



Urbanization and Modernity Making in Rural China

An anthropological case study on livelihoods diversification
in Xiangxi, China

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Caption photo front page: Yelangping village, Xiangxi, China 22 August 2018



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Abstract

Keywords: rural transformation, livelihoods, self-organized, modernity, urbanization

This paper explores how the social life in rural China has evolved over years under the impact of processes of urbanization. Modernization has become a prominent and ongoing process in China since its opening-up policy. The rapid expansion and development of the urban has a profound impact on rural society. Urbanization spurred the development of a series of new connections between urban and rural areas, but it simultaneously strengthened existing relations. In this relation, urban wealth and modern values become accessible to rural people. This paper analyzed how do rural people re-organized social life with these new elements. The focus is the 'new' activities rural people have developed to respond to the growth and interference from the urban. In order to depict this transformation in a holistic way, the livelihood framework is adopted. The evolution of rural social life is manifested in the process of livelihood diversification; different livelihood strategies are identified, and how these strategies have been organized is discussed. This paper argues that the diverse rural livelihoods strategies are influenced by various factors (including policies, wealth and opportunities from the urban, and modern values) but finally determined by rural people. It unfolds as a heterogeneous process whereby urbanization is experienced differently. The paper deems rural transformation in China as a modernity-making process, and analyses it as what Arce and Long called 'mutated modernity'. To argument that runs through the paper is that the impact of urbanization, rural China is witnessing the emergence of mutated modernity.

Preface

This thesis is written with the chair group Sociology of Development and Change within the master programme of International Development Studies at Wageningen University. A sociological perspective on development studies is basically how to address the issue of poverty and inequality with the background of modernization and globalization. Today, China is ranked as the second largest economy in the world with over 40 percent rural population; when China is highly praised in the international arena for its remarkable achievements on poverty alleviation, this research intends to make a counter narrative on how to understand the process of rural transformation and the changing trajectory of rural people's social life.

Rural society is like water; it is highly autonomous and resilient to any external interference. You can hardly alter its shape by direct intrusion (unless you did it in a destructive way). The shape of water goes with its container; the container of rural society is urban-rural interface.

List of Acronyms

CPC	The Communist Party of China
HRS	Household Responsibility System
TPA	Target Poverty Alleviation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

How to understand the process of rural transformation in the context of China's development has been a persisting topic in both political and academic domains. In the state's political discourse, the issue of rural transformation is regarded as an urgent task because 'there is no modern China without the modernization of agriculture and countryside'; guided by such a modern ideology, the key rural policies are focused on the agricultural modernization (Ye, 2015).

However, in the field of development studies the concept of modernization has gone through different phases. It was the guiding ideology of development studies at 1950s – 1940s when this 'discipline' firstly emerged, which highly endorsed the value of economic growth, science and technology. However, since 1960s, the Marxism-oriented dependency theory came to the stage and formed an influential critique to modernization theory. Although posing critique on the dependent relationship between core countries and periphery countries, this perspective did not deny the necessity of economic growth, claiming that underdeveloped countries should avoid the embeddedness with global capitalism and adopt a nationalist and socialist-style development strategy. In other words, the pursuit of growth and progress did not change.

From 1980s, a post-structuralism perspective towards development was initiated, led by Foucault's discourse analysis which saw development practice driven by the discourse of development professionals and institutions. The idea of post-development thus emerged with this context, rendering alternative interpretations on modernity (Escobar, 2010). Not all modernity is Eurocentric; it can be a localized and self-organized practice, with counter-reactions and re-assembling towards modernization policies. Following this perspective, this research regards the rural transformation in China as a localized modernity-making practice, rather than dictated by the state policy or market economy.

The development of rural China is closely tied with the country's urbanization process, with the ongoing transfer of people and economic resources from rural to urban areas (Ye, 2017). The urbanization process took off since 1978 when the market-oriented reform in China was put into practice; since then, rural people were placed at the interface with the urban, coming into contact with modern agricultural technologies, prosperous commodity economy and various working opportunities. The state also tries to modernize the agricultural sector by encouraging scale-farming, market-oriented production and technology dissemination, believing that this path will bring prosperity to the rural.

Ever since 1980s traditional Chinese life and rural society are being rapidly transformed into an urban, modern society with growing cities of different sizes, led by officials and professionals (Gu, Wu, & Cook, 2012). With the massive labor outflow and increasing involvement with the market, off-farm activities and multiple job holding are becoming important for rural livelihoods. The subsistence farming which used to dominated Chinese society for centuries is fading out. Meanwhile, since urbanization is also a dispersion of modern lifestyle and values, the cultural differences between rural and urban area and related social problems has led to inner discomfort and anxiety of rural people (Yu, Wu, Zheng, Zhang & Shen, 2014).

This paper tries to argue that, rural transformation in China is a modernity-making process which is achieved by rural people themselves, by their decisions and activities at the interface. This kind of self-organized process is defined by Arce and Long (2000) as 'mutated modernity'. In this theory, the endogenous and self-made modernity-making process is characterized as

‘social mutations’ and the people that shape this process are ‘social mutants’ (Hebinck, Bosma & Veldwisch, 2019).

To decode how modernity is mutated by rural people, this research casts a special light on how rural people organize their livelihoods. The paper is based on a 3-months fieldwork in a village of Hunan Province, China, and written in an ethnographic way to illustrate how the social life in Yelangping has evolved, how this evolution is achieved by the people, and how this process is related to the wider context of urbanization. The emergence of new livelihood options and diversified livelihood strategies are seen as the manifestation of mutated modernity.

The paper is organized as follows: chapter 2 elaborates the ongoing process in China and the underlying conditions and dynamics of rural transformation; chapter 3 introduces the operationalization of concepts, data-collection methods and the limitations in data collection; chapter 4 is the introduction of the village; chapter 5 is a close inspection on local activities, including the current land practice, farming practice and how the state policy is encountered in this village; chapter 6 presents three cases and the different livelihood strategies deployed by the three families; chapter 7 is the analysis of how this social process is organized by local people and how they achieve mutated modernity.

Chapter 2: Rural Transformation – Ongoing Process and Its Dynamics

As Ye (2017, p.1) and Wise & Veltmeyer (2016) have concluded, the social transformation of China actually entails a set of transformations ----

... including the transformation of an agriculture - based society and economy into a modern industrial system via industrialization; the transformation of the countryside into the cities through urbanization; the transformation of a traditional social system oriented towards traditional values into a modern system geared to modern culture through modernization and commodification; and the transformation of a class of small landholding agricultural producers into a proletariat of wage labors and an industrial reserve army of surplus labour via proletarianization.

Generally, rural transformation is not a unique phenomenon of China, but a universal problem under the ongoing process of modernization, industrialization and urbanization.

What can be easily observed in this compound process is the rapid growth of the urban. With the ascending number of rural people moving into cities as migrant workers, China's urban population has risen from 172 million to 813 million, with the urbanization rate increasing from 17.9% to 58.5% during the period of 1978-2017 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2018). Accompanied was the huge increase in the number of cities: it has increased from 193 in 1978 to 658 in 2010; during the same period, the number of towns has grown even more rapidly from 2173 to 19,410 (Wang, Hui, Choguill, & Jia, 2015).

The rapid urbanization in China, however, is supported by its rural part. Industrialization needs huge amount of labor and resources, which is why China has experienced the world's largest rural-urban migration since 1978 (KOJIMA, 1995). This massive migration has provided China with a bulk of low-cost workforce that fueled stratospheric economic rise (Chuang, 2015), making a strong advantage for China's industrialization, urbanization and modernization. Yu et al. (2015) described the urban-rural relationship as a structure in which 'rural supports urban while urban dominates rural' (p. 65). But this statement is biased, because the rural also gained significant development along with the trajectory of urban development. Yu et al. (2014) described the relationship between urban and rural as a 'symbiotic ecological system' (p. 178) in which city and countryside exchange agricultural and industrial products and interdepend on each other. The rural takes the role of exporting agricultural products and labor, while the urban exports industrial commodities, working opportunities and modern values and lifestyle. China's industrialization is accompanied by the revival of its peasantry, and it is the interactions between the industrial sector and the countryside that led to the development of the both sides (van der Ploeg & Ye, 2010).

The revival of peasantry, however, also has two sides. A great achievement of rural development in China is the significant reduction in starvation and poverty, but on the other hand, the massive outflow of labor has resulted in the emergence of split family and hollowed-out villages (Ye, 2017). Rural people in China are adapting themselves into diversified economic activities and making new forms of social life; these are the responds to urbanization made by rural people at the urban-rural interface. The trajectory of rural transformation is deeply embedded in the modernization process of the country and synchronized with its urbanization process.

The turning point of 1978

Modernization became the central goal and guiding ideology for China's development since the country's foundation. Modernization is frequently used by state as a political discourse in the slogans and propaganda, such as '*being backwards leads to being bullied*', '*realize modernization in four aspects*', '*socialist modernization*', etc. With the objective of modernizing the country, the strategies deployed by the state has experienced a changing trajectory. During 1949-1977, the state set economic re-construction to be its central task and an industrialization-led urbanization strategy was implemented (Gu, Hu, & Cook, 2017); during this period, the mobility between urban and rural areas was prohibited and the rural residents were prevented to float into cities; they were forced to stay in the countryside, providing their surplus for the urban to support the economic re-construction and industrialization (CHAN, 1996).

This strict system was ended up by China's market-oriented economic reform in 1978 which involved de-collectivization of agriculture, opening up the country to foreign investment, and permitting private enterprises (Gu et al., 2017). This reform involved the urban and the rural at the same time. In the urban market economy became allowed and encouraged and economic growth became possible. In the rural, two major changes were made: the first one was the land reform called Household Responsibility System (HRS) which de-collectivized the agricultural production, and the second one was gradually loosening the restriction on migration to cities. Since HRS ended the collective mode of agricultural production and strengthened farming incentives, it on the one hand contributed to the ending of food shortage and starvation, and on the other hand, emancipated the excessive labor into non-agricultural activities, forming a strong workforce for industrialization. Labor thus became a major advantage of China's economic growth. Gu et al (2017) concluded that the driving force of China's urbanization between 1996-2010 was the prosperity of an export-oriented manufacturing system since China had achieved import substitution and turned to earning foreign currencies.

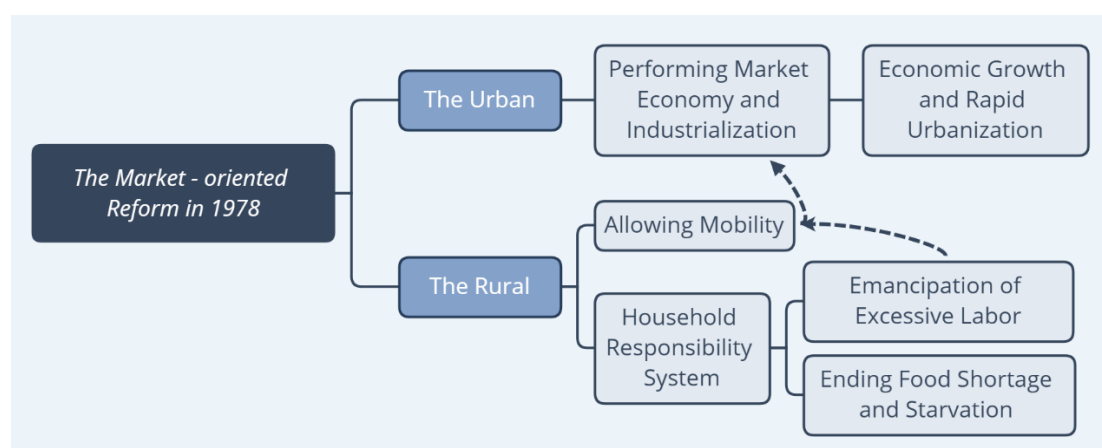


Figure 1. Urban-rural relations and dynamics at the point of 1978 reform

Modernization as an official discourse in rural policies

After the implementation of HRS, the rural society of China experienced a rapid development and upgrading of people's well-being because it successfully emancipated agricultural productivity, getting the issue of food shortage solved. Since then, the modern ideology started to dominate the state's conception on rural development.

In 1982, CPC issued its first *No.1 Central Document* as a national-level rural policy document,

addressing legality and great importance of applying the HRS in rural areas. The No.1 Document was issued at the beginning of every year until 1986 and re-initiated in 2004. Since 2004 the No.1 Central Document is still issued every year, but jointly by CPC and the central government. Following the record of No.1 Central Document we can see what kind of blueprint the state has drawn for the rural society.

In 2004, the sixth No.1 Central Document was issued with the name of *Opinions of the Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council Concerning Several Policies on Promoting the Increase of Farmers' Income*. This document put farmers' income as the central problem of rural development, and to address this problem, the solutions made by the state are: secure major food production, develop industrialized agricultural production, promote agro-science research and agricultural technology extension, develop township enterprises, support rural individual enterprises and boost township economy to create jobs for rural labors, and enhance rural land reform and financial system innovation.

