

# A Peasant or Not? A Test of Chinese Rural Laborers' Identity status and Their Cultivated Land

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## Abstract:

**Background:** Urbanization in China was traditionally intended to lead to comprehensive city development. Peasant laborers must achieve psychological and social adaptation to realize individual urbanization.

**Aims:** The aim of this paper is to identify the factors affecting identity status among Chinese rural laborers.

**Methods:** Survey data for this paper is drawn from the *Survey Data of Rural Laborers in the Pearl River Delta in 2006* dataset, through the Center for Social Survey, Sun Yat-sen University. Multinomial logistic regression is used to test the data, with identity status as the IV (controlling for demographic factors) and retaining cultivated land and self-meaning as DV.

**Results:** Identity status predicts retention of cultivated land but not self-meaning. Specifically, peasants are more likely to retain land than citizens and non-peasants. Citizens do not demonstrate greater self-meaning than peasants.

**Conclusions:** Rural laborers who identify as peasants are more likely to retain cultivated land which highlights its personal, social, and cultural value. The fact that rural laborers who identify as citizens do not show greater self-meaning suggests that many of the perceived benefits of citizenship may be counteracted by the struggles faced during this transition (such as loss of land and previous social ties).

**Key words:** Rural laborers; Identity status; Cultivated land



## 1. Introduction

The Chinese sociological community has long been concerned with how rural laborers assimilate into urban life, especially in terms of social stratification and mobility, social conflicts and anomie, the modernization of individuals and rural land, social networks, and relations between state and society. As research has developed, the focus of theoretical attention has gradually shifted from a macro perspective to the micro level, including rural laborers' psychology (Guo & Li, 2009).

Urbanization has traditionally been intended to result in comprehensive development of cities, and the effects of this movement have had a profound short-term and long-term impact on individuals' lives (Kamisasa, 1983). Peasant laborers must undergo psychological and social adaptations to achieve individual urbanization, often rapidly over short periods of time (Fischer, 1995; Gans, 1968; Jiang, 2003). Individual urbanization is a social process involving consistent changes to rural laborers' behavior as they acquire the subculture, mental states, and behavior patterns of modernity in addition to comprehensive integration (i.e. culturally and economically) of psychology and identity (Fischer, 1995; Kamisasa, 1983). Farmers' adaptation to urban life has long been impeded by the social structure and competition of each citizen's resource distribution. These opposing forces from the social environment influence urban residents' self-consciousness, hinder interactions between rural laborers and urban citizens, and cause the continued expansion of this social divide (Guo & Li, 2009; Jiang, 2003).

However, when peasants assimilate into urban life and achieve individual urbanization, they are confronted with the challenge of refining their self-concept through a re-evaluation of their individual identity and self-attributions as they seek to answer the question of "Who am I?" (Wu & Ning, 2007). They need to reimagine themselves within their novel urban context, which includes social class, social status, and social relations (Rutherford, 1990). As an extension of exchange theory, an individual's social structural status and self-meaning encourages people to maintain their social status and class (Burke & Cast, 1997). Rural laborers' self-identity shapes their attitude toward life

and work in the city and affects integration between an individual and the city (Cai & Cao, 2009). As a result, the self-identity of rural laborers plays an important role in urbanization-related problems with which rural laborers struggle as they integrate into city life (Heger, 2020).

As a psychological concept, social identity reflects a defense mechanism, wherein individuals come to converge with others who are similar in emotions and other underlying psychological factors (Deng, 2007). In this way, sociological identity focuses on an attraction to groups that support a sense of belonging and emphasizes relationships within (ingroups) and between groups (outgroups). As social identity grows stronger, individuals come to internalize the values, attitudes, and behavioral norms of their respective ingroups (Fischer, 1995; Rutherford, 1990).

In sociology, the concepts of self, identity, and social structure are closely intertwined (Deng, 2007; Rutherford, 1990). The self is generated from social interactions in complex, organized, and unique social conditions, such that the "self reflects society" (Deng, 2007). In this sense, the individual comes to accept and adopt various components of the "self", which correlate closely to their own unique social background, in comprising their overall identity. Primarily, relations between the self and society do not arise from the entirety of an individual, but rather more specifically over time based on the relationships between their required roles or interactions with specific members within a specific group or organization. As a result, individuals therefore engage in unique roles as they interact with different people within their ingroups (Deng, 2007).

