

**INCLUSION? EXCLUSION! : CITIZENSHIP, MIGRATION POLICIES AND ANTI-
MIGRANT CAMPAIGNS IN BEIJING**

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Abstract

When migration is substantially increasing in the contemporary world, states build complex systems to manage the movement of migrants, and these institutional borders significantly influence migrants' attainment of citizenship. Besides institutional arrangements, the broader political context also shapes the management of citizenship. However, in existing literature, studies on migration and citizenship focus mostly on the international level and pay less attention to the local citizenship and domestic migration. This thesis studies how the policies changes of the migration system and political campaigns directly targeting migrants both shape the constitution of local citizenship and the experience of migrants through examining the case of Beijing, China. Using data from interviews, government documents and media articles, this thesis investigates both Beijing's reform of the hukou system into a point-based system and its political campaigns against migrants, which began in the form of "urban beautification" and then developed into the direct eviction of migrants. This thesis finds that while Beijing's point system renders better chances for migrants to gain local citizenship in Beijing, the greater acceptance produced by policy changes has been undermined by the anti-migrant campaigns which increasingly problematize migrants. This study not only exhibits the fragility of migration institutions, but also reveals how the political context, specifically the authoritarian system, produces and exacerbates the exclusion of migrants. This study adds a non-nation-state case to the existing literature on migration studies, also reveals the importance of studying the politics of migration.

Lay Summary

Migration is shaped by both institutional arrangements and the broader political context.

However, existing research mostly focuses on international migration and pays less attention to the local citizenship in domestic migration. This thesis investigates how the institutional arrangements and the anti-migrant campaigns in Beijing both shape the management of local citizenship and the experience of migrants. This thesis finds that while the policy changes of Beijing's migration system to the point scoring system render more inclusion of migrants, the anti-migrant campaigns which increasingly problematize migrants has undermined the acceptance brought by policy changes. This study not only updates scholars' understanding of Chinese hukou system, but also reflects the fragility of migration institutions in a changing political context. The institution alone is not reliable in guaranteeing acceptance; a substantial change of the migration politics that really recognizes and respects migrants is far more important.

Preface

This thesis presents original, independent and unpublished work by the author, Biao Zheng. The interview data analyzed in this thesis were covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H17-01667.

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Dedication

For my parents, Mr. Zheng and Mrs. Wang.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Migration is substantially increasing in the contemporary world and has become a prominent public policy issue (United Nations Publications, 2018). States build complex systems to manage the movement of migrants, and these institutional borders significantly influence migrants' attainment of citizenship (Kofman, 2005; Landesman, 2016; Pécoud & Guchteneire, 2006; Zolberg, 1989). Besides institutional arrangements, the broader political context also shapes the management of citizenship (Coutin, 2008; Demo, 2005; Favell, 2002; Freeman, 1995). In the 21st century, states are recoupling human rights with citizenship, rather than applying them to all people despite their immigration status (Kofman, 2005). Additionally, while many states are opening channels for immigrants like allowing international students and skilled workers to gain citizenship, at the same time they are also excluding, criminalizing and expelling irregular immigrants whose entry to the host societies is not officially recognized. The case of the United States, where the family-based immigration program and protection for the US-born children of undocumented immigrants are being severely challenged under the Trump administration (Davis, 2017; Rogers, 2018; Shear & Davis, 2017), exhibits how politics can subvert the institutions of migration and violate immigrants' human rights. It is important to bridge the study of institutions and policies that regulate migration with the examination of the politics of migration to better understand the management of citizenship and the experience of migrants in the contemporary world.

While debates about migration take place mostly in Western societies (Solinger, 1999), Beijing, the capital city of China, also witnesses changes and contradictions in its management of

citizenship. Under the hukou system, which constitutes local citizen rights in China, Chinese people's citizenship is not granted automatically as a birthright, but is determined by their household registration (which is also called "hukou" in Chinese) tied to their family origins (Chan & Zhang, 1999; Cheng & Selden, 1994). Among the whole population of 21.7 million in Beijing, more than one-third are non-hukou migrants who do not have full citizenship in the city. To better manage the influx of migrants, Beijing initiated a reform of the hukou system in 2016, and in 2018, introduced a point system for regulating in-migration. Also, while the control of the population in the mega-city has become a political task put forward by the Chinese central party-government body¹, Beijing has also launched campaigns against migrants, including evictions, which reflect the rise of authoritarianism in China. These changes and events were well captured by media (Buckley, Wee, & Wu, 2017; Hermes, 2018) but have not been discussed in academic literature. Therefore, it is valuable to delve into the case of Beijing as it exhibits both the changes of migration policies and political campaigns targeting migrants, which happened almost at the same time but generated contradictory results. Also, in cities like Beijing, internal migrants face the same challenges of undocumented status and lack of rights that international migrants face in many other countries. The internal migration in China parallels the international migration in important ways. While existing scholarship mostly focuses on migration at the international level and in democratic societies (Shin, 2017; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002), the study of Beijing enhances the migration studies literature by adding a case of a *non-nation-state* entity in an *authoritarian* society.

¹ The Communist Party of China (CPC) is the only ruling party in China and the Central Committee of the Communist Party has significant influence on Chinese politics. Therefore, I use the concept of the central party-government body to refer to both the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the central government of China.

This thesis aims to answer the following question: *how do the policies changes of the migration system and political campaigns directly targeting migrants both shape the constitution of local citizenship and the experience of migrants in Beijing?* To answer this question, this thesis will investigate both Beijing's reform of the hukou system into a point-based system and political campaigns against migrants, which began in the form of "urban beautification" and then developed into the direct eviction of migrants. The data used in this thesis is a combination of government documents, media articles, and my interviews with students of top universities in Beijing. This study focuses on the experience of top university students as they are among the most desired groups of migrants by the host societies and their migration experiences are quite sensitive to the changes of migration systems (King & Raghuram, 2013).

