

The Impact of Land Property Right on China's Rural-Urban Migration

Jianfeng He

Brandeis University, Waltham, MA 02453, United State

jianfenghe@brandeis.edu

Abstract. After the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), private ownership of land in rural areas was abolished, and land was collectively owned. However, the Chinese government issued several policies to protect the rights and interests of farmers. The most representative of these are the Household Responsibility System (HRS) and the Rural Land Contracting Law (RLCL). In this paper, we study the impact of land management systems on population migration under market mechanisms (ability to rent land) and government mechanisms (land expropriation). And we used the Probit model to conduct regression analysis to verify the impact of land management systems on population migration and used robustness tests to ensure the stability and validity of the data. The results show that allowing land to be rented out has a positive effect on population migration, while land acquisition by the government has a negative effect on population migration. It proves that the Three Rights Division (TRD) system proposed and implemented by Chairman Xi Jinping, which forms ownership, contracting, and management rights to protect the rights of agricultural business entities, helps reduce urban-rural income inequality, helps upgrade the industrial structure of urban industries, and maintains economic expansion and increases China's long-term development potential.

Keywords: China; Property Right; Rural; Migration; Land Law.

1. Background

1.1. China's Land System

Besley (1995) suggests that in the Chinese context, developments in land management arrangements and land exchange rights affect migration decisions. This can be understood as a positive correlation between land rights and investment decisions. The land system in China has gone through various forms, which are briefly summarized as the communal system during the Shang Dynasty, the well-field system during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the private ownership system at the end of the Warring States period, the equal-tenant system, and finally the communal system after the founding of the new China.

The communal system abolished the feudal and exploitative land ownership system of the landlord class and realized the right of the cultivator to own land. After the reform and opening up, the government established the Household Responsibility System (HRS), making the public ownership system even better. In 2013, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed the establishment of a system for the "three rights" of rural land, namely land ownership, contracting rights, and management rights, and in 2016, the "three rights" system was fully implemented.

1.1.1. China Land System: Urban and Rural

In China, land ownership is not consistent between urban and rural areas. Urban land is owned by the state. The rights to plan, manage, and use urban land are all exercised by the state. Rural land is collectively owned. Please note that this does not mean that farmers are free to buy and sell land. Although farmers do not own the land, they do have the right to use it through the joint Household Responsibility System (HRS). Land is allocated according to a range of factors, including family size, age, and other factors, and farmers choose to cultivate it.

The Rural Land Contracting Law (RLCL), implemented in 2002, aims to strengthen the rights of families by enforcing 30-year land-use contracts. It prohibits large-scale land redistribution and restricts small-scale land readjustment. And the policy change stipulates that land contract management rights can be transferred by other means, such as subcontracting, leasing, swapping, and transferring. The emergence and implementation of collective ownership of rural land, the Household Responsibility System (HRS), and the Rural Land Contracting Law (RLCL) have established a more just and orderly land relationship between the state and farmers and have greatly ensured the rights and interests of farmers. At the same time, they have stimulated farmers' motivation to produce and modernized agriculture, thereby raising their incomes.

1.1.2. HRS (Household Responsibility System) Land Property Right Characteristic

The Household Responsibility System (HRS) is a system in which collective land is contracted out to individual peasant families. Each family will be given a certain area of land for growing various agricultural products. Families have the right to contract management for a period of 30 years. Under legal circumstances, farmers can transfer their land contract management rights for a fee. The purpose of the household responsibility system is to ensure the rational utilization of land resources and to prevent the occupation of farmland for non-agricultural purposes, while at the same time based on a certain degree of protection of farmers' rights and interests.

1.2. Migration

Yang et al. (2003) and Whalley and Zhang (2007) attribute high urban-rural inequality in China to restrictions on migration. Migration decisions are often modeled as a function of the difference between rural and urban incomes, both for individual migrants (Harris & Todaro, 1970) and for households that go out to work (Stark, 1978; Stark & Bloom, 1985). According to the reference information, economic factors are one of the important considerations in migration decisions. Individuals or families will consider the employment opportunities and income levels after relocation, combined with their own relocation costs to decide whether to relocate or not.

In this paper, the opportunity cost of migration is analyzed by focusing more on the convenience of the agricultural land tenure system. If households migrate permanently, they risk losing their rights to agricultural land, which creates an additional cost of migration in the form of lost future income.

1.2.1. The Profits of Migration

Migration benefits both rural and urban areas. Despite this, state restrictions on labor mobility persist. The household registration (HuKou) system is considered a major obstacle to migration because it prevents rural migrants from accessing all the benefits associated with legal residency in urban areas. Whalley and Zhang (2007) argue that removing restrictions on hukou would greatly increase population mobility and reduce inequality between rural and urban areas.

