principally at the residency permit system and the dual structure of Chinese society.

Let us return briefly to the discussions which associate the economic reforms with the market economy on the one hand, and migratory movements on the other. These discussions take place within the wider framework of the debates between reformists and conservatives over the economic reforms and opening up to the outer world. After September 1987, readjustment measures were introduced to put a brake on the economic reforms, and in the late 1980s and early 1990s the clash between reformists and conservatives over the extent of the reforms already undertaken, was particularly acute. I would like to emphasise the similarity in the terms used by the defenders of the need to strengthen macro-economic controls over the Chinese economy and those deployed by writers describing the "blind migrations", which likewise are said to need control through state intervention. Indeed, for certain conservative officials, "if prices were controlled spontaneously through the market", it follows that "economic development would be blind". Only long-term planning could avoid such chaos and loss of authority (47). For Chen Yun, planning represents order and rationality, while the market is synonymous with blindness. He distinguishes between "the guidance provided by planning" and the rules of the market, which "allow the blind forces of supply and demand to determine production" (48).

In articles dealing with labour migration, certain expressions can also be found which explicitly invoke measures to slow down and control economic growth. For example the reader is told that one of the causes for the big influx of migrants into towns in 1989 was the recession caused by the measures of rectification (, *zhengdun*) and adjustment (, *tiaozheng*), particularly in the rural enterprises. In a work published by journalists from the *People's Daily*, the policy of "cleansing" (, *qingli*) the towns was openly criticised, and the contradictions were laid bare between the rectification (, *zhengdun*) measures imposed in cities and the policy of exporting rural manpower adopted by certain provinces. The writers explain that at the height of the cleansing campaign in the towns, Party officials in Sichuan province gave orders to continue the exportation of rural manpower, and even attempted to find new outlets for it (49). Elsewhere too, the "readjustment" policy is linked with "clearing out the *mangliu*" (50).

To affirm a close connection between mobility and the market economy through a narrowly economist discourse, also means to endow that mobility with a rationale which conflicts with the definition of migration as a blind and irrational phenomenon. From being a manifestation of blind irrationality, migrations suddenly become "the unavoidable outcome of the reforms and opening up (…), the inevitable product of the development of a socialist market economy (…), the inevitable historical product of socialist modernisation and urbanisation" (51), or even "a rational and realistic historical necessity" (52). Several writers appropriate the metaphor of the tide used by the detractors of the migrations and reverse its meaning: from being a force that sows disorder in society, it becomes a force for transformation, enabling the renewal of creative vitality. According to the *People's Daily*, "the wave of peasant workers waxes and wanes according to the rhythms of growth (…); in that respect it clearly displays the characteristics of the market economy in its developmental phase". This onrushing

wave may nonetheless contain a potential threat to the townsfolk insofar as it calls the urban *status quo* into question, especially with regard to the availability of urban services (53).

A particularly vivid illustration of this calling into question is provided in the following extract from an article headed "The shockwave shaking our town walls". Referring to the stagnation in agricultural production, the author writes, "People have finally understood. It is not because there is a lack of manpower in the countryside, but rather because there is no competition and no mobility, that eight hundred million peasants are tied hand and foot to a limited area of arable land, like creepers around an old tree. Their intelligence and skills have been stifled, their vitality has declined, and society has lost its energy. (…) The wave of goods produced for the market has hit the old villages and their dying fields. Millions upon millions of surplus labourers have joined this unstoppable tidal wave. The floodgates have been smashed, and the spirit of individual initiative and creativity, repressed for so long, is suddenly bursting out. The peasants have plunged in headlong, wherever they see a chance to earn a living and develop their skills, without bothering first to wash the mud off their faces or the cow dung off their feet (…). Feeling the shock of this onrushing wave, the town dweller, sitting comfortably in his solid armchair and eating from the state-provided "big pot", has begun to experience the crisis for himself, and the consequent need to lift the curtains and slowly let in the reforms" (54). Here the economics of the market are presented as positive forces for change (55), for the peasants have been awoken from their slumbers by the market economy: "… at present the ideas of the market economy are besieging the whole country, and it is as though many people are suddenly realising that the outside world is full of wonders" (56).

