



Core units: Exemplars – Year 8  
Illustration 4: Migration within China

## Rural-urban divide in China

In this file you are presented with photographs from rural and urban China. They help to explain why so many people want to leave their country villages and migrate to the cities.

### Activity

While the details of the photographs may be very different from what we experience in Australia, the forces that drive people are not. As you look at the photographs think how you would react if you were living there. Think about:

- housing
- education
- recreation
- employment
- food
- family
- shopping
- transport.

Can you empathise with those who wish to migrate from Chinese villages to the big cities?

Imagine that you are not in Australia, but rather, in a village in rural China.

Write a letter to your father, who is a legal hukou worker in Shanghai. He has been away for a year but has not been able to return home. Describe to him life in the village and why you want him to take the family to Shanghai. He has not taken you because he cannot do so legally – do you want him to take a risk?



**1**

**A prosperous village in rural China**  
The village produces a variety of crops, has access to electricity and is located near the national highway. Public transport services the village. There are local shops and a weekly market. There is a doctor in the village but no hospital. There is a primary school.

Source: Photograph © Malcolm Massie, Scotch College Adelaide.



2

**An isolated village in the foothills of the Himalayas**

No road services the village and in winter it is totally cut off. There is no electricity and no phone service. The village has no medical facilities or school. There are no shops and the nearest market is 15 kms away.



3

**A typical village school in rural China**

The classrooms can be quite crowded and the facilities limited. Primary education only is provided. When the crops need attention the students work on the farms instead of attending.

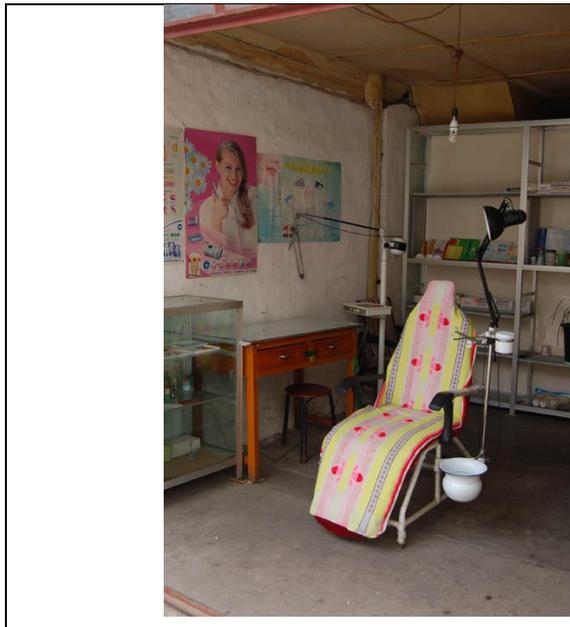


4

**Most villages have small shops**

Open to the street and employing two people, the shop provides a valuable service. The shop offers a limited range of city fashions but the seamstress is very good at altering items to make a sale.

Source: All photographs © Malcolm Massie, Scotch College Adelaide.



5

**The local dentist!**

The surgery is open to the street so that everyone walking past can see the treatments.



6

**In many villages most of the younger people have gone to the cities for work**

They leave behind their small children who are looked after by grandparents. It is common to see groups of men in the local shop playing cards.



7

**In many smaller villages there are few shops, but instead, stalls are set up in the central market place**

Here we see food vendors waiting for buyers.

Source: All photographs © Malcolm Massie, Scotch College Adelaide.



8

**Villages are a good source of fresh produce**

Food is plentiful and cheap. As few villagers have access to refrigeration, meat is often cooked within an hour of purchase.



9

**Shanghai is very different from China's rural heartland**

Shanghai is one of the world's most modern cities. Excellent housing, education, shopping and employment opportunities attract people. Note how bad the air pollution is in the photograph.



10

**The major Chinese cities have all the facilities which we associate with their Australian counterparts, including fast-food outlets**

Source: All photographs © Malcolm Massie, Scotch College Adelaide.



11

**The Beijing railway station**

The station is the centre of a vast rail network which links the capital to the rural areas of China. This is often the arrival destination for the large 'floating population' of illegal migrants.



12

**For legal residents of the city housing is often in modern apartments**

Illegal workers find it difficult to secure good housing and are always threatened with exorbitant rents or eviction.

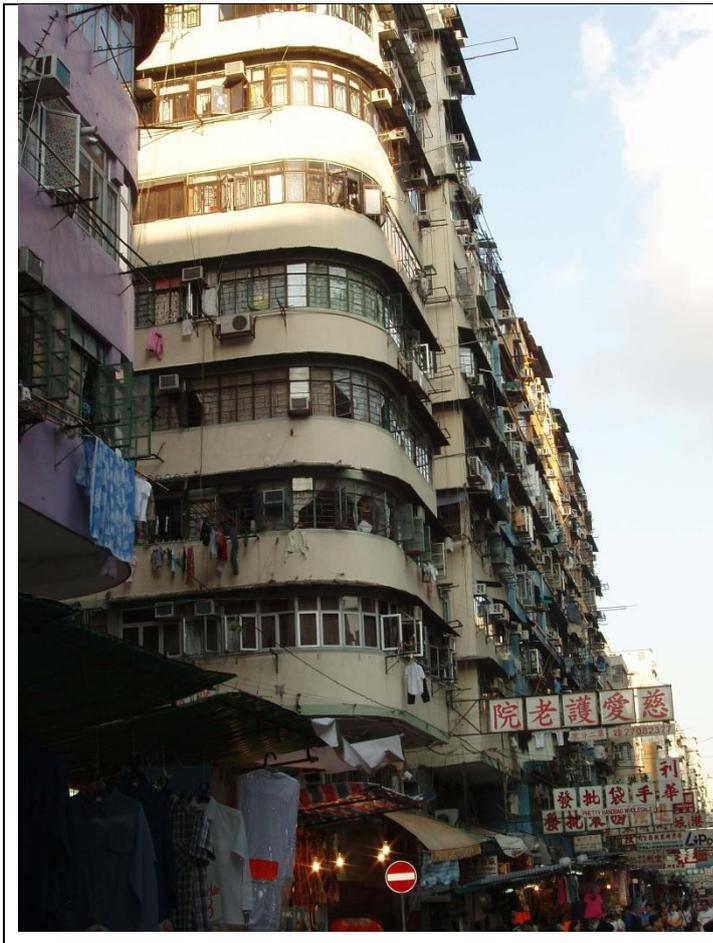


13

**For those moving to the city any job is better than none**

For those without education or skills, jobs are often very low paying and insecure.

Source: All photographs © Malcolm Massie, Scotch College Adelaide.



14

**Older-style apartments**

Older-style apartments are still common in Chinese cities despite efforts to remove them. They are often very crowded and lack modern facilities. Only buildings with more than eight floors have to provide an elevator. In many cases laundry and toilet blocks are shared.



15

**Lining up at the Beijing Amusement Park**

These children are able to take advantage of all that modern, urban China can offer.

Source: All photographs © Malcolm Massie, Scotch College Adelaide.