

The book is organized as follows. The first three chapters engage the challenges of municipal officials, village cadres and villagers as they aim to interpret urban–rural coordination for their own benefit. For instance, municipal officials, in chapter one, reconceptualize the “rural” as functional service providers to the “urban,” which has the effect of subordinating rural areas to urban planning processes. Hailong’s cadres counter this impulse, as chapter two describes, by creatively re-collectivizing agricultural land for commercial use and internal asset redistribution, a process that reframes the “rural” as economically independent from the city. Chapter three focuses on Hailong residents’ social practices and “human feeling” (*renqing*) that creatively constitute rural life on the urban edge. The latter three chapters discuss how multi-scalar sociospatial transformations intersect with Hailong’s inhabitants and their potential futures. Chapter four details Hailong’s village planning process and various intra-party actors vying to shape the national urban-rural development model. Village cadres creatively exploit municipal policies through fissures in urban–rural coordination, which include transforming collective land into real estate and villagers into shareholders, as chapter five reveals. The result, as chapter six explores, is widespread displacement, dissolution of village life, and precarity.

For Smith, state planning under urban–rural coordination portends the “near-total urbanization of China’s population and territory and the incipient end of the village as a meaningful form of sociospatial organization in contemporary China” (p. 7). Villages have historically fostered collective welfare and facilitated semiautonomous self-reliance. Given the underdetermined nature of China’s urbanization and the forms of social inequality it continues to reproduce, how might scholars and practitioners foster more equitable planning processes and advance effective mechanisms for social welfare? Such prescriptive endeavours may be fruitful for others to pursue but remain beyond the scope of this work.

In my view, the book offers interventions that will shape debates in China studies and urban studies for years to come. It stands as an essential authoritative text on urban–rural coordination and the contingencies of China’s urbanization processes. It should be read by scholars not only of urban planning, but also those interested in China’s party-state, development, and rural society.

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The Children of China’s Great Migration

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The Children of China’s Great Migration fills an important gap in the growing English-language literature on rural children who have at least one parent migrating without them to cities for work. It departs from the urban-centric public discourse that paints a “dismal picture” of left-behind children. By giving voice to children about their experiences and perspectives, it offers critically a nuanced sociological study that highlights the sense of responsibility and reciprocity that bond three generations together despite geographic distance and emotional challenges.

Rachel Murphy insightfully uses the term “striving team” to describe China’s multilocal multi-generational families, in which parents, children and grandparents work collectively on realizing aspirations for a better life. Chapter three delineates the “parent–child striving team” as a “social institution,” in which not only parents and grandparents but also schools actively socialize children into internalizing the logic of meritocracy, filial piety and urban superiority. To study hard and succeed in the examination system is to reciprocate parents’ sacrifice, to avoid their path of *dagong* (laborious migrant work), and ultimately to bring the family out of rural poverty and inferiority. Children’s own accounts show the mixed effects of such moralistic teaching at both home and school. Although many are incentivized to endure long hours of repetitive drilling and achieve academic success, others suffer from the pressure and feel frustrated.

This book draws on interviews conducted in four counties in two major migrant-sending provinces (Anhui and Jiangxi) between 2010 and 2011 as well as follow-up interviews with 25 of the children and their caregivers between 2013 and 2015. This offers a glimpse of how family dynamics and children’s lives evolved over time. Survey findings in two townships in each of the fieldwork counties and observation during fieldwork are also used for contextualization. Chapter two provides brief information of the four counties, all of which offer limited off-farm jobs and consequently have a high percentage of labour emigration to coastal cities and even abroad. It highlights how families’ migration patterns and childcare strategies vary in response to local school regimes. In counties where boarding primary and middle schools are available, rural parents opt for them especially because of close supervision by teachers. Ironically, the preference for boarding school perpetuates labour migration to generate remittances and pay expensive boarding fees. In contrast, families in poorer regions with few boarding options rely on grandparents or stay-behind parent to provide childcare and supervision. Yet the difficulties facing aging grandparents are visible and clearly felt by themselves. This reminds us how China’s structural rural–urban disparity, especially in terms of educational resources that have been disproportionately concentrated in towns and cities, necessitates and almost demands parent–child separation among rural households and significantly hinders children’s life chances via education.