Whereas those publications that represent the peasant migrations as the source of disorder call for the control, incarceration and eventual expulsion of the "blind migrants", those that associate the migrations with the reforms sometimes call the social hierarchy itself into question. For them, it is the "old and rigid" urban planning system, and the dual structure of society with its residence permits, which need to be reformed, having effectively lost all legitimacy. Responsibility for the current situation is turned on its head. It is no longer migrants who are responsible for urban disturbances, but the failure of the state to plan and manage a proper labour market and to provide adequate services to migrants in towns (57). This revelation of the state's responsibility allows some of these writers to broach the question of migrants' rights in cities, and to claim on their behalf the right to certain resources and services. Thus, in a major study of the floating populations, Li Mengbai makes a strong case: "We must immediately adopt a welcoming attitude towards them, actively provide them with the conditions and services needed to support their legitimate activities, and recognise their rights and duties without discrimination equal to those of other inhabitants of the towns" (58). Another writer argues that it is the mindset from the past which must be changed: "… we cannot go on refusing equal rights to the peasants. They must be able to participate in the modernisation process, and therefore enjoy its benefits (…). Seen objectively, the emergence of the *mingongchao* is a challenge to the urban protectionism concealed within our approach to development". This writer also considers that towns must increase their ability to welcome migrants (59).

From undifferentiated masses to individual itineraries

In 1990, two journalists from the *People's Daily* published an investigative work in which the question of migrants' rights was central. In this work, the writers reverse the alleged causal relationship between the presence of migrants and urban disturbances. If migrants were to leave the towns, they write, it is the normal urban functions which would be disturbed, putting an end to the towns' prosperity (60). They also insist on the need to focus on individual paths so as to demonstrate that the *mangliu* category may not be used indifferently. This is not the only work to emphasise the migrants' individual itineraries, but all too often, when the homogenising and undifferentiated register of representations is left behind in favour of describing such individually chosen itineraries, the latter end up as deviations from the norm, which merely reconfirms the dominant representation. These two authors have opted to describe those who fail but who do not necessarily fall into the category of *mangliu* or criminals. For instance, writing about a young woman from Sichuan who refuses to work as a prostitute, despite having failed several times in previous jobs, they point out that "although she is among the migrant workers who have failed, she cannot in any sense be labelled a *mangliu*". Their individual subjects display a personal will, they have a name, and they are active subjects. The writers make clear that many individuals who might appear to be *mangliu* but are in fact not, are women. Instead of despising them and rejecting them by calling them *mangliu*, local governments ought to be helping them and giving them support (61).

In sum, peasant migrations and the presence of migrants in towns are problematised in different ways, according to the writer's central tenets, i.e. whether he holds onto the state as the guarantor of order and

the *status quo* on the one hand, or the market and the economic reforms on the other. Depending on whether one or the other of these positions occupies the centre of the argument, the series of oppositions which it generates produce very different images of the migrant and migratory movements. It is tempting to reduce these oppositions, such as order/disorder, stability/instability, lack of civic sense/qualities of the modern town dweller, to the fundamental issue of the legitimacy or the partial and highly circumscribed legitimacy, of the migrants' presence in the towns. In the first case, migrants are described primarily in terms of what they lack (62), in an essentially negative manner. Whatever positive qualities might characterise both migrants and migratory movements are negated in the face of those represented by the legitimate town dweller. By way of contrast, when the migrations are associated with the reforms and the market economy, they become synonymous with dynamism, openness, and innovation, in opposition to the system of central planning, which is then seen as symbolising rigidity, stagnation and archaic structures.

An ongoing discussion

The "blind migrant" category is closely associated with allegations of various social disorders and with the practices of incarceration and repatriation. In the early 1950s, "blind migration" meant illegal migration on account of its opposition to the State policy of industrialisation and collectivisation. Because of this, "blind migration", "to migrate blindly", and "blind migrant" are actually political categories. In this respect it is interesting to compare them with the way immigration is conceived in the West. Didier Bigo calls this "governing through anxiety", and he argues that the discourses calling for the securing of borders, and their practical effects in terms of a whole range of security institutions, should be considered "a political technology, and a contemporary mode of government". He shows to what extent immigration is constructed as though it were a self-evident category, thus encapsulating "a whole network of meanings with security implications, and allowing certain exceptional practices to appear to the population at large as solutions to a single problem". The discourse of security surrounding the question of immigration, particularly through the way it allows a complex of social questions to be simplified, enables immigration to be tied to a series of issues like "globalisation, urbanisation, unemployment, and the birth rate" (63). Similarly, in the case of China, the "blind migrant" (*mangliu*) category bundles together a range of quite different social problems, such as the inadequate urban infrastructures, the rise in criminality, and environmental degradation.