By migrating from urban to rural areas, migrants can reduce labor pressure in rural areas. The technology and knowledge that migrants bring with them can contribute to the economic development and modernization of rural areas. The capital and investment that migrants bring with them can increase employment opportunities and income levels in rural areas and reduce regional poverty rates. By migrating from rural to urban areas, migrants can fill the labor gap in cities. Although migrants are cheap labor at this time, they can still attract many people to work in the city. According to Au and Henderson (2006), who find that China is "under-urbanized", they estimate that the potential productivity growth of most prefectural-level cities is at least 35%. This also means that cities are full of opportunities. Overall, migration has a positive impact on both urban and rural areas, as well as on China's economy and society, promoting economic development, reducing poverty, and fostering entrepreneurship and innovation.

2. Literature

2.1. Land Property Right

Rural land rights in China are divided into four main areas: the right to residual income, the right to unsecured use, the right to secure possession, and the right to transfer. Of these, the right to secure possession and the right to transfer are not well developed in rural areas. In order to improve rural land rights, the Household Responsibility System (HRS) has been implemented in rural areas. Although the land is collectively owned, it is allocated to village families for farming. Similarly, The Rural Land Contracting Law (RLCL), implemented in 2002, has strengthened farmers' right to secure possession of land. It reduces the risk of land being redistributed within a short period of time. The long-term stability of contracting allows farmers to have a stable income.

2.2. The Mechanism of Land Property Right Impacting Migration

While the country's economy is growing rapidly, inequalities between rural and urban areas are increasing. As cities need to expand to achieve better development, the risk of expropriation of rural land is increasing. This makes rural land tenure insecure. In response, the Government of China has enacted the Rural Land Contract Law (RLCL) to strengthen the security of tenure for farmers. However, there is still a risk that farmers' land will be reallocated (Deininger and Jin, 2009). In addition to insecure land tenure, there is also the problem of poor land transfer markets. Initially, when the Household Responsibility System (HRS) was implemented, land was not freely transferable among farm families. It was not until the implementation of rural land contracting that land transfers between households were provided for. Unfortunately, village households, including village neighbors, did not seem to be sufficiently aware of this provision, and Deininger et al. (2006) found that although most local governments and village leaders had publicized the provision, the publicity did not seem to be adequate. Only 21% of village leaders were aware that land transfers had been converted into permissions.

2.2.1. When the Land Property is Well Protected (Rent Your Land Out) - Market Mechanism

The Household Responsibility System (HRS) and the Rural Land Contracting License (RLCL), mentioned earlier, are associated with land tenure and land lease rights. These two land rights are the main factors that may influence villagers' decision to migrate. Let's start with land lease rights. If a farmer is unable to own the leasehold of the land, then it is highly unlikely that they will choose to migrate to the city. This is because the productivity of their land will be reduced, and so will the return on the benefits they derive from it. This is the opportunity cost of moving. If you are allocated more land in the beginning, then your cost of migration will be higher. Side by side, it has been shown that people with more agricultural land are less likely to choose to migrate (Rozelle et al., 1999; Zhao, 1999; Zhao, 2005). If a farmer's migration is to go out to work, he might expect the return to labor from going out to work to be at least greater than or equal to the return to labor from carrying out farming in the village, which, because of the household registration (hukou) system, prevents farmers from obtaining all of the benefits associated with the right to legal residency in the city.

If the farmer chooses to move permanently, he may lose his right to agricultural land, as urban household registration does not allow him to purchase rural land. However, if the farmer has a leasehold right to the land, his opportunity cost of moving will be significantly increases. Efficient land use is achieved by leasing his land to others. He himself can get a return on his labor in the city and at the same time collect money or dividends from the land. An increase in land rental rights might increase the chances of a farmer choosing to migrate.

2.2.2. When the Land Property is Not Well Protected (Appropriation)--Government Mechanism

The second factor that influences relocation decisions is land tenure. Although rural land is collectively owned, farm households acquire the right to use and contract land through the Household-

Related Responsibility System (HRS) and the Rural Land Contracting Law (RLCL). However, rural land is still owned by the State. The State may expropriate rural land for economic development purposes, but compensation will be provided accordingly.