This thesis finds that while Beijing's point system renders better chances for migrants to gain local citizenship in Beijing, the greater acceptance produced by policy changes has been undermined by the anti-migrant campaigns which increasingly problematize migrants. Migrant workers were classified as a burden and problem of the city and were evicted, with their local citizenship being denied. Even non-local university students were confronted with threats and disillusionment during the eviction. Their attainment of the Beijing hukou became more uncertain. This study not only exhibits the fragility of migration institutions, but also reveals how the political context, specifically the authoritarian system, produces and exacerbates the exclusion of migrants.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chinese Hukou System and *de facto* Citizenship

Citizenship, which consists of civil, political and social rights, is the foundation for individuals' well-being in society (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992). Because birthright citizenship and freedom of movement within one country are so common, scholars usually assume that citizens of a state hold equal rights before the law. Accordingly, the studies related to the citizenship of migrants mostly take place in the international context as those who need to gain citizenship are mostly immigrants who leave their societies of origin and enter host societies (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). Also, in the existing literature, citizenship is always viewed as a legal status granted by the nation-state, and the government is the main actor that manages citizenship. However, while the citizenship *de jure* takes form in the political entitlement managed by the state, the citizenship *de facto* is far more complicated in the era of globalization and mass immigration (Staeheli, 2003). On one hand, the international or transnational forces and institutions are more and more important in structuring citizenship, especially for the migrants. On the other, citizenship can also be constituted at the local level under effects of localities and it is more a process of inclusion and belonging than a steady legal status (Staeheli, 2003). China is an example of local citizenship as the citizenship of Chinese people is based on the hukou system, rather than on birthright as a universal status (Solinger, 1999). As such, domestic migrants in China confront challenges to the attainment of local citizenship in their host cities.

According to China's constitution, all Chinese people with Chinese nationality are Chinese citizens who "are equal before the law." However, citizenship *de jure* does not provide Chinese

people with equal rights and benefits across the country. For instance, the children of most non-hukou migrants in mega-cities (including Beijing and Shanghai) cannot get access to public education. Also according to the Chinese constitution, Chinese citizens do not have freedom of movement (The National People's Congress of China, 2004). The domestic mobility of Chinese people is regulated by "The Regulations on Household Registration of the People's Republic of China" (National People's Congress of China, 1958). This document, which was announced in 1958, required all Chinese citizens to be registered in the household registration (hukou) system based on the hukou status of their parents. Ever since then, hukou has served as the foundation for each individual's social identification, which is related to social welfare access, public education and political rights. Using the definition of citizenship by T. H. Marshall (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992), hukou is the source of *de facto* citizenship for Chinese people as it directly determines civil, political and social rights.

From 1958 to 1978, the Chinese hukou system under the planned economy severely hindered people's mobility across regions, especially from rural to urban areas (Chan & Zhang, 1999; Cheng & Selden, 1994). After the initiation of the opening up and reform policies in 1978, the Chinese government began to allow people from rural areas to migrate to urban areas in order to fulfill the need for human labour in the emerging cities (Chan & Zhang, 1999; Solinger, 1999). Today, migrants who enter the urban areas can freely change their residences and find jobs, but those without hukou in their host cities have little access to welfare and education (Johnson, 2017). Lacking the urban hukou, migrants become second-class citizens within their own country compared to the local hukou-holding residents (Solinger, 1999).

While non-hukou residents are largely prevented from getting urban citizenship, Chinese cities still partly open their gates for people who have attained a university education, have political affiliations, or who are investors (Wu & Treiman, 2004; Wu & Zheng, 2016). The hukou threshold varies from city to city. Bigger cities have more restrictive hukou policies, whereas smaller cities tend to be more welcoming to migrants (Wang, 2004). Operating as the institutional border that regulates the granting of citizenship, the hukou system can be considered as a *de facto* migration system. However, there are limited studies that place the hukou system in a broader context, and the studies that do so both focus on the city of Shanghai, which witnesses fewer confrontations between the city and the migrants than Beijing (Johnson, 2017; Li, Li, & Chen, 2010). Therefore, the investigation of the hukou system as a migration system will contribute insights to the existing literature of migration studies as it tells us how the management of citizenship operates within the national border by a non-nation-state entity. Furthermore, this study enriches the scholarship of the Chinese hukou system by adding the critical case of Beijing and examining it in a broader context.

2.2 The Politics of Migration in Authoritarian China

International immigration has become more and more institutionalized since the 1960s (Zolberg, 1989). States employ comprehensive and complicated migration institutions to manage immigration (Kofman, 2002). Immigrants need to go through standardized administrative procedures to gain citizenship in host societies. A key form of institutionalized immigration is the point-based immigration system, which determines immigrants' eligibility to receive permanent residency or full citizenship through the calculation of their scores based on multiple factors, including their educational level, age, employment experience and so forth (Beach,

Green, & Worswick, 2007; Green & Green, 1995; Miller, 1999). Under the point system, immigration becomes a process of clear calculation seemingly rooted in meritocratic evaluations. These systematic arrangements provide immigrants rather clear paths to partial or full citizenship of the hosting societies. Under this background, the institutional border controls usually intervene in the process of immigration as a determinative factor (Zolberg, 1989).

However, migration is not only regulated by institutional borders, but also influenced by the broader political context within states. Freeman finds that among liberal democracies, divergent immigration histories and different levels of normalization of migration politics substantially shape their modes of immigration politics (Freeman, 1995). Irene Bloemraad attributes Canada's positive public attitudes towards immigrants not only to the point system, but also to the specific political context: "Canada has reinvented its national identity away from that of a British colony or a shadow of the United States to one that embraces immigration, diversity, and tolerance" (Bloemraad, 2012). Moreover, driven by political needs and xenophobic ideology, states can employ more direct and violent ways to control migration, including raids against migrant communities (Capps, 2007) and violence towards migrants at the border (Infante et al., 2012). While the institutions of migration generally provide migrants with standardized channels to gain citizenship, these state practices can more directly and fiercely influence the experience of migrants. Thus, besides understanding migration through migration policies, it is also important to investigate how the political powers of the state shape the experience of migrants.