In addition to place, gender is the other key concept around which the second half of the book is structured. Chapter four asks whether boys and girls receive resources and do chores differently. Both quantitative and qualitative data show that gendered differentiation is less pronounced and more mutable than expected in everyday childcare, educational investment, and distribution of pocket money and household chores. This confirms recent scholarship on the decrease of son preference amid demographic changes and socioeconomic development after three decades of family planning and labour migration. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the gender-based perceptions about the roles and needs of males and females remain salient in migration patterns, family relations, and children’s experiences and self-identification. Chapters five, six and seven zoom in onto “mother-stay-behind,” “father-stay-behind” and “skipped-generation” families respectively. Parents and children are socialized in the traditional cultural model of “stern father nurturing mother” and hence normalize the mother-stay-behind arrangement. Most children appreciate the comforts bestowed by their mother’s presence. They recognize the sacrifices their mothers make to shoulder both physical work and emotional burdens at home. In comparison, the father-stay-behind configuration is widely perceived as exceptional and children’s relationships with parents tend to be more complicated and sometimes difficult. The prevailing gender norms signal father-stay-behind families’ vulnerability so that

children need different strategies, such as keeping silent about their mothers' absence, relying on grandmothers and cherishing any affection from their fathers, to cope with such abnormal arrangements. Noticeably, fathers who fail to make economic provision are at more risk of losing emotional closeness and respect from their children because of the gender norm. When both parents migrate often due to poverty, paternal grandparents are expected to take on childcaring responsibilities because of the dominant patrilineal system in which descent is traced through male lines.

Murphy's book carefully avoids simplistic causal analysis by paying meticulous attention to the intersection of multiple factors that contribute to children's experiences and perceptions throughout the chapters. It also demonstrates rigorous scholarship that places the experiences of Chinese left-behind children in the larger context of scholarship about migration and family relations around the world. This book will be of great value to China scholars and graduate students who are interested in migration, education, childhood, family and gender issues.

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Workers and Change in China: Resistance, Repression, Responsiveness

MANFRED ELFSTROM

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The rise of migrant workers' strikes since early 2000s and the efforts of the Chinese government to regulate labour relations have created fertile ground for labour studies in China. Developed from his PhD thesis at Cornell University, Manfred Elfstrom's book is a new contribution to this stream of scholarship. Comparing it to other recently published books, its uniqueness is threefold.

First, Elfstrom adopts mixed methods in this research, while traditionally qualitative methods are dominant in China labour studies. His qualitative research was extensively built on 152 semi-structured interviews with "197 labour activist, workers, factory managers, government officials and others conducted between 2011 and 2017" (pp. 18–19). For the quantitative part, Elfstrom constructed a dataset (China Strike) that covers 1,471 cases of strikes, protests and riots from 2003 to 2012, the full term of the Hu Jintao–Wen Jiabao administration.

Secondly, a regional comparative approach has been adopted. The two main regions that he studied were the portion of the Yangtze River Delta (YRD) in Jiangsu and the Pearl River Delta (PRD) in Guangdong. Apart from these two regions, he also conducted a "shadow case study" on Chongqing in southwestern China. He argues that workers from different backgrounds (i.e. economic sector and migration status) have tended to choose different forms of labour resistance. And different forms of resistance have exerted different levels of pressure on the local authorities and led to what he calls different "regional models of control" (p. 8).

Third, Elfstrom goes beyond the main concern of labour studies scholarship on state, labour and capital relations to reflect on the future of the authoritarian regime. He calls for moving beyond the "*transitology*" and "*resilience*" approaches that have dominated studies of authoritarian regimes since the end of the Cold War. Instead, he