The theory of Symbolic Interaction considers the relationships among individual roles, identity variants, motivation, and differences in cognitive biases as we socially and subjectively (rather than objectively) create society (Carter & Fuller, 2015; Deng, 2007). This theory posits that social structure influences an individual's social identity and promotes self-influencing behavior along with the effects on individual identity of sharing a social culture (Burke & Cast, 1997). According to Burke's Identity Control Theory (Burke, 2007), the internal impetus of identity is clearly visible as individuals make a conscious evaluation of how their identity is demonstrated to

others and then potentially altered to suit responses of relevant others. In this respect, identity is tied to self-meaning in specific social roles, which change along with an individual's internal reference standard (Burke & Cast, 1997). Self-meaning thus contains symbols that include the meaning of an interaction between an individual and their surroundings, the meaning of objects used and altered in specific contexts, and the symbolic meaning attached to those objects (Burke & Cast, 1997). It is important to note that those with low levels of power and status have reduced capacity to alter their actions (and hence their identities) and therefore their identities tend to be more consistent with the symbolic meaning prescribed by more powerful others around them (Burke, 2007).

Cultivated land is of prime interest to all peasants. The rights and benefits of land comprise a fundamental link between peasants and the countryside, and represent the cornerstone of rural life, agricultural labor, and peasant status (Cai & Cao, 2009). This is particularly relevant in light of the challenges faced by peasant workers in obtaining urban rights – especially in larger urban areas (Cao, Huang, & Goa, 2017). Thus, if peasants are willing to abandon their rural land, then it can be assumed that they are also willing to abandon rural life entirely, perhaps accompanied by a desire to leave the countryside (Cai & Cao, 2009). Hypothesis 1 is thus proposed: *Rural laborers who actively identify as peasant status are more likely to retain arable land.*

Heise's Affect Control Theory is similar to Burke's Identity Control Theory in that it also associates identity with self-meaning (Deng, 2007). Essentially, individuals tend to alter perceptions and behaviors within a given social interaction to coincide with their existing affect about the self (Kroska, Powell, Rogers, & Smith-Lovin, 2023). This affect regarding their own self-meaning will vary across three main dimensions: evaluation (good/bad), strength (powerful/weak), and activity (lively/still) (Hamilton, 1982). In this way, an individual's identity is an emotional manifestation of their actual social roles. In situations where the perceived self is incongruent with an individual's self-image, they will often create a new event or alternatively alter perceptions in order to restore the "self" (Hamilton, 1982). Given that obtaining citizen status could potentially afford new services and

opportunities to rural laborers, these individuals may come to develop a more positive self-impression in their current social context, and adapt their affect and behaviors accordingly. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is proposed: *Rural laborers who identify as citizens will experience more recognition and satisfaction of self-meaning in their social role.*

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Sampling

The survey data for this paper is provided from a dataset entitled *Survey Data of Rural Laborers in the Pearl River Delta in 2006* (Center for Social Survey, Sun Yat-sen University). The final sample comes from nine cities within the Pearl River Delta, chosen at random from an initial list of 2500 municipalities based on the population and proportion of migration from the Guangdong population statistics from 2000. A minimum of 200 participants are represented from each location. Individuals were recruited using intercept and snowball methods, resulting in 3,085 officially employed laborers and 888 unemployed migrants from rural areas.

### 2.2 Sample description

**Table 1** shows the sample profile with a final sample size of 3,965 (42.34% men). Participants are between 14 and 71 years old ( $M = 29.1$ ,  $SD = 9.93$ ). Most respondents report retaining cultivated land (77.83%) and, after considering missing values, rural laborers primarily identify as peasants (77.1%) rather than non-peasants (20.8%) or citizens (2%). Further, many participants report feeling as though they have suffered maltreatment (61.70%), whereas others report feeling inferior (35.18%) and experiencing registration-related household discrimination from others (15.82%).

## 3. Measures

**Independent variable:** Participants were asked to indicate which of the following category they identified with most: *citizen, peasant, farmer, worker, freeman, hard to explain, and leakage asked*. These responses were recoded as 0 = *citizen*, 1 = *peasant*, and 2 = *non-peasant*, where the latter group represented all options other than "citizen" or "peasant".

