

**Digesting Industrialisation:
Social Changes in Two Industrialised Villages in East China**

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Abstract

Industrialisation has caused substantial and profound changes in rural China. Based on fieldwork in two industrialised villages, Jiangbin (江滨) and Weiken (围垦), on the outskirts of Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, this research examines how the rural residents and the rural communities cope with the challenges brought by the industries. In Jiangbin and Weiken, industrialisation has already been integrated into the everyday life. Like food, water, and air, industrialisation has become a necessity and an indispensable part of local people's life. Villagers strive to 'digest' industrialisation and its side effects. Rather than passively adapting to the challenges, they strive to understand, co-exist with, and even take advantage of industrialisation. The observations on how local people digest industrialisation serve as a lens for understanding the value, social bonds, and social structure of contemporary rural China at a time of momentous change.

This research critically engages with Fei Xiaotong's theories on the organisation of Chinese rural society in the pre-communist era. It examines the three parts of Fei's classic proposition, i.e., the differential mode of association (chaxu geju 差序格局), with reference to rural residents' adaption to and resistance against the challenges in the era of industrialisation. Based on Fei's theories, this research proposes three arguments. 1) Fei Xiaotong considers rural residents' individuality as the behavioural basis of the differential mode of association. I argue that although many villagers follow a 'selfish' logic to survive and thrive in the tide of industrialisation, the connotation of their individuality has significantly changed. 2) The kinship-based closeness that forms the concentric circular structure of each individual rural resident's social networks in Fei's theory has now been replaced by a more fluid, diversified, and relative type of social bonds. Functional groups that are established based on profession, geographical distribution of households, and similar experience (e.g. diseases) have gradually replaced blood ties in the formation of local people's social networks in rural society. 3) Traditional ethics (renlun 人伦) that serve as a vertical binding force in Fei's differential mode of association has observed much contemporary variation. This has led to a shrinking sphere of influence of traditional

ethics, which proves itself unfitted to many new issues in the industrialised villages. The three arguments lead to a further discussion of the driving forces - capitalism, urbanisation, grassroots institutional reform, and legal awareness - behind the on-going social changes.

Based on an 11-month on-site research and extensive qualitative data collected through my fieldwork, I present 14 ethnographic portraits of villagers in this dissertation. These portraits illustrate the mentality and reaction of rural residents when they face the challenges of land acquisition, changing means of livelihood, and pollution caused by industrialisation. These ethnographic portraits exemplify how social change in rural China is perceived by ordinary people and how the rural residents respond to the change.

This research bridges literature on village studies, sociology of industrialisation, and social inequality in China. It adds contemporary elements to Fei's theories. Furthermore, it contributes to the studies of Chinese rural society both theoretically and empirically: the multi-dimensional examination on the driving forces behind social change in the two researched villages critically responds to the mainstream assumptions about the state-society tension in the socio-economic transition of China, whereas the first-hand and up-to-date empirical data facilitate our understanding of the current status and future of Chinese villages in the tide of industrialisation.

Chapter 1. Chinese Villages Facing Industrialisation: Background, Literature, and the Project Design

1.1 ‘Disunity’ in an industrialised village and the ‘digestion’ of industrialisation

It was a day in the early September of 2014 when I stepped into Jiangbin Village for the first time. Jiangbin is the second research site in my project. As a notorious ‘cancer village’, Jiangbin is home to the Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park. It accommodates more than 30 factories ranging from synthetic fibre manufacturers, medicine producers, to dyeing and finishing workshops. At the time I reached the village, the whole industrial park was operating in full capacity. Smoke came out from the chimneys without a moment of interruption. Trucks were shuttling back and forth, loading and unloading goods. Machineries were humming in a low and steady pitch. The factories altogether wove a picture that matched the stereotype image of how an industrial zone looked in the modern era. What shaped a contrast to the busy scene in the industrial park was the residential area of the village, which was separated from the factories by a road: almost all the households kept the big metal gates of their yards shuttled, leaving the streets empty and quiet in most circumstances during the working hours. There were no longer any big patches of arable land in the village. Only the small vegetable plots scattered on the side of the road or in between houses reminded me that it was a village that for a time accommodated an agricultural means of livelihood and lifestyle. I prepared myself for embracing an industrialised village that differed from rural communities in the traditional sense, reflected in Fei Xiaotong’s village ethnographies in the republican era. Nonetheless, Jiangbin shocked me at the first glance for how deep industrialisation has changed its contour.

However, it is worth noting that the influence of industrialisation on Jiangbin Village was far wider and deeper than a shift of the community’s look or a change in lifestyle due to its geographical intimacy with an industrial park. As soon as I settled in and started to talk to the local people, I began to realise that industrialisation has literally become a part of local life. Villagers regarded industrialisation as a necessity for living, just like food, water, or air. They internalised industrialisation in their

everyday social and moral life in different ways and in an individually specified manner. The internalisation resembled the organic process of digestion. The metaphor of ‘digesting industrialisation’, as a guiding concept and theme in the dissertation, denotes the relationship between industrialisation and rural residents in the industrialised villages of China in two ways. First, it outlines villagers’ dependence on industrialisation, which has become a source of ‘nutrition’ for survival. More importantly, it reflects the complexity of the process and the outcome of the interaction: just like the result of digestion that varies from head to head, villagers’ internalisation of industrialisation takes different forms, ranging from passive endurance, active adaptation, to strategic exploitation. Through the process of digestion, the impact of industrialisation manifests itself differently in a case-specified manner too. As my observations indicate, industrialisation gives rise to individuality, reshapes the pattern of social organisation, and restores the ethical codes in the two rural communities I visited. The digestion of industrialisation is reflected in a number of social changes inflicted, experienced, and reinforced by the local people.

Donghai was my first encounter in Jiangbin Village. He ran a bicycle repair stand at the conjunction of two main roads in the village, right on the border of the residential area and the industrial park. The stand consisted of a shabby tool shed, an open-air workstation, and a waiting area under the roof, where Donghai put several rattan chairs and two thermos bottles for his clients. Surprisingly enough, there were always people gathering in Donghai’s stand for chitchats, with tea mugs at their hands. They were mostly neighbours in the village. The liveliness in the bicycle repair stand shaped a contrast to the quietness on the streets in the village during the daytime. Donghai half-jokingly compared his stand to the ‘information spots’ (qingbao zhan 情报站) in the Chinese villages during the Anti-Japanese War. The fact that Donghai involved himself a lot into the conversation with his visitors made him a most knowledgeable person to the happenings and relations in the neighbourhood. After a few visits, I became acquainted with Donghai and some of the frequent visitors to the stand.

Donghai was born and bred in Jiangbin. He used to work in the No. 2 Agricultural Machinery Company of Xiaoshan before the business was privatised. Donghai was

among the workers that had been laid off during the transition. He opened up this bicycle repair stand some ten years ago at his early 30s as an alternative means of livelihood. As a local dweller, Donghai witnessed the development of the industrial park. According to Donghai, life in the village has been greatly changed since its establishment. He maintained a mixed feeling to the changes brought by industrialisation, which best exemplified the complex process of how industrialisation was digested locally.

Those people who gathered in Donghai's bicycle stand talked about the industries in their neighbourhood a lot. How to digest the consequences of the overwhelming tide of industrialisation has become a main theme in the everyday life of Jiangbin. From the conversation, I gained the understanding that Donghai's visitors tended to place themselves in a hostile position to the industries: it was 'politically right' to dump criticism against the industrial park in the small talks among villagers, whereas any speech in favour of the businesses would attract disagreements and objections. Donghai recalled the interaction between the enterprises and the local people in the past decade, which he believed was the root of the prevailing hostility.

According to Donghai, it was land acquisition, pollution, and diseases that denoted the ever-deteriorated business-villager relations [Research log 73: Interview with Donghai, conducted on 19th September, 2014]. The chemical industrial park was born in dispute since it was built on villagers' farmland. In 2002, the village committee accepted, on behalf of the local residents, a 'bundle offer' for the land acquisition proposed by the township government. Almost all the family plots and contracted fields from the 4th, 5th, and 6th villagers' group were taken away by the industries in exchange for an empty promise of dividends from land share (土地分红 *tudi fenhong*), the amount of which never met the expectation of the residents thereafter. Donghai was lucky enough. As a industrial worker, he did not feel as much the pain of losing the only source of livelihood from the patches as many families did. Nevertheless, it was never difficult to find the sad stories in the neighbourhood, where the land-deprived senior or middle-aged villagers had to adapt themselves to new jobs along the assembly line in the factories. Before the questioning voice to the land acquisition died down, villagers realised that the factories imposed a challenge to their living environment with

various pollutants, ranging from sewage, smokes, to waste gas released by the trucks on the busy village road. As a neighbour of the industrial park, Donghai was among the closest witnesses of pollution caused by the businesses. Local people moaned and groaned over the environmental problems that have been aggravated day after day. It was in 2005, when the village was crowned the notorious title as a ‘cancer village’, that the anxiety and grievance in the neighbourhood reached the summit. The whole village was shrouded by the shadow of the fatal disease. However, as Donghai pointed out, local people gradually digested the sense of uncertainty and fear as time passed by. Years’ experience of living with the polluting industries has reduced their discontent into a sense of resignation and powerlessness. Despite the oft-heard criticism about the industrial park in the bicycle stand, local people did not do anything other than recollecting pieces of memory of the pastoral life in the ‘good old days’.

In the eyes of Donghai, industrialisation has made villagers in Jiangbin less united. Donghai half-jokingly commented on the relations in the community as ‘even more modern than that of the residential zones in big cities’, where neighbours were but ‘strangers living close by’ [Research log 73: Interview with Donghai, conducted on 19th September, 2014]. The prevailing hostility against industrialisation seldom set forth collective actions among villagers to struggle for their rights. The lack of unity had its root in how local residents process their relations with the industries. There were various type and level of dependence on the polluting businesses, which varied from individual villagers. Donghai himself exemplified the dependence. The migrant workers in the industrial park who lived in the nearby areas and commuted by electric bicycles accounted for a majority of Donghai’s clients. Without the thriving chemical plants on the doorstep, Donghai would not have made a living out of the stand. This fact moderated Donghai’s anger each time he was fussed by the neighbouring polluting industries. Similar to Donghai, every villager in Jiangbin has his or her own reason for restricting their grievance in their complaints rather than acting it out. The calculation based on the highly diversified dependence hindered the fundament of unity in the community. Donghai believed that it was as difficult to mobilise against the polluting industries in the neighbourhood as among a group of strangers.

The lack of unity rooted in villagers' various dependence on the chemical industrial park is a vivid evidence for how industrialisation is digested in the rural communities of contemporary China. It tallies with the core concept of 'digesting industrialisation' in this study and corroborates the two main features of 'digestion'. For one thing, the dependence outlines an inseparable relationship between rural residents and industries. For another, the diversity of dependence that caused the disunity in Jiangbin Village exemplifies the complex and individually specified process and outcome of how industrialisation is internalised by the local people. Citing what I saw and heard in Donghai's bicycle stand as an opening remark, this thesis plays with the phenomenon of 'digesting industrialisation'. It examines how industrialisation is digested by the villagers in individual, organisational, and moral dimensions and how the impact of such digestion is reflected in the social changes of contemporary rural China.

1.2 Introduction

China experienced rapid economic and social development at the dawn of the 21st century, which was driven by industrialisation, urbanisation, and capitalism. While the 'China miracle' was materialised in the big cities as busy traffic, mushrooming skyscrapers, and an ever-fast pace of urban life, its impacts on rural China were somehow less visible in the public sphere.¹

Scholars have considered rural China as the 'other' to its urban counterpart. Lai Lili summarises the concept of 'rural' (nong 农) in her recent book, where she insightfully points out the relational connotation of 'being rural' as a signifier counterposed to 'the urban'.² This dichotomy in Chinese society, as many researchers have discussed,³ is deeply rooted in the history and tradition of the country, alongside with the emergence of labour division. In the mid-20th century, the communist regime politically

¹ Miriam Driessen, "Rural Voids," *Public Culture* 30, no. 1 (2018): 61-84.

² Lili Lai, *Hygiene, Sociality, and Culture in Contemporary Rural China: The Uncanny New Village* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016).

³ Myron L Cohen, "Cultural and Political Inventions in Modern China: The Case of the Chinese 'Peasant'," *Daedalus* (1993): 151-70. Charles Wishart Hayford, "The Storm over the Peasant: Orientalism and Rhetoric," in Jeffery Cox and Shelton Stromquist eds., *Contesting the Master Narrative: Essays in Social History* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998). Ravi Kanbur and Xiaobo Zhang, "Fifty Years of Regional Inequality in China: A Journey through Central Planning, Reform, and Openness," *Review of development Economics* 9, no. 1 (2005): 87-106.

reinforced this rural-urban divide. The social classification endorsed by the central government,⁴ the socialist collectivisation reflected in the planned economy,⁵ and the household registration (hukou 户口) system routinized the ‘urban-biased’ social structure in China.⁶ China’s economic reforms since 1978 have institutionalised the heatedly debated and widely criticised bias by launching the national agenda of industrialisation and urbanisation. The national campaign of development continued to lean towards the urban sector, making it a ‘subsidised modernisation’ supported and financed by the rural residents.⁷ At the contemporary stage, the urban-rural discrepancy in China can be seen in the uneven distributional of resources in the realm of education,⁸ healthcare,⁹ infrastructure¹⁰ etc. Due to the discriminated policies and the capitalist system behind the unbalanced development, China observes a flow of rural population that fills the job market in the cities and townships. The on-going divide between the urban and the rural areas has brought a series of social challenges

⁴ Alan Smart and Josephine Smart, “Local Citizenship: Welfare Reform Urban/Rural Status, and Exclusion in China,” *Environment and Planning A* 33, no. 10 (2001): 1853-869.

⁵ John McMillan and Barry Naughton, “How to Reform a Planned Economy: Lessons from China,” *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 8, no. 1 (1992): 130-43.

⁶ Kam Wing Chan and Li Zhang, “The Hukou System and Rural-urban Migration in China: Processes and Changes,” *The China Quarterly* 160 (1999): 818-55. Fei-Ling Wang, *Organizing through Division and Exclusion: China’s Hukou System* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

⁷ Jikun Huang, Scott Rozelle, and Honglin Wang, “Fostering or Stripping Rural China: Modernizing Agriculture and Rural to Urban Capital Flows,” *The Developing Economies* 44, no. 1 (2006): 1-26. Ming Lu and Zhao Chen, “Urbanization, Urban-biased Policies, and Urban-Rural Inequality in China, 1987-2001,” *Chinese Economy* 39, no. 3 (2006): 42-63.

⁸ Emily Hannum, “Political Change and the Urban-rural Gap in Basic Education in China, 1949-1990,” *Comparative Education Review* 43, no. 2 (1999): 193-211. Xiaolei Qian and Russell Smyth, “Measuring Regional Inequality of Education in China: Widening Coast-inland Gap or Widening Rural-Urban Gap?” *Journal of International Development* 20, no. 2 (2008): 132-44. Ravi Kanbur and Xiaobo Zhang, “Spatial Inequality in Education and Healthcare in China,” in *Regional Inequality in China*, ed. Shenggen Fan, Ravi Kanbur, Xiaobo Zhang (London: Routledge, 2009), 92-110.

⁹ Winnie Yip and William C. Hsiao, “The Chinese Health System at a Crossroads,” *Health affairs* 27, no. 2 (2008): 460-68. Kanbur and Zhang, “Spatial Inequality in Education and Healthcare in China,” 92-110.

¹⁰ Shenggen Fan, Linxiu Zhang, and Xiaobo Zhang, *Growth, Inequality, and Poverty in Rural China: The Role of Public Investments*, Vol. 125 (Intl Food Policy Res Inst, 2002). Shenggen Fan and Xiaobo Zhang, “Infrastructure and Regional Economic Development in Rural China,” *China economic review* 15, no. 2 (2004): 203-14.

in contemporary Chinese society, such as overloaded metropolitans,¹¹ urban villages,¹² and hollowed villages.¹³

Parallel to the material factors that sow the seeds, preserve, and deepen such dichotomy, there are carefully constructed and manipulated social discourses that reinforce the urban-rural discrepancy conceptually. In Y. C. James Yen and Liang Shuming's debate over mass education in the Republic Era, both authors emphasised 'reconstructing rural China', although they disagreed on how to achieve it. According to Yen, the rural residents, who were 'ignorant', 'poor', 'weak', and 'selfish' (yu 愚, qiong 穷, ruo 弱, si 私), were the roots of a loose, benighted, and backward society.¹⁴ The rural residents stuck with the traditional 'rural' identity and the associated lifestyle. This signified their conservativeness, backwardness, and the status of being detached from the social mainstream, which was viewed as a countertrend against modernisation. More importantly, the concept of rural people (nongmin 农民) was invented not only to 'temporalize rural and urban spatial difference', but also to 'operate as an epistemic violence over the people who have been less privileged.'¹⁵ From the very beginning, the hegemonic discourse that outlined the antagonistic relationship between the urban and rural sectors in China was fabricated by the elites out of their practical political and economic concerns. Even under the current regime which spares no pain to advocate social equality throughout the country, the discourse is still reflected in its political propaganda explicitly or implicitly.

¹¹ Linda Wong, "China's Urban Migrants - the Public Policy Challenge," *Pacific Affairs* (1994): 335-55. Delia Davin, *Internal Migration in Contemporary China* (New York: Springer, 1998).

¹² Siqi Zheng, Fenjie Long, C. Cindy Fan, and Yizhen Gu, "Urban Villages in China: A 2008 Survey of Migrant Settlements in Beijing," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 50, no. 4 (2009): 425-46. Yaping Wang, Yanglin Wang, and Jiansheng Wu, "Urbanization and Informal Development in China: Urban Villages in Shenzhen," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 33, no. 4 (2009): 957-73.

