STATE WITHIN A STATE

Fifty years of the Chinese hukou system
Chinese household registration policy, based on separation of the population classified as ‘agricultural’ from the ‘non-agricultural’.
GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUKOU SYSTEM

1) BEFORE 1949:
   • ‘well-field’ and ‘xiangsui’ systems (Zhou dynasty)
   • ‘baojia’ system (Song dynasty),
   • ‘lijia’ system (Ming dynasty)
   **FUNCTIONS**: fighting with unrestrained migration, tax collection and crime prevention; mutual control and collective responsibility; uncontrolled migration considered as a threat to public order

2) PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (SINCE 1949):
   • 1951 - Contemporary Regulations on Hukou in the Cities, extended to rural areas in 1955
   • 1958 - Hukou Law of the People’s Republic of China; restrictions for those who wanted to settle down in urban areas and the borderland
   • 1958-60 – ‘Great Leap Forward’ – intensive population movements, followed by strengthening of the hukou system
   • 1966-1976 – ‘Cultural Revolution’ – massive population movements, both spontaneous and forced
• **1978** – start of the economic reform - decollectivisation and elimination of rural communes leaves the countryside with a labour surplus of 220 million; liberalization of the hukou system; developing coastal provinces of China (mainly Special Economic Zones) attract millions of workers from inland regions.

• **1984** – liberalization of hukou; holders of the agricultural hukou status allowed to settle down in 60,000 towns, provided that they could afford their own food; they don’t have access to any social benefits; the system of food rationing abolished in 1987.

• **1985** – introduction of ID cards (shenfenzheng 身分证), which became the only documents required during trips across the country.

• **End of the 1980s** - overpopulation of some cities and regions, many municipalities require fees from migrants; the newcomers receive ‘blue-stamp’ hukou and access to some of the social benefits; the fees officially banned in 2001.

• **Middle of the 1990s – until now** – series of pilot programs, abolishing hukou restrictions in different parts of China.

• **2001** – Government’s announcement of abolishment of hukou within the subsequent 5 years; the goal wasn’t accomplished.

• **2003** - ‘Regulations concerning the Help and Dealing with Vagrants and Beggars in Urban Areas’ – as a result of the case of Sun Zhigang; abolishment of previous recommendations to arrest and expel from the cities migrants who didn’t have necessary permits.
FUNCTIONS OF THE HUKOU SYSTEM

- **INFORMATION** – hukou as a source of information on citizens’ lives and activities
- **SOCIAL CONTROL** – hukou as a tool of isolating groups and individuals constituting hazard to the state’s stability
- **MIGRATION CONTROL** – hukou as a tool of preventing overpopulation and excessive growth of the cities
- **ECONOMIC** – hukou as one of the elements of centrally-planned economy and the collective system of production
- **ALLOCATIVE** – hukou as one of the tools of distribution of social guarantees
<table>
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<th>Holders of non-agricultural hukou:</th>
<th>Holders of agricultural hukou:</th>
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<td>Access to arable land</td>
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<td>Accommodation</td>
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METHODS OF CHANGING THE HUKOU STATUS INTO THE NON-AGRICULTURAL

- EDUCATION
- JOB
- SERVICE IN THE ARMY
- MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY
- URBANIZATION
- FORCIBLE RESETTLEMENTS
- FAMILY SITUATION
- ‘DINGTI’ POLICY
EFFECTS OF THE HUKOU SYSTEM

- SPATIAL DISPROPORTIONS IN: EDUCATION, LABOR MARKET, HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL CARE SYSTEMS
- LIMITATION OF URBANIZATION PROCESSES
- RESTRICTION OF SOCIAL MOBILITY
- SLOWING DOWN CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC UNIFICATION OF THE COUNTRY (ONLY HALF OF THE POPULATION CAN UNDERSTAND THE OFFICIAL, NATIONAL SPEECH, ‘PUTONGHUA’)
- INDIRECTLY – HUKOU SYSTEM AND ITS NEGATIVE OUTCOMES MIGHT STIMULATE THE ALREADY NUMEROUS CASES OF SOCIAL UNREST.