An understanding of the Chinese hukou system, which is a classification system that also regulates legal residence and therefore migration, should also go beyond its *de facto* policies, especially since contemporary Chinese society has witnessed the sharp rise of authoritarianism

under the rule of Xi Jinping and intensified confrontation between the state and migrants. Since 2016, different levels of the Chinese government have been strengthening their control over the whole society. For instance, the government has reinforced its censorship of the media and launched a series of campaigns targeting social activists (Economy, 2014; Fu, 2017). These developments challenge the notion of “consultative authoritarianism” that encourages the simultaneous expansion of a fairly autonomous civil society and the development of indirect tools of state control (Teets, 2013). By contrast, China has seen the direct and fierce suppression of social activists in recent years (Economy, 2014; Fu, 2017). China is turning from “soft authoritarianism” (Roy, 1994), which allows limited freedom and mainly uses persuasion, into a more typical, coercive authoritarian state (Buckley, 2018; Economy, 2014).

Paralleling the rise of authoritarianism is the politicization of migration management in recent years. In 2013, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC) passed the *Decision of the CCCPC on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform*, which was recognized by the national media as “the milestone-like programmatic document guiding the reforming and the opening up” (Xinhua Agency, 2013). As the Communist Party of China remains at the center of the Chinese political system, there is no denying that this document is of great political significance. This document put forward migration control in megacities (including Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou) as a political task: “We will introduce new population management methods... strictly control the population size of megacities.” (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 2013, emphasis added) After the announcement of the decision, in 2014, the Chinese central government (2014) addressed the same issue in the *China Urbanization Plan for 2014-2020*:

“strictly controls the scale of mega-cities with over 5 million urban population.”(emphasis added) This is the first overall and comprehensive guideline by the central government which directs the urban policies of different cities in China (Chinese Central Government, 2014). As we can see from the text, both cardinal documents use the word “strictly,” reflecting a newly restrictive attitude towards migration into the megacities. In China, the governance structure is quite centralized with strong top-down mandates (Zhang, 2006); therefore, the megacities, including Beijing, have to follow the guidance from the central party-government body and restrictively control the population.

Chapter 3: Case and Methods

3.1 Methods

In this study, I combine data from my interview-based study with university students, with analysis of secondary material, including government documents and media articles.

At the very first stage of this study, my original focus was university students in Beijing as I hoped to investigate how the institutional changes in Beijing shaped the experience of the university students as migrants. I conducted nine interviews with university students from Peking University and Tsinghua University in the summer of 2017 when the reform of the hukou system in Beijing had been proposed. Peking University and Tsinghua University are publicly acknowledged to be the top two universities in China. Considering the privilege and uniqueness of these two universities, university students from these two schools can be a critical case, revealing how some of the most privileged potential migrants experience the current municipal migration system and policy changes in Beijing. At the time of the interviews, university students in Beijing receive the hukou from Beijing mostly through employment, and their hukou status was determined by their employment process. I used purposive sampling² to reach university graduates that both received the hukou of Beijing (3 participants) and had not yet

² At that point of my study, based on the examination of government documents, I did not think the major and level of degrees of university students/graduates will have strong influences on the migration process of the university students as the hukou system in Beijing did not favor students from specific majors. Also, while master students and doctor students could benefit from their higher level of educational attainment, the undergraduate students from Peking University and Tsinghua University are considered more privileged than graduate students as it is way more difficult for students to be admitted as undergraduates than graduate students. Therefore, I did not purposively sample students from different majors and levels of degree. At the end of the sampling process, the group of research participants did exhibit the diversity of majors and levels of degrees: the majors of interviewees include literature, computer science, sociology, economics, electronic engineering and physics; 4 of my research participants are university graduates (with bachelor's degree) and 5 are master students and graduates with master's degree.

received the hukou of Beijing (6 participants) at that point in the study. As a graduate from Peking University, I used my personal social network to seek the recommendation for potential research participants and tried to keep the balance between the school origins and genders of the interviewees. In terms of school origins, 5 of my research participants are from Peking University and the other 4 are from Tsinghua University. 4 interviewees are males and the other 5 are females. All of them are non-local students from other provinces in China. I conducted 6 seven face-to-face interviews in Beijing during August 2017 and 3 online interviews in early September 2017 in Vancouver. At that stage, my focus mostly lay on the policies of migration and their influences on the experience of university students and recent graduates.

However, the events which happened after I returned to Canada in November 2017 challenged my original analysis, as these events show that Beijing's management of migration is not limited to policy changes but also includes more violent and fiercer public campaigns against migrants. During the evictions in November (describe in more detail below), many migrant workers were forced to leave their residences and some university graduates were also affected. I observed strong backlash on my social media (where most of my connections are university students or graduates). These campaigns reminded me that the study of migration in Beijing should not only focus on the policy changes, but also probe into events that could have even more direct effects on migrants. As a result, I decided to shift my previous study to a broader scope which focused both on the policy changes and the political campaigns.

These events happened quite suddenly and after I had returned to Canada; thus, it was impossible for me to schedule any field work in Beijing. Also, since violence was involved in these events, I might be in danger as a researcher, especially in an authoritarian country, if I conducted

observations or interviews about these events (Buckley, 2017). Therefore, the analysis of the migrant workers in Beijing is mostly based on media articles that covered these events.

Considering that Chinese media is controlled by the state (Stockmann & Gallagher, 2011), for these events, I mostly use articles from Western and Hong Kong media to guarantee the reliability of the data.

Besides data from the interviews and media coverage, to illustrate the institutional changes of the hukou system in Beijing, I also use government documents and coverage from both Chinese and Western media, juxtaposing these data with the data from my interviews to provide a more reliable picture of these changes.