¹³ Yansui Liu, Yu Liu, Yangfen Chen, and Hualou Long, "The Process and Driving Forces of Rural Hollowing in China under Rapid Urbanization," *Journal of Geographical Sciences* 20, no. 6 (2010): 876-88. Driessen, "Rural Voids," 61-84.

¹⁴ Shuming Liang 梁漱溟, *Xiangcun jianshe lilun* 乡村建设理论, in *Liang Shuming quanji* 梁漱溟全集, Vol. 2 (Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1991).

¹⁵ Lai, *Hygiene, Sociality, and Culture in Contemporary Rural China: The Uncanny New Village*, 27. Xiaotong Fei, Gary G. Hamilton, and Wang Zheng, *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society*, (Translation of Fei Xiaotong's *Xiangtu Zhongguo*, with an Introduction and Epilogue) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

The material and conceptual urban-rural divide jointly create a Bourdieusian *habitus* for Chinese rural residents, who consciously or unconsciously embrace their subordinated identity in the hierarchy of society. This embodied [un-]consciousness about inferiority made it almost natural for rural residents to adapt to social change silently. This, together with the semi-authoritarian regime and its complex power relations, makes the changing social structure, livelihoods, and lifestyle in rural China less visible in the modern era.

Nevertheless, it is over-simplistic to treat all the rural residents in China as victims of industrialisation. In fact, the connotation of ‘digestion’ is wider and more multi-dimensional than many pessimistic scholars have argued.¹⁶ Even though the rural area is paying for the cost of industrialisation, i.e., to serve as a reservoir for cheap labour¹⁷ and to suffer from the adverse environmental impact from the industries,¹⁸ rural people perceive and process the sacrifices differently. Many rural citizens altered their lifestyle, means of production, and ways of communication initiatively, so as to better survive in, or even to take advantage of the transformations. In the meantime, the social structure and cultural practices in rural communities change accordingly, which accommodate new challenges brought by industrialisation. Despite an unbalanced distribution of benefits and burden from development that is in favour of the urban areas, rural China adjusts itself spontaneously so as to keep up with the pace of development, digest the adverse side-effect of industrialisation, and taste the sweetness of the glittering economic prosperity.

Against this backdrop, my doctorate aims to understand life in the Chinese villages facing industrialisation from the angle of *changes*. It probes into how the people, the society, and the tradition evolve in the villages of China driven by industrialisation and the associated social tides. Many changes are taking place in the silence of the

¹⁶ Scott Rozelle, “Rural Industrialization and Increasing Inequality: Emerging Patterns in China’s Reforming Economy,” *Journal of comparative economics* 19, no. 3 (1994): 362-91. Chris Bramall, *The Industrialization of Rural China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁷ Hairong Yan, *New Masters, New Servants: Migration, Development, and Women Workers in China* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008). Jane Golley and Xin Meng, “Has China Run out of Surplus Labour?” *China Economic Review* 22, no. 4 (2011): 555-72.

¹⁸ Richard Louis Edmonds, *Patterns of China’s Lost Harmony: A Survey of the Country’s Environmental Degradation and Protection* (London: Routledge, 2012).

seemingly stagnant countryside. A multi-level analysis featuring the transformation of villagers' individuality, the patterns of social association, and the traditional ethics demonstrates a shift of Chinese villages from their traditional 'images' recorded in the classic ethnographies, e.g., Fei's portraits of pre-communist rural China. Meanwhile, this project contributes to a comprehensive understanding of development in rural China by telling the stories concealed under the eye-catching figures and political propaganda. It challenges the rigid understanding and the hegemonic discourse about the urban-rural dichotomy and the associated geographical classification, which consider the countryside of China as a backward subordinate to its urban counterpart. Findings from the field of this research question the oft-seen fatalistic argument that rural residents are doomed to eat the bitter fruit of the industrialisation, urbanisation, and modernisation. To the contrary, the aforementioned changes are by nature signs of the dynamics in the rural communities, which strive to survive and thrive in the overwhelming tide of industrialisation.

This project is situated at the conjunction of three sets of literature, which focus on rural communities, rural residents' mobilisation, and the motive power behind contemporary rural China's social change. First and foremost, this project joins the scholarly attempt at drawing ethnographic portraits of Chinese villages and their people. Many existing anthropological studies on Chinese villages over the past century enable me to understand the dynamics of rural society in China over time and space. Citing Fei Xiaotong's classic observations and theories about the structure and organisation of rural Chinese society as a reference,¹⁹ I examine how and why industrialised villages undergo a number of social changes and betray the traditional 'Chinese characteristics' that were widely mentioned in the studies of Chinese society. In the meantime, recent ethnographic research on the development of villages during

¹⁹ In the books *Peasant Life in China* and *Earthbound China*, Fei Xiaotong presents the microsociology of two rural communities with detailed observation and rich empirical data, whereas in his later works *From the Soil* and *Rural Recovery*, Fei theorises the structure of rural society in China. My research benefits from Fei's research methods and thoughts about rural society of China simultaneously. Hsiao-Tung Fei, *Peasant Life in China* (Redditch: Read Books Ltd, 2013). Chih-I. Chang and Hsiao Tung-Fei, *Earthbound China: A Study of the Rural Economy of Yunnan* (London: Routledge, 2013). Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*. Xiaotong Fei 费孝通, *Xiangtu chongjian 乡土重建* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2004). Xiaotong Fei, *Rural development in China: Prospect and retrospect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

the economic reform and in the post-reform era provides an up-to-date socio-economic context for analysing the phenomena in my case studies. Secondly, this research engages with literature on social mobilisation around the issues of health, welfare, and the environment. To analyse how rural residents digest industrialisation, I focus on villagers' stance taking and strategy making in their mobilisation against the challenges brought by industrialisation. This research serves as another case to demonstrate that social movements appear in different forms, ranging from revolutionary collective actions, everyday 'small acts of resistance', to strategic resignation. It emphasises that the constantly changing social, economic, and political contexts are a set of key determinants that shape perception and action in the social mobilisation.²⁰ Lastly, this project joins the discussion about the driving forces behind the dramatic changes in contemporary rural China. Much existing scholarship elaborates the roles of industrialisation, urbanisation, flourishing capitalism, administrative innovation, and the wakening legal awareness among residents in the rural society of the country. This project probes into the relations of these factors and exemplifies the mechanism where multiple interlinked social trends collaboratively shape the transformation of the villages and the rural residents.

1.3 Ethnographies of Chinese villages: past and present

In this section, I present a chronological review of ethnographical studies on Chinese villages and discuss how they contextualise my research conceptually and methodologically. My doctorate is, in the first place, an ethnographic study of two Chinese villages – Jiangbin (江滨) and Weiken (围垦). In this project, ethnography serves not only as a writing genre but also as a methodological guideline for designing and implementing my research. With its irreplaceable value as a 'context-sensitive' research method which emphasises thick description, the plausibility of accounts, the cultural context, and the immersion of the researcher,²¹ ethnography is an ideal approach that meets the objective of this project, i.e., to illustrate the diversity of

²⁰ Anna Lora-Wainwright, *Resigned Activism: Living with Pollution in Rural China* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2017), 9.

²¹ Michael H. Agar, *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Academic Press, 1996). David M. Fetterman, *Ethnography* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998).

experiences of social change in rural China and to theorise the logics between the text from and the context of the research fields. As a result, village ethnographies produced by the anthropological and sociological studies on rural China are among the most important sources of literature with which this study resonates.

Research on Chinese villages began in the early 20th century, when rural society was observing a structural transformation at the collapsing edge of the imperial China. The introduction of modern sociological methods expanded ways to study rural China, as scholars ‘suddenly come to a realisation that observations of everyday life can lead to knowledge.’²² Among the first few sociological and anthropological fieldworks in rural China were the surveys conducted by the Beijing Social Progress Association in 1914, Chen Da’s team in 1916, and Daniel Harrison Kulp’s team in 1918. Kulp endorsed an ‘organic way’ to record and account for ‘all the relationships shifting over through time’²³. This laid a methodological foundation for the following sociological studies on Han Chinese communities.²⁴ Like Kulp’s field research, my project seeks an integration of facts and their contexts in data collection and interpretation, which facilitates the understanding of a reflexive relationship between the phenomena in villagers’ everyday life and the structural factors in the local society.

The new rural reconstruction projects initiated by Liang Shuming and Yan Yangchu (Y. C. James Yen) in the 1920s and the 1930s marked the beginning of the exploration of ‘modernity’ in the countryside of China. To modernise rural China has been a century-long expedition for generations of scholars and policy makers. Liang and Yan’s debates on the routes to rural modernisation still shed light on the mode of rural development in contemporary China. Based on an education experiment in Ding County of Hebei Province, which was recorded in a number of ethnographic accounts,²⁵ Yan summarises the characteristics of the rural society and its people. He

²² Peilin Li, *Social Transformation and Chinese Experience* (London: Routledge, 2017), 66.

²³ Daniel Harrison Kulp, *Country Life in South China* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1925).

²⁴ Shanfeng Li 李善峰, “Ershi shiji de Zhongguo cunluo yanjiu – yige yi zhuzuo wei xiansuo de taolun 20 世纪的中国村落研究——一个以著作为线索的讨论,” *Minsu yanjiu* 民俗研究 3 (2004): 2-15.

²⁵ Yangchu Yan 晏阳初, *Pingmin jiaoyu yu xiangcun yundong* 平民教育与乡村建设运动 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2014).

proposes the ‘four pillars’ of civil education (sida jiaoyu 四大教育) so as to create ‘new citizens’ (xinmin 新民). As Stig Thøgersen argues, this pioneering proposal resonates with the birth and evolution of the concept ‘citizenship’ in Europe since the 18th century.²⁶ Liang Shuming, on the contrary, supports the reconstruction of China’s countryside on the basis of its inherent social ethics, economy, and land system.²⁷ He emphasises the fundamental status of agriculture in the country’s economy and considers industrialisation as a ‘side-product’ of agricultural prosperity. Meanwhile, Liang endorses an autonomous yet institutionalised mode of community in rural governance, which, as he argues, best compromises with the conditions of China under transition and preserves the predominant Confucian culture in the localities. The experiments in four counties of Shandong Province exemplify Liang’s ideal of rural reconstruction in his early life before he engaged with the Communist regime. Liang’s ethnography about Zouping County provides a detailed analysis of rural reconstruction’s practicability with reference to the reality of China’s rural society.²⁸ Based on the debates over the route to rural construction and modernisation, I contextualise my research in a broader philosophical discussion on the nationality, the fundamental realities, and the social ethics of the country. This sets forth an underlying question in rural Chinese studies, i.e., to what extent the western routes and experience can be transplanted. It serves as a hint and alert for my project when I cautiously engage with the western concepts in the field of rural studies.

The 1940s observed surging developments in the sociological and anthropological studies of Chinese villages. Numerous emerging scholarships strengthened the status of ethnographical methods, which became a widely accepted tool in the systemic research of rural China and a fashion of presentation. Among the most influential projects in this period are Yao Maochun’s research of Taitou Village in Shandong Province,²⁹ Fei Xiaotong’s research of Kaixiangong Village in Jiangsu,³⁰ and Lin

²⁶ Stig Thøgersen, “Revisiting a Dramatic Triangle: The State, Villagers, and Social Activists in Chinese Rural Reconstruction Projects,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 38, no. 4 (2010): 9-33.

²⁷ Liang, *Xiangcun jianshe lilun*.

²⁸ Liang, *Xiangcun jianshe lilun*. See also Feirong Yang 杨菲蓉, *Liang Shuming hezuo lilun yu Zouping hezuo yundong* 梁漱溟合作理论与邹平合作运动 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2001).

²⁹ Martin C Yang, *A Chinese Village, Taitou, Shantung Province* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950).

Yaohua's research of Yixu and Yutian, two counties in Fujian that accommodate numerous lineage relationships.³¹ The three authors adopt a similar ethnographical approach to discuss the issues of agriculture, business, politics, legal practices, folk traditions, beliefs, lineage settings, and customs in villagers' daily life. These studies more or less follow a structural functionalist fashion to decipher the phenomena that scholars observed from the field with reference to the interpersonal relationship, family structure, and social organisation.

Based on the methodological and conceptual developments in anthropology, Fei Xiaotong summarises the modes of social organisation in rural China. Although Fei admits the diversity among villagers across a wide spectrum of geographic distribution, which results in a variety of routes to modernisation,³² he argues that the factors embedded in the culture, tradition, and ethics of the nation forge a distinctive yet identical logic in the transition of rural China. Many Fei's concepts, namely 'earthbound China' (xiangtu zhongguo 乡土中国), 'differential mode of association' (chaxu geju 差序格局), 'system of rites' (lifa guanxi 礼法关系), and 'rule by seniors' (zhanglao tongzhi 长老统治), are influential analytical tools to study the people and society of rural China. They set the stage for a 'common sense of traditional Chinese culture' reflected in Fei's studies of pre-communist rural China, which distinguishes scholarships on China from those on western communities. Fei's attempt to theorise China's rural society introduces a macro analytical framework to the micro ethnographic community studies. Still extensively cited, Fei's theories prove to be influential through time and space.

I adopt the concept of differential mode of association in the presentation and analysis of my research. This theory has three components, namely rural residents' individuality, each individual's concentric circular social networks defined by the relative closeness, and the social ethics. My research structurally resonates with the

³⁰ Xiaotong Fei 费孝通, *Jiangcun jingji* 江村经济 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2006).

³¹ Yaohua Lin 林耀华, *Yixu de zongzu yanjiu: fu baizu* 义序的宗族研究: 附拜祖 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2000).

³² Xiaotong Fei 费孝通 and Zhiyi Zhang 张之毅, *Yunnan sancun* 云南三村 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2006).

theory of differential mode of association by examining the three components respectively in my investigation of the behavioural basis, the horizontal pattern of organisation, and the vertical bonds behind the social order in contemporary Chinese villages under transition. As will be seen in the following analyses, the introduction of Fei Xiaotong's theoretical framework to the discussion of the up-to-date developments and changes in the society of contemporary rural China facilitates an inspection of the tension between traditional characters of republican China's countryside and the new challenges in rural residents' everyday life. This constitutes a significant part of my project's theoretical contribution.

From the 1950s onwards, ethnographic literature of rural Chinese studies goes beyond portraying the social settings of and the daily life in the villages. Many works focus on the inner structure and the external relations of rural communities, which form 'themes' in qualitative research based on detailed ethnographies. My project benefits from two branches of research among these scholarships theoretically.

Rather than examining the dominating organisations in rural communities, scholars study the operation logic and the significance of particular functional groups in Chinese villages. For example, Maurice Freedman's study about the 'rice sharing' communities that possess a collectively owned irrigation system and produce agricultural surpluses collaboratively demonstrates the role of lineage system in collective assets accumulation.³³ Freedman's view was further corroborated by Burton Pasternak,³⁴ Hugh Baker,³⁵ and Myron Cohen³⁶'s ethnographies. In the meantime, many scholars use ethnographic cases to illustrate the function of administrative organisations at the grassroots level. William Hinton,³⁷ Isabel and David Crook,³⁸ and

³³ Maurice Freedman, *Lineage Organization in South Eastern China* (London: The Athlone Press, 1958). Maurice Freedman, *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung* (London: The Athlone Press, 1966).

³⁴ Burton Pasternak, "The Role of the Frontier in Chinese Lineage Development," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 28, no. 3 (1969): 551-61. Burton Pasternak, *Kinship & Community in Two Chinese Villages* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972).

³⁵ Hugh DR Baker and John Clammer, "Chinese Family and Kinship," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 7, no. 1 (1979): 136-39.

³⁶ Myron L. Cohen, "Agnatic Kinship in South Taiwan," *Ethnology* 8, no. 2 (1969): 167-82.

³⁷ William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Document of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

Ramon Hawley Myers,³⁹ elaborate on the significance of land reform and transforming agricultural production mode for organisational evolution in villages. In these cases, newly emerged functional associations of an economically cooperative-type gradually replace the authorities based on kinship relations. This view is however refuted by Gary Seaman,⁴⁰ William Parish and Martin Whyte,⁴¹ and Richard Madsen.⁴² They argue that even though the changing land ownership and mode of production bring benefits to many rural households, the inherent hierarchy in the villages is still maintained by the lineage, ethical, and religious traditions and is reflected in the uneven distribution of resources and the division of administrative powers within functional organisations. My research critically engages with the debates about the political powers inside the village. I pay attention to the power struggle and the organisational change in my research sites. The relative importance of lineage and kinship-based groups which persists in certain parts of local people's everyday life and decays in the others remains a hint for me to understand the social changes in my research sites.

Another theme features the boundary of rural communities and villages' relations with the external world. G. William Skinner denies the role of the village as a fundamental unit in rural society.⁴³ According to Skinner's findings from the Chengdu Plain, it was the local markets that define the public social sphere of rural residents. The grassroots fairs form relatively stable regional markets, upon which the geo-economic entities take the shape. The approach of 'regional analysis' proposed by Skinner triggers extensive debates in the anthropological study of rural China.⁴⁴

³⁸ Isabel Crook and David Crook, *Ten Mile Inn: Mass Movement in a Chinese Village* (New York: Pantheon, 1979).

³⁹ Ramon Hawley Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890-1949* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).

⁴⁰ Gary Seaman, *Temple Organization in a Chinese Village*, Vol. 101 (Chinese Association for Folklore, 1974).

⁴¹ William L. Parish and Martin King Whyte, *Village and Family in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

⁴² Richard Madsen and Richard W. Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1984).

⁴³ George William Skinner, *Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China* (Association for Asian Studies, 1965).

⁴⁴ William Lately, "The Spatial Approach to Chinese History: Illustrations from North China and the Upper Yangzi," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (1989): 100-13. Daniel Little and Joseph W.