The perspective which presents things in terms of threats and disturbances, accompanied by the practices of incarceration and repatriation aimed at specific categories of individuals, is in my view very close to what Aiwha Ong has called "graduated sovereignty", meaning in the case of China the single party state's application of different regimes of civility and discipline to different sections of the population (64). This differential application is conducted through a process of "visibilization" and observation of the different categories of migrants in cities—and here one only has to consider the proliferation of agencies and personnel responsible for managing migrants. Dean Mitchell considers that, in order to operate effectively, certain kinds of government require a policy of "highlighting and defining certain objects", making them visible by simultaneously obscuring others (65). This process of constituting a governmental space, and the categories which it requires, is reminiscent of the "Panopticon" as a figure of political technology in Michel Foucault's analysis. Its dominant principle is to maximise the visibility of those "who must be disciplined, surveyed, and understood" (66). Numerous works have emphasised the discrimination suffered by rural migrants in cities. These include arbitrary restraints, and the proliferation of informal regulations concerning housing, the right to work, birth control etc. (67). People from the countryside are subjected to a large-scale invasion of their private lives by the party state (68), the extent of which varies according to the different category migrants belong to, the kind of work they do and its concomitant prestige, and the nature of their relationship with the various levels of the administration (69). Under the conditions in post-Mao China, the residential permit system has led to a situation of institutional discrimination backed by legal ambiguity, and it affects migrants as soon as they are in a town, turning them into "immigrants from the interior" (70). These control mechanisms (residential and work permits) operate concomitantly with the discourse on disorder, to make the migrants outsiders on the margins of society (71).

While the "blind migrant" categorisation was at the centre of public debates in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it has subsequently lost that central position, not to disappear entirely but to be used intermittently, whenever there has been a campaign aimed at controlling, incarcerating, and expelling migrants found without the documents needed to live in cities. In the late 1980s, "blind migrant" was common currency in everyday speech. Françoise Poglia-Mileti has pointed out that "in order for categories referring to alterity (in thought, action, definition of the "other" etc.) to become commonly accepted, and to be treated as inseparable aspects of a social problem, they must first acquire a visible

presence and enter the public domain" (72). Conversely, throughout the 1990s, as public perception of the migrations from the countryside gradually changed, the "blind migrant" category fell out of common usage.

This change can be most clearly seen in the press publications from the Pearl River Delta area. There the discussions of the problems caused by migration at the time of the New Year festival were markedly different from those in the Beijing press in the same period, for example, and from the articles of the 1980s which I quoted earlier. Distinctly less dramatic in tone, they also give more space to the views of migrants themselves, and they tend more towards describing the migrations as ordinary phenomena (73). In fact, it was in the Special Economic Zones of the Pearl River Delta in the early 1990s that the press first gave migrants an image that was very distant from the usual one of undifferentiated and threatening masses. In that decade the figure of the "legitimate migrant worker" emerged. As for the "blind migrant" category, it continued to make sporadic reappearances as a synonym for the "three withouts" (, *sanwu*: people without identity documents, residence permits, or regular employment). This retains its potential for stigmatisation, which is always reinforced and virtually unopposed during the "cleansing campaigns" (74). Still, the "blind migrant" category has changed from being a political and common sense category, to being only a public intervention. .

We have seen that, by being associated with the economic reforms and the market economy, migratory movements could be described in rather positive terms. Frequently this kind of discourse gives precedence to purely economic arguments, as a consequence of the modernisation model predominant in China's journalistic and intellectual circles (75). Although it inverts the image of migration as a source of disorder, it is no less homogenising. As the mental product of a section of the urban elite, it makes the migrants' legitimate status depend upon their work, and in so doing it continues to assign them to a position opposed to that of the majority of people living in towns (76).

Moreover, in many of the publications dealing with migration, even as early as the 1980s the emergence of a certain idealising conception of the market and the market economy can be detected, bestowing upon it an actively liberating role. According to this approach, by bringing peasants into close contact with the market and the towns, the migrations will allow them to move from their "traditional subjectivity" to a "modern" one (77). This idea of individual transformation thanks to migration is by no means unique to China. What does distinguish the Chinese case is the extent to which the Party and the urban elite are deeply implicated in producing the discourses which magnify the attraction to the towns, thus reinforcing what Lisa Hoffman calls "the cultural hierarchies of opportunity and stagnation" (78). However, it should be emphasised that since the late 1990s the neo-liberal myths of the market and the capitalist system have become objects of intense intellectual debate. I have noted earlier that from the 1980s onwards, some writers have broached the question of migrants' rights, thus implicitly questioning the social hierarchy itself. This discourse centred on rights is currently at the heart of the debate over the dearth of rural labour force in certain areas of the country. Since the 1990s the migrants' cause has made gradual headway, both in the media and in central and municipal government circles. These authorities are beginning to talk about the need to provide services for migrants and to safeguard their rights.