3.2 Beijing as the Field Site

This study chooses Beijing as the field site, for it is a key receiving city for migrants and faces strong pressure due to the migration influx. Ever since the late 1970s, Beijing has attracted a huge number of migrants from the rest of China as a result of relaxed state control over people's geographic mobility (Chan & Zhang, 1999). Beijing's total population has increased from 9.81 million (1985) to 21.73 million (2016), and the number of non-hukou residents has increased from 0.23 million to 8.08 million in the same period (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2017). In many ways, Beijing has become a city of migrants and there is ongoing tension between the city and the migrants.

As a city of migrants, Beijing confronts the severe pressure of population control. The Beijing government has put forward two goals for population control, one in 1994 (the population of 2000 should be kept to 11.60 million), and one in 2005 (the population of 2020 should be kept to

18 million) (The Municipal Government of Beijing, 1994, 2005). However, the Beijing government failed to achieve both goals as the population of Beijing reached 13.64 million in 2000 and kept increasing to 18.60 million in 2009 (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2017). After 2013 and 2014, when both the CPC and the Chinese central government recognized the population control of megacities as a national political task, Beijing made a new goal in 2016 that the population should be kept to 23 million in 2020 (The Municipal Government of Beijing, 2017). The population of Beijing in 2016 had reached 21.73 million, which is extremely close to the goal of 23 million. Faced with the pressure of migration control, Beijing initiated the reform towards the point system and also launched a series of campaigns against the migrants.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Inclusion: The Reform of the Hukou System in Beijing

4.1.1 The Employment-based System

In Beijing, the hukou system determines the local citizenship people can have; however, the current system lacks systematic regulations and clear institutional arrangements as the rules of the whole system are not written out (Chan & Zhang, 1999; Cheng & Selden, 1994). Therefore, in order to understand the current hukou system in Beijing, one has to rely on the combination of a series of government documents, media coverage and the experiences of migrants themselves.

The first channel of hukou granting in Beijing is the family-based hukou program. According to the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau,³ the spouses and children of Beijing hukou residents can apply for the hukou with sponsorship. However, the Beijing government strictly limits the openness of this channel as the spouses must be over 45 years old and the length of marriage must be over 5 years (emphasis added). Children of the hukou residents must be the single child and under 18. Given such stringent requirements, it is almost impossible for most of the migrants to gain the hukou of Beijing through this channel, even when they get married to hukou-holding residents.

Besides the highly restrictive family-based program, the most important and open program is provided to non-local university graduates.⁴ Each year, the Beijing government decides the total

³ The specific contents of this program can be found here:

<http://www.bjgaj.gov.cn/web/gspdAction.do?method=getSectionInfo&id=7891&type=jwgk&title=IDXjgIHkurIj6PnrqHnkIY>

⁴ The specific contents of this program can be found here:

<http://zhengce.beijing.gov.cn/library/192/33/50/438650/1543840/index.html>

quota of hukou grants. Then, the government distributes quotas to certain employers for hiring university graduates. The distribution of the quota is solely determined by the government with no possibility for negotiation. With a quota, an employer can nominate those university graduates it wishes to hire for the hukou. In this way, the hukou system in Beijing has become mostly an employment-based system. Non-local university students can only get hukou in Beijing when their employers with access to hukou quotas nominate them during the hiring process and the nomination from the employer is approved by the Beijing government.

However, the seemingly regulated and systematic hukou system lacks transparency and consistency. First, there is little open official information about the total quota and the distribution of quotas to various employers. In practice, university students usually have no access to this information until the recruitment season. A university graduate, FX, told me that she did not get the official information and did not think the government would announce the information to the public.

Biao: ...Who provided you with the information about attaining the hukou?

FX: ...Usually I will find my classmates [for the information), we communicate with each other about whether this employer will offer you the hukou.

Biao: Have you got access to the official information from the government?

FX: No. ...I don't think this official information will say anything about which employer has the hukou. What I am gonna do is to check if the employer has the hukou or not.

...Yes, but there had been some unofficial stats for people who cared about it. Some bloggers will calculate the information.

Biao: But this is *unofficial*?

FX: Yes, there is no possibility for them to announce this. ...I don't know but I think they just won't announce it, or I cannot see it. We rely on experience, there is no official documents that tell you that.

With no official information open to the public, students have to rely on the experiences of their fellow students and information from other unofficial sources. Besides the lack of transparency, the hukou quota also changes rapidly. In 2015, without any announcement, media found that the Beijing government sharply decreased the total quota provided to employers for university graduates to stay in Beijing, which was confirmed by a government official to be below 9,000, while in 2014 the quota was around 10,000. For 2016, the quota was even less than the quota of 2015 (Chinanews, 2017). Moreover, the decrease of quota did not apply evenly to different employers. While private sector employers lost most of their quotas, public-sector employers, including governments, CPC agencies, state-owned companies and public organizations still received considerable quotas for the hukou. This change was confirmed by my interviewee, HQ, a recent graduate from Tsinghua University. When she was looking for a job, she knew that she would not get the hukou, for she intended to seek employment in private companies and “private companies usually don't give you the hukou.” Another interviewee, FY, a graduate of Peking University, abandoned all the employment opportunities from private companies and only focused on public sector employers for the sake of receiving the Beijing hukou: “I only asked for

hukou, so I omitted all the companies, all the private companies, and only applied for the state-owned media, public sector and government departments.” The decreased quota for hukou has significantly influenced the experience of university students when their only way to get the hukou is to work for and receive nomination from the public-sector employers.

When each year there are around 160,000 non-local university students graduating in Beijing⁵ and the quota of the hukou is below 9,000, most university graduates are prevented from getting the hukou of Beijing. Therefore, the employment-based hukou system produces considerable exclusion rather than acceptance of migrants in Beijing.