Unlike Skinner, several scholars argue for the irreplaceable significance of village in China's rural society. Philip Huang,⁴⁵ for example, argues that village sustains the peasant economy and bridges the families to a broader market based on his research on the South Manchuria Railway Company's ethnographic survey in 33 villages in north China and 8 villages in the Yangtze River Delta. Huang criticises Skinner's paradigm as methodologically impracticable, which leads to 'fragmented images of both the state and the villages'.⁴⁶ Prasenjit Duara, likewise, presents a historical sketch of four villages in Hebei Province in China's state-making era and argues that the village serves as a fundamental unit in rural society since it accommodates the 'cultural nexus of power' that is jointly determined by the state and multiple informal interactions among local residents at the grassroots level.⁴⁷ Further to these debates, my research examines the significance of the village as a unit of everyday life and social interaction in the present. Like Fei Xiaotong, I treat administrative village as the 'outer circle' in rural residents' social association⁴⁸ and interpret it as a closed circle for collective memories and resource distribution. Although contemporary Chinese villages are better connected to the external market and the world, they still act as inseparable and incommensurable organs in rural society both in terms of their organisational function and local residents' psychological needs.

China's Reform and Opening Up marks a new era of ethnographic studies on rural China, as researchers have easier access to the fields. Meanwhile, there are new issues that broaden the scope of scholarship. My project joins three sets of ethnographies that respectively portray the changing power relations, economy, and cultural practices inside rural communities. Like ethnographic case studies in this period, my research provides detailed accounts of villages and their people, and tracks their transformations. This improves the understanding of the localised driving forces

Esherick, "Testing the Testers: A Reply to Barbara Sands and Ramon Myers's Critique of G. William Skinner's Regional Systems Approach to China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (1989): 90-99.

⁴⁵ Philip Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1985). Philip C Huang, *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta, 1350-1988* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1990).

⁴⁶ Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*.

⁴⁷ Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

⁴⁸ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*.

behind the changing social contour and local people's reaction, which is often omitted in theoretical and statistical studies of contemporary Chinese villages.

In the post-reform era, the revolutionary change of politics in rural China is reflected in the retreating of state power from the villages. According to Li Shanfeng, self-governance is 'a key to understand what is going on inside Chinese rural communities.'⁴⁹ Yu Jianrong,⁵⁰ Wu Yi,⁵¹ and He Baogang⁵² use ethnographic cases to demonstrate that village governance at the current stage is jointly determined by the traditional political culture in the localities, the changing state-society relations, revolution, and people's increasing familiarity with the political procedures. The elaboration on the prevailing self-governance facilitates my analysis of the political settings in the research sites. In addition to the discussion of the state-society relations in contemporary rural China, the impact of non-political factors on the revolutionary change of rural China's political landscape has caught extensive intellectual interest. Most importantly, scholars continue to use full-length ethnographies to elaborate on the changing roles of family and kinship network in the social life of rural China,⁵³ which, as Huang Xiyi⁵⁴ and Hok Bun Ku⁵⁵ argue, fill the power vacuum and sustain the village organs in the post-reform era. The changing political mechanism is also reflected in the role of individual political elites. For instance, Helen F. Siu,⁵⁶ Huang Shu-min,⁵⁷ and Gregory A. Ruf⁵⁸ delineate the role of

⁴⁹ Li, "Ershi shiji de Zhongguo cunluo yanjiu," 8.

⁵⁰ Jianrong Yu 于建嵘, *Yuecun zhengzhi: zhuanxingqi Zhongguo xiangcun zhengzhi jiegou de bianqian* 岳村政治: 转型期中国乡村政治结构的变迁 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2001).

⁵¹ Yi Wu 吴毅, *Cunzhi bianqian zhong de quanwei yu zhixu* 村治变迁中的权威与秩序 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2002).

⁵² Baogang He, *Rural Democracy in China: The Role of Village Elections* (New York: Springer, 2007).

⁵³ Charles Stafford, *Separation and Reunion in Modern China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Yunxiang Yan, *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). Susanne Brandtstädter and Gonçalo D. Santos eds., *Chinese Kinship: Contemporary Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁵⁴ Xiyi Huang, "Two-way Changes: Kinship in Contemporary Rural China," in Flemming Christiansen ed., *Village Inc: Chinese Rural Society in the 1990s* (Hatfield: UH Press 1998): 177.

⁵⁵ Hok Bun Ku, *Moral Politics in a South Chinese Village: Responsibility, Reciprocity, and Resistance* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

⁵⁶ Helen F Siu, *Agents and Victims in South China: Accomplices in Rural Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁵⁷ Shu-Min Huang, *The Spiral Road: Change in a Chinese Village through the Eyes of a Communist Party Leader* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2013).

village cadres as agents between state and local society in their case studies. Siu's intriguing point about the dilemma of local elites is widely resonated in later ethnographic research on the relationship between cadres, villagers, and the state.⁵⁹

The economic reform since the late 1970s has strengthened the presence of capitalism to the countryside. Mushrooming township and village enterprises (TVEs) rejuvenate the economy of rural China and reshape the livelihood and lifestyle of the population once living solely on agricultural production.⁶⁰ The irresistible trend of deagriculturalisation, as suggested by She Xiaoye in her case study of Wanfeng Village in the Pearl River Delta, challenges the traditional social order in rural communities. My research resonates with She's observation by presenting the rising business powers - including companies that are undergoing insider privatisation and enterprises that land in the locality - and their impact on the local society. The tension between business powers and traditional powers in the villages is reflected in local people's adaption to and stance taking in the social changes. Driven by the economically motivated industrialisation and deagriculturalisation, many villages in China experience a changing lifestyle. The key phenomenon of rural to urban migration has received extensive scholarly interest, where its root, form, and consequence are analysed.⁶¹ According to Murphy, the nation-wide migration not only yielded important opportunities for rural communities but also undermined their existence. Some ethnographies⁶² illustrate how rural communities are gradually

⁵⁸ Gregory A Ruf, *Cadres and Kin: Making a Socialist Village in West China, 1921-1991* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

⁵⁹ Stephan Feuchtwang and Wang Mingming, *Grassroots Charisma: Four Local Leaders in China* (London: Routledge, 2013). Shukai Zhao, "Township-village Relations: Disconnection in the Midst of Control," *Chinese Sociology & Anthropology* 39, no. 2 (2007): 74-93. Juan Wang, "Shifting Boundaries between the State and Society: Village Cadres as New Activists in Collective Petition," *The China Quarterly* 211 (2012): 697-717. Daniel Kelliher, *Peasant Power in China: The Era of Rural Reform, 1979-1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Jean C. Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China: The Political Economy of Village Government* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1989). David Zweig, "Rural People, the Politicians, and Power," *The China Journal* 38 (1997): 153-68.

⁶⁰ Ronald Coase and Ning Wang, *How China Became Capitalist* (Springer, 2016). Louis Putterman, "On the Past and Future of China's Township and Village-owned Enterprises," *World Development* 25, no. 10 (1997): 1639-55.

⁶¹ Rachel Murphy, *How Migrant Labor Is Changing Rural China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁶² Hu Sun, Yansui Liu, and Keshuai Xu, "Hollow Villages and Rural Restructuring in Major Rural Regions of China: A Case Study of Yucheng City, Shandong Province," *Chinese Geographical Science* 21, no. 3 (2011): 354-63. Driessen, "Rural Voids," 61-84.

degraded as ‘hollow villages’ accommodating only the elderly and children. My case studies, on the contrary, exemplify the other side of the story, which is seldom seen in the existing literature. The two industrialised and economically advanced villages in my research are destinations of workers from less developed areas in China. The inflow of migrant workers reshapes the lifestyle of the local people and introduces new elements to the social network in the communities.

Complementary to the political and economic transitions in the post-reform era, the cultural life of rural residents has also undergone fundamental changes. A most significant factor that denotes the change is the evolution of the *guanxi* network in the villages. According to Yan Yunxiang,⁶³ Mayfair Mei-hui Yang,⁶⁴ and Andrew B. Kipnis,⁶⁵ the ever expanding social realm of rural residents has enriched the connotation of *guanxi* as well as the techniques to produce and strengthen the *guanxi* networks. The shifting mode of social interaction and communication leads to a wide range of transforming cultural practices, such as banquets and gatherings,⁶⁶ popular religions,⁶⁷ and popular rituals.⁶⁸ The social norms encoded in community events, religious beliefs, sentiments of reciprocity, and other cultural aspects of life undergo a gradual yet significant transformation consequentially. More recently, scholars focus on the tension between an uprising state-led socialist value and the social norms transmitted among and sustained by local people. For example, in an ethnography about the moral framework in a village of Hubei, Hans Steinmuller argues that villagers tend to internalise the state propaganda and vent grievance through nuanced

⁶³ Yunxiang Yan, *The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

⁶⁴ Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

⁶⁵ Andrew B Kipnis, *Producing Guanxi: Sentiment, Self, and Subculture in a North China Village* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1997).

⁶⁶ Xin Liu, *In One's Own Shadow: An Ethnographic Account of the Condition of Post-reform Rural China* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2000). Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets*.

⁶⁷ Stephan Feuchtwang, *The Imperial Metaphor: Popular Religion in China* (London: Routledge, 1992). Paul Sangren, *History and Magical Power in a Chinese Community* (Berkeley: Stanford University Press, 1987). Thomas David DuBois, *The Sacred Village: Social Change and Religious Life in Rural North China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

⁶⁸ Siu, *Agents and Victims in South China*. Lily Lee Tsai, “Cadres, Temple and Lineage Institutions, and Governance in Rural China,” *The China Journal* 48 (2002): 1-27. Erik Mueggler, *The Age of Wild Ghosts: Memory, Violence, and Place in Southwest China* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2001).

sacarcism.⁶⁹ This practice, which Steinmuller terms as ‘everyday ethics’ in rural China, effectively protects ordinary residents from moral and political risks. Likewise, Lai Lili’s recent ethnography sheds light on how villagers localise the policy of ‘building a new socialist countryside.’⁷⁰ Villagers quest for well-being and solidarity under the state scheme by redefining health, sociality, and culture in localised contexts. The aforementioned ethnographic portraits of villages in the post-reform era contribute to the understanding of changing cultural practices and morality in contemporary rural China. My research joins the literature to probe into the essence, form, and roots of the changes.

To summarise, ethnographic research on Chinese rural society is tightly associated to the social transitions towards modernisation in the past century and is hence constantly enriched along with China’s development. By reviewing the history of ethnographic research on rural China in the past century, I gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics and limitation of my project, given its nature as an ethnographic account situated in particular time, space, and social background. My project resonates with the ethnographies ontologically, methodologically, and conceptually. First, I inherit the prevailing paradigm in the ethnographic research of rural China and take the village as a unit of analysis. Second, the ethnographic approach to collect and interpret data is a core part of my research and where its contribution lies. Third, the thematic issues discussed in these ethnographies provide a context for my findings and form a background for the development of my own theoretical approach. A chronological overview of ethnographies of China suggests that modernisation has been and continues to be a central issue in rural Chinese studies. So far, the state-led campaign of rural industrialisation has become the main route for the development of rural areas. However, the side-effect of industrialisation and the tension between different forms of development and the practices and values that were closely associated with traditional rural society, as portrayed by Fei in his works, await to be further explored. By elaborating these issues with reference to the

⁶⁹ Hans Steinmüller, *Communities of Complicity: Everyday Ethics in Rural China* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013).

⁷⁰ Lai, *Hygiene, Sociality, and Culture in Contemporary Rural China*.

ethnographic examples, this project contributes to contemporary scholarship on rural China both theoretically and empirically.

1.4 Rural residents' mobilisation around health, welfare, and the environment

In this research, I examine rural residents' mobilisation so as to discuss the structural and behavioural changes in local society caused by industrialisation. Both of my research sites have struggled against the unbalanced distribution of rights and burdens in the past two decades. Local residents' concern features land use, employments, and the environmental and health impacts of the industries, which coincide with the main themes of activist campaigns in contemporary China. Therefore, I situate my analysis in the discussion of China's rural grassroots activism. The findings of my research resonate with literature on the origins, forms, features, techniques, and restrictions of grassroots mobilisation in rural China. It contributes to the understanding of the tension arising from and the reaction against industrialisation empirically. Furthermore, I bridge the scholarship on mobilisation with debates around the changing social networks, power relations, culture, and ethics in rural communities. This helps contextualise social mobilisation and demonstrate its reflexive relations with the structural transformations in rural society of modern China.

This research takes a middle ground in the theoretical spectrum to perceive activism. It combines the views from the radical and the functionalist ends. It emphasises the inseparable nature of action and reflection in social mobilisation. Unlike Paulo Freire, who defines activism as an 'action for action's sake' and rigidly distinguishes it from the mobilisation with particular propositions,⁷¹ I justify the pursuit of material interest as an indispensable part of the movements. The grassroots activist campaigns in my research fields have clearly-defined purposes, which are reflected in the participants' stances and objectives. Freire's definition of activism leads to an over-simplistic deduction of the solidarity among activists, who, as he points out, are naturally united because of their common social class as the oppressed.⁷² My observations on rural residents in Jiangbin and Weiken challenge Freire's view. Rural residents have

⁷¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (30th Anniversary edition)*. (New York: Continuum, 2000).

⁷² Ibid.

different attitudes and stances, although all of them are members of the ‘subaltern’ group that is subordinated to the political and business powers. Nevertheless, it goes too far to perceive the mobilisation at the other functionalist end, where the altruistic nature of individuals is regarded as a key psychological factor among the motives of participation.⁷³ This leads to a somehow pessimistic argument that activism may never become an identity project.⁷⁴ Empirical evidence from my research fields suggests that many villagers ally to mobilise collectively for the collective interest of functional groups, namely villagers’ group (cunmin xiaozu 村民小组, formerly production team / shengchan dui 生产队), professional associations, neighbourhood, and patient families’ circle. This process nurtures citizenship and reinforces the collective identity of the participating residents. Against this backdrop, I adopt a Gramscian approach to position and comprehend activism in this research. The case studies in this project resonate with and contribute to Gramsci’s thoughts on the point that they exemplify Gramsci’s argument that ‘hegemony is partial.’⁷⁵ The open activist actions and the parallel silent social change as the villagers digest industrialisation demonstrate a compromise between the locals and the powers. Chinese rural residents’ citizenship is shaped by their collective experiences, which they can draw upon to reject industrialisation as value endorsed by the ruling class.

Practically speaking, my research joins literature to illustrate the diversity of grassroots mobilisation in terms of its forms and manifestations. Activism is not necessarily confrontational. Rather than involving blood, sweat, and tear all the time and aiming at a revolutionary power shift, activism can take a less formal form in a less visible arena of society. The everyday resistance, which James C. Scott uses to describe the subaltern politics in South East Asia,⁷⁶ reflects the repertoire of

⁷³ E. Gil Clary, Mark Snyder, Robert D. Ridge, John Copeland, Arthur A. Stukas, Julie Haugen, Peter Miene, and Ed Diener, “Understanding and Assessing the Motivations of Volunteers: A Functional Approach,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74, no. 6 (1998): 1516-530. Clelia Anna Mannino, Mark Snyder, and Allen M. Omoto, “Why Do People Get Involved? Motivations for Volunteerism and Other Forms of Social Action,” *Social Motivation* (2011): 127-46.

⁷⁴ Debra Friedman and Doug McAdam, “Collective Identity and Activism,” *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (1992): 156-73.

⁷⁵ Antonio Gramsci and Quintin Hoare, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Vol. 294 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 373.

⁷⁶ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

mobilisation that was consciously selected by the peasants within their reach. The observation on the residents' tools of mobilisation in Jiangbin and Weiken corroborates with Scott's theoretical summarisation about the 'weapons of the weak': when activists empty their toolbox of open and confrontational opposition, the everyday form of resistance continues to exist and function to shape the state-society relations. In addition, my research exemplifies the prevailing individualism among participants, which accounts for the diversity of stances and strategies in their mobilisation. Villagers' individualistic tendency is not only reflected in their interest seeking and their self-protective countermeasures to the hazards brought by industrialisation,⁷⁷ but also demonstrated in their highly diversified stance taking influenced by each individual's distinctive position in local social networks.⁷⁸ Each villager in Jiangbin and Weiken is thus involved in the mobilisation against the adverse side-effects of industrialisation to a different extents. Some actively mobilise through open actions, whereas others opt for acquiescence and resignation, as a result of the burdens rooted in their dependence on the local powers⁷⁹ and a sense of powerlessness to treat the sufferings as an 'inevitable' consequence of development.⁸⁰

Rural China's grassroots mobilisation is situated in the broad context of the country's political regime, power relations, and social structure. Many scholars propose the 'Chinese characteristics' of social movements. This idea is fully comprehensible when approached from the political and socio-economic background of China. My

⁷⁷ Bryan Tilt, "Industrial Pollution and Environmental Health in Rural China: Risk, Uncertainty and Individualization," *China Quarterly* 214 (2013): 283-301. Anna Lora-Wainwright, *Fighting for Breath: Living Morally and Dying of Cancer in a Chinese Village* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

⁷⁸ Ajiang Chen 陈阿江, Pengli Cheng 程鹏立, and Yajuan Luo 罗亚娟. "Aizhengcun" diaocha: Huanjing jiankang fengxian de renzhi yu yingdui "癌症村"调查: 环境健康风险的认知与应对. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2013. Anna Lora-Wainwright, "Introduction. Dying for Development: Pollution, Illness and the Limits of Citizens' Agency in China," *The China Quarterly* 214, no. 214 (2013): 243-54. Lora-Wainwright, *Resigned Activism*.

⁷⁹ Benjamin Van Rooij, Anna Lora-Wainwright, Yunmei Wu, and Yiyun Zhang, "Activist Acquiescence: Power, Pollution and Access to Justice in a Chinese Village," (March 7, 2014), UC Irvine School of Law Research Paper No. 2014-22. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2406219>, accessed on 2018-11-10. Lora-Wainwright, *Resigned Activism*.

⁸⁰ John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980). Anna Lora-Wainwright, Yiyun Zhang, Yunmei Wu, and Benjamin Van Rooij, "Learning to Live with Pollution: The Making of Environmental Subjects in a Chinese Industrialized Village," *The China Journal* 68, no. 1 (2012): 106-24.

project borrows this concept and develops the discussion on the ‘Chinese characteristics’ by associating it with the examination of social changes in Jiangbin and Weiken.