Whereas the studies produced by governmental and semi-governmental institutes have approached migrations primarily from the angle of social order, along with the advantages and disadvantages brought about by the presence of migrants in towns, sociological studies published during the 1990s, which focus more on the problems and experiences of the migrants themselves, seem to have had an influence on current public debates (80). As Chloé Froissart has pointed out, there has been a shift in the attitude of the central government towards migrants. This has led to a series of official measures aimed at protecting their rights in towns, as well as considerably relaxing the rules governing their residency and access to jobs (81). There is a great deal at stake here, and it remains to be seen whether the goal of reducing the disparities between town and countryside, and between rich and poor, announced at the Sixteenth Party Congress, will have any effect.

1. I would like to thank the editors and the two anonymous readers for their suggested improvements to the first draft of this article.

2. On this question, see Anita Chan, "Recent Trends in Chinese Labour Issues—Signs of Change", *China Perspectives*, No. 57, January-February 2005, pp. 23-31.

3. *Mingong* (W), is a contraction of *nongmin* (WW, peasant) and *gongren* (WW, worker). It is often translated as "peasant worker", but in this article I will translate it as "migrant".

4. See in particular Delia Davin, "Migrants and the Media: Concerns about Rural Migrants in the Chinese Press", in Loraine A. West and Zhao Yaohui, *Rural Labor Flows in China*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 2003, pp. 278-291; Delia Davin, *Internal Migration in Contemporary China*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1991, pp. 151-154; Tamara Jacka, "Working sisters answer back: the representation and self-representation of women in China's floating population", *China Information*, Vol. Xlll, No. 1, Summer 1998, pp. 43-75; Zhang Li, *Strangers in the City: Reconfiguration of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China's Floating Population,* Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001; Zhang Li, "Contesting Crime, Order, and Migrant Spaces in Beijing", in Nancy Chen *et al.* (eds.), *Ethnographies of the Urban in Late Twentieth Century China*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, pp. 201-224; Zhao Yuezhi, "The Rich, the Laid-off, and the Criminal in Tabloid Tales: Read all about it!", in Perry Link, Richard P. Madsen and Paul Pickowitz, *Popular China: Unofficial culture in a globalizing society*, Lanham, Rowman, and Littlefield, 2002, pp. 111-135.

5. Judith Banister, "Internal and Regional Migration Trends", in Thomas Scharping (ed.), *Floating Population and Migration in China: The Impact of Economic Reforms*, Hamburg, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde, 1997, p. 88.

6. This analysis deals with 75 articles published in the national press (i.e., *Renmin ribao*–People's Daily; *Nongmin ribao*–Peasants' Daily; *Guangmin ribao*–Clarity Daily; *Fazhi ribao*–Legal Daily; *Jingji ribao*–Economics Daily), and 29 items of reportage literature taken from political science journals. In addition, extracts were taken from six works of reportage literature: Dong Jie, Cai Zhiqiang, and Guan Wenhao, *Mangliu! Mangliu!*, Shenyang, Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1990; Ge Xiangxian and Qu Weiying, *Zhongguo mingongchao*, Hebei, Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 1990; Zheng Nian, *Chao lu, chao zhang: mingongchao toushi*, Beijing, Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1991; Yang Shen, *Xiongyong mingongchao*, Guangxi, Guangzhou chubanshe, 1993; Wang Haiping, *Mangliu chongjibo*, Beijing, Shoudou shifandaxue chubanshe, 1993; Wang Lingxu, *Doushili de moshengren, bianwai shimin shenghuo jishi*, Shanghai, Shanghai shehui, kexueyuan chuban, 1993.