4.1.2 Towards a Point-Scoring System

The employment-based system has received lots of criticism due to the high levels of exclusion and its preference for public-sector employers, even from the official media. One article points out that the current hukou system makes the city of Beijing a “fortress besieged”⁶ (Ziyi Huang, 2016): non-local university graduates who hope to get the hukou must choose the public-sector jobs, but the public-sector jobs are mostly not satisfying and these jobs also require longer serving terms, which makes it quite difficult for the university graduates holding such positions to switch jobs after getting the hukou. Another media outlet also mentions this defect of the current system and calls for a more equal hukou system, one which gives chances to both public sector and private sector employees (Songchao Zhang, 2016). Besides these critiques, even

⁵ Information on the number of university graduates in Beijing can be found through the following link: <http://www.jiemian.com/article/1054945.html>; http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2016-10/11/content_5117193.htm.

⁶ This is a reference to the book by Qian Zhongshu with the same name (Chinese name: *Weicheng*). It refers to the situation that a seemingly attractive place is in fact a dilemma: people outside of it want to enter while people who have entered the place want to leave.

students who have attained the hukou of Beijing are not satisfied with their situation. FY told me that she was regretting her decision to only choose public sector employers. “Yes, I did get the hukou of Beijing, but I gave up my dreams. If I had another chance, I would definitely make another decision (to choose not to get the hukou of Beijing).” FY’s public-sector job requires her to work for at least three years. If she resigns within the three-year term, she needs to pay for 200 thousand Chinese yuan as the penalty. Besides the restrictions on resignation, she also found her job a “total waste of life” when it provides her with little possibility for self-development. These comments reveal that the current employment-based system fails to accommodate the needs of the migrants and needs substantial improvements.

As a reaction to these criticisms, Beijing has initiated several adjustments to the employment-based hukou system. In 2016, the Beijing government introduced the residency card system. With the residency card, non-hukou residents can enjoy some access to limited public services, including participating in social insurance, getting the housing provident fund⁷ and access to public education. While the provision of hukou is highly limited, the residence card has a lower threshold. Any non-local people living in Beijing with steady employment and residence can apply for the residence card. The residency card holder cannot enjoy the same rights of full citizenship as the hukou residents, however. For instance, they cannot sponsor their children and spouse to apply for the hukou (China Daily, 2016). Although the residency card system does not substantially alter the hukou system, it does provide some convenience to migrants. One of my research participants, QB, a graduate of Peking University and currently a non-hukou resident of

⁷ The housing provident fund is a public financial program in China aiming to provide affordable housing to people. Under the HPF program, all employees are required to contribute a proportion of their salaries to HPF and employers contribute a similar amount (Yeung & Howes, 2006).

Beijing, mentioned that the residency card weakens the urgency for getting the hukou: “I think my own interests are more important. I don’t think hukou really matters with the existence of the residency card.”

In addition to the introduction of the residency card system, another significant change is the introduction of the point-scoring system in Beijing in April 2018, which will mostly replace the current system by the end of the year. The point-scoring system in Beijing, similar to its counterparts in Canada (Beach et al., 2007; Green & Green, 1995) and Australia (Miller, 1999), takes multiple categories into consideration and accordingly evaluates hukou applicants. The hukou applicants will be granted the hukou if their scores in the system meet the threshold set by the government. The table below shows the prerequisites and breakdown of the point-scoring system in Beijing:

Prerequisites	Holding the Beijing residency card
	Younger than the legal retirement age
	Having been paying social insurance for at least seven years
	No criminal record
Categories of Points	Steady employment

	Steady residence
	Educational attainment
	Place of work and residence
	Entrepreneurship experience
	Tax contribution
	Age
	Honors

Source: Beijing Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, 2018

Table 4-1 The Categories of the Point-based System

The introduction of the new point system brings about significant changes to the migration policy in Beijing. First, the granting of hukou in Beijing is no longer exclusively based on employment but on multiple categories. Applicants for the hukou do not necessarily need to work for public sector employers; migrants who are working for private sector employers also get the chance to become hukou residents. Also, the point-scoring system is open to all applicants that meet the prerequisites, which builds a pathway between residency card holders and hukou residents. The gate to the hukou is open much wider than before. When migrants working in the city become potential citizens, the point-based hukou system also blurs the binary between hukou and non-hukou residents.

Compared to the employment-based system, the point system is also more transparent as all the categories of score calculation can be seen in the official documentation (Beijing Human

Resources & Social Security Bureau, 2018). Applicants can also calculate their score themselves using the mock scoring system provided by the Beijing government. Furthermore, after receiving all the applications, the Beijing government will determine the number of migrants accepted and then decide the threshold in the point system. Applicants will immediately understand their application status after the announcement of the threshold. With a more standardized way of calculation, there are fewer uncertainties within the new system.

The more open and transparent point-scoring system in Beijing has received wide praise from domestic commentators, who have represented this new system as fairer and more open.

According to one media article, “The new point system gives non-hukou migrant workers hope” (China.com, 2018). One professor from Chinese Renmin University also recognizes the positive implications of the point-based hukou system: “The point-scoring system gives the migrants with common skills the chance to get the hukou and constructs a ladder for society. ...Not only does it facilitate social equalities, but also the equal provision of public services” (Yang Song, 2018).

The Chinese official media Xinhua Agency has also written that “The point system of Beijing opened a gate to hukou for many of the migrants floating in Beijing and let those who have waited for so long see the dawn sunshine” (Qiang Liu, 2018). While the hukou system in Beijing has been considered highly restrictive for a long time (Guo & Iredale, 2004), the reform towards the point-scoring system presents an updated picture: Beijing will accept new migrants from both the public and private sectors, and the reformed institution is more transparent.