The ‘Chinese characteristic’ of social mobilisation in rural China manifests itself in the sources of tension and grievance in the first place. The long-standing barrier between rural residents and their urban counterparts in the dualistic structure of China sustains prevalent social inequality. As many scholars point out, there is an insurmountable rural-urban gap in people’s income⁸¹ and their access to social resource,⁸² which is preserved and reinforced by the *hukou* system,⁸³ disproportionate state investments,⁸⁴ and many other biased policies of development.⁸⁵ In the meantime, the land acquisition, which responds to the national call for countryside development through industrialisation and urbanisation, destroys the traditional agricultural means of livelihood in many rural households and ruins their family finance.⁸⁶ As a consequence, many grassroots mobilisation campaigns in rural areas are framed as ‘fights for survival’ by the activists.⁸⁷ Jiangbin and Weiken exemplify ordinary residents’ difficult situation under the dual pressure from the discriminated policies and land disputes. Many of my respondents consider their subordinated status as a doomed destiny of living in China’s countryside. This, together with Ching and Creed’s observation,⁸⁸ denotes the characteristics of the grassroots social mobilisation

⁸¹ Dennis Tao Yang, “Urban-Biased Policies and Rising Income Inequality in China,” *The American Economic Review* 89, no. 2 (1999): 306-10. Terry Sicular, Yue Ximing, Björn Gustafsson, and Li Shi, “The Urban-rural Income Gap and Inequality in China,” *Review of Income and Wealth* 53, no. 1 (2007): 93-126.

⁸² Nan Lin, “Inequality in Social Capital,” *Contemporary Sociology* 29, no. 6 (2000): 785-95.

⁸³ Chan and Zhang, “The Hukou System and Rural-Urban Migration in China,” 818-55. Farzana Afridi, Sherry Xin Li, and Yufei Ren, “Social Identity and Inequality: The Impact of China’s Hukou System,” *Journal of Public Economics* 123, no. C (2015): 17-29.

⁸⁴ Fan et al., *Growth Inequality and Poverty in Rural China*. Fan and Zhang, “Infrastructure and Regional Economic Development in Rural China,” 203-14.

⁸⁵ Martin King Whyte, “The Paradoxes of Rural-Urban Inequality in Contemporary China,” In Martin King Whyte ed., *One Country, Two Societies: Rural-Urban Inequality in Contemporary China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), 1-28.

⁸⁶ Yaohui Zhao, “Leaving the Countryside: Rural-to-Urban Migration Decisions in China,” *American Economic Review* 89, no. 2 (1999): 281-86. Chengri Ding, “Policy and Praxis of Land Acquisition in China,” *Land Use Policy* 24, no. 1 (2007): 1-13.

⁸⁷ Kathy Le Mons Walker, “From Covert to Overt: Everyday Peasant Politics in China and the Implications for Transnational Agrarian Movements,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8, no. 2-3 (2008): 462-88.

⁸⁸ Barbara Ching and Gerald W. Creed, *Knowing Your Place: Rural Identity and Cultural Hierarchy* (London: Routledge, 1996).

in rural China that are defined and determined by the politically inferior status of rural residents at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Another unique feature of grassroots activism in rural China is tightly associated with the economic reform since the late 1970s. Jiangbin and Weiken, along with many other villages under transition, observe the rise of private businesses in the neighbourhood. The reform marks a redistribution of wealth and resources in rural communities. Through the process that Li and Rozelle define as ‘insider privatisation’,⁸⁹ the formerly collectively owned assets change their owners, which exclude the ordinary villagers from the benefits they used to enjoy. My case studies show that insider privatisation usually runs in parallel with rural industrialisation. It takes time for rural residents to psychologically adapt to the dramatic change from the era of collective economy. The change of the villagers’ identity from an ‘owner’ to an ‘employer’ of the business triggers grievance and sets the stage for mobilisation. This illustrates another distinctive characteristic of activism in rural China which features the source of subaltern residents’ grievance from the economic perspective.

Furthermore, activists in rural China are subject to a special political and social context, in which the channels and the strategies of mobilisation are embedded. The state control over the civil society in the semi-authoritarian regime of contemporary China limits the room for the activists to mobilise. This results in another manifestation of ‘Chinese characteristics’ of activism, which is reflected in the limited social space and channels for civic actions. Based on the study of the pro-ecological movements in China, Peter Ho puts forward the concept of ‘embedded activism’ to describe the collective actions controlled by political elites and led by the state.⁹⁰ My empirical data resonate with Ho’s argument that the ‘embeddedness’ of Chinese activism ‘refers to the contextualisation and networks of human action’.⁹¹ Villagers carefully frame their open actions to avoid political risks. In the meantime, the social

⁸⁹ Hongbin Li and Scott Rozelle, “Privatizing Rural China: Insider Privatization, Innovative Contracts and the Performance of Township Enterprises,” *The China Quarterly* 176, no. 176 (2003): 981-1005. Hongbin Li and Scott Rozelle, “Insider Privatization with a Tail: The Screening Contract and Performance of Privatized Firms in Rural China,” *Journal of Development Economics* 75, no. 1 (2004): 1-26.

⁹⁰ Peter Ho and Richard L. Edmonds, “Perspectives of Time and Change: Rethinking Embedded Green Activism in China,” in *China’s Embedded Activism: Opportunities and Constraints of a Social Movement*, eds. Peter Ho and Richard L. Edmonds. (London; New York: Routledge, 2008): 218.

⁹¹ Ibid.

networks in local society determine the range and form of participation in the mobilisation. Moreover, to justify their claims, rural residents tend to hinge their actions on the division between the central and local levels of government and between the legal and administrative sectors of the state. The phenomenon, which Kevin O'Brien and Li Lianjiang define as 'rightful resistance' in rural China, reveals the tactics of activism. My research joins many case studies under this theoretical framework⁹² to demonstrate how rural residents strategically exploit the limited political space under the existing regime of China and the logics behind their choices. In addition, it takes the discussion a step further by examining the 'reaction' of the mobilisation to local society. The social changes triggered and catalysed by the open actions against industrialisation best exemplify how activism survives and evolves in Chinese rural communities.

The issues of health, welfare, and the environment, which are side-effects of the fast-paced industrialisation, raise extensive grievance among residents of rural China. Many residents mobilise against the uneven distribution of benefit and burden of industrialisation. It is common that rural residents portray themselves as direct victims of pollution and diseases,⁹³ and moan over their sacrifice in the unfair welfare system of the country.⁹⁴ As a consequence, health, welfare, and the environment become popular themes in the social mobilisation of rural China. An increasing number of scholarships focusing on environmental pollution, diseases, and the associated problems of social welfare have emerged since the new millennium. They serve as a core set of literature to contextualise my research both theoretically and empirically. Noteworthy for this study, social mobilisation aiming at environmental rights, health, and wellbeing bears special features in terms of its evidence adduction and

⁹² Yongshun Cai, *Collective Resistance in China: Why Popular Protests Succeed or Fail*, Studies of the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010). Ying Wu and Ngai-Ming Yip, "The Homeowners' Protest in Beijing and Guangzhou: Rightful Resistance and Beyond," *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences: Annual Review* 5, no. 3 (2010): 513-24. Julia Chuang, "China's Rural Land Politics: Bureaucratic Absorption and the Muting of Rightful Resistance," *The China Quarterly* 219, no. 6 (2014): 649-69.

⁹³ Jun Jing, "Environmental Protests in Rural China," In *Chinese Society*, 222-240 (Routledge, 2003). Lee Liu, "Made in China: Cancer Villages," *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 52, no. 2 (2010): 8-21.

⁹⁴ Xiaoli Zhao, Sufang Zhang, and Chunyang Fan, "Environmental Externality and Inequality in China: Current Status and Future Choices," *Environmental Pollution* 190, no. C (2014): 176-79.

compensation seeking. Therefore, the form of environmentalism and the outcome of the actions are usually subject to the local power relations and the technical issues. Findings from Jiangbin and Weiken show that the fight against pollution and diseases counts for a main source of tension in parallel with the land-driven disputes in the locality. It facilitates the understanding of how local people digest the challenges of development and reflects the dynamics between industrialisation and local society.

The mobilisation for the rights of a clean living environment, health, and well-being are driven by the emerging environmentalism among rural residents of China. The form of environmentalism in China, as Anna Lora-Wainwright argues,⁹⁵ is determined by the context of environmental concerns and environmental movements and is hence different from that in the theoretical models based on cases from the global North.⁹⁶ The mobilisation usually bursts out from the most disadvantaged groups rather than being prompted by 'affluence and self-indulgence'. This differentiates the environmentalism in rural China from that inspired by the post-materialist value.⁹⁷ This research joins the studies of grassroots environmental mobilisation in China to outline the characteristics of rural Chinese residents' environmentalism. The environmentalism of villagers, which, as Lora-Wainwright and Tilt argue,⁹⁸ is rooted in the individualism of rural residents and demonstrates plurality. Many case studies suggest that villagers facing industrialisation and its side-effects define hazards,⁹⁹ solution,¹⁰⁰ morality and value,¹⁰¹ and even their identity as victims¹⁰² differently.

⁹⁵ Lora-Wainwright, *Resigned Activism*, 3.

⁹⁶ Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 25th Anniversary ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). Barbara L. Allen, *Uneasy Alchemy: Citizens and Experts in Louisiana's Chemical Corridor Disputes*, Urban and Industrial Environments (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003). Steve Lerner, *Diamond: A Struggle for Environmental Justice in Louisiana's Chemical Corridor* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005). Steve Lerner, *Sacrifice Zones: The Front Lines of Toxic Chemical Exposure in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010).

⁹⁷ Ronald Inglehart, "Changing Values, Economic Development and Political Change," *International Social Science Journal* 47, no. 145 (1995): 379-403. Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values," *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (2000): 19-51.

⁹⁸ Lora-Wainwright, *Resigned Activism*. Tilt, *Industrial Pollution and Environmental Health in Rural China*, 283-301.

⁹⁹ Anna Lora-Wainwright, "Of Farming Chemicals and Cancer Deaths: The Politics of Health in Contemporary Rural China," *Social Anthropology* 17, no. 1 (2009): 56-73. Tilt, "Industrial Pollution and Environmental Health in Rural China," 283-301.

¹⁰⁰ Benjamin Van Rooij et al., "The Compensation Trap: The Limits of Community-based Pollution Regulation in China," *Pace Environmental Law Review* 29, no. 3 (2012): 701-45.

Meanwhile, Chen Ajiang and his team's¹⁰³ findings from three 'cancer villages' demonstrate that local residents endorse environmentalism differently in their everyday practice as they are involved in the local politics, depending on business powers, and participating in public social events to various extents. My research resonates with the literature and exemplifies the formation of environmentalism among rural residents, who struggle to shape their identity in the dilemma between development and the environment.

It is also worth noting that there are a number of technical issues that distinguish the environmental mobilisation from other grassroots campaigns for social justice. First, the contested causality between pollution and health is 'notoriously complex,'¹⁰⁴ which inevitably impedes the legitimisation of lay residents' claims of hazard.¹⁰⁵ As the standards of evidence are monopolised by the powers, it is not rare to see the polluters and their political alliances define and shape science according to their interest, leaving no sound ground for the pro-ecological mobilisation from the grassroots level.¹⁰⁶ My research contributes to this discussion empirically by presenting two Chinese villages that face similar challenges from the scientific discourse. Apart from demonstrating the tension between the powers and the subordinates in the contest for science and evidence, my narrative also sheds light on the influence of local social networks on individual villager's perception about

¹⁰¹ Jing, "Environmental Protests in Rural China," 222-40. Anna L. Ahlers and Yongdong Shen, "Breathe Easy? Local Nuances of Authoritarian Environmentalism in China's Battle against Air Pollution," *The China Quarterly* 234 (2018): 299-319. Mette Halskov Hansen and Zhaozhui Liu, "Air Pollution and Grassroots Echoes of 'Ecological Civilization' in Rural China," *The China Quarterly* 234 (2017): 320-39.

¹⁰² Tilt, "Industrial Pollution and Environmental Health in Rural China," 283-301.

¹⁰³ Ajiang Chen 陈阿江, Pengli Cheng 程鹏立, and Yajuan Luo 罗亚娟. "Aizhengcun" diaocha: Huanjing jiankang fengxian de renzhi yu yingdui "癌症村"调查: 环境健康风险的认知与应对. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Jennifer Holdaway, "Environment and Health Research in China: The State of the Field," *The China Quarterly* 214, no. 214 (2013): 256.

¹⁰⁵ Jennifer Holdaway et al., *Huanjing yu jiankang: Kuoxueke shijiao* 环境与健康: 跨学科视角 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010). Chen, Cheng, and Luo, "Aizhengcun" diaocha. Tilt, "Industrial Pollution and Environmental Health in Rural China," 283-301. Anna Lora-Wainwright and Ajiang Chen, "China's Cancer Villages: Contested Evidence and the Politics of Pollution," in Merrill Singer ed., *A Companion to the Anthropology of Environmental Health* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2016): 396-416.

¹⁰⁶ Michelle Murphy, *Sick Building Syndrome and the Problem of Uncertainty: Environmental Politics, Technoscience, and Women Workers* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006). Benjamin Van Rooij, "The People vs. Pollution: Understanding Citizen Action against Pollution in China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 63 (2010): 55-77.

pollution and health. Second, as Benjamin Van Rooij and his team argue,¹⁰⁷ monetary redress for damages caused by industrial activities has become an overarching end to the pro-ecological mobilisation in rural China. Interest reframes the grievance and actions among local people. Some opt for a compromise with the polluting industries and EPB officials,¹⁰⁸ while others, driven by a sense of opportunism, mobilise solely to maximise the compensation and abandon their pro-ecological motive.¹⁰⁹ The phenomenon, which Van Rooij defines as a ‘compensation trap’, coincides with my argument that local people’s digest of industrialisation is multi-directional: villagers can sometimes take advantage of industrialisation and its social impact rather than passively adapting to it.

To summarise, my research is situated in the theoretical and empirical discussion of activism. The activist campaigns in Jiangbin and Weiken are the most visible medium to understand the tension in the social settings of rural China in era of industrial transition. Therefore, they are treated as a hint for the data collection and presentation in my project. Findings from Jiangbin and Weiken deepen the understanding of the nature, the form, and the consequences of social activism. It also contributes to the studies of Chinese social movements with empirical cases to illustrate the ‘Chinese characteristics’ of activism, which has been portrayed in much existing literature. The mobilisation in Jiangbin and Weiken focuses on a number of welfare and environmental problems, which are believed to have been caused by the industries in the neighbourhood. In this regard, the scholarship focusing on the pro-ecological mobilisation in rural China is the most relevant to my research. My interpretation of the grassroots mobilisation enriches this set of literature as it examines the context of the activism and emphasises the fluid and mutual shaping relations between the ‘local victims’ and the process of rural industrialisation.

¹⁰⁷ Van Rooij et al., “The Compensation Trap: The Limits of Community-based Pollution Regulation in China,” *Pace Environmental Law Review* 29, no. 3 (2012): 701-45.

¹⁰⁸ Bryan Tilt, “The Political Ecology of Pollution Enforcement in China: A Case from Sichuan’s Rural Industrial Sector,” *The China Quarterly* 192 (2007): 915-32.

¹⁰⁹ Van Rooij et al., “The Compensation Trap: The Limits of Community-based Pollution Regulation in China,” *Pace Environmental Law Review* 29, no. 3 (2012): 701-45.

1.5 Behind the social changes in contemporary China

The chronological examination of Chinese villages' evolution through ethnographies in the past century and the inspection of rural residents' activist campaigns against the challenges along the path of development lead to a question about the driving forces behind the social changes and local people's adaption. As existing literature suggests, the structural and behavioural changes in rural communities of China are deeply embedded in the flourishing capitalism, the overwhelming urbanisation, the grassroots institutional reform, and the gradually wakening legal awareness of people. However, despite the consensus on the importance of these factors, the channel through which they influence the villages and the people remain highly contested. The discussion about the underlying roots of the changes in the scholarship sets the stage for analysing my research data and achieving a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of rural residents' digestion of industrialisation. My work, at the same time, joins the debate and contributes to the studies of China's social transition from a grassroots perspective.

The role of capitalism in the social and economic reform of rural China has attracted extensive academic interest. According to Susan Whiting and Michael Webber,¹¹⁰ it is capitalism rather than socialism that defines the power and wealth structure in Chinese rural society. The 'centrally managed capitalism' in China,¹¹¹ which is a typical model of capitalism in the East Asia, demonstrates state-led ideological features that run in coherence with the communist propaganda after 1949.¹¹² Capitalism poses a big challenge to rural residents both mentally and materially. This leads to an intriguing question on the social impact of capitalism in rural China, which lights up my exploration of the roots beneath the social changes in the industrialised villages. My project resonates with the existing literature to examine such impact in

¹¹⁰ Susan H. Whiting, *Power and Wealth in Rural China: The Political Economy of Institutional Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Michael John Webber, *Making Capitalism in Rural China* (Cheltenham; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2012).

¹¹¹ Nan Lin, "Capitalism in China: A Centrally Managed Capitalism (CMC) and Its Future," *Management and Organization Review* 7, no. 1 (2011): 63-96.