In addition to this, relocation may increase the risk of land expropriation. When farmers obtain the right to use land through HRS and RLCL, village leaders will allocate the land area according to the family size and labor force. When migration occurs, it is assumed that the number of households living in the rural area decreases, along with the labor force. Then the land of the farming households may be redistributed. While RLCL prohibits large-scale land reallocation, it also restricts small-scale land readjustment. However, due to the government's legal education and promotion of RLCL, there are still village leaders and farmers who are not aware that land redistribution is not allowed. Thus, relocation has a positive impact on the risk of land acquisition. It also implies that land expropriation affects the decisions that farmers make about migration.

3. Empirical Analysis

3.1. Data

The China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS) aims to collect a high quality nationally representative sample of Chinese residents ages 45 and older to serve the needs of scientific research on the elderly. The baseline national wave of CHARLS is being fielded in 2011 and includes about 10,000 households and 17,500 individuals in 150 counties/districts and 450 villages/resident committees. The individuals will be followed up every two years. All data will be made public one year after the end of data collection.

3.2. Identification Strategy (Variable; Coefficient)

In order to better predict the dependent variable, multiple independent variables will be used in this analysis for the regression analysis. The most basic linear regression equation can be expressed as equation (1).

$$Y = a + b \cdot X + e \quad (1)$$

Where Y, to the left of the equal sign, is the dependent variable. The a on the other side of the equal sign is the linear intercept, b is the slope of the line, X is the independent variable in this equation, and e is the error term. As long as the independent variable X is given, then the relationship between the dependent variable Y and the independent variable X can be established. The linear equation (2) used for this regression evolved from this as well.

$$Y \text{ (migration)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 \text{ (land property right)} + \beta_2 X_2 \text{ (age)} + \beta_3 X_3 \text{ (education)} + \beta_4 X_4 \text{ (gender)} + \beta_5 X_5 \text{ (income)} + \dots + \beta_n X_n \text{ (marriage, political status, minority...)} \quad (2)$$

Again, inside this equation, Y(migration), on the left side of the equal sign, is the dependent variable. β_0 on the right side of the equal sign is the intercept term, the value of Y when the independent variables ($X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots, X_n$) are 0. ($\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \dots, \beta_n$) are the coefficients associated with each independent variable ($X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots, X_n$). And ($X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots, X_n$) are the independent variables that can influence the change in the dependent variable Y(migration).

This equation expresses the independent variables such as X_1 is land property right, X_2 is age, X_3 is education, X_4 is gender, and X_5 is income. There are many kinds of variables in this equation. Whether or not land property rights are well protected can have a large impact on the dependent variable. So the land property right is a key variable. Age, education, gender, and income are all regular variables that's often used as a factor in data analysis. After that, marriage, political status,

and ethnic minorities are special variables. These special variables also affect the dependent variable (migration) to a certain extent, so they appear in this analytical model.

3.3. Market Mechanism of Land Property Right Change on Migration

3.3.1. Basic Regression

Table 1. Regression Result for Market Mechanism

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
migration					
rent_per	0.376*	0.623**	0.637**	0.652**	0.634**
	(1.67)	(2.15)	(2.16)	(2.21)	(2.15)
logincome	0.088*	0.136**	0.140***	0.144***	0.139***
	(1.95)	(2.55)	(2.62)	(2.66)	(2.60)
vprov	(0.00)				
	(-0.485)				
age	-0.038***				
	(-4.794)				
edu	-0.173*				
	(-1.723)				
gender	1.124***	1.508***	1.498***	1.505***	1.498***
	(8.46)	(9.05)	(8.83)	(8.87)	(8.82)
health	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.01
	(0.40)	(0.37)	(0.18)	(0.25)	(0.17)
party		-0.981***	-0.999***	-1.006***	-1.002***
		(-3.825)	(-3.995)	(-4.000)	(-3.985)
han		(0.30)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.26)
		(-1.020)	(-0.868)	(-0.840)	(-0.877)
private_~busi				0.19	
				(0.71)	
parent					0.03
					(0.17)
_cons	1.241*	(1.12)	(1.15)	(1.59)	(1.20)
	(1.92)	(-1.223)	(-1.238)	(-1.408)	(-1.220)
N	489.00	478.00	474.00	474.00	474.00

T statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In the theoretical analysis of Part 2.2.1 above, it can be seen that the lease right of land has a positive effect on the immigration mechanism. If farmers own land leases, they are more likely to migrate to cities. In order to confirm the theoretical inference, the Probit model is set up for further analysis. In Table 1, we can see the analysis results of five Probit models. The asterisk following the coefficient indicates the significance of the coefficient. If the P-value is between 0 and 0.01, then the significance of the variables is indicated by three asterisks. If the P-value is between 0.01 and 0.05, the significance

of the variables is indicated by two asterisks. If the P-value is between 0.05 and 0.1, the significance of the variables is indicated by an asterisk. If the p-value is greater than 0.1, the result is not significant. When the result is not significant, no matter how high the correlation coefficient is, the hypothesis cannot be supported.