**Dependent variables:** Based on Burke and Cast (1997), the variable self-meaning includes three items "Feelings of maltreatment", "Urban household

registration will make me better” and “Feeling inferior to others” which were rated on frequency (0 = *no*, 1 = *occasionally*, 2 = *frequently*, 3 = *always*) and one binary item “Feeling of household registration discrimination” (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*). Based on Symbolic Interaction Theory, this study also asks “Do you retain a cultivated field?” (0 = *no* [no arable land], 1 = *yes* [maintain arable land]).

**Socio-demographic variables:** Given that the new generation of rural laborers is more likely than previous generations to urbanize (Cai & Cao, 2009), the variables of age (0 = 14–35 years; 2 = 36–49 years; 3 = 50–71 years), gender (0 = *female*; 1 = *male*), and type of job are included as control variables. Job type was defined as 0 = *manager*, 1 = *blue-collar*, 2 = *service practitioner*, 3 = *pink-collar*, 4 = *self-employed*, and 5 = *other*.

#### 4. Statistical Analyses

Two approaches are utilized in the present study. Initially, a *t*-test, F test, and Pearson correlation coefficients are used to examine relationships between key variables. Next, regression analyses are employed to explore the relationships between identity status and the dependent variables of retaining arable land and self-meaning. Because of the inclusion of both categorical and continuous variables, a multinomial logistic model is utilized to evaluate the discrete selection variable. All statistical analyses were carried out in Stata MP-64, framed as two-tailed tests at a .001 significance level.

#### 5. Results

**Table 1** shows the initial statistical results, comparing identity status across the key dependent variables. Most participants (65.96%,  $\chi^2 = 30.42^{***}$ ) report feelings of maltreatment (comprising *occasionally*, *frequently*, and *always*), but peasants are more likely to report the affirmative options of frequently and always compared to citizens and non-peasants. While most report not feeling inferior to others (60.09%,  $\chi^2 = 84.27^{***}$ ), peasants are more likely to report affirmative options of often, frequently, and always than citizens and non-

peasants. A similar pattern is found, where peasants are less likely to say “no” to “urban household registration will make me better” (47.37%,  $\chi^2 = 33.19^{***}$ ) and more likely to say “yes” to “feeling household registration discrimination” (83.01%,  $\chi^2 = 24.49^{***}$ ). A significant difference is also seen with the question about retaining cultivated land, where a greater proportion of peasants retain cultivated land (79.85%) compared to non-peasants (68.26%) and citizens (50.77%).

Multiple regressions are used to examine the impact of identity status on retention of cultivated land and self-meaning satisfaction. As evidenced by comparisons between rural laborers who identify as peasants and those who do not, age has a nearly significant effect where young people are more likely than elders to identify as non-peasants in all models, whereas the other control variables demonstrate no significant effects.

For the variable “feeling of unfairness,” compared to never (*never* = 0), respondents claiming a non-peasant identity choose “*occasionally*” more often by 0.18 logistic units ( $p < 0.05$ ) and 0.19 logistic units ( $p < 0.05$ ) in Models 2 and 3 respectively, compared to respondents identifying as peasants. With respect to the item “feeling inferior to others”, rural laborers who identify as non-peasants are less likely to choose the option “*frequently*” by 0.59 logistic units ( $p < 0.001$ ) and 0.56 logistic units ( $p < 0.001$ ) in Models 2 and 3 respectively, compared to those identifying as peasants. Non-peasants indicate experiencing *hukou* (household registration) discrimination 0.27 logistic units ( $p < 0.05$ ) and 0.24 logistic units ( $p < 0.05$ ) lower in Models 2 and 3 compared to peasants.

As can be seen in **Table 2**, a significant negative relationship emerges between identity status and retention of cultivated land in Model 3. When controlling for other variables, rural laborers who identify as peasants retain cultivated land more often than those who identify as citizens (by 1.24 logistic units) and non-peasants (0.51 logistic units). In contrast, items pertinent to participant self-meaning exhibit no consistent significant link to identity status.