Besides the positive comments from the media, one of my research participants, BY, a graduate from Peking University, also supported the point system (which was proposed at the point of my study): “I think if there is a qualitative quota to measure, I will be willing to participate. For

instance, how much tax you pay and the contributions your occupation makes to the city and the costs you have resulted in. Or from the perspective of the whole country and society, if I can see my position from a qualitative system, I will be interested. If I know I will get a hukou if I have 60 points or 80 points, I will be willing to know.” By contrast, he was unsatisfied with the employment-based system, “Without these [the point system], I will think this game is too complicated. You need a special social network and more complicated channels, underground and illegal stuff. I will think it’s energy-consuming and I don’t want to participate.” HQ believed that the point system would bring her hope to get the hukou:

Biao: Do you have confidence and hope to get the hukou of Beijing under the point system?

HQ: Yes! I think if I have one channel to the hukou like that, I will definitely have the chance to get the hukou. But if Beijing is still implementing such an employment-based system, I have no idea whether or not I will get the hukou.

Beijing’s institutional reform towards the point system exhibits the resilience of the hukou system which can incorporate the point system into its policy arrangements. Also, the fairness and openness of the point system shows that the Beijing government did take the interests of the migrants into consideration when initiating the reform. However, the anti-migrant campaigns in 2017 soon broke up this welcoming picture.

4.2 Exclusion: The Anti-Migrant Campaigns in Beijing

From a perspective of institutional change, Beijing is stepping into a more open and accepting migration system with the implementation of the point system. However, policy change alone does not fully reveal Beijing's management of migration. Driven by the political pressure from the central party-government body for population control, Beijing also employs more direct and coercive ways to manage migration: the anti-migrant campaigns, which denied the citizenship of migrants. The anti-migrant campaigns undermined the acceptance brought about by the institutional reform, rendering more exclusion of the migrants in Beijing.

4.2.1 “Low-End Population”: The Problematization of the Migrants

Ever since the relaxation of the hukou system, migrants in China have been haunted by negative coverage from the media, discrimination from local people and enmity from the government. The migrants were labelled the “blind influx”, which was to be restrictively controlled, rather than tolerated and accepted by the city government (Solinger, 1999). Beijing has witnessed intensifying tension between the city government and migrants.

Since 1978, when migrants began to pour into the city, Beijing has shifted its attitude towards migrants several times. For example, in the early 1990s, faced with the growth of migrant communities of Zhejiang origin⁸ and their increasing economic power, the Beijing government utilized police forces to try to expel these migrants through the ejection of their wholesale businesses. Their intended expulsion soon received backlash from both the migrant community and the Zhejiang provincial government. The Beijing government then adjusted its tactic, from

⁸ Zhejiang is a province in southern China and thus the migrant community was called “Zhejiang Village.”

periodic expulsion to passive “guidance” and the migrants were tolerated (Ma & Xiang, 1998; Xiang, 1999). In concrete terms, this meant that the government ceased to remove and expel these migrants but tried to investigate and monitor them. This passive guidance soon evolved into “no guidance” and *de facto* laissez faire. After the failed ejection, migrant communities began to thrive in Beijing. While the Beijing government did not try to integrate them as citizens, it was still willing to tolerate their existence in the 1990s (Xiang, 1999).

However, since 2013, when the central party-government body began considering solving over-population in mega-cities as a political task, Beijing has changed its attitude toward migrants and has begun to problematize them again. From 2016, the term “low-end populations” has frequently appeared in official documents by district governments of Beijing. There is no clear definition of this term, but it usually refers to the migrant workers in labor-intensive and service industries. The language used with this term is mostly negative and conveys aggressive measures, for example: “... pulling down and expelling the low-end industries and low-end population” (“Report on Solving the Problem of Illegal Land-use of Shunyi District Government”, originally from the government’s website, permanently deleted); “Restrictively control the influx of low-end population” (“Decoding the Report from the Changping District Party Committee”, originally from the government’s website, permanently deleted).⁹ In contrast to the older concept of “blind influx” which suggests that the migrants in China need guidance from the government in their migration process, the concept of “low-end population” is a more

⁹ The original documents including this term have been deleted from the internet, but some media have recorded examples of this language before they were deleted:
<https://chinadigitaltimes.net/chinese/2017/11/%E3%80%90%E7%AB%8B%E6%AD%A4%E5%AD%98%E7%85%A7%E3%80%91%E9%A9%B1%E8%B5%B6%E4%BD%8E%E7%AB%AF%E4%BA%BA%E5%8F%A3%E4%B8%80%E8%AF%B4%E6%AF%AB%E6%97%A0%E6%A0%B9%E6%8D%AE-%E5%90%97%EF%BC%9F/>

explicit version of the xenophobia within Chinese cities, and it directly dehumanizes the migrants as an infection needing to be removed. Under the “low-end population” narrative, the Beijing government launched a series of political campaigns against the migrants.

4.2.2 From Beautification Campaign to Evictions

In the spring of 2017, Beijing launched a new program to clean up “holes in the wall” through shutting down “unauthorized businesses” (Myers, 2017; Pingping Xiong, 2017), a term that refers to restaurants, cafes and stores that take root in the old town area of Beijing, which were classified as “unlicensed” by the government. During this campaign, 23,390 businesses were identified and shut down by the city. This campaign was launched in the name of “urban beautification.” However, non-official media including *Caijing* and the *New York Times* have asserted that “urban beautification” was no more than a disguise, and that the real aim of this campaign was to expel migrants from the city, given that the owners of these businesses are mostly non-hukou-holding people (Myers, 2017; Pingping Xiong, 2017). Indeed, the Beijing government did not stop at targeting the businesses owned by migrants, and the campaign soon developed into the next stage: the eviction of the migrants.