The No.1 Central Document of 2006 raised new phrases of '*constructing new socialist countryside*' and '*overall planning of urban and rural development*' in its title; the idea of developing 'modern agriculture' was also firstly mentioned in the No.1 Central Document in this year.

In 2007, developing modern agriculture was put into the title together with '*constructing new socialist countryside*'; meanwhile, developing industrialized agriculture was listed again, and the proposal of activating farmers' agricultural cooperatives and promoting agricultural mechanizations were mentioned for first time.

In 2009, the No.1 Document proposed to build and activate the market for transferring land management right and encourage the development of agricultural cooperatives. In the following year, rural land system innovation was emphasized, indicating that the rural land policy would turn more liberal.

From 2013 to 2016, the No.1 Central Document kept mentioning 'agricultural modernization' in its title, indicating the central task of rural development of China was promoting agricultural modernization at this time. Meanwhile, the focuses were also put on agricultural technology extension, scale-farming, market-oriented structural reform, activating land market, agricultural cooperatives and flagship enterprises, rural financial services. In 2017, a new diction of 'supply-side reform' was created, depicting the countryside as supplier of agricultural products, while the solutions for rural development still went the same with before.

In 2018, another new phrase of '*rural revitalization*' was put into focus, but the core idea was still the modernization of agriculture as it stated that 'there is no modern China without the modernization of agriculture and countryside'.

In general, throughout China's rural policy documents it can be concluded that the Chinese official wants a 'modernized' countryside with an industrialized and marketized agricultural sector. From 2004, the rural and agricultural policies are mainly focused on improving scale farming by promoting land transfer and modern technologies adoption, encouraging agricultural enterprises and cooperatives and enhancing the financial service for farmers to reduce the barriers of starting enterprises. The state believes that this neo-liberalist orientation will effectively facilitate agricultural modernization and bring prosperity to rural areas.

The trajectory of rural land tenure system

The conception and orientation from the state have always dominated the land tenure system in the rural. The Communist China first made a radical land reform since its foundation in 1921 within its controlling area. In this reform, the old land owners were all subverted and the land was equally distributed to every peasant, which was named “whoever cultivate owns the land” by the Communist Party of China (CPC). In 1937, CPC started issuing the certificates of land ownership to peasants, showing that peasants were given full ownership of their land. However, this land tenure was obviously very much close to a capitalist private ownership, which was contradictory with the Communist ideology.

This land tenure system came to a sharp turning over in 1953 when Chinese government started to collectivize rural land. By 1958, the ownership of rural land had been fully collectivized. The agricultural distribution and production mode were also collectivized during this period; the collectives were *farmers’ cooperatives*; along with the development of this egalitarian campaign, collectives were converted into *People’s Commune*.

This egalitarian system of land tenure and agricultural production was ended by the enactment of Household Responsibility System in 1978. In this system, the ownership of rural land was separated into two parts: ownership and land contract right. Land ownership still belongs to village collectives, while farmers are granted with the right to contract land from the village collective. In this way, farmers could cultivate the land and deal with the field output on their own minds, rather than obeying the collective anymore. From the perspective of production mode, this is also transformation from collective production to family farming.

In 2016, the *Opinions of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council on Improving the Measures for Separating Rural Land Ownership from Contracted Management Right* was issued. By this action, the third right of rural land was separated from its ownership, which is the ‘land management right’. Chinese government called this action a ‘a great innovation after the Household Responsibility System’ because it enables famers to transfer their land and provide the possibility of large-scale farming (Guangming Daily, 2018). Basically, the aim of separating land management right is to build a more active land market, encourage land transfer and scale framing while maintaining the collective ownership of rural land.

Poverty alleviation policies

While ‘poverty’ has been widely used in development studies and practices, addressing rural poverty is also an important topic in Chinese rural policies. Zhou, Guo, Liu, Wu, and Li (2018) pointed out the different objectives and practices of China’s poverty alleviation:

Table 1. Six phases of China’s poverty alleviation agenda

1949-1978	Traditional relief-type approach
1978-1985	Promoting poverty alleviation by institutional reforms
1986-1993	Large-scale development-oriented poverty alleviation
1994-2000	Tackling key problems (basic food and clothing needs) of poverty relief
2001-2013	The promulgations of <i>Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Program (2001–2010)</i> and <i>Outline for Development-oriented Poverty Reduction for China’s Rural Areas (2011–2020)</i>
2014 -	Targeted poverty alleviation strategy

Source: Zhou et al., (2018). *Targeted poverty alleviation and land policy innovation: Some practice and policy implications from China*. *Land Use Policy*, 74, 53–65.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2017.04.037>

From the six phases it can be concluded the problem of poverty has not entered the arena of political discourse until 2001. This is coincident with the trend that the living standards and conditions were being increasingly emphasized in the No.1 Central Document after 2006. From then on poverty alleviation has formally become a policy agenda, integrated into the overall rural development policy.

The thinking of *target poverty alleviation (TPA)* was firstly raised up by President Xi Jinping in 2013 during his tour in Xiangxi prefecture. In January 2014, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council jointly issued *The Opinions on Innovating New Mechanisms to Firmly Promote the Work of Poverty Aid Development in Rural Areas*, officially launching the TPA strategy as a dominant anti-poverty policy to achieve CPC's goal of 'eradicating poverty and achieving a moderately prosperous society by 2020'. This means the Chinese government needs to lift 70 million impoverished people out of poverty between 2014 and 2020, which is no doubt a challenging task. The essence of TPA strategy is accurately identifying impoverished population, villages and 'poverty-stricken regions'; to achieve this a database system for registering each person, household and village has been built by a dramatically wide and in-depth field investigation. The field investigation is taken by the unit of village; every identified village is assigned with a working team, usually recruited from the local bureaus and governments.

Problem statement

In both academic and political domains, the discussion around rural transformation in China is dominated by meta-narratives: the effect of institutional and administrative reforms, the embrace of market economy and modernization, the pursuit of eradicating poverty, etc., but a bottomed-up perspective is absent. Meanwhile, the interactive relationship between urban and rural areas is neglected.

The objective of this research is to investigate the role of rural people in achieving rural transformation, and how their decisions and activities are related to urbanization. A special attention will be given to how rural people organize their livelihoods, because it is an integrated, holistic, bottom-up perspective centered on the understanding of what people do to make a living in diverse social context and circumstance (Scoones, 2015). By casting light on the role of human agency, we can better understand the underlying dynamics of rural transformation and China's development, providing new indications and implications for the state and policy makers.

Research question

What is the role of rural people in achieving rural transformation in China?

Sub – questions:

SRQ1: How has the livelihoods in Yelangping village has changed over years?

SRQ2: How is the change related to the urbanization process of China?

SRQ3: How do rural people achieve and experience this social transformation?

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter elaborates on concept operationalization and data collection in this research. As it has been illustrated in problem statement, this research will unfold the social life of rural people by looking at their livelihoods. The data was collected by a 3-months fieldwork on what resources do people own and how they utilize them, what role are the institutional conditions and organizations playing in livelihoods diversification, what new livelihood strategies are raised up by rural people, and how these changes are related to urbanization and urban-rural connections. Limitations and self-reflections on data collection are also discussed.

Livelihood focus

Livelihood is how people make a living. As Hebinck (2007) has pointed out,

In their attempts to make a living, people use a variety of resources, such as social networks, labor, land, capital, knowledge, employment, technology and markets to produce food, harvest natural resources and to generate their incomes. Wide-ranging interpersonal networks link rural and urban areas, on-farm and off-farm work, dry-land and irrigated farming. Livelihood transcends sectoral economic boundaries (e.g. agriculture and industry, formal employment and informal activities) as well as geographical boundaries, particularly those between urban and rural environments. (p.11)

By adopting an actor-oriented perspective in ethnographic development studies, Norman Long also argues that, people are actively engaged as social actors in livelihoods construction; they are constantly maneuvering to improve their lives (Long, 2001).

Murray (2002) concludes the following tips for conducting livelihood research:

1. The circumstance approach: 'look around' at a moment of time, empirical investigation;
2. The retrospective approach: try to reconstruct change over time, longitudinal comparison by different surveys;
3. Analyze family trajectories of accumulation or impoverishment over time;
4. In order to give diagnose of the cause of poverty, livelihoods research should include the study of the non-poor, so as to understand poverty in structural or relational terms.

Concepts

The concepts are operationalized based on the livelihood framework made by Scoones (2015). This framework provides an overview of what elements are related to or included in livelihood construction. It consists of five elements: contexts, conditions and trends, resources, institutional conditions and organizations, livelihoods strategies, livelihood outcomes.

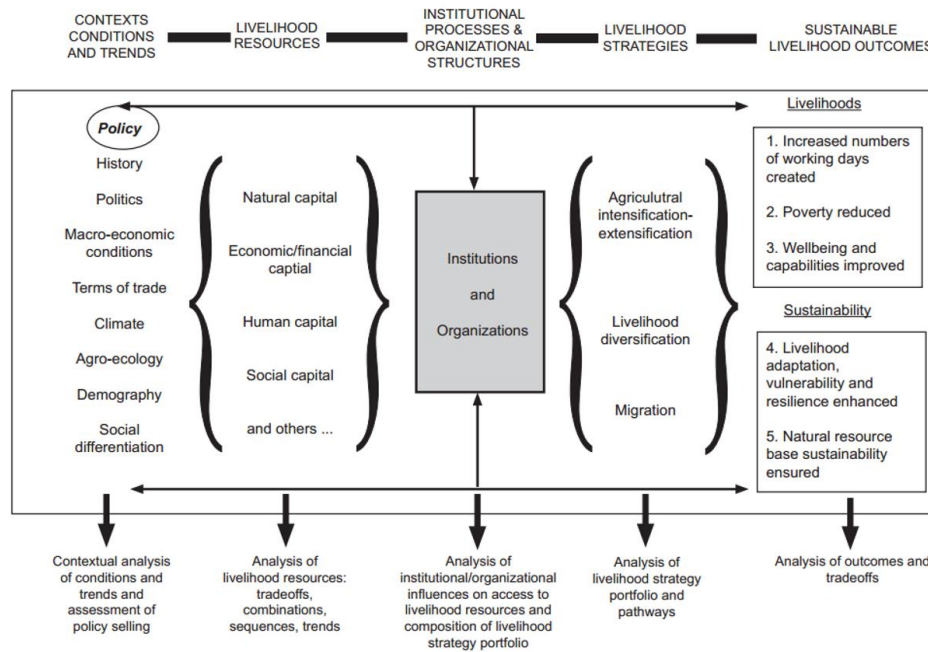


Figure 2. The sustainable livelihoods framework (Scoones, 2015, p.36)

The data-collection in this research is focused on the following concepts:

1. Livelihood resources

What local resources are used by people, and how they use them?

2. Livelihoods strategies and outcomes

Livelihoods strategies are the collection of people's activities to make a living; livelihoods outcomes are largely focused on assets, income and expenditure, but they also extend to schooling, health and other human development indices (Scoones, 2015). For example, what kind of work they do to generate income, how they deal with educational and medical issues, how they interact with cities in these practices; finally, how these practices of making a living has changed over years and how the change is related to urbanization.

3. Contexts, conditions and trends

A special attention will also be given to what motivates people to organize their current livelihoods or make a change.

4. Institutional conditions and organizations

Institutions are the rules of the game while organizations are 'the players' (North, 1990). In this research, institutions can be the rules of marriage, inheritance, land tenure, etc., while organizations can be families, the Village Committee, local government, and agricultural cooperatives.

Access to the field

The case I chose for this research is a village called Yelangping in Xiangxi, China. I approached this village through one of my collage classmates. She used to work in Yelangping village as a volunteer in a poverty-alleviation project, living in the village for almost one year, from August 2017 to July 2018, together with another volunteer. During this year, they participated in local life and production, and built solid trust with local people and village cadres. The poverty-alleviation project was implemented by an independent nonprofit organization called *Serve*

For China in 2017, placing top Chinese graduates in villages where they can use their skills and knowledge to promote rural development and social entrepreneurship. The project was planned to run for 2 years, but due to the organization's mismanagement and the asymmetry between volunteers' capability and solid rural realities, it was not run successfully, and most volunteers quitted ahead of schedule, so did my classmate and her colleague. Therefore, this research will not involve the story of this project.

I arrived in the village at August 2018. Their previous working experience and social network served as a great advantage for my fieldwork. During the 3 months, I lived in the village, eating with local people and observing their daily activities. Most interviews are unstructured, with the rest of them are semi-structured. The unstructured interviews were conducted in natural life scenes.

Limitations and reflections on data collection

Firstly, for the ethical concerns, I did not go very deep with the personal life of my informants.