**Table 1.** Comparison of peasants, non-peasants, and citizens on demographic variables, self-meaning, and retention of land ( $N = 3,965$ )

	Peasants ( $n = 2,476$ )	Non-peasant ( $n = 1,424$ )	Citizen ( $n = 65$ )	F/ $\chi^2$
	Mean (SD)/N (%)	Mean(SD)/N (%)	Mean (SD)/N (%)	
Age	31.45 (10.21)	26.35 (8.49)	29.03 (10.25)	126.78 <sup>***</sup>

Continuation Table:

		Peasants ( <i>n</i> = 2,476)	Non-peasant ( <i>n</i> = 1,424)	Citizen ( <i>n</i> = 65)	F/ $\chi^2$
		Mean (SD)/N (%)	Mean(SD)/N (%)	Mean (SD)/N (%)	
Gender	Male	1,043 (42.09)	695 (48.81)	36 (55.38)	19.54***
	Female	1,435 (57.91)	729 (51.19)	29 (44.62)	
Type of work	Manager	2 (0.08)	-	-	132.33***
	Blue-collar	1,711 (69.5)	1,029 (72.77)	35 (53.85)	
	Service practitioner	307 (12.27)	207 (14.62)	15 (23.08)	
	Pink-collar	41 (1.67)	77 (5.45)	7 (10.77)	
	Self-employed	360 (14.62)	78 (5.52)	8 (12.31)	
	Other	41 (1.67)	23 (1.63)	-	
Feeling of maltreatment	No	789 (34.04)	484 (35.99)	24 (38.1)	30.42***
	Occasionally	757 (32.66)	517 (38.44)	26 (41.27)	
	Frequently	475 (20.49)	226 (16.8)	8 (12.7)	
	Always	297 (12.81)	118 (8.77)	5 (7.94)	
Feeling inferior to others	No	1,417 (60.09)	986 (72.55)	49 (75.38)	84.27***
	Occasionally	508 (21.54)	256 (18.84)	12 (18.46)	
	Frequently	300 (12.72)	81 (5.96)	3 (4.62)	
	Always	133 (5.64)	36 (2.65)	1 (1.54)	
Urban household registration will make me better	No	1,017 (47.37)	702 (55.45)	36 (59.02)	33.19***
	Occasionally	584 (27.20)	328 (25.91)	11 (18.03)	
	Frequently	339 (15.79)	161 (12.72)	11 (18.03)	
	Always	207 (9.64)	75 (5.92)	3 (4.92)	
Feeling of household registration discrimination	No	2,057 (83.01)	1,263 (88.76)	58 (89.23)	24.49***
	Yes	421 (16.99)	160 (11.24)	7 (10.77)	
Retain cultivated land	No	499 (20.15)	972 (68.26)	33 (50.77)	88.92***
	Yes	1,977 (79.85)	452 (31.74)	32 (49.23)	

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$

Table 2 Multinomial logistic regression of identity status of rural laborers

Identity status	Dependent variable	Model1		Model2		Model3	
		$\beta$	95% CI	$\beta$	95% CI	$\beta$	95% CI
Peasant	(baseline)						
Non-Peasant	Age (14–35 years)						
	36–49 years	-.86***	-1.05 -.67	-.82***	-1.04 -.60	-.79***	-1.02 -.58
	50–71 years	-1.01***	-1.41 -.62	-.84***	-1.27 -.41	-.79***	-1.23 -.36
	Gender (female)						
	Male	-.08	-.21, .05	.018	-.17 .14	-.003	-.16 .15
	Type of work (manager)						
	Blue-collar	13.66	-1774.83 1802.15	14.37	-2514.77 2543.53	14.25	-2520.73 2549.24
	Service practitioner	13.81	-1774.68 1802.31	14.50	-2514.61 2543.65	14.34	-2520.642549.34
	Pink-collar	14.67	-1773.82 1803.16	15.21	-2513.94 2544.37	15.06	-2519.93 2550.06
	Self-employed	12.96	-1775.53 1801.45	13.71	-2515.44 2542.87	13.55	-2521.44 2548.55
	Other	13.72	-1774.76 1802.21	14.18	-2514.97 2543.34	14.04	-2520.95 2549.04
	Feeling of unfairness (never)						

Continuation Table:

Identity status	Dependent variable	Model1		Model2		Model3	
		$\beta$	95% CI	$\beta$	95% CI	$\beta$	95% CI
Citizen	Occasionally			.18*	.002 .36	.19*	.01 .37
	Frequently			.02	-.21 .26	.03	-.19 .26
	Always			-.08	-.37 .21	-.06	-.34 .23
	Feeling inferior to others (never)						
	Occasionally			-.19	-.39 .01	-.19	-.39 .01
	Frequently			-.59***	-.90-.27	-.56***	-.89 -.25
	Always			-.31	-.77 .14	-.33	-.79 .12
	Feeling of household registration discrimination (no)						
	Yes			-.27*	-.50-.04	-.24*	-.48 -.01
	Urban household registration will make me better (never)						
	Occasionally			-.16	.35 .019	-.18	-.36 .01
	Frequently			-.02	-.27 .23	-.03	-.27 .22
	Always			-.04	-.37 .28	-.03	-.35 .30
	Retain cultivated land (no)						
	Yes					-.51***	-.69 -.34
	_cons	-13.96	-1802.45 1774.53	-14.57	-2543.71 2514.58	-14.07	-2549.06 2520.92
	Age (14-35)						
	36-49	-.68	-1.41 .06	-.65	-1.48 .19	-.57	-1.41 .26
	50-71	.07	-.91 1.07	.42	-.60 1.44	.53	-.49 1.56
	Gender (female)						
	male	-.34	-.86 .18	-.34	-.89.21	-.30	-.86 .25
Type of work (manager)							
Blue-collar	13.41	-8270.48 8297.29	14.31	-11623.9 11652.53	13.92	-11718.09 11745.95	
Service practitioner	14.25	-8269.64 8298.14	15.15	-11623.07 11653.36	14.67	-11717.34 11746.7	
Pink-collar	15.33	-8268.56 8299.22	15.92	-11622.3 11654.13	15.47	-11716.54 11747.5	
Self-employed	13.67	-8270.22 8297.56	14.67	-11623.55 11652.88	14.16	-11717.85 11746.19	
Others	.74	-8379.48 8380.96	.94	-11796.15 11798.04	.67	-11880.6 11881.95	
Feeling of unfairness (never)							
Occasionally			.39	-.21 .99	.42	-.191.02	
Frequently			-.12	-.99.74	-.08	-.95 .78	
Always			-.25	-1.37 .87	-.15	-1.27 .97	
Feeling inferior to others (never)			-				
Occasionally			-.35	-1.06 .37	-.35	-1.07 .37	
Frequently			-1.43	-2.93 .08	-1.35	-2.86 .16	
Always			-1.06	-3.181.06	-1.03	-3.16 1.08	
Feeling of household registration discrimination (no)							
Yes			-.05	-.89 .79	.01	-.83 .85	

Continuation Table:

Identity status	Dependent variable	Model1		Model2		Model3	
		$\beta$	95% CI	$\beta$	95% CI	$\beta$	95% CI
	Urban household registration will make me better (never)						
	Occasionally			-.49	-1.20 .22	-.53	-1.25 .17
	Frequently			.48	-.27 1.2	.45	-.31 1.20
	Always			-.08	-1.34 1.19	-.03	-1.31 1.24
	Retain cultivated land (no)						
	Yes					-1.24***	-1.77-.71
	_cons	-17.01	-8300.89 8266.88	-17.69	-11655.9 11620.53	-16.51	-11748.53 11715.51
	N		3938		3215		3214
	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.04		0.05		0.06
	Prob. > $\chi^2$		< 0.001		< 0.001		< 0.001

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

Data from this study shows that a strong majority of rural laborers still identify themselves as “peasants”. Most peasant laborers therefore may have not yet fully integrated into urban life. According to Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of needs, most Chinese are still developing toward the stage of respect needs and social needs, which are associated with privilege. At these later stages, people begin to care about stable status and social recognition. In 2006, China’s GDP was 2,194,385 million *yuan*, whereas the disposable income of residents with rural household registration (i.e., peasants) was 3,597 *yuan* and that of citizens was 11,759.5 *yuan* (China, 2007). Based on this, it appears that most peasants are still working to achieve a comfortable life, including adequate or ample food and clothing. Financially, then, it would seem that becoming a citizen would afford many opportunities to achieve or satisfy higher levels of need. However, according to Model 3, although some may wish to be citizens, they have not abandoned their peasant identity due to the shackles of the symbolic meaning of cultivated land granted by social history (Burke & Cast, 1997). This importance comes from cultivated civilization and traditional Chinese political thought. Land is the economic foundation in the life of villages and clans; it also binds farmers to clan groups and a peasant identity (Freedman & Liu, 2000). Even today, Chinese peasants have not formally separated themselves from the land, and hence a “complex of

land” exists among many citizens.