On November 18, 2017, an extensive fire in an illegally-constructed building killed 19 people, including eight children, in a migrant workers’ community in suburban Beijing (Buckley, 2017). In response to this accident, the Beijing government launched a new mission named “the ‘investigation’, ‘cleaning up’ and ‘renovation’ of hidden danger” to ban these “illegal” residences and remove “illegal” buildings. However, people soon found that this mission went far beyond safety issues and developed into violent mass evictions of migrants living in suburban areas of Beijing. Migrant workers living in these communities were forced to move out within

short periods of time, from two days to more than one week. Also, although this mission took place in the cold winter, the government provided little resettlement assistance to people made homeless by the campaign. As media estimated, there were tens of thousands of migrants evicted during the campaign (Buckley, 2017). Due to the violent and even merciless measures the government employed, some people even compare this event to “Kristallnacht,” which was also an unannounced eviction targeting marginalized people.¹⁰

While the former “Holes in the Wall Cleanup” campaign primarily targeted business owners, this new campaign directly pulled down migrants’ residences and forced them to leave the city almost immediately (Buckley, 2017; Yan Li, 2017). To make it worse, the Beijing government did not stop at this point, but broadened the scope of the campaign. Further evictions spread to the schools for migrant workers’ children (Hernández & Zhao, 2017). These schools were forced to close despite the fact that they were the only educational institutions in the city that accepted the children of migrant workers. Therefore, even when the government of Beijing claimed that they initiated these campaigns out of public interests like urban beautification and community safety, they were *de facto* anti-migrant, drawing on the xenophobic sentiments lying behind the “low-end population” narrative and given their destructive influence on migrants.

¹⁰ Comments that compare Beijing’s eviction with “Kristallnacht” can be found in the following links:

<https://twitter.com/caojitw/status/934417057638055936>; <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/zhuanlan/chenguangchengboke/cgc-12042017121817.html>;

During the evictions, besides expelling the migrants, the government also restrictively controlled the media. Related keywords, including “low-end population” and “eviction,” were deleted extensively in Chinese social media. One artist, Hua Yong, who aimed to record this campaign, was detained due to “disruption of the public order” (AFP, 2017). Under the situation of strict censorship, it was almost impossible for the migrants to get their voices amplified. Making their situation even worse, the government also prohibited NGOs and other social organizations from providing assistance to these evicted migrants (Qi A, 2018). While the previous measures taken by the Beijing government in the 1990s only focused on the migrant communities, these recent evictions have taken the form of more comprehensive suppression of the migrants and other social organizations that attempted to assist them.

Therefore, even being Chinese citizens, these migrants evicted by the Beijing government had been deprived of their local citizenship when they were living and working in Beijing: their jobs were lost; their residences were pulled down; their voices were suppressed; their children also lost access to education. Previous studies usually describe the situation of migrant workers in Chinese cities as “second-class citizens” (Johnson, 2017; Solinger, 1999), but the experience of migrants during these campaigns put them into a worse situation: non-citizens who could enjoy few human rights in their own land. This is an ironic picture when the institutional reform of the formal migration system in Beijing claims to be open and welcoming.

In a broader sense, the evictions reflect the rising authoritarianism in China. The campaign and evictions launched by the Beijing government mostly took the form of coercion rather than persuasion. Moreover, rather than allowing the NGOs to respond, the Beijing government prohibited them from providing any assistance to these migrant workers. The case of Beijing

contradicts previous scholarly understanding of Chinese “soft authoritarianism” (Roy, 1994) and “consultative authoritarianism” (Teets, 2013), pointing to a more suppressive form of authoritarianism in contemporary China. While in democratic societies, governments might have concerns about morality issues in migration control (Bonjour, 2011) and migrants might be able to negotiate with the states (Engbersen & Broeders, 2009), under the rising authoritarianism in China, it is almost impossible for migrants to protect their rights in the face of the fierce anti-migrant campaigns.

4.2.3 University Graduates as *Personae Non-Grata*

These campaigns and evictions in Beijing not only influenced migrant workers but also impacted university graduates and skilled workers. The evictions triggered fear among university students and skilled workers when some white-collar workers also lost their homes during the eviction. Mr. Si, a programmer interviewed by the *New York Times* who was forced to move out from his home, described his experience as “One minute you’re drinking espressos, the next you’re being evicted” (Buckley et al., 2017). DY, one of my research participants, a graduate from Tsinghua University who was working for an IT company, expressed strong optimism about his ability to receive a Beijing hukou when I interviewed him in the summer of 2017, before the evictions: “Of course I am among the top 1% of talent in the city. There is no reason that the city will deny persons like me.” However, right after the eviction, he changed his profile name in a social media network to “low-end population”—expressing his identification with low-education migrant workers who had been forcibly expelled from the city—and demonstrating that he was threatened and disappointed by the violence and the city’s unwelcoming attitude towards non-local people. JX, another graduate from Tsinghua University, wrote with anger on his social

media account after visiting the migrant communities following the eviction: “Most of us are the ‘low-end population’ defined by the Beijing government.” While university students have long been considered the most promising social group to get the hukou of Beijing (Guo & Iredale, 2004), many of them felt threatened and disillusioned after witnessing the violence and suppression of migrants in the city.

The political context also brings uncertainty to the existing hukou system. Among my interviewees, FY and JX were both nominated by their employers to get the hukou, but their attainment of the Beijing hukou was significantly delayed in 2017. FY had waited for one year to finally receive the formal hukou document. JX was still waiting for the approval of his hukou application at the point of this study, and he attributed the delay of the process to the political context: “I think it is due to the 19th congress of the Chinese Communist Party. There are many debates among the executives, so they do not have time to deal with the hukou. Also, Beijing is controlling its population, so they are more restrictive towards the hukou application.” Without the approval of his hukou application, JX had no legal status in Beijing, which brought him lots of troubles. For instance, he could not sign the formal contract with his employer and had to receive a lower salary as an informal employee. As these two cases point out, even the promised hukou for public-sector employees is not guaranteed, given the context of migration control.