Secondly, the triangulation was restricted, because I was conducting the fieldwork individually, without any support from projects or institutions. I was not able to access the informants from different positions. I have to do some small-scale triangulations within the villagers.

Thirdly, due to the same reason, I was not able to collect any demographic and economic data that could better descript the holistic condition of the village.

Chapter 4: Located in the Context

Yelangping village is located in Hunan Province, the South of China. To clearly depict the administrative condition of Yelangping village, I would like to briefly introduce the administrative division in China first. The current administrative division of China consists of 5 levels, which are province level (including several sub-provinces), prefecture level, county level, township level and village level. Therefore, village is the tiniest unit and the ending of Chinese administrative system. In this research, Hunan Province governs 13 cities and *Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture* (prefecture has the same hierarchical level with cities). This prefecture governs 8 counties, among which Huayuan County governs 21 towns. Jiwei town is one of them, which governs several villages, including Yelangping village. Yelangping village is governed by Jiwei Town, Huayuan County, Xiangxi Prefecture and Hunan Province.

Table 2. Administrative division of China and this case

Level	Name	The case of this research
Provincial level	Province Autonomous region Municipality Special administrative region	Hunan Province
Prefectural level	City Prefecture Autonomous prefecture League	Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture
County level	District County-level city County Autonomous county Banner Autonomous banner Special district Forestry district	Huayuan County
Township level	Subdistrict Town Township District public office Ethnic townships Sumu Ethnic sumu	Jiwei Town
Basic level autonomy	Community Village	Yelangping village

Source: National administrative division information query platform. (n.d.). Retrieved March 20, 2019, from <http://xzqh.mca.gov.cn/map>

Geographically, Yelangping is located in a mountainous area in southwestern China, which is called Wuling Mountains. Wuling mountains lies in the juncture of four provinces (including Hunan), and it is home to several ethnic minorities, such as Tujia, Han, Miao, Dong, and Bai. The village covers an area of 6.0677 square kilometers, which contains 4545.50 mu (3.03 square kilometers) agrarian land, made up by paddy field, dry field, forestry and pasture. Although located in mountains and with the high altitude of 860 meters, the whole area of Yelangping village is plain, which is called ‘highland basin’ by local people.

Yelangping village is 3 kilometers away from Jiwei Town, which makes it rather convenient compared to other villages governed by this town. Jiwei is the political and economic center

among all its subordinate villages; it is the location of local government, a public primary school and a public hospital. The downtown area of Jiwei is merely a big cross made up of two streets, where a lot of different shops are settled; it is also the location of local open market, which is held every five days. When the market is on, the whole streets are just too crowded to move, filled up by numbers of small retailers and nearby villagers; the commodities on sale range from snacks, fruits, vegetables, and various industrial products. The open market in nearby towns are all held once every 5 days, but on different and successive date, and these retailers follow the market to every town in the nearby area. Open market is a common activity in rural China, often held in towns, being an important space for villagers to buy commodities and do some other transactions. The activity of visiting the open market is called '*ganchang*' or '*ganji*' in Mandarin. *Ganchang* is such an important event in rural life that the people who live in those far villages even take a 40-minutes ride to Jiwei.

In terms of economic activities, farming and wage labor constitute the main income resources of the villagers. The main crops of the village are rice, tobacco and mulberry trees and medical herbs. What might be interesting is that each of these crops represents a different mode of production: rice is the chronically dominant crop and food in south China; tobacco was introduced by local government in 1990s as an economic crop, and now it has become the backbone of family income for a number of households; mulberry trees cultivation is part of the silkworm industry, which emerged very recently in the village and the nearby region; medical herbs are introduced by local medical enterprises, who has transferred a large area of dry land from villagers and manage the cultivations themselves. Different agriculture cooperatives in this village are also involved into the production of rice, tobacco and mulberry trees to different degrees.

As the tiniest administrative unit, Yelangping has its own governing body, which is made up of a village committee and a Party branch (branch of Communist Party of China). The state has developed a mechanism called *Community-Level Self-Governance* on villages in the rural area of China. Within this system, village committee is the governing organization of a village whose members are selected every three years from the villagers; the leader of village committee is called *chairman of village committee*, but in reality, the person taking this position is always called 'village head' by villagers. When I was in the village, the village committee of Yelangping is made up of 7 staff. Although the village committee is the terminal unit of the state's administrative apparatus and responsible for the tasks from the local government, its members are not full-time employees of the local government; they only get a certain amount of subsidy for this job from the government of Jiwei.

Another part of the village governing body is the Party branch, which is formed by 38 Party members and led by a secretary. The Party branch secretary is also selected every 3 years by members of the village Party branch. Usually, the village committee and the village Party branch always held the elections at the same time, and both village head and the Party branch secretary can only be re-elected once when their first term is finished.

Usually in China, the administrative system and the Communist Party work in a rather intertwined way at every level, from the national level to basic level, so is the case in villages. The village head and the Party Branch secretary were working through all the tasks and even making decisions together, and the members are the two systems (the administrative system and the party branch) are highly overlapped.

The population of Yelangping village is around 2700, which are all Miao people, an ethnic minority in China. Yelangping village has been the habitation of Miao people chronically, and

the Miao culture is still actively presented in every detail of their daily life, such as language, clothing and architectures. All of the villagers see the Miao language as their mother tongue, but most of them can also speak Mandarin; elder people learnt them from the communications with outsiders, and the young people learnt it in schools.

There are three education institutions near the village, one is a public primary school and it is in the village.

The interlock of family, land and livelihood

Family has multiple meanings and functions in contemporary rural China. Firstly, it is an administrative unit in the Hukou system, used for demographic registration and land distribution; secondly, it is the unit of production, wealth accumulation and distribution. In Yelangping, the family-based farm is still a dominant production unit. Thirdly, family is the unit that forms and sustains the kinship and farmer's social network.

Land is a fundamental resource and capital for rural families. Since the Green Revolution was not introduced in this area until 1980s, before this time the people in Yelangping was working very hard in the land just to fight against starvation. The yields were too low to meet people's demand; therefore all the labor was devoted into extending agricultural frontier and agricultural intensification. That was a time when all the paddy and dry field of the village were fully occupied to produce food; in the paddy field rice was the only crop, while in the dry field maize and sorghum were both planted. The full occupation of the land led to heavy work load of the villagers, especially at a time when there were no motor vehicles and agro-machineries. Before the reform in 1978 the state was performing planned economy and agricultural collectivization, so agricultural activities and output distribution were organized within productive teams and productive brigade. A productive brigade was usually made out from village and divided into several production teams.

This situation started to change after 1978 when the Household Responsibility System was enacted. The enactment of HRS ended the collective mode production and dismissed the system of productive brigade and production team; land was assigned to and managed by households, and farming has totally become a domestic activity. Shortly in the 1980s, when the high-yield rice breed and agricultural chemicals became accessible to villagers with the rise of Green Revolution in China, the threaten of starvation gradually faded out. From 1990s, the power of urbanization and market economy reached the village. Villagers started to participate in the non-agricultural works to earn money: at the very beginning they worked in the manganese mines within Huayuan County, and then turned to various short-time work in the village or in the cities. Before 1990s they farm the land for food, but now they work for salaries, to meet the cash demand of their families, as an outcome of expanding market economy.

Cash and industrial products played a very small part in social life before 1990. The domestic industry provided most of the living materials for these rural families. The tools, houses, and clothes are all made by farmers themselves. The tools for agricultural production were all made from woods, which can still be seen in most of families.



Picture 1. The home-made farming tools



Picture 2. The farming tools sold on the market

As a result of green revolution, market economy and the state policy on ecological restoration, the farming area in Yelangping has declined quite a lot, but land doesn't lose its importance for rural family. Rice is still widely grown by the villagers; growing tobacco in the dry land has form an important income resource since 1990s, and the newly-emerged silkworm & mulberry tree industry is also performing prosperously; meanwhile, tobacco, mulberry tree and medical herb are providing a number of daily-paid jobs for the villagers.

Embedded in the changing political-economic context, family still remains farmers' principle of organizing agricultural and non-agricultural activities, which compose their livelihood strategy. Today in Yelangping, farmers' livelihood is oriented by their need of cash, and the common reason for this need is that every family has three 'compulsory tasks' to finish: (children's) education, renewing the house, and (children's) marriage. The three tasks and people's effort to achieve them constitute the social life of contemporary rural China.

Chapter 5: A Close Look at Local Activities

This chapter the light will be casted on the real practice of rural people and how new elements from the state and the urban have been encountered in field.

Land practice

The village collective of Yelangping consists of 4545.50 mu (3.03 square kilometers) agrarian land, made up by paddy field, dry field, forestry and pasture. As mentioned before, the ownership of the land belongs to the village collective and has been contracted to farmers after the implementation of Household Responsibility System in 1978. However, this 'contract' has never been signed officially and never existed in a paper version. Rather, the practice of signing land contract with village collective was implemented in another way called "*fentian daohu*" or "*fendi*" by local people, which literally means the village collective distributing land to each household. In Yelangping, this event happened in 1980. The village head told me that, all the land, including the paddy field, dry field and forestry was distributed and registered to each household, and the quota was made based on the number of family numbers. For example, every villager could be distributed with 1 *mu* (= 0.067 hectare) paddy field on average, and a family with seven people would be distributed with 7 *mu* paddy field. Once the area of land was registered, it would never change. Nevertheless, the number of family members can always change, which is why sometimes you can see a big family own a small piece of land while a small family owns a relatively bigger piece of land.

Although in the current land system, the land ownership belongs to village collective, and farmers only has the land contract right and management right, farmers still phrased their contracted land as "my land" or "my family's land". Moreover, although the arable land was not legally allowed to be leased until 2016 when the third part of rural land ownership --- the management right-----was invented by the policy innovation, the practice of land lease had already existed for over ten years. The beginning of land lease in Yelangping can hardly be verified, from the narrating of the villagers, the earliest land lease behavior might begin with the introduction of the tobacco business in this region. Land lease, as a long-persisting practice, has hardly been influenced by the policy innovation and reform.

After the 2016 policy innovation, the practice of land lease got a new name within the current institutional framework: land transfer, but in daily life, most villagers still use the language of 'land lease' to refer to this practice. The land in Yelangping is transferred mainly in three kinds of ways: to companies, to agricultural cooperatives and to individuals. The local medical herb companies have been transferring dry land from the village over years to grow medical herbs. The rice cooperative in the village have transferred 80 of paddy field to grow rice, while the silkworm cooperatives has transferred 100 mu of dry land to grow mulberry trees. The land transfer between individuals are usually used for growing tobacco or mulberry trees. For 1 mu of land a farmer could get the return of 300-400 *yuan* per year, which is called "rent" by local people. The land practice by people is conducted in a very capitalist way.

The land practice in Yelangping is very diverse. Besides the three kinds of land transfer mentioned above, there is another way to deal with land: some villagers who do not want to cultivate his land would let his relatives or neighbors to work the land for free. This usually happened to the households that already have stable income resource from other channels, for example, with family members working or settling in cities. In this situation, land is not a vital resource anymore, and people are not relying the family income on land.

The first function of land in Yelangping is to produce food and cash income (see 4.2 *Economic Activities*). Besides the land that is used for growing crops, forestry also provides crucial resources for villagers' life and production; the most important one is firewood, which was the only source of fuel before charcoal business became normal in this region. Collecting firewood used to be a very important activity in Yelangping, but now people seldom do it after the charcoal business become popular, because charcoal is much more convenient and affordable for most families. A villager told me that,

"We only collect the firewood from our own forestry, but now many people don't do it anymore, since it is very exhausting especially when your forestry is very far from home. In the past we had to walk there and then carry the firewood back on ourselves with the back baskets; after this you need to make space to store it and keep it dry. Now things are much easier, charcoal is just cheap and easy to use; it can last for a long time after lighted."



Picture 3. The collected firewood

Around the end of October, the charcoal retailer would come by the village, park his track here with full of charcoal, and stay for a couple of days. He's business is on the move; he purchased the charcoal from the southern provinces of China and sell it in the nearby regions. Usually the villagers would buy the charcoal for the whole winter, costing around 1000 yuan. But charcoal has not fully replaced the use of firewood, because for some impoverished families, the cost of charcoal is still not affordable; there are also some families use charcoal and firewood at the same time. In other words, it is all depended on family financial condition.

Another important resource from forestry was tea trees, which was the main source of cooking oil in the past time, but now it has been replaced with normal cooking oil in local market. These tea trees are not planted intentionally; they just grow there naturally, and no one was taking care of them. The seeds of tea trees are supposed to be collected in October; then the seeds need to be dried out at the ground, and then put into the machine to squeeze out the oil. But after cooking oil became popular in the local market as an affordable commodity, the processing of tea seed oil started to decline. Now the commodity cooking oil has become a common option in their kitchen. Nevertheless, since the tea-seed oil is recognized with high nutrition value and popular among urban consumers, some villagers still collect and process it and sell them in the market. But since there isn't a mature market for tea-seed oil, this business has not become an industry, only as a small extra income for some families.