¹¹² Charlmers Johnson, "Economic Crisis in East Asia: The Clash of Capitalisms," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 22, no. 6 (1998): 653-61. Jean C. Oi, *Rural China Takes off: Institutional Foundations of Economic Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). S. Gordon Redding, *The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2013).

three aspects. First, the flourishing capitalism introduces privatisation to the rural economy, which was originally based on loose family-based production and collective businesses.¹¹³ The roaring expansion of the private sector in rural China reshapes the contour of political economy in the villages. However, rather than many empirical studies which keep track of rural residents' painful sacrifice to the transition,¹¹⁴ my findings from Jiangbin and Weiken suggest that local people have already digested the shock and are gradually adapting to the changes: many take job offers from the privatised businesses in the neighbourhood and perceive the unbalanced distribution of means of production and wealth as a part of their fate. Second, the changing mode of production in rural China is by and large a consequence of capitalisation, which introduces land deprivation and a change of the means of livelihood,¹¹⁵ agricultural work force loss,¹¹⁶ and the decay of the earth-bound culture.¹¹⁷ My research highlights that the influence of these challenges is not overwhelmingly adverse. More often than not, rural communities adapt to and take advantage of the changes through spontaneous self-adjustments of individual values, social structure, and ethics. This process enriches our understanding about the 'resilience' of social entities.¹¹⁸ Last but not the least, the reviving market in the process of capitalisation challenges the agriculture-centred rural economy and lifestyle in China.¹¹⁹ It also expands the social realm of rural residents and enables the

¹¹³ McMillan and Naughton, "How to Reform a Planned Economy," 130-43. Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007).

¹¹⁴ Wing Thye Woo, "The Real Reasons for China's Growth," *The China Journal* 41 (1999): 115-37. Kathy Le Mons Walker, "'Gangster Capitalism' and Peasant Protest in China: The Last Twenty Years," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 33, no. 1 (2006): 1-33. Kellee S. Tsai, *Capitalism without Democracy: The Private Sector in Contemporary China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

¹¹⁵ Brooke Wilmsen, "Expanding Capitalism in Rural China through Land Acquisition and Land Reforms," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 101 (2016): 701-17. Qian Forrest Zhang and Jianling Wu, "Political Dynamics in Land Commodification: Commodifying Rural Land Development Rights in Chengdu, China," *Geoforum* 78 (2017): 98-109.

¹¹⁶ Rachel Murphy, *How Migrant Labor Is Changing Rural China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Mary Elizabeth Gallagher, *Contagious Capitalism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011).

¹¹⁷ M. Boisot and J. Child, "From Fiefs to Clans and Network Capitalism: Explaining China's Emerging Economic Order," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (1996): 600-28. Yingjie Guo, "Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: The Search for National Identity under Reform", in David Goodman ed. *Routledge Studies on China in Transition Vol. 15* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2004).

¹¹⁸ Markus Keck, and Patrick Sakdapolrak, "What Is Social Resilience? Lessons Learned and Ways Forward," *Erdkunde* 67, no. 1 (2013): 5-19.

¹¹⁹ Dwayne Benjamin and Loren Brandt, "Markets and Inequality in Rural China: Parallels with the Past," *The American Economic Review* 89, no. 2 (1999): 292-95. Andrew G. Walder, "Markets and

rural residents to adapt to the life after land acquisition. By summarising the three categories of impact capitalism imposes to the rural society of China, my work discusses how these challenges result in the social changes and how the changes manifest themselves as a form of the local people and communities' adaption empirically.

Apart from capitalism, scholars also consider urbanisation as an underlying driving force of the social changes in rural China. Much existing literature studies an 'urban-rural dual structure', in which rural area is treated as a subordinate of its urban counterpart. Scholars point out that the unequal relations of urban and rural China are not only economical but also political.¹²⁰ The urban-rural gap is originated from an uneven access to a wide range of social resources, which has long been consolidated by the discriminative policies and the market. More recently, the state-led campaign advocates an integrated development scheme to fill the urban-rural gap by promoting urbanisation nationwide. The campaign puts forward various slogans, such as 'industry feeds agriculture' (gongye fanbu nongye 工业反哺农业) and 'city support the countryside' (chengshi zhichi nongcun 城市支持农村).¹²¹ The policy of 'giving more, taking less, and loosening control' (duoyu 多予, shaoqu 少取, fanghuo 放活)¹²² marks a new stage of the urban-rural relations in China. The progress of urbanisation and the difference between urban and rural development set the stage for analysing the social changes in the two industrialised villages in my project. Located in the peripheries of a most economically advanced metropolitan in China, Jiangbin and Weiken best exemplify the effects of the policies upon their implementation. However, despite the consensus on the existence of such an urban-rural dichotomy reflected in economic and social development, how rural residents perceive the fragmented relations between the two sectors and their 'otherness' to the urban counterparts lacks

Income Inequality in Rural China: Political Advantage in an Expanding Economy," *American Sociological Review* 67, no. 2 (2002): 231-53.

¹²⁰ Dennis Tao Yang, "What Has Caused Regional Inequality in China?" *China Economic Review* 13, no. 4 (2002): 331-34. Dennis Tao Yang and Fang Cai, "The Political Economy of China's Rural-urban Divide," in Nicholas C. Hope, Dennis Tao Yang, and Mu Yang Li, eds., *How Far across the River? Chinese Policy Reform at the Millennium* (Stanford: Stanford University Press: 2003): 389-416.

¹²¹ Guojia xinxing chengzhenhua guihua (2014-2020 nian) 国家新型城镇化规划 (2014-2020 年), available at http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2014-03/16/content_2640075.htm, accessed on 2014-03-16.

¹²² Ibid.

empirical evidence. Furthermore, the extent to which urbanisation conceptually reshapes rural residents' identity receives little academic attention. Lai Lili's ethnographic research on China's rural-urban divide stands out among the intellectual quests to this question. By referring to the local intimacy of the divide as an uncanny experience, Lai emphasises the importance of the individualised and embedded experience that constitutes the cognition of urbanisation and modernisation.¹²³ This approach guides my exploration of urbanisation's role in rural Chinese society both conceptually and methodologically.

Another approach to understand the social changes and their driving forces in rural China features the institutional reform at the grassroots level. According to Xu Yong and Wen Tiejun,¹²⁴ the reform, or villagers' self-governance to be specific, is by nature an experiment in parallel with the transition of rural economy in the era of industrialisation, which aims to use 'local wisdom' to tackle a number of emerging political challenges regarding ownership, collective assets, the mode of production, and the social welfare system in rural China. Much literature discusses the positive impact of the reform, such as encouraging political participation and creating political opportunity at the local level.¹²⁵ My fieldwork, on the contrary, questions the extent to which the state power retreats from rural society, leaving room for the civil society to function in the grassroots administration. Nevertheless, it is doubtless that the changing power relations in the villages inspired by the institutional reform catalyses the social changes in the rural society of China. On one hand, it balances the social networks based on kinship relations and geographical intimacy and paves the road for the implementation of industrialisation and development. On the other, it shows compatibility with the traditional political and social settings of rural communities. My research demonstrates that the villagers' autonomy, rather than being a top-down political process which has uniformed outputs, has been localised at behavioural,

¹²³ Lai, *Hygiene, Sociality, and Culture in Contemporary Rural China*.

¹²⁴ Xu Yong 徐勇 et al., "Cunmin zizhi he xiangcun zhili 村民自治和乡村治理," *Nongcun gongzuo tongxun* 农村工作通讯, no. 12 (2002): 38. Tiejun Wen 温铁军, *Ju'an siwei: Guojia anquan yu xiangcun zhili* 居危思危: 国家安全与乡村治理 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2016), 21.

¹²⁵ K. S. Louie, "Village Self-Governance and Democracy in China: An Evaluation," *Democratization* 8, no. 4 (2001): 134-54. Shuna Wang and Yao Yang, "Grassroots Democracy and Local Governance: Evidence from Rural China," *World Development* 35, no. 10 (2007): 1635-649.

structural, and ethical levels. The relationship between the state-led grassroots democratisation and the tradition of rural society yields insight of the power struggle behind the changes in contemporary Chinese rural society.

Finally, my research bridges the examination of social changes in rural China with the scholarly discussion of local people's legal awareness. According to Kevin O'Brien and Li Lianjiang,¹²⁶ the weakening collective controls and the improved legal system have raised rural residents' legal awareness in China. The most identifiable proof for this development is the increasing employment of 'legal weapons' in lodging complaints and mobilising for rights.¹²⁷ From within the rural communities, local people's rising legal awareness poses a challenge to traditional ethics and authorities in Fei Xiaotong's sense, where 'rituals' and 'the etiquette principles' (lifa lunchang 礼法伦常) plays a central role in forming and executing social order.¹²⁸ My observation resonates with Yang Shanhua and Hou Hongrui's theoretical analysis of the dichotomy of village affairs. The phenomenon, which Yang and Hou term as 'rationalised differential mode of association (chaxu geju de lixinghua 差序格局的理性化)',¹²⁹ outlines the differentiated spheres in everyday local life, to which the new and the traditional moral and behavioural codes apply respectively. From without the villages, it is worth noting that the rule of law is not the political practice *de facto* in the semi-authoritarian regime of contemporary China. Consequentially, the legal tools in the grassroots activism not always yield fruitful results. Much evidence suggests that rural residents, upon realising the bottleneck of their mobilisation, adopt

¹²⁶ Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "The Politics of Lodging Complaints in Rural China," *The China Quarterly* 143 (1995): 756-83.

¹²⁷ Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Suing the Local State: Administrative Litigation in Rural China," in *Engaging the Law in China: State, Society, and Possibilities for Justice*, eds., Neil J. Diamant, Stanley B. Lubman, and Kevin J. O'Brien, 31-53 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005). Ethan Michelson, "Justice from Above or Below? Popular Strategies for Resolving Grievances in Rural China," *The China Quarterly* 193, no. 193 (2008): 43-64. Susanne Brandtstädter, "The Law Cuts Both Ways: Rural Legal Activism and Citizenship Struggles in Neosocialist China," *Economy and Society* 40, no. 2 (2011): 266-88.

¹²⁸ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*.

¹²⁹ Shanhua Yang 杨善华 and Hongrui Hou 侯红蕊, "Xueyuan, yinyuan, qinqing yu liyi – Xianjieduan Zhongguo nongcun shehui zhong 'chaxu geju' de 'lixinghua' qushi 血缘、姻缘、亲情与利益——现阶段中国农村社会中“差序格局”的“理性化”趋势," *Ningxia shehui kexue* 宁夏社会科学, no. 06 (1999): 51-58.

embedded,¹³⁰ rightful,¹³¹ and ‘everyday form’¹³² of resistance to avoid collision or even collaborate with the state power. The local society also changes accordingly to adapt to the legal and political settings of the country.

To summarise, the behavioural, social, and ethical changes alongside rural residents’ digestion of industrialisation, are deeply associated with the broader socio-economic context of the country. The flourishing capitalism, the nationwide campaign of urbanisation, the grassroots institutional reform, and the legal awareness of Chinese people collectively reshape the social landscape of contemporary Chinese villages. While rural residents and communities ‘digest’ industrialisation, these big themes of social changes in China are internalised and localised. The discussion about the driving forces of the changes in Jiangbin and Weiken bridges my empirical findings with literature on China’s social and economic transition, which attaches theoretical significance to this project.

1.6 Arguments, contribution, and thesis structure

The objective of this research is to explore how rural residents and communities cope with the challenges introduced by industrialisation in contemporary China. Industrialisation has long been a theme in China’s struggle for modernisation. In the post reform era, China experienced the soaring economic growth, fast pace of urbanisation, and an ever expanding capital market. However, the sociology of industrialisation rarely explores the other side of the story, i.e., the bitter fruits brought by the thriving industries. Due to a lack of substantial reliable data to decipher the burden of economic prosperity and its distribution among Chinese people by a top-down approach, the focus on the grassroots level becomes an important alternative. This research joins the effort to present ethnographic portraits of industrialised villages and their people in contemporary China. It aims to enrich the

¹³⁰ Ho and Edmonds, “Perspectives of Time and Change,” 216-25.

¹³¹ Kevin J. O’Brien, “Rightful Resistance,” *World Politics* 49, no. 1 (1996): 31-55. Kevin J. O’Brien, “Rightful Resistance Revisited,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 40, no. 6 (2013): 1-12.

¹³² James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

case studies of rural China's social changes and to improve the understanding of how industrialisation is digested by rural residents and rural communities.

I employ the expression 'digesting' industrialisation in order to highlight the fact that rural residents are affected by and adapting to development brought by industrialisation simultaneously. First and foremost, my empirical findings suggest that industrialisation literally becomes part of the villagers' sense of self, their relationships with others and with the world more broadly. It is as much part of the essence of their daily lives as air, water, or food. The long-standing experience of 'intimacy' with industrialisation has routinized many local residents' attitude and action in response to the changes in the social life of their industrialised villages. In addition, I aim to show that by 'digesting' industrialisation, rural residents not only attempt to adapt themselves to the challenges, but also try to internalise industrialisation and development as a part of their everyday life. This, as will be discussed in the following empirical chapters, is reflected in the changing individual behaviour, social network, and morality in Jiangbin and Weiken. Thirdly, this project emphasises the bi-directional effect of this process of 'digestion': on the one hand, industrialisation shapes the lifestyle of villagers; on the other, rural residents also influence the process of industrialisation through their everyday actions, which shape the power relations in the locality and attach 'local characters' to the route and form of industrialisation in their villages.

Starting from outlining the connotation of 'digesting' industrialisation, this project emphasises the dynamics and reflexivity between industrialisation and the transformation of rural society in China. Rather than treating rural residents as absolute subordinates to and victims of the local business and political powers and inferior citizens to their urban counterparts in the process of modernisation, I argue that the behavioural and structural changes of the villagers and the local society are by nature an effort of adaption. Admittedly, the uneven distribution of gains and burdens in modernisation entails many rural residents who suffer from inequality. My findings, however, suggest that rural communities evolve to cope with the new challenges in the modern era, when local residents actively seek knowledge to understand industrialisation and generate strategies to adapt to, fight against, or take advantage of the process. In the meantime, as will be discussed in the analysis of this project, the

reaction of villages and villagers shapes the form of industrialisation in rural China in return. Noteworthy enough, a ‘microscopic’ observation that examines the individual villagers’ stance taking and strategy making further reveals a significant divergence within a community. In the context of industrialisation and the power relations it creates, this project introduces the concept of ‘spectrum of subordination’ and argues that each rural individual’s stance toward industrialisation and development is shaped by multiple factors related to his knowledge background and social status.

Pollution and its environmental and health impacts remain a key issue in the tide of industrialisation. It raises deep concern from the rural communities I visited. Noticing that industrial pollution has long been a most heatedly discussed topic in the everyday life of my fieldwork sites, this research pays special attention to local people’s environmental awareness, knowledge, and actions, as a hint to understand how industrialisation is digested and how the digestion incurs changes in the local society. The ethnographic portraits presented in the following empirical chapters, in a way or another, touch the origin, essence, and manifestation of environmentalism among local people. Findings from the field suggest that villagers’ environmentalism against the backdrop of fast-paced rural industrialisation is highly utilised, localised, and individualised. Primarily, the green activism in my research field is usually intertwined with villagers’ practical concerns, as many scholars have observed elsewhere in rural China.¹³³ This tendency obscures the pro-ecological purposes of the mobilisation in the neighbourhood. Secondly, the environmentalism observed in the two researched villages takes a localised form, which resonates with the arguments of a prevailing NIMBYism in China’s environmental movements.¹³⁴ Finally, local residents’ attitude to and action against industrial pollution are highly individualised, based on their own social statuses and networks. The diversity best exemplifies the trend of individualisation in Chinese society and how it influences the social life of the industrialised villages. The understanding of environmentalism reflected in villagers’

¹³³ Bryan Tilt, *The struggle for Sustainability in Rural China: Environmental Values and Civil Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). Van Rooij et al., “The Compensation Trap”.

¹³⁴ Lei Xie, “Political participation and environmental movements in China,” in *The International Handbook of Political Ecology*, Raymond L. Bryant ed. 246-59 (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2015). Lora-Wainwright, “Introduction. Dying for Development.”

everyday life in the tide of industrialisation reinforces the arguments about ‘digestion’ and social changes in rural communities of contemporary China.

Rural China is often studied as a backwater of the country, a place residents wish to leave in search of a better life. The long-held stereotype of rural China and of rural Chinese as ‘low’, ‘backward’, and undesirable¹³⁵ goes hand in hand with the focus on the underdevelopment in rural areas. Instead of treating rural China as the less developed, I look at two economically developed villages and how industrialisation and development has affected them, with particular focus on the structure of the community and social relations. The two villages in this project are situated in the peripheral of the Hangzhou Metropolitan Area. They are direct beneficiary parties of the urban development, economic prosperity, technology, and information. The villages are also among the first rural communities embracing industrialisation. Both villages are home to many successful businesses now. Rather than a supplier of labour force to the urban area, they accept migrant workers attracted by the working opportunities in the neighbourhood. However, as typical Chinese villages, the two researched communities also accommodate traditional social networks and value in Fei’s sense. In the past three decades with roaring pace of industrialisation, local residents have also undergone a lot of uneasy situations and struggles. The empirical data from the two ‘developed’ villages best illustrate how rural communities and their people process development and its side-effects. In the meantime, it aims to provide a complementary lens to view rural China’s adaption to industrialisation when rural communities and rural people are not subject to the economic inferiority and underdevelopment.

Both of the researched communities are referred to as ‘industrialised villages’ in this project. The concept of industrialised village has been widely applied in the studies of contemporary rural China, yet it is worth noting that the term itself seldom gets clearly defined in the existing scholarship. In the review of the book series *Village Economy and Culture in Contemporary China*, Stig Thøgersen relates the standard of

¹³⁵ Lai, *Hygiene, Sociality, and Culture in Contemporary Rural China*, 31.

industrialised villages to the ratio of the village's output from the industrial sector.¹³⁶ Those referred to as 'heavily industrialised villages' by the author usually observe a gross output, of which 90% or more of the value comes from industry.¹³⁷ Rather than prescribing a quantatised standard, I tend to define industrialised villages according to a wide variety of impact industrialisation has generated on rural communities. The impact is not limited in the economic sector, but also applied to the local power structure, lifestyle, and cultural practices. Industrialised villages, as both of my research sites show, will need to demonstrate a certain level of 'dependence' on industries. In a typical industrialised village, such dependence is mainly reflected in three aspects. At the individual and household level, as rural communities undergo transitions in the tide of industrialisation, the land ownership, the income structure, and the means of production shift all change accordingly, which forces local residents to abandon their traditional agriculture-centred life-style. At the village level, industries begin to play a significant role in the local politics and society. The rise of industries as business powers challenges the existing power relations and social ties in the neighbourhood and creates dependence in the decision-making of village affairs. Both the changes at individual and village levels further introduce an ideological shift in the industrialised villages, where residents become used to the socio-economic settings in the industrial age and digest the changes so as to internalise them as a part of their daily routine. Even though the standards for 'industrialised villages' proposed by this research seem ambiguous, they convey the idea that the influence of industrialisation on contemporary Chinese villages and villages' dependence on industrialisation are multi-dimensional. This resonates with the connotation of 'digesting industrialisation', which is considered to be an organic and complex process. By clarifying the definition of 'industrialised villages', this project better situates and contextualises the two researched communities. It points out their particularity and generality and relates them to other villages undergoing industrial transition in contemporary China.

