



Source: pixabay

Linking Urban Public Space and Migrant Integration: Memories, Nostalgia, and Belonging

Dr Chen Qu
University of Cambridge
United Nations University CRIS

ABSTRACT

Chinese rural-urban migrants' post-migratory urban lives seem to be discussed merely from a sociological perspective in most of current studies (Yue *et al.*, 2013) where urban public space is seldom stressed, neither. My research aims to explore the role of such space in the migrant integration by both developing the concept of integration and examining migrant use of and sense of place to such space during fieldwork in a Chinese mega city. The evidence suggests that urban public space can promote integration via various approaches, whereas this presentation focuses on one aspect: how memories and nostalgia, evoked during visits to such space, encourage the migrants to achieve 'place identity integration' at different scales, i.e. a sense of belonging (Qian *et al.*, 2011) to such space and/or the city, through fostering a sense of familiarity and positive emotions. The nostalgia associated with rural hometowns as strong emotional ties, however, may conversely hinder migrants building a social identity as an 'insider' and gaining belongingness to the host city. While the influence of nostalgia on belongingness is arguably complex, urban design recommendations oriented to using nostalgia and elements that can boost positive feelings to support migrant integration are provided finally.

BACKGROUND

- Internal migration is important, and common in developing countries in Asia, Africa and so on, so it should gain our attention
- The largest human mobility in the contemporary history: Chinese rural-to-urban migration lasting for over 40 years in the mainland of China
- The migrants undergo lots of inequalities in terms of employment, residence, healthcare, child education, welfare and so on
- With the development of the mainland of China, the largest developing country and the second largest economy globally, there are various types of migrants such as the old moving to cities to look after their (grand)children, rather than merely traditionally-defined migrant workers
- This research on migrants' use of urban public space discovers how the space can relate to their sense of belonging

CONCEPTS AND METHODS

- Urban public space can be urban parks, public gardens, streets and plazas
- Belonging here is considered as 'sense of belonging'
- Nostalgia differs from homesickness and can trigger positive feelings
- A Chinese megacity for interviews with migrants and professionals in urban planning or migration studies, and observation in public spaces



Source: pixabay

KEY FINDINGS

- Nostalgia or memories can be evoked in public space and help migrants form a sense of belonging to the host city
- The nostalgia or memories can be on their hometowns and other places
- Strong ties with their hometowns can hinder such sense of belonging

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- In developing countries for internal migrants, urban public space can be designed and built to help migrants adapt themselves to the local environment, especially near migrants' residences if segregation is serious, and then their health and wellbeing
- Urban design elements relevant to migrants' history/memories can be set
- Other social and economic support measures should be used and advanced to help internal migrants at the same time

KEY REFERENCES

- Qian, J. and Zhu, H. (2014) 'Chinese urban migrants' sense of place: Emotional attachment, identity formation, and place dependence in the city and community of Guangzhou', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 55(1), pp. 81-101.
- Qian, J., Zhu, H. and Liu, Y. (2011) 'Investigating urban migrants' sense of place through a multi-scalar perspective', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Elsevier Ltd, 31(2), pp. 170-183.
- Rubrecht, C. *et al.* (2013) 'Place Attachment and Memory: Landscapes of Belonging as Experienced Post-migration: Place Attachment and Memory: Landscapes of Belonging as Experienced Post-migration', *Landscape Research*, 38(2), pp. 150-176.
- Whyte, W. H. (1980) *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. New York: Project for Public Space.
- Yao, Z. S. *et al.* (2013) 'The Role of Social Networks in the Integration of Chinese Rural-Urban Migrants: A Migrant-Resident, The Perspective', *Urban Studies*, 50(9), pp. 1704-1723.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank the leaders, my Supervisor Professor Ash Amin and the participants and informants in this research. I am grateful to all the people who support my research, for a better world.



Scan to listen or for more details



Follow me



CHEN QU