The only resource which is still utilized by farmers today from the forestry is the edible fungi. The time for collecting edible fungi is between August and October. From the end of August is the peak time of the fungi; villagers would go to their forestry at the early morning. Sometimes they cook the fungi for their own meal but sometimes they sell it on the local market in Jiwei. At the peak season of the fungi, there are a lot of local people, usually old females, selling the self-collected fungi at the town during market time. Collecting the fungi is a time-consuming work, that's why its price is rather high at the market. But both the income of tea seed oil and edible fungi is not a stable, but an extra income.

Economic activities

The economic activities in Yelangping are mainly organized around the land since land is a fundamental resource for agricultural production and livelihoods here. Usually for a farming family in Yelangping, rice and maize are the two main crops, which occupies the largest part in the local cropping scheme. Rice is a traditional grain and staple food in South China, growing in paddy fields, while maize is used to feed domestic livestock and planted in dry fields. Apart from these two crops, tobacco is the third main crop in Yelangping, which was introduced by local governments as in the 1990s as an economic crop and has become the biggest economic crop in local areas.

Rice

Rice is a traditional staple food in south China since ancient times, so is the case in Yelangping. Currently there is around 1900 *mu* paddy field in this village, and almost all of it is occupied by rice. Planting rice has been a basic and normal activity in this village since the past time, and now the remaining stayers in the village still plant rice; it is hard to find a vacant land in the village. The location of Yelangping makes this place not warm enough to grow double-season rice, which is a common cropping scheme in the southern part of China, so the villagers only grow rice for single harvest every year. The current practice of rice cultivation follows this schedule:

Farmers start seedling in March, and then in April they need to transplant the seedlings into the field. After transplanting they need to apply fertilizers and pesticides several times to make sure the rice can grow well. From the late August it is time to harvest. Now the harvest has been mechanized to a great extent and managing the rice reaping machine has become a normal business in the local areas. After harvesting the rice firstly needs to be dried on the space land, usually the farmers do it in their own yard. Then the dried rice needs to be separated from the stem, which is usually done by the reaping machine. After this the rice becomes "guzi" (grain), which can be sold on the market. But some farmers would choose to process the grain into the next step, which is rice. To make grain into rice the machine is needed again. In the village there are three tiny factories that run this business; they are all farmers, but they made their own investment to build this small business and get paid by processing other farmers' grains in the village.

It can be seen that at the current stage, growing rice has become an activity in which every step is intertwined with external actors, but in the past time growing rice was merely a domestic activity. A villager told me that, the turning point happened at around 1990 when a new breed of rice was introduced by governments.

'Before we have the new breed what we used for planting was self-retained seeds. At that time the rice yield was really low, and all the field output was distributed by the production brigade. We were not able to feed ourselves even though all the paddy land

had been planted with rice, so we had to grow maize and wheat in the dry field to get enough food, but none of us liked eating them. After 1982 when all the land was distributed by households, we did not farm for the collective, for the production brigade anymore, but for our own families, but the rice yield was still very low; feeding ourselves and avoiding starvation was always an urgent problem when I was young.

'At the beginning when the local government came to our village to recommend the new breed of rice few of us was willing to try it, because that seed costed money. Only after a few households got obvious yields increase by applying the new breed did more and more villagers to follow up. Now everyone in the village uses the new breed of seeds. But it is not a perfect way of farming, currently we have to shift the breed every two or three years, because if you keep using a same breed for over three years, the risk of getting infections and dying would be very high. Also the high-yields breeds are all relying on certain chemicals to prevent it from diseases.'

But now the things have been quite different, because every step of growing rice had been changed. Firstly, farmers need to buy seed every year; when transplanting the seed into fields, hiring labor is needed; chemicals are also necessary since the high-yields breed of rice is to a great extent relying on the chemicals to avoid disease. Harvesting needs to rent the reaping machine and also hire people to work in some areas where the machine cannot enter. After harvesting, processing into grain or rice still cost money. It is clear that for every step of growing rice a farmer needs to interact and cooperate with external actors and pay for it.



Picture 4. The processing machine used in rice production

It needs to be noted that, current way of rice production, although very much mechanized, is still a family activity. It is organized by family and highly relied on family labor.

The arrival and prevalence of this new breed greatly emancipated farmers from the starving risk and heavy work load. Now the output of only 1 mu rice field is adequate for 1 person per year. But this great improvement has not brought any monetary income. The cost of growing rice is too high to gain profit when compared with its market price.

'You need to buy seed every year, in the past we do not buy seed because we kept the seed every year; we also have to buy fertilizers and pesticides, these chemicals and the rice breed just match with each other, you have to buy them, or the rice won't grow well.'

Along with the production change, the role of rice cultivation in social life of Yelangping has changed over years. In the past time growing rice is the basis and foundation of a family, since people did not have any other things to do, and growing rice was the only way to get food and

feed themselves. But since 1990s the situation started to change.

'Since 1990 the mining resource in Huayuan County was explored, which brought a great economic growth for the near-by region. Many of the villagers gave up farming to work in the mines. That job really earns a lot even though it was very dangerous. At that time the paddy field in the village was vacant, because the rice from outside was very cheap. During that time we (the villagers in Yelangping) bought the rice from various places, including the Northeast China and Thailand.'

'My husband was also one of the mining works at that time. By this job we had the enough money for the tuition fee for my son and daughter. But from 2006 the mines started to be collectivized by local governments; private mining was not allowed anymore and the opportunities in the mining area was largely decreased. Together with the actions of the Party Secretary, the rice planting was revitalized in Yelangping. Now in our village the rice is self-sufficient.'

It is true that the rice is extensively planted in Yelangping; nearly every household is growing rice. But there is also a consensus in the village that "rice doesn't make money". When the climate is appropriate, the output would be relatively higher and the chemical cost would decrease, the profit per mu of land would be 1000 *yuan*, and this is the most ideal situation; but in most occasions, the cost and return of growing rice are just equal. This situation cannot change by enlarging the scale, because once you cultivate more land, you cannot manage them on yourself and have to hire labor, then the cost would dramatically increase. Therefore, the present rice growers all grow a I asked a lot of farmers who grew rice, the responds were quite different.

'I am too old to get a job in city, growing rice is the only thing I can do. Shifting into another economic crop needs money and knowledge, but I don't have either.'

'Now my sons all have good job in cities, I don't lack money and now my job is taking good care of their children, so I just grow some rice for our own needs. Our own rice has better quality than the rice that you can buy at the market.'

'I used to work in a factory for several years, but I do not like it. I prefer the life when I am growing rice at home. It makes me feel free; I know very well how to grow rice, and I can manage to do some daily-paid works while growing rice at the same time.'



Picture 5. The small-scale harvesting machine in rice field (left)

Picture 6. The normal harvesting machine (right)

The rice production has encountered three turning points Yelangping. The first time is at 1980s, when the new breed was introduced; this change ended the threaten of starvation but put

the practice of rice cultivation more intertwined with the market economy. Meanwhile, it doesn't add up any monetary income. with the growing need of cash by the villagers, rice cultivation met its decline at 1990s when the wealth from the local mining industry flew into this village. After the individual mining was banned by the state, rice production was revitalized. But this time it is more involved with transactions with external service or actors at every stage of the process.

Tobacco

Tobacco was introduced by governments at around 1990s as a prospective economic crop. Currently there are 1000 mu tobacco field in this village, and more than 100 household were now living on this crop. However, these tobacco growers are quite differentiated. I talked to two tobacco growers in the village.

The first farmer transferred 30 mu land from villagers.

I started growing tobacco in 1997, when the government was extending this crop to us as part of their poverty-reduction policy. Before this policy I grew rice and maize, and feed pigs, just like what most farmers did here, but none of them could make me earn more than tobacco. At the beginning I only grow the tobacco on my own land, about three or four mu; the government offered us some financial and technological help and then we could start. Now I manage 30 mu tobacco field, but I still need to loan every year because the cost is so high. The cost includes land rent, fertilizers, pesticides, labor hiring. After harvesting I still need to smoke them because the tobacco company only accepts the dried leaves. I built a smoking room myself, with the subsidy from government, and the charcoal for smoking leaves is another expense. When moving the tobacco seedlings from the greenhouse to the field and harvesting the tobacco leaves, I need to hire people within the village. Those seedlings are very delicate and really cost time and manpower to take care of.

All this cost adds up to around 2000/mu, by selling the dried leaves I could earn around 3000 yuan, so the profit is 1000 yuan/mu, but this always fluctuates. The yield and quality of tobacco was determined by various factors together. For example, this year there has been too much rainfalls, so a large area of the tobacco in this region has become ill or even died. Thus the yield will definitely decrease, and the quality will be lower, which will reduce the selling price.

Another tobacco grower told me like this,

I rent 50 mu land in the nearby town called Shinan, this year 10 mu of my tobacco just died due to the humid climate. Growing tobacco is just like gambling, you cannot forecast and avoid these various risks.

It is obvious that tobacco is not a satisfying industry for farmers and the community. Firstly, due to the soil degradation, most of the dry land in Yelangping is already not suitable for growing tobacco anymore; no one knows how long this industry can last in the future. Farmers told me that the present soil conditions make the tobacco very weak and easy to be infected by diseases, so it is normal for tobacco growers in Yelangping to rent land in the nearby towns. Secondly, the economic return of tobacco is very low when compared to the needed effort to take care of it. 'Tobacco is very delicate in the field; you need to hire people for every step, including transplanting, weeding, fertilizing, and harvesting.' Every step requires hiring labor and this no doubts adds up the cost and decreases the profit. As a result, the tobacco grower

has to transfer land to meet the family demand of cash, and managing the big-scale tobacco field for a farmer or a family is not an easy task. For most tobacco growers the annual profit cannot even cover their cost for the next growing turn; therefore they need to get loan from the bank every year, guaranteed by local tobacco companies.



Picture 7. Short -term workers who are packaging the dried tobacco leaves

In Yelangping there are two outstanding buildings, which are houses of two tobacco growers. They were said to be the richest tobacco growers in the village. When I asked why they could earn so much money from this industry while most of tobacco growers are still in poverty, a key informant told me like this:

'They can earn money from tobacco because of their networks (guanxi/relationships). Not everyone can sell tobacco leaves because they all have signed contacted about their selling quota. But if you have certain relationships within local tobacco bureau, you can mediate between tobacco companies and growers. That means you can purchase other farmers products and sell them to companies. That's how they make money.'

To conclude, tobacco, as the most influential economic crop in Yelangping, has pushed famers to organize their production in a new way which is deeply intertwined with the market, soil degradation and the power of local tobacco bureau. Although their producing activities appear to be very much relied on governments and tobacco companies, the tobacco production still fostered a large extent of self-organized activities and institutions. It asks famers to hire people from the neighborhood throughout the planting process, by which a local labor market has come into being. The formation of local labor market is also shaped by other process, which will be discussed afterwards.

Silkworm and mulberry trees

Silk used to be a traditional product in Xiangxi; the Miao people have the tradition of collecting mulberry leaves to feed silkworms and using the silk to make their clothes. Recently this industry has been revitalized by villagers. Long Jinyun was the first one who started feeding silkworms in the nearby region. He started his silk career in 2011 on his own and has gained remarkable success and fame within the county. After his success this industry has become more attractive to the people in Yelangping and local areas, and is becoming a prosperous,

growing industry.

"I started producing the silk on my own at the very beginning. It is our traditional product of this place and the price is really good, so I believe that I can earn money by producing and selling it. In the first few years I was merely losing money, the production didn't go well so I had to figure it out. I changed the breed of mulberry for two times; I contact the Sericulture Institute of Hunan and learnt knowledge from it, and even build up good connection with its experts."

After the first two years, Jinyun's business started to earn profit, but he still had greater ambition. He kept investing the profit to enlarge the scale, transferring land from other villagers to plant mulberry trees and feed more silkworms and constructing bigger breeding rooms. In 2015, he registered a cooperative with 50,000 yuan of registered capital. This money, as he told, was raised all this money on himself and that the cooperative had been run all by himself alone since its set-up.

Turning his silk business into the form of agricultural cooperatives is to meet his will of enlarging this business. For Jinyun, enlarging the scale does not only mean to increase this productivity, but also includes the attempts to make more villagers join this business. Jinyun owns a very entrepreneurial mind; he is well aware of how market works.

If I want to earn big money with my silk business, the scale and productivity of it must be large enough, otherwise the big companies won't buy your silk.

Although Jinyun does not have the background of any business education, he gets the idea from his own experience that, to be integrated into the market, scale is necessary. But he is not able to enlarge his production scale to such extent, so he hopes to motivate more villagers to join in this industry. Therefore, the activities of his cooperative does not only include the production, but also the provision of technological service and consultancy.