7. Nilolas S. Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, London, Sage, 1999. Moreover, as Pierre Bourdieu has pointed out, categorisation as praxis is a struggle "for the monopoly over ways of seeing and understanding, of installing cognition and recognition, of imposing the legitimate definition of the divisions in society, and hence of making and unmaking social groups" ("L'identité et la representation", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociaux*, 35, 1980, pp. 63-72). In my forthcoming article, "Migrant workers in the Pearl River Delta: Discourse and Narratives about Work as Sites of Struggle" (Vanessa Fong and Rachel Murphy [eds.], *Critical Asian Studies*, 2007, special edition on *Media, Struggle, and Identity in China*), I focus on the links between the representation of migrant workers in the Pearl River Delta and the experiences of the workers themselves.

8. On the social crisis, see the dossier compiled by Jean-Philippe Béja, "La crise sociale en Chine", Paris, La Documentation française, *Problèmes politiques et sociaux*, No. 612, 1989, pp. 1-59.

9. See the summary of the ideological debates related to the reforms in the 1980s by Joseph Fewsmith, *The Dilemmas of Reform in China: Political Conflict and Ideological Debate*, Armonk, New York and London, M. E. Sharpe, 1992.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-198.

11. Jean-Philippe Béja, *op. cit.*, p. 2, and pp. 36-7.

12. Judith Banister, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-97.

13. Chen Baoliang, *Zhongguo liumangshi*, Beijing, Beijing shehui kexue chubanshe, 1993, pp. 2-7, quoted in English in Michael Dutton, *Streetlife China*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 63-64. See also Zhang Li, *op, cit.*, pp. 33-34.

14. Cheng Tiejun, *Dialectics of Control: The Household Registration (hukou) System in Contemporary China*, PhD. Dissertation, New York, State University of New York at Binghampton, 1991, pp. 70-71, and p. 76.

15. *Renmin ribao*, "Zhongyan renmin zhengfu zhengwuyuan guan quanzhi nongmin mangmu liuru chengshi de zhishi", April 17th 1953, p. 1.

16. See the following issues of *Renmin ribao,* April 17th 1953, p. 1; April 18th 1953, p. 1; March 15th 1954, p. 2; May 6th 1954, p. 2; March 13th 1955, p. 6; April 10th 1955, p. 6; and September 3rd 1955, p. 2.

17. *Renmin ribao*, April 20th 1953, p. 1. See also *Renmin ribao*, "Zhongyang neiwubu he zhongyang laodongbu guanyu jixu guanche 'quanzhi nongmin mangmu liuru chengshi' de zhishi", March 15th 1954, p. 2; *Renmin ribao*, "Nongmin mangmu liuru chengshi yanzhong yingxiang chungeng shengchan", April 25th 1953, p. 2.

18. *Renmin ribao*, "Jixu quanzhi nongmin mangmu liuru chenshi", December 17th 1953, p. 2.

19. *Renmin ribao*, "Zhizhi nongcun renkou mangmu wailiu" December 19th 1957, p. 1. It should be stressed that throughout the period 1952-1957, the urban population increased significantly. See Cheng Tiejun, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-119; Cheng Tiejun and Mark Sedden, "The Origins and Consequences of China's Hukou System", *The China Quarterly*, no. 139, 1994, pp. 644-668.

20. "Regulations concerning the registration of households in the People's Republic of China" January 9th 1958, quoted in Cheng Tiejun, *op. cit.*, pp. 403-405.

21. Owing to the famine following the Great Leap Forward, and the difficulties in supplying the towns, this directive only came into force in 1960.

22. Spontaneous mobility is likewise opposed to the migrations planned and organised by the state.

23. This was the *sibian* policy, which had been in force since the 1950s; Cheng Tiejun, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-102.

24. Chai Junyong, "Liudong renkou chengshi guanli de yi da kunrao", *Shehui*, no. 10, 1990, pp. 8-12. See also *Renmin ribao*, March 10th 1989, p. 2, for a similar set of arguments.

25. *Nongmin ribao*, "Chengxiang chabie he nongcun shehui wenti", November 28th 1988, p. 2.

26. Yang Guangwu, "*Mangliu*: zai Beijing qiusheng de ling yi qun", *Minzhu yu fazhi*, No. 2, 91, 1987, pp. 40-1.

27. Dong Jie, Cai Zhiqiang, and Guan Wenhao, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-2.

28. This is not a neutral term. The basic meaning of *lao* is to pull something out of the water; figuratively it means to get something illegally.