Confronted with evictions, violence and uncertainty, university graduates are no longer the desired migrants, but have instead become *personae non-gratae* in Beijing. While Beijing’s reform towards the point system claims to be open and accepting, university students have lost

their faith in this policy reform.¹¹ FN, a graduate from Tsinghua University, does not believe the point-based hukou system is more open than the employment-based system: “The point-based system is not realistic. I think this system is for people with money and special connections. All of the people around me don’t have expectations of getting the hukou through this point-based system. It’s obvious that Beijing is getting people out from the city; there are just a few people who can get the hukou through this channel. You cannot reach the line as an ordinary person.” JX even described the point-based system as a bad joke: “They say nothing about the real situation, it is a fake point system, very funny.” These negative sentiments from these university students have shown that the campaigns and evictions launched by the Beijing government have challenged the credibility of the reform of the hukou system towards the point system.

The experience of the university students pertains to an existing question in migration literature: whether non-local university students are really desired by the host societies as potential skilled workers (King & Raghuram, 2013). The university students in Beijing seem to have the chance to receive the hukou of Beijing in the employment-based hukou system, with a greater chance in the newer point system. However, the experience of these students during and after the evictions challenges their presumed desirability. University students could also be classified as part of the “low-end population” amidst the xenophobic campaigns. The privilege of the university students is fragile in the xenophobic political context, even when the policy arrangements favor them. The sufferings of the migrants during evictions and the obstacles university students met both exhibit a xenophobic picture of Beijing behind the unwelcoming policy changes within the hukou

¹¹ At the point of my interviews, the point-system had been proposed, so most of my interviewees knew about the reform and were able to comment on it.

system. When population control become a political task and migrants are considered as problems and burdens, the seemingly open migration system does not guarantee the local citizenship of the migrants, not to mention failing to protect them from violence and exclusion.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

As this thesis argues, the policy changes of the migration system and the anti-migrant campaigns both shape the management of local citizenship in Beijing. While the existing employment-based hukou system prevents most migrants from getting full citizenship in Beijing, the reform of the hukou system towards the point system renders migrants better chances of getting the hukou. Beijing manifests its acceptance of migrants when people from different occupations can apply for the hukou. At the same time, paralleling these institutional changes, when population control became a political task, Beijing initiated a series of campaigns against migrants and developed it into violent evictions. The evictions not only denied the local citizenship of migrant workers, but also threatened university graduates. Taking an authoritarian form, the evictions substantially undermined the acceptance of migrants brought about by institutional changes.

The shift from the employment-based system to the point system updates scholarly understanding of the hukou system and shows its resilience. The hukou system has not been abandoned by Chinese cities (Kam Wing Chan & Will Buckingham, 2008). Rather, it still determines the *de facto* citizenship migrants can have. The hukou system is also able to take different forms to better manage citizenship, including the point-scoring mechanism, which has been employed in Western societies (Beach, Worswick, & Green, 2011; Miller, 1999). As such, the migration systems in the world have a wider scope: not only does the nation-state employ institutions to manage migration, non-nation-state entities like Beijing can also construct their own migration systems and even incorporate the models of other societies into the design of their institutions.

The case of Beijing also reflects the fragility of migration institutions in a changing political context. Of course, the standardized and quantitative point system does provide people with a fair and reliable pathway to the citizenship of host societies. Nevertheless, these institutional arrangements alone do not present the complete picture. Driven by a xenophobic narrative and using political power, states can employ fiercer and more violent methods, including campaigns against, and evictions of, migrants to more effectively control migration and achieve the political goal. Therefore, it is far from sufficient to only focus on the institutions alone; attention should also be paid to a state's ideology and practice related to migration, which can have decisive impacts on migrants.

The political campaigns and evictions launched by the Beijing government, on the other hand, shed more light on Chinese authoritarianism and how the authoritarian context exacerbates the destructive effects of anti-migrant campaigns. The coercion and suppression of migrants, media and NGOs that the city employed directly contradict the argument about Chinese "soft authoritarianism" (Roy, 1994) or "consultative authoritarianism" (Teets, 2013), showing that China is stepping backwards in its political reform. In migration studies, comparisons between the Chinese hukou system and Western migration systems should take the different political contexts into consideration.

As a migrant host society which employs both institutional reform and political campaigns in its management of migration, Beijing reflects similar contradictions to those within Western countries. Faced with the pressure of immigrants, Western countries like the U.S. are trying to reform their immigration policies towards a merit-based system (Davis, 2017). However, will a merit-based system really improve the experience of migrants? The case of Beijing reminds us

that besides institutional arrangements, anti-migrant campaigns driven by political power can play a decisive role. Xenophobic and authoritarian migration politics can substantially undermine institutional improvements. Unfortunately, we can see the threat from an intolerant migration politics when the president of the U.S. hopes to introduce a “merit-based system” but at the same time dehumanizes migrants (Wickenden, 2017). The institution alone is not reliable in guaranteeing acceptance; a substantial change of the migration politics that really recognizes and respects migrants is far more important. It is still of great significance to recall the study of Irene Bloemraad on Canadian exceptionalism (Bloemraad, 2012): it is Canada’s practice of incorporating migrants as part of its national identity and the migration supporting program that make Canada exceptional (emphasis added) . Therefore, scholars should be skeptical, or at least hold a cautious view, of institutional changes and at the same time probe into migration politics: does the state really respect the immigrants? Or are the institutional changes just a disguise for xenophobic political agendas? Is there any danger that the states will apply direct and fierce measures for migration control?

By examining the case of Beijing, this thesis adds a non-nation state case to existing migration studies literature (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). Nonetheless, this thesis is by no means a complete study. I was not able to directly conduct field work with migrant workers during the campaigns and evictions. Mostly relying on media articles, the analysis of the experience of migrant workers in this thesis is unavoidably limited. Future research should generate deeper and more vivid field work data about the events related to the migration politics. Only through data-based, meticulous and comprehensive studies can scholars untangle the contradictory, fast-

changing and chaotic migration politics and the experience of migrants in the contemporary world.

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