There is no doubt that producing silk is far more profitable than growing rice, and also better than tobacco. According to Jinyun's calculation, if accounted by the area of mulberry trees (since the space needed for feeding silkworms is much less), 1 mu of mulberry trees can bring 4000 yuan per year, while the income from tobacco is only 2000 per year. This is the reason why Jinyun has stayed in this business over years as well as more and more villagers have been motivated and join in. Owing to his selfless and volunteering help, there have been six families who started the silk production in their home and with their own land.

This industry does not bring income to families in Yelangping in only one way; it also renders a lot of opportunities for short-term work. Just like most cash crops, the production of silk is also labor-intensive. As production scale of Jinyun's cooperative is too large to be managed by himself alone, nearly every step of his production needs hiring labor. Usually he hired the elder women in the village. This kind of labor hiring is, to a great extent, an optimized way of mobilizing local resources, because Yelangping is also a 'hollowed-out' village where the most of strong labor have become migrant workers, leaving the elder and the young in the village. Working for silk production is neither exhausting nor dangerous, the work includes collecting mulberry leaves and collect the cocoons; on the other hand, without the silk industry these villagers do not have any other things to do; for them this short-term work simply increases their income.



'Most of the followers used to work for me as daily-paid workers. By working here some of them realized the silkworm industry is profitable and then became willing to feed their own silkworms. I taught these people how to feed silkworms and growing mulberry trees step by step; I hatch the silkworm egg and foster the larva for them; I teach them how to use medicine and chemicals, how to prepare the mulberry tree leaves and how to protect the silkworms from potential diseases. Sometimes I give them chemicals for free. I have been doing these all for free because I hope this industry can grow stronger and more influential, with large-scale and great value. But I cannot achieve it on my own because my energy and capacity is limited, so I hope that more famers can join in and we develop this industry altogether.'

Picture 8. The hired women collecting the cocoons

Purchasing the cocoons from other farmers is also an important part of Jinyun's business. Usually he sells his own cocoons and the purchased ones altogether; after doing the silkworm business for several years, Jinyun has accumulated stable and reliable channel to sell the cocoons. For these farmers this is a sale guarantee, and the only thing they need to do is producing high-quality cocoons. For farmers the outlet of agro-products is a very critical thing; farmers do not start with a new crop unless they are sure that the products have stable sale channels.

Besides his effort on enlarging the scale, Jinyun is also trying to extend the value chain and make more added value to his products. In September 2018, Jinyun set out processing cocoons into silk quilts, because by selling silk quilt he can get higher profit than cocoons. He learnt this way of processing cocoons when participating in an industrial event in Zhejiang, which is the center of Chinese silk industry. In order to make this idea into reality, he firstly contacted a retailer who sells the silk-reeling machines. He bought two machines from this retailer in the name of the cooperative, and learnt from him about how to operate these machines as well as how to make the reeled products into silk quilt. The process of silk quilt processing is also labor-intensive.



Picture 9. Making silk quilt by machine and labor

Jinyun's silkworm cooperative appears to be quite different from any other agricultural cooperative in the village. Firstly, it is well functioning and earning profit; secondly, it is evolving towards a private enterprise. Although having made such great progress, he still wants to lift this career up to a new level.

'I still want to enlarge the scale of silkworm feeding in this village by attracting more farmers to join in. Only when our scale is large enough can we really make it into an industry. I hope that in the future I only do the processing and selling things, leaving the production to other farmers, because we can earn more after processing the cocoons. For now we can only sell the cocoons. By increasing the scale I can also create more jobs for villagers, now I hire some old women in the village and pay them 80 yuan per day. For the elder people this is a good opportunity to get some income.'

Jinyun's way of doing the silk industry is very entrepreneurial. Firstly, the goal is to earn profit; secondly, it is not fully developed on the local resource base, but with a remarkable amount of capital input; thirdly, it has the tendency to enlarge the production scale, the provided services and the added value of its products.

In conclusion, the development of silk industry is an endogenous practice from the beginning. Every step of this process is initiated and achieved by the farmer and his network alone, and he made all his decisions based on his own understanding of the local community and the way of running a business.

The changing trajectory of housing

House is designated with important meaning in Chinese society. The evolution of housing in Yelangping can be seen as a manifestation of people's modernity making. Ever since 1980s renewing the house became a common family agenda in Yelangping, and gradually realized by the villagers. This process is intertwined with the urban-rural connections and executed by the rural people themselves; it has deeply influenced farmers' livelihoods and facilitated the self-organized formation of local labor market.

Since the rural families renew their house at different time, now in the village there are basically three kinds of houses: the traditional wooden house, flat brick house and villa. The three kinds of houses are showing the changing trajectory of housing in Yelangping. Wooden house is a traditional accommodation of Miao people early in the history. Now there are still quite a lot of old wooden houses that are used by people as normal, with a small number of wooden houses are just abandoned. This kind of house is made by wood, bamboo and ox manure, which are all from the local nature resources. The full use of local resource implies

that, the construction of a traditional wooden house seldom requires monetary input; it is a process in which nature resources are transferred into a building by local labor.

According to the villagers, in the very past time building a new house was a really huge task, because every step needed to be done by manpower.

The first step is logging. We get the wood from the surrounding forestry and then process it into boards...

Without the help of industrial products and building materials, building a house needs to start with logging at the nearby forests, and then process the log into wooden boards, and use these boards to build a house. This process usually takes three months for 3-5 crafts men to finish; during this time, the owner of the house needs to offer food for them. Therefore, for the time of subsistence farming, building a new house was an extremely costly work, because building a house asked for enough food, not cash. People would not build a new house until the old one is broken, or a nuclear family was about to split from the extended family. Usually a traditional wooden house could last for 100 years, and today there are still a lot of them in use in Yelangping.

The inside layout of old-style wooden house is very simple: the use of natural construction materials exempts the needs for decoration (painting the wall, for example); inside the house is merely a singular space without any room division. The furniture is also very limited, partly due to the low productivity of the old time, leaving a big space to store the grains as well. Some of the wooden houses in the village now have been adapted more modern-looking ---- with split bedrooms and purchased furniture and electrical appliances.



Picture 10. The old wooden house

From around 1990s brick houses emerged with the first tide of migrant workers (*dagong*). That was also a time when the nearby manganese mining was rather prosperous; a lot of villagers used the money they earned from the mining work to build their first brick house. The earliest brick houses still followed the shape and structure of traditional wooden house, with similar design and space arrangements.

Brick houses were well accepted by villagers and got popular soon, while the wooden house, as a cultural and ethnical symbol, began to fade out from local society. Today building a brick house or villa is still the aim of most families. I asked why brick house is preferred, the villagers said, 'because it looks fancy.'



Picture 11. The inside of wooden house and the old-style wooden furniture

As time goes on, the brick house was evolving towards a modern direction; the newly-built brick houses are usually in the shape of villa, with two or three floors, separated bedrooms, stylish furniture, and nice decorating tiles outside the wall.

In rural society, living in a nice house is a very proud thing; it is also a symbol of wealth and personal achievement. The pursuit of nice house is also revealed in the local marriage culture; a man would be more competitive when he wants to get married if he has a newly-built, nice house. As a young villager told me,

'There are three events for us that are necessary to achieve: (children's) education, marriage, housing. That is why we need money.'

'If you do not have a newly-built house, who will marry you?'

The important meaning of house has indeed enabled the development of self-constructed houses in Yelangping. The size gets bigger, the decoration gets fancier, the furniture gets more complete. This trend of housing has significantly boost local building materials industry, both at town level and county level. The building materials business make a prosperous sector of the real economy in the downtown of Jiwei Town and Huayuan County. On the other hand, it also brought the most villagers with a huge financial pressure because it requires a large amount of money. Constructing a nice house today means huge expense on building materials, including bricks, cements, tiles, and inside paintings, decorations, furniture and electrical appliances. All these need to be purchased from the market.

Meanwhile, the labor input of constructing house doesn't seem to decline when compared with the old-style wooden house. Building a new two-floors villa, according to the villager, costs at least 2 months with 5 men working every day. Currently the average wage of a construction worker per day is around 200 yuan, so the labor input also makes a remarkable contribution to villagers' financial pressure.

But on the other hand, people's appreciation of nice houses has also enabled the development of the labor market. Villagers in Yelangping usually hire the people within the village, sometimes from the other nearby villages when there are not enough people within the village. The local labor market is based on networks; usually the person who build the house will hire people firstly from his own network of relatives, neighbors and friends.



Picture 12. One of the most splendid villas in Yelangping

Compared to the old time when only labor was not free for house construction and 'wage' is paid mainly in the form of food, now the situation has been quite different. Every piece of the house needs to be purchased at market and even the wage of workers should be paid in cash. The increasing demand of cash, which is resulted from the necessity of constructing the new house, has pushed the villagers in Yelangping to look for more opportunities in the urban. A villager pointed a new three-floors villa to me and said,

Look at that house, it was built after the son of that family was married. The old couple and the young couple, four people in total, worked in cities for 4 years, and then got enough money to build this house, costing them 320,000 yuan.

Another option is earning money from the economic crops. Just as mentioned before, the two most splendid villas in Yelangping was constructed by the two big tobacco growers cum dealers. But in general, no matter earning money from migrant working or cash crops, this wealth, or capital, comes from the urban. The practice of housing in Yelangping, is actually a process in which the capital flows from the urban to the rural, and then redistributed among the local villagers through the local labor market.

The emergence and impasse of agricultural cooperatives

As mentioned before, the encouragement and promotion of agricultural cooperatives has been integrated into China's policy agenda. The state regards it as an approach to develop modern agriculture, increase farmers' income. However, in the real cases of Yelangping, the agricultural cooperatives have failed to achieve this goal.

Apart from the economic role, agricultural cooperatives in Yelangping are designated with a political task in real practice. The local responds to this policy promotion are very positive, which can be shown in the number of existing cooperatives. Currently in Yelangping, there are 7 agricultural cooperatives, with each them representing a local industry or crop, including rice, silkworm and mulberry tree, lotus, Miao snitch, tea-seed oil, livestock and tobacco.

The rice cooperative and Miao snitch cooperative are established by Tian Jinzhen, the present Party Secretary of the village. As the leader of the village, her ambition and conception of the two cooperatives are to build a collective business for the whole village; in other words, she hopes that the prosperity of the cooperatives could increase villagers income as well as improve community solidarity within the village. This is why she chose rice and Miao snitch,

both of which, as the symbols of local society and culture, are in strong attachment with the villagers.

The way Jinzhen tried to realize her collective conception of the rice cooperative was to produce high-end rice in the full range of the village's paddy field. She believed that high-quality rice would be more profitable; if the whole village could be involved into high-quality rice production, villagers could earn money from the upscale market. The 'involvement' here mainly refers to creating more jobs in the village. She managed to produce high quality rice; she deployed the strictest organic standard in the rice field, and got the organic certification from credible organization in Beijing. The market feedback was also quite good, the price sometimes reached 20 yuan/kg while the price of normal rice is only around 5 yuan/kg.

However, this rice business still stepped into impasse because it was not profitable and could not sustain itself. Jinzhen told me about the situation,

We applied the strictest regulations and criterion when cultivating the rice. It is with highest quality and holds organic certification. When we organized the sale in downtown on ourselves, the price was really good; consumers welcomed our rice and were willing to pay higher price, but this amount is very limited; we are not able to sell all our rice in this way, neither do we have any other channels. To avoid overstock we have to sell it to rice retailers at a normal price, which cannot even cover the cost, because the organic way of production makes the cost very high.

Due to financial deficit, the scale of organic rice was declining. At the beginning of its establishment, the rice cooperative transferred 200 mu paddy field from villagers, but the area had shrunk to only 80 mu in 2018. although Jinzhen's hope was to transfer all the 700 mu paddy field within the village.

The ambition of 'building collective business for the village' was countered by the trap of rice cooperative. On the one hand, it has never been able to earn profit since its establishment; on the other hand, it has failed to grow into a 'collective business'. Restricted by the state regulations on agricultural cooperative, this rice cooperative, although in the name of Yelangping village, was registered and by Jinzhen individually; she collected 500,000 yuan for the registered capital all from her own social networks in this village; the cooperative was mainly run by two young men in the village, both of whom are the joint sponsors of the cooperative cum her relatives. The rice cooperative is not able to level up the local rice industry, neither does it increase farmers' income. On the contrary, it has become a heavy burden of its sponsors and managers.

Due to the poor profitability, the organic rice business was not attractive for villagers, and not able to involve them into the production. Most villagers have shown very low interest in this business, because they didn't believe there was any possibility of making money from rice, based on their life experiences. However, the reality somehow has turned out that, they were right.