29. Ba Liang and Ma Lun, "Taozhinzhe de meng" in Wang Lingxu, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

30. See Liang Yibo, "Nu'er guo shilu", *Shehui*, March 1992, pp. 14-16. There have been numerous works on Chinese women migrants in different economic sectors. See in particular Delia Davin "Migration, Women, and Gender Issues in Contemporary China" in Thomas Scharping (ed.), *Floating Population and Migration in China: The Impact of Economic Reforms*, Hamburg, Mitteilung des Instituts für Asienkunde, 1997, pp. 297-315; Arianne M. Gaetano and Tamara Jacka (eds.), *Women in Rural-to-Urban Migration in Contemporary China*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004. On the issues of migration and work in the coastal regions, see Lee Ching Kwan, *Gender and the South China Miracle: Two Worlds of Factory Women*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998; Pun Ngai, *Made in China: Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace*, Durham, London, and Hong Kong, Duke University Press, Hong Kong University Press, 2005; and Xu Feng, *Women Migrant Workers in China's Economic Reform*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 2000.

31. In the 1980s and the early 1990s, the poorest regions were less concerned by the migrations than the more economically advanced ones. See Hein Mallee, "In Defence of Migration: Recent Chinese Studies on Rural Population Mobility", *China Information*, Vol. X, No. 3/4 (Winter 1995/ Spring 1996), Leiden, 1996, p. 126.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 126-129.

33. The way in which human mobility is explained has a big influence on how it is perceived. For a detailed study of the theories of migration as applied to China, together with a complex theoretical model, see Thomas Scharping, "Studying Migration in Contemporary China: Models and Methods, Issues in Evidence", in Thomas Scharping (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 9-55. Frank Pieke proposes that we rethink migrations in terms of "migration configurations", putting greater emphasis on the "social and political context" on the one hand, and taking "an anthropological view of mobility as a discursively constituted event" on the other. Douglas Massey calls for an integrated approach, urging that any analysis of the causes of migrations should take at least four elements into account: the structural forces within the places of origin which encourage migration, the structural forces which work to attract the migrants, the "motives, goals, and aspirations of those who respond to these structural forces …", and the economic forces which come into play and connect the place of origin to the destination. See Douglas S. Massey, "Why Does Immigration Occur? A Theoretical Synthesis", in Charles Hirschman *et al.* (eds.), *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience*, New York, Russel Sage Foundation, 1992, pp. 34-52.

34. *Guangming ribao*, "Mangliu, Mangliu ah", March 10th 1989, p. 1. See also the book *Mangliu! Mangliu!*. The writers affirm that, given their numbers, the *mangliu* will disturb society in

every respect, inevitably increasing the pressure on transport, postal and telephone services, urban grain supplies, employment, hygiene, and the environment: Dong Jie, Cai Zhiqiang, and Guan Wenhao, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

35. See for example, *Guangming ribao*, March 10th 1989, p. 1; *Renmin ribao*, February 20th 1989, p. 1, February 22nd 1989, p. 1, March 4th 1989, p. 1, March 10th, 1989, p.1, and March 14th 1989, p.1; Yan Gangyu, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41; Wang Haiping, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-22.

36. Li Ting, "Liudong renkou dui da changshi shenghuo he shengtai huanjing yinxiang ji qi yuanyin fenxi", *Renkou dongtai*, No. 1, 1990, pp. 26-28.

37. Zhang Li notes that the hegemonic discourse interprets migrant criminality as the expression of their natural inclinations, which result from their not belonging to the urban community: see Zhang Li, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-224; see also Zhang Yuezhi, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

38. Zhang Li, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-33.

39. On the association of migrations with disturbances in Chinese history, see Zhang Li, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

40. One demographer has asserted, "To refuse to acknowledge the floating populations comes down to refusing the market economy and abandoning the modernisation of society" (Yang Shen, *op. cit.*, p. 121).

41. See for example *Renmin ribao*, March 25th 1989, p. 5, "The sudden influx of peasant workers has uncovered deep contradictions in our system for directing the labour force, but it is not like the waves of *mangliu* in the past; it possesses clear characteristics of the market economy in its developmental phase".

42. *Renmin ribao*, March 25th 1989, p. 2.

43. See Dong Jie, Cai Zhiqiang, and Guan Wenhao, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179; Zheng Nian, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87; *Renmin ribao*, March 22nd 1989, p. 2, and April 13th 1989, p. 5.

44. *Renmin ribao*, March 25th 1989, p. 2.