136 Stig Thøgersen, "Village Economy and Culture in Contemporary China," *Modern China* 28, No.2 (2002): 256.

137 Thøgersen, "Village Economy and Culture in Contemporary China," 254, 256.

This research compares contemporary industrialised villages with traditional rural communities in China, reflected in Fei Xiaotong's ethnographies in the pre-communist era. By doing so, it aims at revealing how industrialisation incurs social changes to the villages as an evidence of how industrialisation is digested locally in the two research sites under examination. In order to fulfil this goal, I adopt the rural society in the late 1930s and the early 1940s as a baseline for the comparison. The concept of 'traditional villages' in China in this research is mainly constructed on Fei Xiaotong's summarisation of the rural society back in the time when his early ethnographic works on Chinese villages¹³⁸ came forth and attracted attention from the academia. The reason behind this decision is two-fold. First, the traditional agrarian society in China manifested itself in a relatively mature form throughout thousands of years' development. After the new regime took over power of the country, rural communities observed significant social and ideological change, with the well-reserved social relations in the pre-communist era being toppled¹³⁹ and much cultural practices vanishing or being hidden from the open realm.¹⁴⁰ Citing villages on the eve of revolutionary change as a parameter of the traditional Chinese rural society enables this research to better understand the changes and the extent to which such changes were caused by industrialisation. Second, as the chronological review of the ethnographic studies of Chinese villages demonstrates, the sociological research of rural China only commences from the early 20th century. Even though a mature agrarian society in China has been in place for centuries, it lacks necessary academic representation at the earlier stage. Against this backdrop, I engage with Fei Xiaotong's village studies, which are by far one of the most widely accepted and cited scholarship on pre-communist rural China. Fei's works present a comprehensive and detailed description of social organisation, relationships, cultural practices, and ethics in the villages in the late 1930s and the early 1940s. Nevertheless, by narrowing down the scope of time for defining 'traditional villages' in this research, I by no means

¹³⁸ Fei, *Peasant Life in China*. Chang and Fei, *Earthbound China: A Study of the Rural Economy of Yunnan*. Fei and Zhang, *Yunnan sancun* 云南三村.

¹³⁹ Thomas B Gold, "After Comradeship: Personal Relations in China since the Cultural Revolution." *The China Quarterly* 104 (1985). Jonathan Unger, *The Transformation of Rural China* (London: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁴⁰ Siu, *Agents and Victims in South China: Accomplices in Rural Revolution*. Sulamith Heins Potter and Jack M. Potter, *China's Peasants: The Anthropology of a Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

wish to generalise rural China's past and tradition by playing up the representativeness of Fei's village ethnographies. On the contrary, I pay attention to the diversity of rural Chinese society through time and space. I stay alert to the extent to which the features and the value in the traditional Chinese village remain coherent and serve as a comparable subject for this research.

Noteworthy for the readers, this research compares contemporary rural communities with villages in the pre-communist time. It leaves out the period of the 1950s to the 1970s, when the country underwent a number of political movements and suffered from decades of unrest and turbulence. Although rural China has undergone significant social changes during this stage, it is widely acknowledged that the socio-political movements and the associated massive chaos were rooted in the upper end of the political system and caused by the failure of leadership. Admittedly, the highly politicised tide of industrialisation, as observed in the Great Leap Forward Campaign, influenced the socio-economic landscape of rural China to a certain extent, it is necessary to point out that the impact of industrialisation was not as significant compared to that of the political messages incorporated in the movements. It was only after the Reform and Open-up that industrialisation began to influence rural China by itself. The post-reform era also marked the emergence of many industrialised villages, which, by the definition in this research, featured rural communities' dependence on industries. Such relation of dependence was seldom observed during the era of revolution.

The three sub-arguments in this research are tightly associated with Fei Xiaotong's classic proposition, i.e., 'the differential mode of association', to delineate social networks and social structure in rural Chinese communities. In the parsimonious yet profound theory, Fei integrates three elements, namely individuals, networks, and ethics, which consists the social life of rural China. According to Fei, every individual rural resident is situated in the middle of a concentric circular pattern of social networks, which resembles 'the ripples of water when a stone is thrown into a lake.'¹⁴¹ In the differential mode of association, the 'closeness' is primarily based on

¹⁴¹ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 20.

kinship and is relatively defined. The pattern is preserved by the ethics (lun 伦), which determines the order and morality of rural communities. Based on this theory, my thesis examines the extent to which the form and manifestation of social structure in Chinese villages evolves throughout the time, and explains the reasons and logics behind the changes. Firstly, this study contributes to the analyses of rising individualism¹⁴² by taking a critical stance on its connotation and relevance. As my case studies and analysis based on Fei's work will show, the connotation of individualism has significantly expanded since Fei's fieldwork in the 1930s and is no longer restricted to the logic of action inspired by the 'core family interest'. I argue that a multi-faceted individualism is the behavioural basis of the social architecture in the rural communities of China. Secondly, Fei's proposition of the kinship-based closeness in rural communities, reflected in each individual resident's concentric circular pattern of social network, is interfered by a more fluid, diversified, and relative type of social bonds. As I argue in this research, many functional groups have gradually replaced the central role of blood ties in the social association of rural China. Thirdly, the traditional ethics reflected in Fei's ethnographies of rural China in the republican era serving as the vertical bond in the differential mode of association has observed much contemporary variation. This research revisits Fei Xiaotong's thoughts about the connotation and function of social ethics in rural residents' everyday social life. It argues that the traditional ethics observe a shrinking sphere of influence in the contemporary age due to its incompatibility with many new developments in the industrialised villages, whereas the local residents redefine morality in their everyday life of the time. The three main sub-arguments lead to a further discussion of the driving forces behind the social changes, where the roles of capitalism, urbanisation, grassroots institutional reform, and legal awareness are respectively examined.

Despite being invented 70 years ago, the concept of 'the differential mode of association' is still valuable as a guiding theory to understand the interpersonal relations and social structure in contemporary Chinese rural communities. The reason this project engages with Fei's theory is threefold. First, Fei's insightful

¹⁴² Yan, *Private Life under Socialism*. Yunxiang Yan, *The Individualization of Chinese Society* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2009). Yunxiang Yan, "The Chinese Path to Individualization," *British Journal of Sociology* 61, no. 3 (2010): 489-512.

summarisation of the characteristics of rural society is tightly associated with his observation and understanding of traditional Chinese culture, which, as Gary G. Hamilton points out, has shaped and will continue to dominate the daily social life of rural China.¹⁴³ My fieldworks suggest that Fei's theory is a valuable lens to examine industrialised villages in the present. Contemporary rural communities have undergone profound socio-economic transition, which reshapes the local people's mentality and affects deeply rooted cultural practices. As a result, it becomes important to examine the extent to which the current situation may still be understood under Fei's conceptual framework. Secondly, Fei's theory about social organisation in the rural communities is widely cited by later scholars as a popular paradigm to understand and interpret phenomena in the social studies of rural China. By critically engaging with Fei's theory, this research enriches Fei's thoughts with first hand data and points out the challenges to Fei's theories posed by the new changes in the social life of Chinese rural residents. Thirdly, Fei's theory of 'differential mode of association' is highly structural. The three main propositions, i.e., rural residents' individuality, individual villager's social network of a concentric circular type, and the vertical bonds that preserve the pattern of social organisation, serve as a hint for me to frame the analyses systematically. In the three empirical chapters, I examine the changing behavioural basis, social organisation, and ethics in the two researched villages respectively and discuss the factors that influence this process. At the beginning of each empirical chapter, the relevant component of the theory will be presented with reference to Fei Xiaotong's elaboration on his thoughts in the original text and the later developments of this concept.

Apart from engaging with Fei Xiaotong's thoughts about traditional rural China, this research project also contributes to the more recent literature of rural Chinese society both theoretically and empirically. It bridges three sets of scholarship on the social settings of China's rural communities, rural residents' mobilisation for rights and equality, and the factors behind challenges brought by rapid industrialisation in rural areas. The relevant literature in the three categories is respectively utilised to contextualise, present, and analyse the findings from the research fields. Based on an

¹⁴³ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 23.

11-month fieldwork, this research offers an in-depth description of the social life in Jiangbin and Weiken. It presents first-hand observation of the communities and accounts of real life experience from the grassroots. This joins the limited cases in the studies of contemporary rural China to draw ethnographies from a bottom-perspective complementary to the statistics. The empirical research facilitates the understanding about contemporary rural China since it resonates to a series of key debates in the sociological studies of the country, i.e., tradition and social change, state legitimacy and grassroots autonomy, central policy and local administration, economic developments and social welfare, resource distribution and equality, etc. In this research, I redefine the role of rural residents and view their relations with the social changes in a reflexive way. This answers the core question about the impact of industrialisation on traditional rural communities of China in the existing literature.

In the following two chapters, I outline the background and context of this research. Chapter 2 presents how I select the research topic and the sites from a researcher's first-person perspective. It serves as a reflective account, in which I explain how positionality, as an unavoidable issue in qualitative social studies, is handled and embraced during my fieldwork and writing-up. It also illustrates the methodologies adopted in this research and the issues concerning research ethics. Chapter 3 introduces the social settings of Jiangbin and Weiken, the two research sites of this project. It compares the geography and demographics, the economy, the kinship networks, the religions, and the environment of the two villages. It aims to provide readers a background to understand the happenings in the localities and the difference between the two research fields. Following the sketch is a brief timeline of industrialisation and villagers' open actions against the industries in their neighbourhood. This is a hint and a cutting point to understand rural residents' digestion of industrialisation.

The three empirical chapters altogether portray a logically comprehensive picture of the transformation of individual residents, the social structure of the villages, and the social ethics in rural communities. Chapter 4 demonstrates the enlarging connotation of 'core interest' in rural China and local residents' individualised actions in the tide of industrialisation. Chapter 5 examines a series of factors introduced by industrialisation that interfere with the traditional concentric circular social networks

of villagers that is previously defined by the kinship-based closeness. Chapter 6 reviews the changes in the social ethics of the two researched villages and reveals the dilemma of traditional rural authorities that face new challenges in the present. The empirical observations lead to a theoretical analysis in Chapter 7, which discusses the roles of capitalism, urbanisation, grassroots institutional reform, and legal awareness of the rural residents in shaping rural China's digestion of industrialisation.

Chapter 2. Approaching the Villages and the People: Positionality, Reflexivity, Methodology, and Participatory Ethics

This chapter gives a reflexive account of my fieldwork in rural China. It records the design of the research and the standards by which I chose the sites for my fieldwork. In addition, it describes how I stepped into the communities and approached the local people during my 11-month stay in the two host villages – Jiangbin and Weiken. I maintained multiple identities in the fieldwork, primarily as a research student interested in the sociology of industrialisation in rural China, but also as a curious ‘native’ from the nearby city of Hangzhou who for the first time set foot in the rural suburbs and became a keen volunteer hoping to offer a helping hand to locals who were pre-supposed ‘victims’ in the tide of industrialisation.

By closely keeping track of my experience and mentality before and during the on-site research, I reflect on the positionality of my fieldwork and the presentation of the findings. Rather than pursuing a ‘transparent reflexivity’¹⁴⁴ to fully understand and to precisely interpret the history of the village and the stances of different stakeholders, I choose to recognise and embrace the uncertainty, as proposed by Gillian Rose.¹⁴⁵ This tendency is primarily reflected in the methods employed in this research¹⁴⁶, where the semi-structured in-depth interviews serve as the main source of data. The positionality is by and large characterised by the way the respondents are selected and approached, the identity of the interviewer, the language used during the communication, and the situation where the interviews take place. In this chapter, I clarify how I perceive and process the positionality. This sets the stage for my discussion based on an inevitably ‘partial’ observation from the research sites. Finally, I will analyse how it influences the fieldwork in a reflexive way.

¹⁴⁴ Gillian Rose, “Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities and Other Tactics,” *Progress in Human Geography* 21, no. 3 (1997): 305-20.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Kim VL. England, “Getting Personal: Reflexivity, Positionality, and Feminist Research,” *The Professional Geographer* 46, no. 1 (1994): 80-89.

2.1 Identifying the research topic and selecting the research sites

To identify the topic of my doctorate, I follow the passion that is tightly associated with my experience in childhood and teenage. Born and bred in the North Zhejiang Province, known as a typical part of ‘the watery land in the Yangtze River Delta’ (jiangnan shuixiang 江南水乡), I enjoy the proximity to the water system in my hometown. The vast wetlands in the west and south part of Hangzhou sustained by the Qiantang River, the ‘mother river’ of the city, remain the most cherished part of my childhood memories. Nevertheless, since the late 1990s, news about water pollution in the Qiantang River struck the city successively¹⁴⁷, leaving local residents deeply concerned about the safety of their drinking water. At the same time, the coverage of wetland on the outskirts of the city has shrunk significantly over the years as a consequence of industrialisation and urbanisation. Hangzhou is not alone: it joins numerous cities and towns in the Yangtze River Delta that encounter similar problems caused by water pollution. As a witness, I am curious about the roots and impacts of these changes. Consequentially, I become committed to understanding the sociology of the changing water system in the era of industrialisation and urbanisation in the socially and economically developed regions of East China.

The selection of research topic reflects my curiosity about social life in rural China. As Fei Xiaotong and Gary G. Hamilton point out in *From the Soil*, the cultural distinctiveness of rural China marks the rural communities off from their urban counterparts and the western society.¹⁴⁸ Since I have long been fascinated by the ‘otherness’ of the rural areas surrounding my home city, I sought a chance to experience village life myself. The earthbound (or ‘water-bound’ in the watery lands of East China) rural residents are among the first to experience the changes of local water system. This catches my attention, and I aim to step in the village and observe how the villagers adapt to and react to water pollution and the excessive exploitation of wetlands both individually and as a community. The ethnographies of the villagers’ struggle vividly reflect the structural tension and fragmentation in contemporary

¹⁴⁷ Zhiqing Li 李志清, Hangzhou zilaishui yiwei shijian de beihou 杭州自来水异味事件的背后, available at <http://news.163.com/13/1225/08/9GU635IL00014AED.html>, accessed on 2013-12-25.

¹⁴⁸ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*.

Chinese society, namely that between rural and urban, rich and poor, tradition and modernisation, rural means of production and industrialisation, and polluters and victims.

Following this direction, I started my preliminary investigation in June 2013. The term ‘cancer village’ in the literature caught my eyes. It denotes the phenomenon of disease clusters within the boundary of rural settlements. Both the relevant sociological scholarship and media coverage directly or obliquely implies that industrial pollution remains a fundamental aetiological factor for the exceptionally high cancer incidence and death rate in the reported areas. As the findings of Chen Ajiang and his team¹⁴⁹ suggest, the contaminated water represents an underlying form of pollution that threatens the health and wellbeing of China’s rural residents. To develop my research question and identify potential sites for fieldwork, I gathered and analysed the media reports of cancer villages in China since the early 2000s and created a data pool based on the water pollution map created by the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs (IPE).¹⁵⁰ More scholarships on cancer villages in China have emerged since the Environmental Protection Bureau of China formally recognised the phenomenon in February 2013. These studies facilitate a deeper understanding of the scientific origins¹⁵¹ and social impacts¹⁵² of cancer villages. They serve as an important source of data and thoughts for my research as well.

The next question I encountered in the process of identifying the research topic is how to unpack the multi-faceted phenomenon of cancer village. Scholars approach the sociology of cancer village through different channels. The phenomenon primarily

¹⁴⁹ Ajiang Chen 陈阿江, Pengli Cheng 程鹏立, and Yajuan Luo 罗亚娟. “*Aizhengcun*” *diaocha: Huanjing jiankang fengxian de renzhi yu yingdui* “癌症村”调查: 环境健康风险的认知与应对. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2013.

¹⁵⁰ Real-time Environmental Performance Statistics for All Locations, available at <http://wwwwen.ipe.org.cn/MapPollution/Pollution.aspx?q=4&type=2>. Accessed on 2018-11-10.

¹⁵¹ Shengsheng Gong 龚胜生 and Tao Zhang 张涛, “Zhongguo ‘aizhengcun’ shikong fenbu bianqian yanjiu 中国“癌症村”时空分布变迁研究,” *Zhongguo renkou ziyuan yu huanjing* 中国人口资源与环境 23, no. 9 (2013): 156-64. Zhuang Tao 陶庄, “Huaihe liuyu ‘aizhengcun’ guiyinyu shui de jibing fudan yanjiu 淮河流域“癌症村”归因于水的疾病负担研究, PhD Diss., (Beijing: Zhongguo jibing yufang kongzhi zhongxin, 2010).