The situation of the rice cooperative in Yelangping is actually a typical case of such kind of cooperatives that are initiated by villager cadres and designated with both economic and political roles. As a respond to policy orientation, the establishment of agricultural cooperatives by village cadres in the name of 'village collective' has become quite common; among the 7 cooperatives in Yelangping, 6 are established by village cadres, among which the tobacco cooperative and lotus cooperative were registered by the village head. Outside the wall of the village office building, there is a poster presenting the field of the lotus cooperative,

with the illustration of 'village head's lotus field', indicating that the lotus business was regarded as both the task of village head and a collective business.

When I approached the village in 2018, only two of these cooperatives were still running in hardship, the rest of which were almost paralyzed. A villager even said that,

'Most agricultural cooperatives are not success; they manage them only with the purpose of receiving subsidies, and without government subsidies no cooperative can survive'.

This statement might be too speculative, but it somehow reveals the hardship that most agricultural cooperatives are experiencing in rural China.

The failure of these cooperatives reflects the dysfunction of those policy that wants to modernize the agricultural sector by encouraging cooperatives. On the one hand, these cooperatives are not able to realize a modernized and commercialized way of agricultural transformation. The essence of an agricultural cooperative is 'doing business', but the nature of agricultural products is low profitability for the reason of the high cost and risk; this is the drawback of the entire agricultural sector, which cannot be reversed by these grassroot actors. The low profitability of agro-products exaggerates the situation of these agricultural cooperatives, because managing a business organization requires professional staff and knowledge, but all the young educated people in the village choose to work in cities for higher salary. The remaining people in the village have no interest in managing and developing these cooperatives because they know this is not a fruitful direction to go, based on their own experience of farming and rural economic activities. On the other hand, these cooperatives are not going with the role of public affair or collective business. All these cooperatives are registered individually and managed in a private and individual way.

In contrast, the only active cooperative in the village is the silkworm cooperative. As elaborated before, the establishment and development of this cooperative, as well as the rising of this industry are totally free from the policy orientation. It is the local people themselves that identify this prospective product and develop this industry. The success of the silkworm cooperative has even activated the village labor market, forming one important part of present livelihoods strategies in the village.

How TPA strategy is implemented and encountered in the field

TPA's ultimate requirement of accuracy, as a novel policy innovation, has no doubt created great challenge to the implementors at basic-level. To accurately identify and give aid to all the impoverished people throughout the country, a magnitude investigating campaign was launched. The identification activity has been carried out in every village all over the country. To finish this tremendous amount of work at the village level, all of the staff in the local governmental apparatus are mobilized. In other words, there is no increased staff to finish the poverty alleviation and investigation task, otherwise the work is assigned with the current governmental staff, and organized by local bureaus (at county-level)

To ensure that the registration and aid process can be successfully conducted and monitored, the targeted poverty alleviation asks in-depth involvements of both village cadres and local governments staff. The local governments here refer to the county-level governments. In Huayuan county, the task of implementing TPA in the 18 subordinate towns is assigned to its local government apparatus; in this way, Jiwei Town, in which Yelangping is located, is take over by *Huayuan Urban Administrative and Law Enforcement Bureau* (usually called 'Law Enforcement Bureau' by the local people). The staff of Law Enforcement Bureau was divided

into groups of 4-5 people and sent to each village of Jiwei, constituting the TPA working teams. These working teams are required to live and work in the village for five days per week.

Then how is the TPA implemented in reality? Basically it follows the procedure of 'identification – registration – aid delivery – effect assessment'. The first step is identification, which embodies the value of 'accuracy' in TPA strategy. In Yelangping it is conducted in a very transparent and democratic way:

1. The working team and village cadres worked in 2016 together to inform all the villagers about the policy of TPA; villagers are encouraged to apply for the 'identity of impoverished household' as long as their family meet the requirement of 'no villa, no car, no business cooperation', which is made by local government;
2. Then the village committee made a list of candidate households, and held an open election in the village to decide who are going to be finally identified as 'impoverished household';
3. After the first selection in 2016, 188 household in Yelangping were identified and registered as 'impoverished household' by the TPA working team in the database system;
4. This list is updated every year by adding newly-identified households into the list and moving out the households that had been better off; the identification of new impoverished household follows the procedure of 'application - voting', and which families to be moved out is decided by an assessment for the registered impoverished households every year.

After identified and registered as 'impoverished household', the family will receive the aid from the government, and a file will be opened for it, which documented all the information, including the demographic information, income resources and the aid delivered to it. In the TPA policy there is an aid framework implying what actions will be taken to help these families and people. The aid is mainly in the form of subsidy; usually the subsidy will be clearly documented in the file to make the aid procedure transparent and trackable. The thinking behind this aid framework partly reveals its coherence with the state policy on rural development by attaching great importance to industrialized agricultural production. Its way to encourage this transformation is offering subsidy to those 'impoverished families', hoping they can use this money to industrialize their family farming and thus gain higher income.

Table 3. The aid actions of Targeted Poverty Alleviation strategy

For household	Develop industrialized agriculture	2000-yuan subsidy for each household
	Travelling subsidy	Travelling subsidy every year for the people who work outside the village
	Education	Every-year living allowance for students
	Medical support	Halve the medical insurance fee for every family member; higher reimbursement proportion for serious illness
	Old house renovation scheme	
	Eco-compensation	
For village collective	Rural road construction Clean water Electricity power Village public service	

Source: own source, derived from the posters in the office place of village committee (see Appendix)

The aid delivered to the households are differentiated according to the situation of each family. Usually every family receive the 2000 yuan in the name of ‘agriculture industrialization subsidy’ from the government and get their medical insurance fee halved; then only the family with family members working outside can receive the travelling subsidy, the same goes with the educational subsidy.

It seems that the aid framework of TPA strategy has offered a comprehensive and inclusive solution to poverty, but in real practice the implementation of TPA failed to enable any change to the impoverished households and village. In terms of the agriculture industrialization subsidy, it helps nothing on the household production, because this amount means little help compared to the cost of farming. According to farmers responses, the cost of rice per mu usually goes beyond 1000 yuan, while the cost of other economic crops would only be higher; meanwhile, the daily wage of short-term work can be 120-200 yuan. Compared to the entire economic context, this subsidy can hardly make any difference. No registered impoverished family is able to turn the agricultural production of the family into an income resource with the help of this subsidy. In most occasions this amount of money were just spent for other family expense. The other different subsidies are even smaller, which can only temporarily alleviate the financial pressure, but have little influence on people’s choice and decisions on economic activities and livelihoods strategies. These villagers still continue with their previous way of making money, or to find new opportunity relying on themselves and their social network. As a young villager told me,

‘My family was registered to be the impoverished family two years ago, now according to the policy we need to be crossed out from the list, and officially, we are not the ‘impoverished’ anymore, but in fact I don’t feel the policy has brought any change to my family. Everything goes like before.’

时间	成效内容	签字
2017	扶贫资金合作联社 补贴735元	麻永华
2017	麻永华外出务工 2800元	麻永华
2017	3亩水稻水费 2000元	麻永华
2017	养殖500只鸡苗 1000元	麻永华
2017	扶贫补贴17618元	麻永华
2017	扶贫补贴8815元	麻永华
2017	扶贫补贴10000元	麻永华
2017	扶贫补贴105600元	麻永华
2017	扶贫补贴40000元	麻永华
2017	扶贫补贴140000元	麻永华
2017	扶贫补贴19200元	麻永华

时间	项目内容	帮扶单位
2015.2.27	扶贫资金合作联社 300元	扶贫局
2015.3	麻永华外出务工 2人工资75元/人每月	扶贫局
2015.4.15	3亩水稻水费	扶贫局
2015.5.4	扶贫补贴14628元	扶贫局
2015.6.9	扶贫补贴8815元	扶贫局
2015.10.18	扶贫补贴105600元	扶贫局

Picture 13. The record brochure made for each impoverished household

Since the TPA aid strategy is not able to change the wider context in which poverty is embedded and has existing over years, nor has it brought any substantial change to the ‘impoverished’ families or the community. On the contrary, the implementation of TPA aid has resulted in some negative influence in the village.

The policy of Targeted Poverty Alleviation has been deeply intertwined other rural governance

actions at different levels. For instance, the local subsidy program for agricultural cooperatives was interrupted. The subsidy which was planned to be granted to the promising agricultural cooperatives in the county-wide is integrated into the TPA aid framework. The original subsidy program simply asks the managers and owners of agricultural cooperative to apply for this subsidy, and then grant the money to the qualified cooperatives after assessment. But after integrated into the TPA framework, each selected cooperative must take the responsibility of 'helping the impoverished households' with the subsidy they get. The notion of 'helping the impoverished households' means that, each candidate cooperatives are assigned with a number of impoverished households within the county, and they are asked to include the assigned impoverished households into their production and make the commitment of a certain number of income growth of these households within three years. Without the commitment the cooperative cannot get the subsidy.

This is no doubt a very unreasonable requirements, but it is the outcome of involving irrelevant policies and programs into the TPA strategy in practice. Actually, what happened to the subsidy program is not the only case; TPA strategy has just penetrated into every corner of the local governance space and influence the life of local people. I participated in the application process of the silkworm cooperative of Yelangping; during the process its manager was showing great discontent with this distorted subsidy program. To meet the commitment of income growth for impoverished households, Jinyun decided not to use this money, but directly transferred the money to those families. In fact, most of the appliers that we came across made the same decisions. Jinyun said to me,

Even without the money from governments I can still do my business. I was planning to use this subsidy to buy more equipment and mulberry trees, but now it turns out impossible. I have to raise money on myself to implement my plan.

But I think I still need to apply for this useless subsidy, because if I quit this time, maybe the next time there won't be any opportunity for me when there is new subsidy program.

In general, the aid actions in TPA mainly takes the form of subsidy, which in reality forms capital flow from the urban to the rural, oriented by the state. However, this huge flow of capital failed to bring any substantial changes to the community, nor was it able to realize its goal of agriculture industrialization, income growth and poverty alleviation. The families that got help from TPA didn't change their way of life, and the agricultural cooperatives, which should be encouraged as they are the hope of agriculture industrialization, failed to get the interests and development opportunity from the TPA. Finally they still need to development the business all on their own.

Chapter 6: The Diversified Livelihood Strategies

In this chapter three cases will be presented to show how a family organizes its activities and makes up its livelihood strategy. By looking into the family-level decisions and activities, we can have an inspection on how the rural transformation is achieved at the grassroot level, and how rural people make their own modernity.

Case 1 - Long Wenjin

Long Wenjin was born in 1969 and got married in 1990 with one son and one daughter. His wife was from the nearby town called *Malichang*. His family got split from the extended family since he got married with has 23 mu land.

It was also around 1990 when the local government started to extend tobacco in this area. He was one of the earliest tobacco growers in the village. As the first attempt he only grew tobacco within his own land, about 5 mu. But after the first harvest, he gave up growing tobacco and went to work in the nearby mine, because he the income from tobacco was too low to support his family daily expense.

‘After the first year I harvested and sold the tobacco, I got 2000 yuan. I spent this money on a television and my new-born daughter’s powdered milk, and then I got nothing last. I found that growing tobacco cannot support my family, so I went to the mine.’ He said so.

After being a mining worker for many years, he left this industry at 2007, because at that time the state started to nationalize the manganese mines in Huayuan and banned private mining. Then he started his time of short term paid-work together with his wife. They had the experience of working in a small factory.

Wenjin and his wife didn’t work in the factory for a long time. After 3 years they left the factory and went back to their home in Yelangping and picked up farming, because they felt that farming at home could leave them more freedom.

‘When we worked at factories the schedule was quite tight and fixed. But at home we can arrange our own life.’

Since farming (rice, maize and livestock in total) cannot provide this family with adequate income, they also did a wide range of paid-works in the nearby areas. The type of work varied, usually construction workers and the tobacco working were the most common ones. Ever since the brick house got popular in this area, construction workers became a constant need in the local community. Construction work was also paid with the highest salary, usually 200-200 yuan/day. His wife usually did work in the tobacco field or processing and packaging the tobacco leaves. Theses short-term works are paid daily, and usually the vacancy information is spread by the local kinship and networks. The network is not restricted within only one village; its influence usually spread all over the county. It is a very common thing for the villagers like Wenjin and his wife to participate in the work in other villages and towns. When I asked about what jobs have he tried, he always said, *‘I do whatever earns money’*.

Apart from the short-term works, farming also constituted an important segment in Wenjin’s family life. He and his wife have been doing farming in a very typical way: a mixed farm. Their farm is based on their own yard and land. In the yard they keep livestock including pigs, ducks and chicken. They also grow rice, vegetables and maize. Rice is firstly to meet self-need, with the rest sold in the market in Jiwei; vegetables are grown with a small area only to meet self

needs; lastly, growing maize is for feeding pigs. The practice of growing maize to feed pigs is very common in Yelangping, because the selling maize cannot earn profit due to the low price, but the cost of growing maize is less than the cost of feeding pigs with commercial fodders.



