

## **Ambition: Migration, Desire and Fatigue in China**

If the petty trader and factory worker are the representative figures of rural-urban migrants in China of the 1980s and 1990s, the so-called “small-town swot” (professionals who achieved economically upward mobility from the countryside to cities by excelling in the test-driven education system) and the “Smart” (youths with rural backgrounds who feel deeply alienated from lives in cities and wear shocking hair styles and clothes) are the migrant figures in the beginning of the new millennium. They all have their ambitions. While the older generation’s ambition provided them with hope against material odds, the younger generation feel fatigue and disillusioned partly due to their desire to a better life. This change of the meaning of ambition is not at all confined to migrants, but offers an opening to re-examine how political economy, social consciousness and lived experiences entangle in rapidly changing China.