¹⁵² Chen, Cheng, and Luo, “*Aizhengcun*” *diaocha*. Liu, “Made in China: Cancer Villages,” 8-21. Lora-Wainwright, *Fighting for Breath*.

articulates debates on environmental rights and justice,¹⁵³ whereas the uncertainty around aetiology sets forth much discussion about the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) and citizen science.¹⁵⁴ In addition, many case studies of cancer villages illustrate the tension between stakeholders, which is usually escalated into open resistance and confrontation. The grassroots pro-ecological movement resonates with and exemplifies social mobilisation and the related subaltern politics,¹⁵⁵ which is followed by the discussion from the perspective of legal studies.¹⁵⁶ The confrontation between the polluting industries and the pollution victims in the cancer villages is eye-catching. At first, I decided to centre on the confrontation and portray the villagers' mobilisation. However, data from the fieldwork proved my presumption wrong: rather than fighting against polluters, most local residents in the cancer villages choose to adapt to industrialisation and its adverse side-effects. After rethinking about the findings, I finalised my research focus and the strategy of interpretation. I choose to review the shaping influence of industrialisation on the village culture and social structure rather than focusing on the tension and grievance reflected in the open actions of local people. The thesis consists of a series of ethnographic portraits of villagers. This allows me to discuss the pluralism, diversity, and fluidity of the opinions and stances that have been observed from the villagers. At the village level, the analysis reveals the pattern of changes in the research sites and engages with several key themes in the existing literature on contemporary rural China, namely poverty and social justice, industrialisation and urbanisation, capitalism and market, etc.

¹⁵³ Jonathan Watts, "China's Environmental Health Challenges," *The Lancet* 372, no. 9648 (2008): 1451-452.

¹⁵⁴ Ajiang Chen 陈阿江 and Pengli Cheng 程鹏立, "'Aizheng-wuran' de renzhi yu fengxian yingdui – jiyu ruogan 'aizhengcun' de jingyan yanjiu 癌症-污染"的认知与风险应对——基于若干"癌症村"的经验研究," *Xuehai* 学海, no. 3 (2011): 30-41. Anna Lora-Wainwright, "Plural Forms of Evidence and Uncertainty in Environmental Health: A Comparison of Two Chinese Cases," *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice* 9, no. 1 (2013): 49-64.

¹⁵⁵ Anna Lora-Wainwright, "An Anthropology of 'Cancer Villages': Villagers' Perspectives and the Politics of Responsibility," *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 63 (2010): 79-99. Lora-Wainwright, *Resigned Activism*.

¹⁵⁶ Rachel E. Stern, "On the Frontlines: Making Decisions in Chinese Civil Environmental Lawsuits," *Law & Policy* 32, no. 1 (2010): 79-103. Rachel E. Stern, *Environmental Litigation in China: A Study in Political Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Qian Liu 刘倩 and Lei Chen 陈磊, "Cong aizhengcun toushi woguo huanjing falü yunzuo tixi de qushi 从癌症村透视我国环境法律运作体系的缺失," *Shiyan zhiye jishu xueyuan xuebao* 十堰职业技术学院学报 20, no. 2 (2007): 18-20.

My previously very limited experience with life in rural China impedes the process of identifying the research question. After reviewing relevant academic literature, I move to media reports of industrialisation, through which I hoped to summarise the pattern of social relations and actions in the severely contaminated villages of China. Admittedly, this strategy neglects the diversity of rural settlements in China with a wide spectrum of geographical, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Once I narrowed down the scope of my tentative research subject and stepped into the pilot sites for pre-investigations, I noticed that it is important to situate the analysis into the local context and make its specificity clear.

I stepped into the first site for pilot investigation on 21st June, 2014. Wangjiangjing is a beautiful watery town situated on the border of Zhejiang and Jiangsu Province near the south bank of Lake Taihu. It has long been home to numerous textile industries. Disputes around industrial sewage discharge emerged in the late 1990s. Given the special geographic location of the township, the disputes ran in parallel with complicated administrative issues and triggered a collective grassroots protest in 2001 which involved more than 3,000 local residents.¹⁵⁷ Since then, Wangjiangjing has been exposed under the spotlight of both media and academia. In the early works of Chen Ajiang, Wangjiangjing is an important case for studying interprovincial administrative cooperation on water resource utilisation and pollution control, based on which Chen discusses the social mechanism of water pollution and its tentative solution.¹⁵⁸ The site caught my attention because it incorporates every element to portray an industrialised township's painful transition and sacrifices. Nevertheless, after a short visit to Wangjiangjing, I realised that the situation has changed significantly over the past decade: the textile factories have now been relocated to an industrial park and the township has cleaned up its canals for aquatic farming. Local people spoke in favour of the government's decisive pollution control measures from

¹⁵⁷ Zhejiang Jiaxing sanqian duo nongmin chenchuan zhuba jujue wushui liuru "jingnei" 浙江嘉兴 3000 多农民沉船筑坝 拒绝污水流入“境内”, available at <http://www.china.com.cn/chinese/2001/Nov/80275.htm>, accessed on 2018-11-27.

¹⁵⁸ Ajiang Chen 陈阿江, "Shuiwuran shijian zhong de liyi xiangguan zhe fenxi 水污染事件中的利益相关者分析," *Zhejiang xuekan* 浙江学刊, no. 4 (2008): 169-75. Ajiang Chen 陈阿江, *Cisheng jiaolv: Taihu liuyu shuiwuran de shehui jiedu* 次生焦虑: 太湖流域水污染的社会解读 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2010).

2002 to 2004. They no longer criticised the local government as they did in the protest in 2001, which is referred to as the ‘mid-night campaign’ (lingdian xingdong 零点行动). Instead, the water pollution control was portrayed as ‘a heart-winning project’ (minxin gongcheng 民心工程) and ‘a victory of the joint effort by the official and the locals’ in the eyes of many ordinary people [Research log 2: Interview with Minwei, conducted on 23rd June 2014; Research log 3: Interview with Songhua, conducted on 23rd June 2014; Research log 11: Interview with A’shui, conducted on 24th June 2014]. When I met Professor Chen Ajiang in Nanjing in 2014, he pointed out that Wangjiangjing has been reduced to an ‘image project’ (mianzi gongcheng 面子工程) of Zhejiang Province, in which the government carefully moderated public opinions of the local people [Research log 17: Interview with Prof. Chen Ajiang, conducted on 2nd July, 2014]. For practical reasons, he suggested me to shift focus to other sites with on-going tension and try to approach some locals via personal networks rather than stepping into a village without any connections.

Fortunately, my second attempt of site searching yielded good results. The ‘practical concerns’ were flagged up as a key criterion for choosing villages this time. I narrowed down the scope of selection to the villages with on-going disputes in their industrial transition. Meanwhile, I paid attention to the location and gave preference to the villages near my hometown, which allowed me to take advantage of personal connections, to understand the local culture better, and to overcome the barrier of dialects. The two filters, coupled with the selected research topic, yielded a number of promising results. I moved into a host family in Weiken Village in early July of 2014, and stepped into Jiangbin Village in September. Both villages are located on the south outskirts of Hangzhou. They have got the notorious title as ‘cancer villages’ in succession since the mid-2000s. Weiken Village accommodates an industrial giant specialising in synthetic fibre manufacturing. Jiangbin Village is the home to the Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park, where more than 30 small or medium sized companies established their factories since 2002. Both villages have experienced conflicts between industries and the local residents in the past 20 years, featuring land acquisition, employment, environment, health, and so on. Local residents did not cease to mobilise for their rights and well-being when I arrived. As one of my respondents pointed out, villagers ‘would never forget the scars’ and ‘will fight against the industries for the sake of themselves and the offspring’ [Research log 87: Interview

with Dongying, conducted on 24th September, 2014]. Local people's clear memory about the path of industrialisation and their on-going experience of living with industries on their doorsteps makes it easy for me to sort out a timeline of events through the accounts gathered in the in-depth interviews. They serve as a core part of the data in this research and facilitate the understanding about the sociology of industrialisation and the social changes in the industrialised villages that are still under transition.

After the first stage of my on-site investigation in Jiangbin and Weiken, I went on a trip to Jiangsu, Anhui, and Shandong Province together with Dr Luo Yajuan and Ms Lin Rong in January, 2015. As a part of Dr Luo's project on the mechanism of industrial pollution transfer, this 2-week field trip featured pilot investigations on 7 villages which are heavily contaminated by the branches of two branded lead-acid battery manufacturers. As a team member, I took the opportunity to identify more potential sites, hoping to further develop my project by a comparative approach. The findings from the 7 villages along the trip demonstrated great similarity to those of Jiangbin and Weiken in terms of the type of disputes, local residents' stance taking, and the strategies in their mobilisation. These findings convinced me of the validity and representativeness of my data. However, due to the limited time and funding, we did not go too far in data collection at each site. Since I become committed to ethnographic writing and to delving in the details of specific cases, I do not include the 7 villages into my study. Nevertheless, this attempt of identifying more sites of fieldwork has developed my research questions, trained myself as a social investigator, and facilitated my follow-up visits to Jiangbin and Weiken between February and May, 2015.

Rather than adopting a random sampling method to guarantee the statistical validity and representativeness of results, my selection of cases is subject to personal knowledge and practical concerns, and thus reflects my positionality in this project. As Curtis and Tongco suggest, researcher's bias is almost unavoidable in the case and informant selection of qualitative studies.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, purposive sampling with

¹⁵⁹ Sarah Curtis et al., "Approaches to Sampling and Case Selection in Qualitative Research: Examples in the Geography of Health," *Social science & medicine* 50, no. 7-8 (2000): 1001-014. MDC Tongco,

inherent bias contributes to efficiency and guarantees data quality. It is noteworthy that data from purposive sampling demonstrate a high level of transferability.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, how to map out the transferability of the two researched villages through time and space remains a main question during my fieldwork. In this sense, the unsuccessful attempts to identify the research sites are equally meaningful. They enable me to better grasp the pattern of situation in rural China and link the findings from Jiangbin and Weiken to a wider context. The fieldwork experience beyond the chosen sites for this research contributes to my strategy to handle positionality in this project.

2.2 Stepping into the village and approaching the local people

The members of my host families are my first contacts. The interaction with them marks the starting point of my connection building in the locality. I was lucky enough to get the invitation from Ms Chen Xiaoying, a high school teacher born and bred in Jiulian, a village next to Weiken. Her family accommodated and catered me during my two-stage visit in Weiken. Later, when I set foot in Jiangbin Village, I lived in an inn run by a local family for the first couple of days, before Dongying, a warm-hearted fisherwoman and keen green activist in the village, insisted on moving me to a clean and cosy room on the second floor of her house for free. ‘You are a student. You should not waste the money on the accommodation,’ as Dongying said.

I started my life in Weiken as a part-time English teacher at the beginning. Xiaoying was running a ‘summer camp’ to prepare high school students in the nearby villages for the National College Entrance Exam in the following year. I joined Xiaoying and offered English tutorials. It turned out to be a superb way to integrate myself into the locality. The students and their parents became the first batch of my respondents.

The attempts to break the ice in Jiangbin Village were somehow more difficult. Since the village has been extensively exposed to media, villagers developed a set of

“Purposive Sampling as a Tool for Informant Selection,” *Ethnobotany Research and Applications* 5 (2007): 147-58.

¹⁶⁰ Charles Teddlie and Fen Yu, “Mixed Methods Sampling: A Typology with Examples,” *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1, no. 1 (2007): 77-100.

rhetoric to cope with journalists. Many local residents resent the presence of media in the neighbourhood. They believed that media were but the agents of the local government. At first I was considered as another journalist when I paid home visits to the local people. I showed my student card to the villagers during our first encounters to avoid suspicion. The identity of a research student turned out to be more acceptable in the eyes of the curious yet suspicious villagers. They repeatedly questioned about my intention, though, in most cases, not in a hostile manner.

Rather than maintaining a neutral position as an outsider and observer as Raymond Gold proposes,¹⁶¹ I integrated myself as a part of the local society during the fieldwork. In the recent developments of social studies, researchers' immersive participation in the qualitative research has been widely justified.¹⁶² By recognising myself as a part of the social settings in the research sites, I gained a better understanding of the embeddedness and emotions of villagers and the deeper logics behind their social choices. Meanwhile, the participation itself was a process of self-discovery. My experience of living in the villages revealed the reflexive nature of local knowledge. During the stay, I got the chance to ponder upon the origin of local people's perceptions and knowledge about industrialisation through first-hand experience. The way local people perceive and handle industrialisation is tightly associated to their everyday life. My initial reluctance to eat the food and to drink the water from the locality was soon moderated by the practical concern of affordability and accessibility. It was easy to understand the practical concerns that drove the villagers to surrender to the adverse side-effects of industrialisation. Similarly, the observation and participation of local residents' land reclamation on the hills deepened my understanding about the land-deprived villagers' struggle for livelihood and their painful lifestyle change throughout the period of industrialisation and transition.

¹⁶¹ Gold, Raymond. "Roles in Sociological Field Observations." *Social Forces* 36, no. 3 (1958): 217.

¹⁶² Coffey, Amanda. *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1999). De Laine, Marlene. *Fieldwork, Participation and Practice: Ethics and Dilemmas in Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2000). Judith Preissle and Linda Grant. "Fieldwork Traditions: Ethnography and Participant Observation," in *Foundations for Research: Methods of Inquiry in Education and the Social Sciences*, eds. Kathleen B. deMarrais and Stephen D. Lapan (London: Rutledge: 2004).

As an attempt to ‘localise’ myself, I learnt the dialect of East Xiaoshan. Although both of the research sites are not far from my hometown, where a similar Wu dialect is spoken, it still took some effort to master the characteristic intonation and vocabulary in the locality. I learnt the dialect mainly over the dinner table of Xiaoying’s family. The dialect did become my stepping stone to many local households. The respondents made fun of my unskilful dialect by calling it as ‘half local’ (bantu buyang 半土不洋) and ‘secondhand’ (ershōu xiaoshanhua 二手萧山话). This brought me closer to the local residents and made it easier to break the ice and open up the conversation.

Another most frequently used strategy to approach the respondents was to engage people into conversation by resorting to ‘lucky words’ (jilihua 吉利话). During my stay, I gradually realised that most of the villagers take pride in their houses. The house demonstrates the wealth and social status of its owner. It never went wrong to compliment the design of the building and the courtyard once stepping into a respondent’s home. It was also a good strategy to mention children at the beginning of a conversation. The best lucky words would be ‘a son and a daughter make a perfect’ (yizi yinü cōucheng yige hao 一子一女凑成一个好), which never failed to please mothers or fathers who have both daughters and sons.

The immersive participation in the village allowed me to identify many special occasions to carry out interviews. Doing agricultural work is an excellent chance to understand the local residents’ lifestyle and thoughts. Many households in Jiangbin and Weiken make and sell a special type of preserved and dried cabbage (meigancai 霉干菜). Drying and sorting of the vegetable require collaboration of several households, which makes it a perfect timing for group interviews. During the stay, I undertook several group interviews in the yard or on the drying court while helping with drying the cabbage. The conversation usually came up smoothly in an informal atmosphere. Another good occasion to introduce myself and speak to the local people is the banquet. I attended two banquets in Jiangbin along with Dongying’s family. Some banquets with special themes such as ancestral worship revealed the cultural traditions in the communities, whereas the other less formal banquets intended for

celebration of big events in a household yielded opportunities to observe the local interpersonal networks.

During my fieldwork, I employed multiple methods to approach my respondents. Since the topics are sensitive in some stakeholders' eyes, I saved the interviews with village cadres, entrepreneurs, and township officials to the latter half of the fieldwork so as to avoid possible censorship and intervention. Ordinary villagers accounted for the majority of my respondents. They were recruited through three different channels. At the beginning, I started the snowballing from my students, the host families, and their neighbours. The introduction by acquaintance often secured a good start for the interview, though the depth of the conversation varied from case to case. After familiarising myself with the social settings in the villages, I approached several local opinion leaders who were often referred to by other villagers, through which I obtained more detailed information about particular issues and events in the locality. In order to ensure the validity of the data, I also implemented samplings in both villages by paying home visits to randomly selected villagers. The hand-drawn maps (see Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2) served as my visual guide for the home visits. The random sampling, despite several painful experiences with respondents who slammed the door and sent me away, revealed the pattern of opinions among the residents. It also yielded insights about the economy, society, and culture of the communities under transition by putting together a collage of stories collected from the ordinary people at the village level.

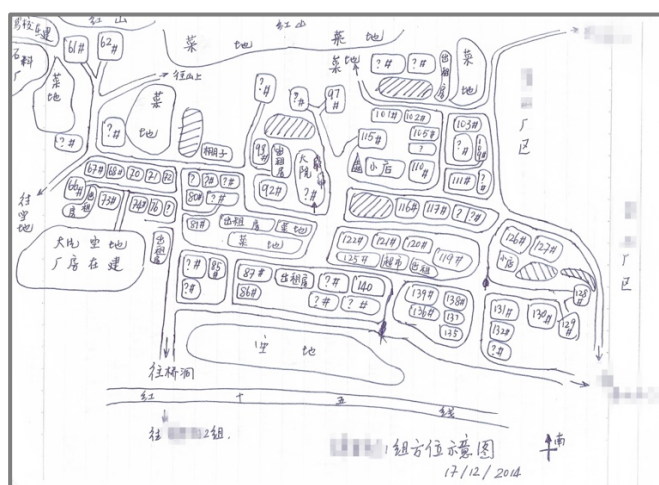


Figure 2.1. Hand-drawn map of 1st Villagers' Group, Jiangbin Village



Figure 2.2. Hand-drawn map of 4th, 5th, and 6th Villagers' Group, Jiangbin Village

As both sites were experiencing on-going disputes and collisions with nearby industries, I repeated my visits to the respondents to update the developments in the villages and their changing moods. The 11-month stay in the researched villages enabled me to approach local residents time and again through daily encounters. Later, when I returned to the UK, I still kept touch with many respondents via telephone and

online chatting apps. Thanks to the popularisation of smart phones, for one of which the villagers could get for around RMB 1,000 *yuan* in 2014, many of my respondents have now been connected to the internet. This is yet another illustration for the contradictory relations between industrialisation and rural residents in China: the ‘victims’ of industrialisation are enjoying the convenience brought by the industrial products.