Picture 14. The small vegetable field near the house



Picture 15. The domestic ducks

For the farmers like Wenjing in Yelangping, living with such a mixed livelihood strategy in the village has following advantages: firstly, it minimizes the living cost because, compared to migrant working, he doesn't need to pay for accommodation and food. The majority of the daily food at Wenjin's table is self-sufficient, from his own land and yard. Secondly, living at the village enables him to approach diverse daily-paid working opportunity in the local community. This mixed livelihood strategy is the most viable and stable way of this family to make a living in today's socio-economic background; it is emerged on the basis of economic development of local community.

Case 2 - Long Jinyun

Long Jinyun was born in 1966. He got married at 1988. As the eldest child in his family, he split from his family in 1990. He got a piece of land from his father and started to make his own living.

Jinyun has tried a variety of ways to make money to support his family. When the cooking oil

had not appeared in the nearby market and people were making oil from tea seeds, Jinyun was the first one in the village who purchased a machine to process the tea seeds. Anyone who in the village wanted to make tea seed oil would come to him, and Jinyun would charge them.

“When there was no oil to buy, we made the tea seed oil ourselves. In late October we collected the seeds, dried them in our yards, and then used the machine to process the seeds into oil. I am the only one in the village who owns such a machine, and I process the seeds for the whole village and took some return from villagers.”

Besides the tea seed oil machine, he also purchased the machine for rice processing. Besides the tea seed, he also owned the machines to process rice and maize, which covers about one third to half villagers. This kind of machine-processing business provided him and his family with a stable income resource for a long time.

After 2000, Jinyun's two children needed to go to college and high school, which asked for a large amount of money. Jinyun went to the manganese mine and worked there for several years. During this time he became the manager of a mine and made a sum of money to pay for his children's education.

From 2015 Jinyun started the silkworm business, which has been explicitly explained in previous chapters. From then on, the silkworm industry became the main task and income resource of Jinyun and his wife.

Jinyun's daughter was born in 1988, after graduation from collage she found a job in Changsha, the capital city of Hunan Province, and then settled in this city. His son was born in 1990, after graduation from the collage, he has tried doing different businesses. His first enterprise was education industry; he set up a company which provide extracurricular education for the kids from primary school to high school. Extracurricular education has been a rising industry in urban China with the income growth of urban population and a pervasive concentration on educational context among Chinese society. But he shut his company after two years for the reason of financial deficit.

‘The cost was really huge: you need to hire lectures and to rent classroom; the input was high, but the customers and income were unstable. So it did not last very long.’

After ending this, he started another business at the nearby town with a pick-up station (a private form of postal service). The rapid development of rural branches of private postal service is the manifestation and outcome of the explosion of online shopping and package delivery industry in China. After gaining great success in the urban, the online shopping industry in China started to develop the rural market. In 2013, Alibaba, one of the biggest e-commerce company of China, initiated its program called ‘*Rural Taobao*’, aiming to make the online shopping accessible to rural population, because this is a huge consumer group. To develop the rural market the delivery service must be improved; with this background, the delivery industry in China got dramatic expansion by expanding the delivery station at town level. Jinyun's son is one who catches up with this trend. He got this opportunity from his mother's brother, and thus became an agent of a delivery company in the town. Usually a delivery company only extends its branch to the county level and cooperates with some agents who transport the packages to the town and finish the final delivery. Jinyun's son rent a small shop in the town and made it into a pick-up station, the people from the nearby villages would collect their packages here and pay for it; this is how this kind of pick-up station earn money.

Case 3 - Shi Ronghua

Ronghua was born in 1990 in the nearby town called Longtan. From her life experience we can take a glance at how young people in Yelangping make their living.

Ronghua got her first job in a factory, in Fujian Province, when she was 18, shortly after the graduation from high school. In the factory her work was manufacturing sneakers, and her salary was counted by the number of shoes that she processed. *'All I need to do was snitching this line on sneakers.'* She told me. In this factory she got to know her husband. They fell in love with each other during the days in factory and got married in Yelangping soon. In traditional Chinese rural society, it is very common for people to get married at the age around 20, especially for the people who do not go to college.

Following the traditional Chinese marriage customs, Ronghua moved into her husband's family in Yelangping and started her new life here. In 2014 she gave birth to her first baby, and then she and her husband went for migrant working together with their son and her husband's mother. But the time of migrant working didn't last for long. Their salary was just able to cover daily expense, to pay for house rent and grocery. In this way, it is not possible to save money to renew their house and save for children's future education and marriage. Therefore, after she got pregnant for the second time, she and her husband decide to move back to home at 2017.

'I used to work in the factory with my son, my husband and our mother, because I do not want to leave my son at home. But during the day my husband and I have to work, so his mother also lived with us to take care of my son. since we live in that city as a family, we have to rent a larger place to live. There are some cheap and small rooms, but those are for the single or the young couples. When living in the city we have to buy groceries every day. Our salary was not high, after paying these daily expenses we almost have nothing left. We worked in that factory for 3 years, it was a busy time, but we didn't save any money. Therefore, after I gave birth to my daughter at home, I decided to stay.'

After going back home, they on the one hand continued growing rice, and on the other hand tried to find other off-farm opportunities. Ronghua became employed at a private kindergarten near the town, while her mother-in-law often went for short-term works, including working in the tobacco field or in the processing step of the tobacco industry; she is closely tied in the social network which brings her with various kinds of working opportunities. At the meantime, since Ronghua's husband has not find an appropriate position, he naturally took the responsibility of taking care of baby at home.

Ronghua's extended family also deploys a mixed livelihood strategy which combines farming and short-term works. She and her families had already tried the make a living in cities, but finally make out that, living in village is best choice that they can make for now.

Ronghua's family has been registered as the 'impoverished household' during the implementation of the TPA program for 4 years, however it failed to bring any substantial change to this family except some subsidy in cash. This family is still trying to make changes and seek for opportunity by itself. When I left the village, Ronghua's husband was learning driving and applying for the driving licenses, hoping this skill could help him got more opportunity.

The changing practice of parenting

Since Jinyun's son got married in 2015, his family became an extended family. The extended

family composed of two to four generations is very common in China's rural society, being a stable social unit that provides rural population with food and accommodations. Since reproduction is a fundamental function of family, the extended family is also endowed with the important function of parenting.

Jinyun's daughter-in-law gave birth to a baby at 2017. Afterwards she has been living at home and became a stay-at-home mom, with parenting becoming her full-time job, because this 'job' required her to keep an eye on the baby for every minute in case any incident would happen. In the past time when food shortage was still a problem and all the labor was devoted to farming, parenting was usually accomplished along with the farming activities, or handled by elder children in the family.

'I used a back basket to take my kid with me everywhere and every day. When I needed to work in field, I put the kid at the side of the field, and did my work while keeping an eye on him; when I did chores or went to the open market for shopping, I used the back basket to take the kid with me.'

'I dropped off from school very early, and when I was at my teen age my job was to look after my siblings at home, because parents were busy working in the fields.' Another women in the village told me like this.

When talked about parenting, Jinyun complained to me, 'When I was young, the women could work in field and do chores while taking care of babies, but now my son's wife cannot even cook while parenting'. This was proved to be true when I talked to Jinyun's wife, 'I had to work in the rice field with my kid on my back'. Nowadays, parenting means a full-time attention; a baby can keep the mother away from doing anything but watching the baby, in case they get injured when walking around at home, preparing the food or clothes for it.

When food shortage was ended and subsistence farming started to fade out, this way of parenting also disappeared. Today in Yelangping, most of the young mothers are raising their kids in a full-time way. Parenting forced the young mothers to stay at home, while there are no part-time jobs they can do at the same time.

This new style of parenting doesn't not only mean the full occupation of time, but also the cost of money. Raising up a baby today requires a constant need for various industrial products, including the diapers, toys, food, clothes, etc. The embrace of baby products by local people has greatly boosted this market. In Jiwei Town, there are three stores which sell baby product.

The need of baby products creates a demand of cash. In Jinyun's family, this expense is jointly supported by him and his son. This case has shown the contribution of extended family on parenting through the provision of labor, money and accommodation needed for raising a kid. But Jinyun's family practice is not the only parenting pattern that is practiced by the people in Yelangping. The inner labor division within an extended family could be different. For example, in Ronghua's family, her husband was the one who take care of baby at home; it is also possible that young couple leave for migrant working while the elder couple live at home and take care of their grandchildren. The labor division for parenting is also in motion, as the case of Ronghua's family, her husband was learning driving and applying for a driving license in order to find a job outside the village; once he gets a job, the task of babysitting will be transferred to his wife or parents.

In general, it is clear that parenting practice in the rural is moving towards a 'modern' style

with the full-time labor input and wide use of baby products. Parenting in a modern way in the rural is supported by the extended family; this trend has increased the cash demand of rural families and boosted the local market of baby products.

What enables this transformation is the embrace of modern values by rural people. The villagers in Yelangping are paying more attention to child raising and education than the elder generations, because they hope their children could get high education and settle down in the urban in future. Therefore, they are trying their best ---- in the major form of making money from the urban ---- to create a better environment for their children. A young villager told me like this,

'If my kids can go to college like you in the future, I can do anything for them.'

The modern values and urban lifestyle have composed a beautiful and attractive image to the rural people. This is the process when new element became mutated by rural people; this social mutation unleashes more urban-rural connections and interactions in the form of people's self-organized activities.

Diversified livelihood strategies

Life stories in the three cases have shown that, new livelihood options emerged in the village with the progress of urbanization and regional economic development, which are widely practiced by local people, adapted into diversified livelihood strategies, and finally made into new forms of social life.

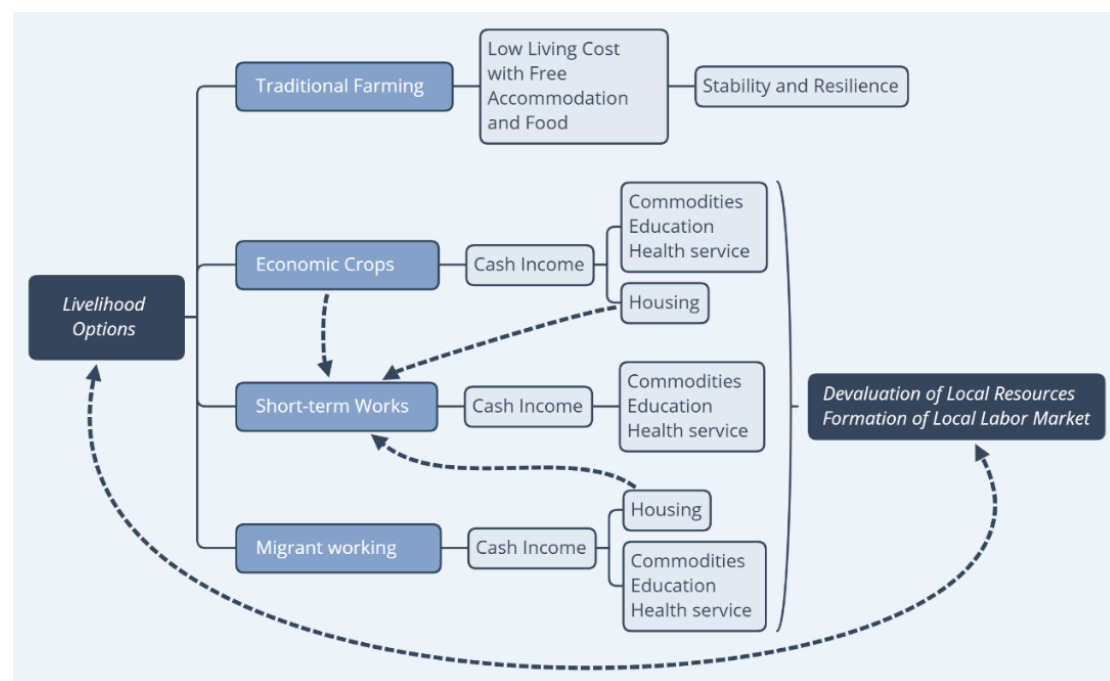


Figure 3. Overview of livelihood options in Yelangping

Figure 3 concludes the four options that constitute the livelihood strategy in Yelangping now: traditional farming, growing economic crops, local short-term works and migrant working. A family make choice from these options to assemble its livelihood strategy; the assemblage of every family is on motion because people may shift between different options; they may also develop new initiatives in the future.

During the growth of the urban and market economy, rural people operates massively at the interface with the urban. They transferred the wealth back to the rural by growing economic

crops, migrant working or doing business in the urban, and this wealth gets redistributed again within rural community and transferred into diverse industrial products, improving their living conditions. During this interacting process, traditional farming got consolidated, becoming a fallback option which provides them with stability and resilience in the context of market economy.

The following dynamics in this process deserve some attention.