In this Basic Regression part, we only look at the first Probit model, which is called Probit 1. The Probit 1 model consists of 7 variables, which are rent_per (rent percentage), logincome (income), prov (providences), age, edu (education), gender, and health. And selects the agricultural Hukou with an age less than 80 to do the analysis. From the regression result for the market mechanism, the coefficient of rent percentage is 0.376. And there is one asterisk, saying that the result is significant. The coefficient of income is 0.088, with one asterisk. The coefficient of age is -0.038, with three asterisks. The rest can be done in the same manner. The Probit 1 model shows that the key variable rent percentage has a significant positive correlation with migration. In addition, income and gender also have significant positive effects on migration. Age and education have significant negative effects on migration.

3.3.2. Robustness Checks

The results have been preliminarily tested in the basic regression section by excluding variables. For empirical accuracy and robustness, we will add four Probit models (Probit 2, Probit 3, Probit 4, and Probit 5) to analyze the relocation mechanism in the market mechanism. Compared with Probit 1, two variables, party and han, are added to Probit 2. Party refers to members of the Communist Party of China. In the table, you can see that the coefficient of party is -0.981 and has a significance of three asterisks. This means that rural households with Communist Party membership have a negative impact on migration. The Probit 3 model added one more variable than the Probit 2 model: marital status. The data for this variable is not displayed in the table because the result presented is not significant. The variable added by Probit 4 is private business. The coefficient of this variable is 0.19, but with no asterisk. In the Probit 5 model, we add one more variable, parents. Its coefficient is 0.03, with no asterisk. Overall, even though the regression results of the variables providences, health, han, private business, and parent are not significant and unstable, but what is certain is that the rent percentage has a positive effect on migration. Income is also positively correlated with migration. In terms of age, the older the farmers, the lower the probability of migration. The probability of being male is higher than that of being female. Communist Party members are also less likely to migrate. The above conclusions are based on Table 1. Regression Result for the Market Mechanism.

3.4. Government Mechanism of Land Property Right Change on Migration

3.4.1. Basic Regression

It is mentioned in section 2.2.2 that the government's mechanism of land acquisition will affect people's decision on migration. In this section we will test whether this argument is correct. This basic regression was also analyzed with the Probit model. Compared with section 3.3, we have changed the key variable to appropriation. The analysis samples were also screened and had to meet the requirement of having a rural hukou and being younger than 80 years old.

There are a total of five Probit models in Table 2 (M1, M2, M3, M4, M5). In the Basic Regression section, we analyze M1. The Probit model has six variables. They are appropriation, logincome, gender, age, edu and health. The coefficient for the key variable appropriation is -0.192, but the result is not significant. The coefficient of the second variable, income, 0.11, has two asterisks to prove its significance. The third variable, gender 1.292, has three asterisks to prove its significance is very high. The remaining variables age, edu, and health do not show their coefficients in Table2, because the results of these variables are not significant. Yes and no indicate whether the variable is controlled in the model. According to the regression results of M1, appropriation has a negative effect on migration, but the results are not significant.

Table 2. Regression Result for Government Mechanism

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M50
migration					
appropri~ n	-0.192	-0.301*	-0.314*	-0.522**	-0.473**
	(-1.151)	(-1.777)	(-1.773)	(-2.231)	(-2.149)
logincome	0.118**	0.146***	0.144***	0.203***	0.180***
	-2.561	-3.056	-3.013	-3.289	-3.013
gender	1.292***	1.477***	1.529***	1.451***	1.341***
	-9.764	-10.005	-10.018	-7.363	-7.154
party		-1.091***	-1.127***	-1.211***	-1.119***
		(-4.718)	(-4.871)	(-4.324)	(-4.042)
han		0.133	0.181	0.261	0.139
		-0.527	-0.749	-0.831	-0.455
private~busi				0.354	
				-1.225	
parents					0.22
					-1.031
age	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
edu	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
health	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
marital	no	no	yes	yes	yes
_cons	-1.790***	-2.052**	-2.249***	-2.894**	-2.694***
	(-2.592)	(-2.574)	(-2.797)	(-2.353)	(-2.720)
N	618	616	614	417	427

T statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

3.4.2. Robustness Checks

According to the regression results of M1, appropriation has a negative effect on migration, but the results are not significant. To ensure the stability of the inspection results, especially the inspection results of appropriation. We compare the rest of the models in the table. The M2 model has two more variables than M1, party, and han. The coefficient of party is -1.091, with three asterisks. The coefficient of Han is 0.133 with no asterisk. The appropriation variable in M2 has a coefficient of -0.301 with an asterisk. The results of logincome, gender, party, and han in the M3, M4, and M5 models are very similar to the results of M2, with little change in coefficient. appropriation of the M3 model has changed little, with a coefficient of -0.314, again with an asterisk. The difference is that M3 adds the variable marital. The M4 model adds a variable to the M3 model, private business, with a coefficient of 0.354 and no asterisks. The M5 model adds the variable parents on the basis of M3. It has a coefficient of 0.22 and has no asterisk, meaning it is not significant. The results of the robustness check do not differ much from those of the basic regression. Government land acquisition has a negative impact on migration.

4. Analysis

Population migration has a great impact on the economic development of the country. The development of China's metropolitan cities and some regional centers cannot be separated from the

influence of population migration. Adequate labor force can meet the needs of different industries and help upgrade the country's industrial structure.

4.1. Market Channel

From the previous theoretical analysis in Part II and the empirical analysis in Part III, it is clear that the protection of tenancy rights under the market mechanism helps to increase the probability of population migration. When land can be rented out to others, the farmer receives rent and does not have to earn an income by farming it himself. He can choose to work in the city and receive the fruits of his labor from working in the city while receiving the rent. The opportunity cost of relocating himself is reduced because the rural land is not idle or wasted. And there is an increase in income. This is why the coefficient of the rent percentage is positive.

In addition to the key variable rent percentage, people with higher household incomes are more likely to migrate. This is because they can afford the costs of moving, such as living in the city and spending more on food than in the countryside. The willingness to move to the city decreases with age, which is why the rural population is aging at a higher rate than the urban population. In addition, men are more likely to migrate than women because it is easier for them to find work to pay for their expenses in the city. Another significant variable is the party. Party members are less likely to migrate than non-party members. In rural areas, party members are usually village officials, village chiefs, and leading farmer-entrepreneurs. The income of this part of the population will be higher than that of ordinary villagers in the area. If they choose to migrate to the cities, it is equivalent to giving up their higher income and benefits, so the probability of their migration is also small. All these reasons can explain why the coefficient of these variables is positive or negative.

4.2. Expropriation (Government) Channel

Appropriation's coefficient is not as stable as the rent percentage. Under the government mechanism, the regression result of the M1 model to the M5 model indicates that the coefficient of appropriation is negative, but its significance is not stable. One conjecture is that this has something to do with the compensation for government-enforced land acquisition. In rural areas, when the government needs to expropriate a farmer's land, it needs to give compensation to the farmer. But this compensation is not much. Farmers cannot rely on the compensation money from expropriation to buy a house in the city or resettle there. In addition, when the government expropriates land, it usually expropriates the farmland, not the villagers' residence. So, when villagers realize that the compensation they receive will not allow them to live in the city, they choose to live on their homesteads. Overall, the government's compulsory acquisition of land will reduce population movement and relocation.

5. Conclusion

In the 1980s, China realized reform and opened. Since then, the domestic economy has soared, and its global status has risen. It is now the second-largest economy in the world. At the same time, China's rural system has been undergoing reforms in order to deal with the relationship between the state, farmers, and the land. From the establishment of the Household Responsibility System (HRS) to the abolition of the people's commune system and the complete abolition of agricultural taxes and fees. Then came the promulgation of the Rural Land Contracting Law (RLCL) in 2002 and the establishment of the "Three Rights" system for rural land. Step by step, the government has safeguarded the interests of farmers, reduced their burdens, and promoted the economic development of townships. These policies have also had an impact on population mobility, as farmers' incomes have risen, and they have been able to buy houses and work in towns. This paper examines how rural property rights affect population mobility.

The paper analyzes the market mechanism and the government mechanism, respectively. After collecting data, the model is constructed, and the basic regression test and the robustness test are used for deeper analysis. From the results of the ornamentation, under the market mechanism, people have

the right to lease land; the more land they lease, the higher the probability of going to the city; people with higher incomes have an increased probability of going to the city; males are more likely to migrate than females; and party members have a lower tendency to migrate. Under the government mechanism, government-enforced expropriation from the people inhibits mobility. It may be possible to increase expropriation compensation payments to counteract the effects of this. Taken together, this paper argues that if we want to promote farmers' willingness to migrate, we should adopt the market mechanism rather than the government mechanism. In addition, we can collect more data and add variables to identify the extent to which the rural land system affects migration.

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