45. Miao Guangzong, "Mingongchao: fuyin haishi tiaozhan", *Shehui*, no. 1 (72), 1991, pp. 8-10.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 8; Dong Jie, Cai Zhiqiang, and Guan Wenhao, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-181; Guo Shutian and Liu Chunbin, *Shiheng de Zhongguo*, Tangshan, Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1991, pp. 5-14; *Nongmin ribao*: October 11th 1988, p. 2, October 26th 1988, p.1, and November 28th 1988, p. 1; Cheng Ke, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-20.

47. Joseph Fewsmith, *op. cit.*, p. 94. Sometimes references are made to the disorders of the Great Leap Forward, whenever the emphasis falls on the "blind" aspects of socio-economic development. See *ibid.*, p.95.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

49. Ge and Qu, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-175.

50. *Nongmin ribao*: March 6th 1989, p. 1, March 7th 1989, p. 2, and February 19th 1990, p. 1.

51. Cheng Ke, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

52. Miao Guangzong, *op. cit.*, p. 8. An article in *Nongmin ribao*, January 14th 1987, p. 1, informs us that "The developmental rules of the market economy have taught us that the total amount of labour must be allocated to the different spheres of production in a manner proportionate to social needs. This means that now we can only act in accordance with the rules of the economy, strengthening the rational mobility of the agricultural labour force, in order that its reallocation may take place without obstructions".

53. *Renmin ribao*, April 13th 1989, p. 5.

54. *Nongmin ribao*, December 30th 1988, p. 1. See also Yang Shen, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-107: "The walls separating town and countryside have begun to crumble under the shocks of the tidal wave of the *mingong* and the reforms. As the reforms continue, the days of this wall are numbered". Dorothy Solinger emphasises that by their very association with marketisation, the rural migrants symbolise a threat to the urban *status quo*: Dorothy Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1999, pp. 56-100.

55. See in particular *Nongmin ribao*, December 30th 1988, p. 1, and June 24th 1986, p. 3; Dong Jie, Cai Zhiqiang, and Guan Wenhao, *op. cit.*, p. 4 and 189; *Renmin ribao* April 13th 1989, p. 1.

56. Dong Jie, Cai Zhiqiang, and Guan Wenhao, *op. cit.*, p.4.

57. Ding Xiuyun, "Beijing baiwan liudong renkou tanzong: liudon renkou gei Beijing dailai de haochu", *Liaowang*, No. 50, December 1986, pp. 16-20; Chai Junyong, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-12; Wang Shuxin and Feng Litian, "Jingji tizhi gaige zhong de Beijing liudong renkou", *Renkou yu jingji*, No. 1, 1986, pp. 5-11; Li Menbai, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-30.