Firstly, the spread of economic crop is not a linear process. Although there are still more than 100 households living on tobacco, the story in the first case has shown that, some people would reject it or give up growing it afterwards. Actually, there are more than half of the tobacco growers are registered 'impoverished households'. Although this is not a profitable crop, and since growing tobacco leads to soil degradation, the risk is even increasing, a lot of growers still continue growing it just because currently they do not have a better choice; and most of them could withdraw tobacco and go for migrant working at any time.

Secondly, although tobacco is not a strong income resource for most families, this industry has provided a lot of short-term works, which means that, some families that do not grow tobacco are also earning money from this industry, which has been shown in the second case. The silkworm industry is making the same contribution.

Thirdly, the role of local labor market is very important and influential in today's social life in Yelangping. According to the villagers, the earliest attempt of paid work emerged around 1990s, together with the emergence of the earliest migrant workers in the village.

'Before the massive employees in the mines, usually we helped each other with the farming work; for example, when transplanting the rice seedlings into field, I helped my neighbor with her family's land, after finish her work her or her families would come to help with my family's land. That's how we made over the busy periods. But after a lot of villagers found jobs in the nearby mines, the situation was quite different. It happened that I helped my neighbor's farming, but her families cannot help with mine because her husband and son were doing mining work. To solve this problem, we started to pay for this kind of work.'

From then on, the old reciprocal relationship in farming was diminished, with the paid work becoming widely accepted in the village, and the work does not only include the rice cultivation, but also tobacco production and processing, the housing construction. The local labor market is highly depended on the kinship and network.

Fourthly, with the attenuation of subsistence farming, labor gets saved for parenting. The way local people raise a child has been evolving quickly towards a 'modern style', with a strong demand of cash to buy baby products from the market. This is supported by the extended family, and also renders a strong cash demand.

Fifthly, traditional farming plays an important role in the social life of Yelangping. Living in the village with a small-scale mixed farm provided local people with free accommodation and food. Usually in an extended family, a certain scale of traditional farming is included, but the labor division can be different, in some cases it is between genders and in other cases it is between generations. Meanwhile, traditional farming and the other cash-earning activities are supporting each other, consolidating the mixed livelihood strategy.

Sixthly, livelihoods diversification is also accompanied by the devaluation of local resources because they are being replaced by industrial products. People are giving up using charcoal

and tee seed oil from the forestry; building a house requires construction materials, rather than free woods, bamboo and ox manure; these leads to the demand of cash. Tobacco cultivation is declining due to soil degradation, which are pushing villagers to other livelihood options.

Chapter 7: The Making of Mutated Modernity

In the context of China's development, the rural became the common object of the state and the urban. The state is deploying a modern ideology to orient rural development, while the urban is eager for agricultural products, labor and new market from the rural.

Behind the changing rhetoric (which has never been clearly and officially defined) in rural policies made by the state, the firm endorsement of modernization stays unchanged. The blueprint of the countryside is composed of an industrialized and market-oriented agricultural sector and the eradication of poverty. This generates the innovations on land tenure system, the encouragement of agricultural cooperatives, modern technology and rural financial service, and the TPA strategy. Modernization has been implemented by the state as 'a comprehensive package of technical and institutional measures aimed at widespread societal transformation and underpinned by neo-evolutionary theoretical narratives' (Arce & Long, 2000, p.2).

On the other hand, the growth of the urban has opened the access to wealth to rural people. Development is a process in which wealth flows from the high-capital-density territory to the low-capital-density territory. This process happens between the first world and China, and also between the urban and the rural. This is the inner logic of China's rural transformation, but the flow of wealth is achieved by people's self-organized activities at grassroot level; they become the actors that connect the two spaces.

This fits into the notion of 'mutated modernity'. Arce and Long (2000) reconfigured modernity from an anthropologist perspective by adopting the metaphors of 'mutants' and 'mutations'. Moving away from the binary scope which is made up of 'tradition' and 'modern', they characterized those self-organized social processes as 'mutated modernity', in which the new social forms emerge out from existing ones and are able to reproduce or transform themselves in various ways (Arce & Long, 2000). In this perspective, modernity is not something to be completed or ended, but reworked by the localized practices from within; modernization is not dictated by external actors (Hebinck, Bosma & Veldwish, 2019). As it has been explained,

how the ideas and practices of modernity are themselves appropriated and re-embedded in locally-situated practices, thus accelerating the fragmentation and dispersal of modernity into constantly proliferating modernities (Arce & Long, 2000, p.1).

Placed at the interface, the people in Yelangping have developed new livelihood initiatives to earn money from the urban side. They go for migrant working, grow economic crops, and use the remittance to construct their homeland in the rural. The inflow of wealth, involved with the existing institutions of extended family and social network, renders new forms of social life. During this process, the traditional reciprocal relationships in subsistence farming has almost been replaced by a local labor market that is developed on social network. The labor market constantly provides short-term works to local people in the fields of economic crops management and house construction, redistributing the wealth within the community.

Another part of the wealth inflow is used to buy industrial products, which activates the local commodity economy and revives the towns with the devaluation of local resources. The recent years have witnessed the growth of the real economy in the forms of expanding urban areas and increasing shops in Jiwei Town and Huayuan County, especially for baby products

and construction materials. The industrial products are used to support parenting, farming, housing and daily life, improving the life quality. The urban-rural interface is re-shaped in this process, with the two spaces tied closely. The commodity economy increases the cash demand and makes rural people increasingly rely on the wealth inflow from the urban.

Despite moving towards a modern life, the traditional farming, however, is consolidated. The family-based mixed farm which contains staple crops, vegetables and livestock is still widely practiced by the people in Yelangping. The prevalence of hybrid breeds, chemicals and agro-machineries has greatly alleviated the work load of traditional farming with a reliable field output. In this way, keeping a certain scale of traditional farming becomes a fallback option in local livelihood strategy. Living in the village with a mixed farm provides the people with free accommodation and self-sufficient food, and enables the extended family to perform parenting, because most migrant workers are not able to raise up their kids in cities. In general, traditional farming provides rural families with stability and resilience when urban economy is overwhelmingly exclusive.

On the other hand, the state's orientation for rural transformation turns out dysfunction. Although modern technology and machinery has been widely accepted and the institutional innovation of land transfer is implemented, agricultural modernization is not realized, and there is no indication that it can be realized in recent future. The encourage of land transfer failed to facilitate scale farming because farming is not profitable due to current socio-economic conditions. Tobacco, as a government-introduced economic crop, didn't bring prosperity to local community; in contrast, the financial service for tobacco cultivation makes growers tied in this regime. The promotion of agricultural enterprises and cooperatives is responded by the failure of rice cooperative and tobacco cooperative in Yelangping, while the only successful one was developed without any help and orientation from the state. The massive implementation of the TPA strategy didn't generate much influence on the 'impoverished households' and the entire community.

In general, this research has shown that, rural transformation in China is achieved by massive grassroots operations at the urban-rural interface. The access to urban wealth and modern values has been resembled, reworked and made into diversified livelihood strategies by rural people; this diversification is deeply involved with local institutions of extended family and social network, and has re-organized their social life. Rural exodus didn't happen; instead an active rural community has emerged. This transformation has proven the agency of rural people in their knowledge and understanding on societal change and a critical mind of making decisions. What is happening in rural China is the making of mutated modernity.

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Appendix

The following is the poster which introduces the TPA policy and aid strategy, displayed at the office place of village committee. Photo was taken on 12th September 2018.

【脱贫攻坚到户政策告知书】

根据中央和省委、省政府脱贫攻坚部署精神，对建档立卡贫困户予以政策支持。支持范围包括产业发展、就业培训、易地搬迁、危房改造、教育资助、医疗救助、兜底保障和生态扶贫等方面。为了使建档立卡贫困户知晓政策、享受政策、用好政策，现将主要到户政策予以公布。期望广大贫困群众通过辛勤劳动和在国家政策扶持下，早日脱贫致富奔小康！

湖南省扶贫开发领导小组办公室
2017年5月

脱贫攻坚到户主要政策一览表

类别	项目	政策内容
产业扶贫	资金补助	对建档立卡贫困户发展产业（含特色产业、电商、乡村旅游）的，给予一定的产业帮扶资金。具体标准由各县确定。
	小额信贷	符合条件的贫困户发展产业，按照授信情况为其提供1-5万元、3年期以内免抵押、免担保、基准利率、财政全额贴息的扶贫小额信贷。
	农业保险保费	为51个贫困县参加农业保险的贫困户补贴90%保险保费。
	借款人意外保险保费	建档立卡贫困户投保扶贫小额信贷借款人意外保险的，最高可给予90%的保费补贴。具体补贴标准由各县确定。
就业扶贫	交通补助	对跨区域（包括跨省、跨市州、跨县区）外出务工的建档立卡贫困人口，给予一定的交通补助，具体标准及拨付办法由各地根据实际情况确定。
	职业培训补贴	贫困人口参加就业技能培训的，培训期间按实际课时给予生活费补贴，具体参照我省就业技能培训补贴资金申领发放程序执行。
	创业担保贷款扶持	将建档立卡贫困人口纳入创业担保贷款扶持范围，各市、县经当地人民政府同意，可放宽创业担保贷款申请条件，提高贷款利率上限。
安居扶贫	易地扶贫搬迁	属于易地扶贫搬迁的对象，由县级政府统筹实施的安置房面积控制在人均25㎡；分散自建的按人均25㎡的标准给予不少于800元/㎡的补助。
	危房改造	无房或居住在C、D级危房中的建档立卡贫困户、低保户、农村分散供养特困人员和贫困残疾人家庭，经农户自愿申请、村评议、乡镇审核、县级审批和三级公示，改造房屋验收合格后可获得农村危房改造补助。具体补助金额根据县级人民政府制定的差异化补助政策确定。
教育扶贫	教育助学	（1）学前教育：对在全省公办幼儿园和经县级以上教育行政部门审批设立的普惠性民办幼儿园就读的建档立卡贫困家庭幼儿，给予1000元/人/年的入园补助。
		（2）义务教育：对就读小学的建档立卡贫困家庭寄宿生，补助贫困寄宿生生活费1000元/生/年，就读初中的补助贫困寄宿生生活费1250元/生/年。
		（3）高中教育：对建档立卡贫困家庭学生免除普通高中学费，标准为示范性高中（含特色教育学校）1000元/生/期，其他800元/生/期。同时，给予平均2000元/生/年助学金（各地根据实际可分1-3档）。
		（4）中职教育：建档立卡贫困家庭学生接受中职教育可享受2000元/生/年的国家助学金；对纳入到“一家一”助学就业工程的贫困学生，另给予2000元/人/年生活费补助，共补2年，第三年推荐定向实习并就业。
		（5）高等教育：建档立卡贫困家庭学生接受本、专科教育可获得平均3000元/生/年国家助学金和最高8000元/生/年助学贷款；硕士研究生可获得6000元/生/年国家助学金和最高12000元/生/年助学贷款。
	雨露计划	（1）职业教育：建档立卡贫困家庭学生接受职业教育的，按照“应补尽补”原则，叠加给予3000元/人的扶贫助学补助。中职、高职和五年制高职教育分别连续补助二年、三年、四年。具体标准参照省相关规定执行。
		（2）农村实用技术培训：建档立卡贫困劳动力参加市县级培训补助120元/人/天，参加县级培训补助100元/人/天。
		（3）就业培训：对接受半年以上职业技能培训并获得初、中级职业资格证书的贫困家庭劳动力，每人补助1500元。
健康扶贫	医疗保障	（1）建档立卡贫困人口参加城乡居民医保的个人缴费部分，通过财政扶贫专项资金等渠道给予补贴，具体补贴标准由统筹地人民政府确定。
		（2）建档立卡贫困人口参与新农合就医报销比例提高10%。
		（3）建档立卡贫困人口大病保险补偿起付线降低50%。
		（4）建档立卡贫困户参加贫困家庭综合保障保险的，最高给予90%的保费补贴。具体补贴标准由各县确定。
		（5）建立贫困人口健康档案，实行分类救治，采取“先诊疗、后付费”。
兜底扶贫	社会保障	（1）对纳入社会保障兜底脱贫的农村低保对象，按农村低保标准全额发放低保金；对未纳入社会保障兜底脱贫的农村低保对象，补差发放低保金；对农村特困人员（原五保对象），原则上按照不低于当地农村低保标准1.3倍发放基本生活救助供养金。
		（2）对农村孤儿发放基本生活补贴，补贴标准为数额600元/月，集中供养1000元/月。
生态扶贫	护林员补助	在40个集中连片特困地区和国家扶贫开发工作重点县，通过购买劳务的方式，选择身体健康、遵纪守法、责任心强、能胜任护林工作的建档立卡贫困人口就地转为生态护林员。

注：上述政策属现行执行标准，如果国家政策进行调整，按调整后的政策标准执行。