In addition, due to the level of development, peasant laborers still constitute a low-status group. Compared with the middle class, this group possesses less control over economic and social rights and tends to struggle in coping with risk (Major et al., 2002). Being a peasant laborer is weakly correlated with a positive self-view (Reinhard, Schindler, & Stahlberg, 2014). Yet the material and spiritual foundation of cultivated land can enhance peasant laborers’ abilities and expectations, which could help them deal with risk. Therefore, peasant laborers consider land the foundation of a peasant identity. If this standard were to be broken, then peasant laborers would have abandoned the peasant lifestyle. These laborers may then have come to possess more social and economic power associated with urban life.

With respect to Hypothesis 1, the present study shows that rural laborers who identify as peasants are more likely than either non-peasants and citizens to retain arable land. This is true even after controlling for demographic variables in Model 3. This highlights the notion that arable land is strongly tied to the self-concept and identity of those in rural China. This land can be viewed as an important symbol with a strong emotional meaning to rural Chinese, even when they are forced to migrate to larger urban areas for any number of reasons. In this respect, retaining land may act as an emotional and cultural link to their rural roots and provides a means of preserving hope for a return to the familiar people, culture, services, and overall way

of life of their past (Wu, 2019).

In contrast, the present study did not find strong and consistent support for Hypothesis 2, in that citizens do not show greater levels of self-meaning than peasants. While comparison of mean scores on individual self-meaning items did show differences between peasant, non-peasant, and citizen identity groups, which is in line with Hypothesis 2, these differences did not remain when examined collectively in the Multinomial Logistic Regression. Citizens were just as likely as peasants to perceive unfairness, feel inferior to others, believe that household registration makes them better, and experience household registration discrimination.

According to Wu (2019), due to the rapid urbanization of China, many who have had to transition from rural to urban environments face many personal and social difficulties. These challenges are evident within living conditions, working conditions, income, class mobility, social interactions, and personal identification (Tian & Xu, 2015; Wang, Guo, & Cheng, 2015; Wu, 2019; Zhang & Xie, 2016). Adaptation to the new urban environment for this group is not always effortless or easy. Ren, Zhang, and Hennessy (2018) found that the majority of the Chinese migrant workers they sampled experience some form of strain (value strain, aspiration strain, deprivation strain and coping strain) which predicts elevated levels of psychological distress. In this respect, it is likely that the potential benefits associated with a citizen identity are counteracted by the multitude of struggles associated with the transition to this status. In addition, given that many citizens do not retain arable land, there may be a parallel to studies focusing on “landless peasants” who show poorer quality of life (Liang & Li, 2014), lower life satisfaction, greater negative emotions (Lian & Zhu, 2015), and altered self-identity (Heger, 2020). As a result, citizens may be more sensitive to events in the environment that could heighten perceptions of maltreatment, feeling inferior, or encountering discrimination.

Tebboth and Locke (2023) note that one of the main advantages of transitioning from a rural to an urban setting is the potential to be viewed as more “civilized” or “modern” compared to rural dwellers. The perception is that a move to an urban environment will make life better in the long run, but there is also often an expectation that this migration is circular in

that they will eventually return to their rural homes, communities, and social ties. When this circular migration is seen as untenable, newly urbanized migrants may experience increased feelings of uncertainty and experience negative reactions to their current situation. In this respect, rather than feeling like this position affords an increase in desirable qualities and outcomes, it is possible many experience precarity in this new position. In turn, this may exaggerate feelings of being deprived of their previous social ties, feeling “inferior” to others, and perceptions of discrimination and maltreatment victimization.

The present study is not without limitations. One issue is that a cross-sectional methodology was utilized. A more longitudinal approach where data are compared across multiple time frames may be more beneficial in the long-term given that government regulations, living conditions, and social conventions with respect to urbanization and land development are in a constant state of change and development. In addition, due to the limited scope of data, the conclusions offered here may not generalize to other areas beyond the Pearl River Delta in China. It should also be noted that research evidence suggests that there are unique issues associated with different type of relocation efforts (Tebboth & Locke, 2023; Wu, 2020). As a result, future research might benefit from providing a comparison between these potentially discrepant groups.

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