58. Li Mengbai, "Chengshi liudong renkou yanjiu quyi", *Chengxiang jianshe*, No. 10, October 1990, pp. 28-30.

59. Miao Guanzong, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
60. Ge and Qu, *op. cit.*, p.11.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-15, and 21.
62. See Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time*, London, Verso 1990, pp. 16-23.
63. Didier Bigo, "Sécurité et immigration: vers une gouvernementalité par inquiétude?", *Culture et conflits*, n°. 31, p. 2.
64. Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 6-7.
65. Mitchell Dean, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.
66. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: un parcours philosophique*, Paris, Gallimard 1989, p. 274.
67. Zhang Li points out that one of the main differences between the status of a migrant from the countryside and that of a town dweller is the degree of state intervention in his private life. Migrant living quarters are subject to sudden inspections, which rarely occur in the case of registered town dwellers' housing. (Zhang Li, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38). The thoroughness of such inspections varies from time to time, and from town to town.
68. Yet some categories of migrant enjoy a measure of autonomy from state control. This point is made by Xiang Biao, who observes that "if the state takes no notice of some migrant communities, they in turn have no need of the state to survive. They can allow themselves to ignore it, bypass it, and even bend its structures to their own purposes" (Xiang Biao, " 'Zhejiang Village': Creating a visible non-state space through migration and marketized traditional networks", in Frank N. Pieke and H. Mallee (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 240-242).
69. Dorothy Solinger, "Migrant Petty Entrepreneurs and a Dual Labour Market", in Scharping, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-118. According to a study carried out in Beijing in 2000, between a quarter and a third of the migrants from the countryside had had some of their goods confiscated, and had been forced to pay a fine in order to get them back. In the case of the most publicly visible workers, such as odd-job workers and rubbish collectors, this proportion was as high as nine out of ten (Li Qiang, "Policy Issues Concerning the Informal Employment of Rural-Urban Migrants in China", *Social Science in China*, [Special Issue: Peasant Worker Migration to Chinese Cities], Winter 2003, pp. 126-137.
70. Jean-Philippe Béja, "Les travailleurs itinérants, des immigrés de l'intérieur", *Perspectives chinoises*, No. 21, January-February 1994, pp. 30-35. In the case of Shenzhen, Pun Ngai points out that the controls over residence permits are particularly well co-ordinated with the controls over labour, which permits a higher degree of exploitation of the migrant labourers (Pun Ngai, "The Precarious Employment and Hidden Costs of Women Workers in Shenzhen Special Economic Zones, China", *Journal of Oxfam*, 2004, p. 6).
71. Zhang Li argues that the "subjectification" of migrants "is made possible through multiple strategies, both inside and outside the State apparatus", such as changing the residential permit system, categorising migrants in various ways and re-ordering those categories, and varying the application of the regulations controlling their daily lives (Zhang Li, *op. cit.*, p. 26).
72. Françoise Poglia Mileti, "Les catégories de la migration: enjeu social ou référent identitaire?", *Revue suisse de soiologie*, 26, 1, 2001, pp. 3-35.
73. See Eric Florence, "Migrant Workers in the Pearl River Delta: Between Discursive Inclusion and Exclusion", in Hein Entzinger, Marco Martiniello, and Catherine Whitol de Wenden (eds.), *Migration Between States and Markets*, Aldershot, Ashgate 2004, pp. 42-63.
74. This category contains a hidden ambiguity in its application, and it is precisely this ambiguity which gives it both its symbolic and performative power. Depending on the socio-political context, it may be more or less inclusive, since it covers odd-job workers, unlicensed small businessmen and traders, those engaged in minor repairs to such items as bicycles or shoes, beggars, street artists, prostitutes, thieves etc. Chinese officials tend to interpret the rules concerning migrants in a very flexible manner (see Dorothy Solinger, *op. cit.*).
75. Xiang Biao and Tan Shen, "Does Migration Research Matter in China? A Review of its Relationship to Policy since the 1980s" in Marco Martiniello and Eric Florence (eds.), "The Links Between Academic Research and Public Policies in the Field of Migration and Ethnic Relations: Selected National Case Studies", *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2005, pp. 12-33.
76. On the immigrant condition, Abdelmayek Sayad has written that since the labour that is defined for immigrants is the very justification for his immigration, this justification, that is the immigrant himself disappear when the work which was its basis disappears. See

Abdelmayek Sayad, *L'Immigration ou les paradoxes de l'altérité*, Paris and Brussels, De Boeck University, 1991, pp. 61-62.

77. Yan Hairong, "Neo-Liberal Governmentality and Neo-Humanism: Organizing Suzhi/Value Flow through Labor Recruitment Networks, *Cultural Anthropology*, 18/4, 2001, pp. 80 and 92-93. Writing on this question, Jean and John Comaroff point out that this kind of "millennial capitalism … invested with salvific force" is to be found in many places across the globe, but these millennial characteristics stand out more clearly in countries where the market economy is replacing previous "tightly regulated material and moral economies", Jean and John Comaroff, "Alien- Nation: Zombies, Immigrants and Millennial Capitalism", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, No. 101, 4, Fall 2002, pp. 779-805.

78. Lisa Hoffman, "Guiding College Graduates to Work", in Nancy Chen *et al.* (eds.), *China Urban: Ethnographies of Contemporary Culture*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2001, p. 45.

79. See Wang Hui, *China's New Order*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 2003, pp. 78-187.

80. Dorothy Solinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-94; Xiang Biao and Tan Shen, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-33.

81. For a detailed account of these measures and the limits to their application at the local level, see Chloé Froissart, "The Rise of Social Movements Among Migrant Workers", *China Perspectives*, No. 61, September-October 2005, pp. 30-40. On the regulations concerning residence in towns, see Zhao Shukai, "Peasant Migration: Order Building and Policy Rethinking", *Social Science in China* (Special Issue: Peasant Worker Migration to Chinese Cities) Winter 2003, pp. 169-176. In addition, after November 2002 the SARS crisis highlighted the great difficulties faced by migrants in gaining access to the health services, as well as the poor hygienic conditions in which many of them have to live (see in particular, Xiang Biao, "SARS and migrant workers in China", *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 12, 4, 2003, pp. 2480-2483). This crisis contributed to a relaxation of the restrictive measures imposed by certain urban authorities.

Translated by Jonathan Hall