There were several critical moments that made me feel as a part of the local communities when I was standing in line with the ordinary villagers. During my stay, I experienced a violent confrontation between villagers in Jiangbin and a company in the nearby chemical industrial park in March 2015. While I was observing local people’s protest against the business, the local police forces arrived abruptly and started to intervene by segregating the villagers from the site of the factory. The protest and quarrel soon escalated into a physical conflict. I joined the scene almost instantly, trying to stop the confrontation by yelling ‘no use of force’ and to separate my landlady from the fully armed police.

This incident urged me to reconsider my position in the fieldwork. In fact, my participation in the communities has already gone beyond merely familiarising myself with the local society and lifestyle. The long-term engagement with the villagers has shaped my stance in the disputes around industrialisation in both villages. I became an ally to the villagers fighting for the rights that are undermined by the nearby industries. After the incident, I used my own personal networks to bring in media and NGOs to the locality. With their supports, villagers initiated public interest litigation and cast pressure on the company, which facilitated a solution to the dispute. The participation in the local activism marks my positionality in the research field.

I pay special attention to the way I process and present the research data. Although the concept of reliability and validity has been redefined in qualitative research,¹⁶³ which allows room for the investigators’ judgement in the generation, selection, and

¹⁶³ Nahid Golafshani, “Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research,” *The Qualitative Report* 8, no. 4 (2003): 597-606.

presentation of data, I aim to produce accurate scripts of both the events and my experiences in the field. To achieve this goal, I introduce the verification strategies proposed by Morse and her team.¹⁶⁴ When I collected information in the field, I paid special attention to the ‘trustworthiness’, i.e. the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability of data, as Guba and Lincoln define.¹⁶⁵ This was guaranteed by techniques such as peer inquiry and structural corroboration. I sought multiple sources to confirm on the stated facts concerning happenings in the past. The numerical data provided by the respondents were carefully verified with reference to written materials. Given the different stances of stakeholders, I compared narratives from different parties. All these measures have enhanced the authenticity of research data in my doctorate.

To summarise, positionality remains an underlying issue in my fieldwork. I entered the villages as an English teacher and research student and tried to integrate myself into the local communities ever since. Later, the decision of abandoning the stance as an independent and neutral observer shifted my position from a passive adapter to an active participator in the villages. It is worth noting that such stance taking exposed my research to the risk of partiality. To avoid further partiality incurred by the biased data collection and presentation, I adopted a number of verification strategies to attain the goal of trustworthiness. Despite the sacrifice of reliability and validity in a positivist sense, this research actually benefited from the positionality when I portrayed the decisions and mentality of ordinary villagers. The life experience in the research sites and the participation in village affairs enabled me to better understand the reflexive relations between ordinary villagers’ stance and their knowledge from their own perspective. This, according to Rose, is but ‘another effective and productive way of knowledge production.’¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Janice M. Morse et al., “Verification Strategies for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1, no. 2 (2002): 13-22.

¹⁶⁵ Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Effective Evaluation: Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results through Responsive and Naturalistic Approaches* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981). Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, “Epistemological and Methodological Bases of Naturalistic Inquiry,” *ECTJ* 30, no. 4 (1982): 233-52.

¹⁶⁶ Rose, “Situating Knowledges,” 305-20.

2.3 Research methodologies

This research is based on an 11-month fieldwork in two targeted villages. The on-site data collection consisted of several stages (see Figure 2.3). The long-term stay in the localities facilitated the collection of qualitative data of various types. By the end of the fieldwork, the qualitative data presented a comprehensive demographic, economic, and social picture of the villages, which laid a basis for further quantitative analysis at the village level. The main research and data collecting methods adopted in this project include in-depth interview, ethnographic observation, questionnaire, and archival research.

Duration	Description
Jun. 2014	Pilot investigation in Wangjiangjing Township
Jul. 2014 – Dec. 2014	Initial fieldwork in Jiangbin and Weiken Village
Jan. 2015	Pilot investigation in 7 villages in Anhui, Jiangsu, and Shandong
Feb. 2015 – May. 2015	Return visit to Jiangbin and Weiken Village

Figure 2.3. Stages of on-site fieldwork

In-depth interviews are the main approach of data collection in this research. During the stay in Jiangbin and Weiken, I carried out hundreds of interviews, of which 201 cases are processed and archived in the form of research logs. The interviewees are categorised according to their social roles and statuses in the local communities. There are 136 cases of interviews with ordinary villagers, which account for the majority of my research logs. The rest of archived interviews include 31 cases with village cadres and those working for public institutes (local health station, urban administrative team, etc.), 11 cases with government officials, 3 cases with

entrepreneurs from the industries nearby, and 8 cases with scholars. The interviews with ordinary villagers during the first home visit were semi-structured based on a carefully designed topic guide (see Appendix 3). It facilitates a logical collection of factual data about the researched households. I interview some key respondents more than once. In the follow-up interviews, I usually adopted a non-structured strategy and kept track of the respondents' spontaneous accounts and comments. As for the interviews with subjects who have 'special' identities, I usually plan them prior to the implementation so as to make myself clear of the intention and target of each interview, to avoid sensitive issues, and to better steer the flow of the conversation.

The interviews took place in a wide variety of settings, ranging from private discussion in an official environment, casual chat in local resident's yard, to heated group discussion at a working scene. I tried to create a casual and friendly atmosphere for the communication and to ensure equal power status between the interviewer and interviewees. Such a setting in the familiar life scene of the respondents would arguably minimise bias as a result of the power relations.¹⁶⁷ To achieve the goal of setting up a 'natural' environment for the interviews, I avoid note taking and the use of electronic recording devices, which, as many researchers suggest, would cause anxiety of the respondents otherwise.¹⁶⁸

I relied on a research diary to keep track of the interviews and the relevant observations. I updated my diary once I completed an interview. I also put down my thoughts and reflections in the diary by the end of each day during the fieldwork. Despite an inevitable loss of detail, the compensative note taking allowed me to abstract the key information more efficiently. I finished coding at the same time as writing the logs. Meanwhile, my research diaries gave insights about the settings and atmosphere of the interview, which could not be reflected in the transcripts from recordings.

¹⁶⁷ Sarah A. Elwood and Deborah G. Martin, "'Placing' Interviews: Location and Scales of Power in Qualitative Research," *The Professional Geographer* 52, no. 4 (2000): 649-57.

¹⁶⁸ Anna Lora-Wainwright, "Perceptions of Health, Illness and Healing in a Sichuan Village, China" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2007). Dai Haijing, "Social Capital in the 'New Socialist Countryside': Guanxi, Community Solidarity, and Resistance in Two Post-Socialist Chinese Townships," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010).

The diary and research log exemplify the importance of observation in the fieldwork. Complementary to the in-depth interviews, ethnographic observation served as another underlying method of this research. My observation featured three different levels, which were later put together towards an integral understanding to the two researched villages and their people. At the individual level, I followed up each respondent's age, sex, employment, social networks, health condition, education, religion, and personal experience. The observation remained to be the key to comprehend local people's stance taking and strategy making throughout the transition. At the household level, I took down notes about the location and condition of each family's residence, its source of income and financial status, and its position in the extended kinship networks in the village, all of which were hints to understand the patterns of opinion and behaviour in the village. At the village level, I paid attention to the grassroots administrative institutions, the power structure and social classification, the culture and tradition, and the inter-village relations in the nearby area, through which I hoped to better grasp the shaping forces of the economy and society in the industrialised villages. The research diary, the hand-drawn maps, and the basic family information record form (jiating jiben qingkuang jilu biao 家庭基本情况记录表) (see Appendix 2) are among the media that record the results of my ethnographic observation.

The well-organised process of data collection made it possible to quantify the qualitative data. By statistically summarising the information about the respondents and the households, this research set up a database for future reference. The making of cancer patients' name list in Jiangbin Village is another practice of employing the quantitative method in this research. I updated Dongying's statistics of cancer incidences and deaths from 2001 to 2008 by verifying the existing records and adding newly diagnosed cases collected during my home visits. The list facilitated the evaluation of the severity of the cancer cluster in the locality. In addition, I renewed the questionnaire survey about the environment in Jiangbin. The survey, entitled 'A Basic Survey of Environmental Pollution' (huanjing wuran jiben diaocha 环境污染基本调查), was once conducted by Dongying with the help of Green Zhejiang, a local ENGO from 2005 to 2008. It collected the opinion about industrialisation and its adverse impact on environment in the neighbourhood. Dongying invited participants

through her personal connections. The answers demonstrate high-level homogeneity. Nevertheless, it was admittedly a precious record of the situation and public opinions in the village. During my stay in Jiangbin, I slightly altered the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) and initiated a random sampling, which expanded the sample size of the survey from 59 in 2005 into 91 in 2014. The results between both stages of the survey were compared, where interesting findings emerged and revealed the dynamics over time.

To collect statistical data about the researched villages, I carried out archival works in various institutes, including the Provincial Library of Zhejiang, the Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB) of Hangzhou, Hangzhou Centre for Disease Control, township health stations, and the archives affiliated to different levels of local government. With the archival data at hand, I reviewed the transforming social and economic landscape of the sites over time and better located the sites spatially through comparisons with other rural entities nearby. The authentication of data was another indispensable part of the archival works in the field. The concern over ‘political security’, as pointed out by Mr Jin Jingren, the former head of the EPB of Hangzhou, has made it a common practice to distort statistics among governmental institutes [Research log 20: Interview with Jin Jingren, conducted on 5th July, 2014]. I adopted two strategies to verify the data: the statistics cited in the research are either validated with reference to multiple sources or checked up from the origins at the grassroots level. One example for the counterfeit statistics is the cancer death rates of Jiangbin and Weiken. After extensive media coverage that has portrayed both sites as notorious ‘cancer villages’, the local government decided to change its irresponsible image by making up the data of cancer incidence. According to the reports from the Centre for Disease Control of Xiaoshan District and the annual health briefings from the township health centres, the cancer incidence and death rate levelled at or remained lower than the average national level for the past decade. However, as the medical certificate of death archived from the village health stations suggested, both villages have observed an abnormally high rate of cancer death since 2010. In 2014 alone, there were 11 records of cancer mortality out of the 3792 permanent residents in Weiken Village and the

adjacent Qunying Village¹⁶⁹. The results accorded with the name list of cancer patients obtained in my fieldwork. The cancer death rate, according to the primary source, was 1.95 times of the national average in the rural China (149.0 out of 100,000).¹⁷⁰ The case best exemplifies the inconsistency between data from public sources and reality. It also illustrates the mechanism of verification I adopted in the archival works.

Visual data are used as another form of data in this project in complement to the transcripts, research logs, and fieldwork diary. During my stay in Jiangbin and Weiken, I took pictures of local people's daily life under industrialisation. The photos were also used to record my presence and participation in the locality. The accompanying pictures to the written materials facilitate the preservation and retrieve of my memories about the research fields and the people.

2.4 Research ethics

The collection and management of the research data in this project are in compliance with the principles established and prescribed by the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) of Oxford. During the fieldwork, I took the obligation and responsibility to treat my respondents in accordance with the ethical requirements and respected their right to know and privacy. Nevertheless, given the culture, tradition, and special codes of social interaction in the everyday life of rural China, the way by which this project complied with the ethical requirements was adjusted according to the local context. The adaptations by no means lowered the standard of research ethics in this research. The spirit of the research protocol was strictly abided throughout the implementation and writing-up of this project.

Despite my multiple identities in the two researched villages, I insisted on telling the respondents the main aim of my visit, i.e., to collect data for my doctoral research. I usually raised this in the middle of the conversation after the greetings and the small

¹⁶⁹ The two adjacent villages share one health station. As a consequence, the death reports feature the record of both villages.

¹⁷⁰ Wanqing Chen et al., "Cancer Statistics in China, 2015." *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians* 66, no. 2 (2016): 115-32.

introductory talks. Luckily, most of the villagers in Jiangbin and Weiken cooperated in a welcoming manner. In their eyes, my identity as a university student bore the image as an innocent and less intimidating passer-by in their neighbourhood. They believed that I was but dropping by and ‘experiencing life’ (tiyan shenghuo 体验生活) and was thus without bad intention. Meanwhile, the Confucian value that emphasised the importance of and respect to education and knowledge won me an easier access to the ordinary villagers in the relatively closed rural communities. Comparing to the ordinary villagers, other stakeholders, namely the entrepreneurs, village cadres, officials, and staff in the public institutes, put more concern on the political sensitivity of the interview. Nevertheless, in most cases, they found it less formal and safer to talk to a student who ‘has not stepped into the society’. The interviews were usually ended up as a ‘lesson’ where I was ‘taught the reality of the society’ which, as they suggest, ‘was totally different from that in the textbooks’.

To avoid censorship and unexpected difficulties during the field trip, I concealed my student status registered with University of Oxford. The local governments and administrative establishments were quite sensitive in this regard, as ‘any issues related to foreign affairs need to be handled with care’ (shewai wu xiaoshi 涉外无小事) in their eyes. With the help of Professor Chen Ajiang and Dr Luo Yajuan, I obtained a reference letter from the Department of Sociology at Hohai University (see Figure 2.4) This enabled me to carry out the fieldwork in the name as an associated research student at a Chinese institute. The reference letter did become my ‘passport’ in many local government offices.

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Figure 2.4. Reference letter from Hohai University

In order to make the research sound less sensitive to the respondents, I framed the research content in a positive way by announcing that I was collecting evidence for the achievements of the national campaign of building a new socialist countryside. It usually made a good opening for the interviews and eased the suspicion of the respondents. Moreover, it enabled me to steer the direction of the conversation and move forward to the questions in my topic guides concerning local residents' life experience about industrialisation. Usually, the interviewees raised the question about the use of data before I explained the issue to them. Ordinary villagers were curious about whether they and their village would become [in-]famous after I wrote about the situation of the locality. The staff employed in the public sector, on the other hand, worried about the impact of the writings on their career, should it become published. I clarified that the data would be used for academic purposes and that the doctorate and the relevant research papers would only be of limited access within the academia. This reassured the officials but disappointed the villagers who were eager to make their voice heard by the public.

The consent form for the interviewees was translated into Chinese before I arrived China. However, I seldom had the chance to obtain signatures from my respondents. It turned out that the villagers did not like the practice at all: some regarded it as a time-wasting effort, whereas others were frightened by the formality and refused to take part. Instead of seeking written consent from the villagers, I asked for informal oral consent from my respondents for participation. The practice was also applied to the collection of visual data when I pictured human subjects. It seems that Chinese rural residents do not have a clear awareness of the right as participants in a social research. Nevertheless, I fulfilled my responsibility to respect their right by abiding the ethical rules.

Pseudonyms are used for the villages and for all of the individuals involved in this research, with the aim of protecting the privacy of the respondents and the safety of the researched communities. However, in order to clarify the social, economic, and cultural settings of the research sites as background information of this research, I choose to reveal the names of the administrative entities from the township level above. This compromise underpins the research ethics regarding subject protection and, simultaneously, ensures that the case studies better resonate with the existing literature for vertical and horizontal comparisons through time and space. I insisted on the use of pseudonyms for the villagers, despite the objection from some of my respondents. Dongying was among one of those who encouraged me to include the real names of the village and the people. She believed that it would be beneficial to the community if I could help broadcast the situation and make the happenings in the locality better known to the outside world. ‘We are not afraid of being under exposure because we do not want to die silently’, said Dongying [Research log 87: Interview with Dongying, conducted on 24th September, 2014]. In order to help the local people without violating the ethical requirements, I invited journalists to the locality, which responded to the villagers’ request for exposure and publicity.

In order to protect the respondents from the potential leakage of information, I digitalised most research data on the very same day of collection and preserved them properly. The data are encrypted by Bit-Locker and stored in my laptop and portable hard disk simultaneously for safety. I also updated the research data to the backup and archive service of the university on a regular basis. Since the research involved

personal information, this still exposed the respondents to the risk of being identified despite my use of pseudonyms. I therefore plan to apply for an embargo on the digital thesis upon its completion. It serves as another approach to protect the data and the human subjects behind the research.

Chapter 3. A Sketch of the Research Fields

This chapter offers an overall account of the social settings in Jiangbin and Weiken. I draw and compare the geographical and demographical features of the two sites and record the evolution of their social networks. In addition, this chapter portrays industrialisation in the local residents' neighbourhood and illustrates industrial pollution and its environmental impacts. These factors set the stage for analysing how local residents perceive environmental hazards, mobilise for environmental rights, search healthcare resources, and seek economic compensation.

To illustrate the characteristics of the two 'cancer villages' and explore the roots of social changes in the two sites, I discuss the two villages' rapid industrialisation throughout the past three decades. In addition, I compare the two villages. By depicting the geographical, social, and political settings of the two sites, I explain the different manifestations of social changes and the divergent behavioural patterns of residents who have different identities.

This thesis argues that rural residents' distinctive identities are subject to their relative positions in multiple social networks and corresponding mentalities. The identity determines the complexity of villagers' decision making mechanism. It avoids the generalised depiction of social stratification, in which rural residents are classified according to their professions, their possession of and access to economic and social capital,¹⁷¹ their families' influence,¹⁷² or a reproduced social hierarchy according to each village member's pattern of social association.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Xueyi Lu 陆学艺. "Zhongguo shehui jieji jieceng jigou bianqian liushi nian 中国社会阶级阶层结构变迁六十年." *Zhongguo renkou: ziyuan yu huanjing* 中国人口资源环境 20, no. 7 (2010): 1-11.
Xueyi Lu 陆学艺, ed. *Dangdai zhongguo shehui liudong* 当代中国社会流动. Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2004.
Xueyi Lu 陆学艺, Houyi Zhang 张厚义, and Qizi Zhang 张其仔. "Zhuanxing shiqi nongmin de jieceng fenhua – dui Dazhai, Liuzhuang, Huaxi deng shisan ge cunzhuang de shizheng yanjiu 转型时期农民的阶层分化——对大寨、刘庄、华西等十三个村庄的实证研究." *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中国社会科学 4 (1992): 137-51.

It is undeniable that although nuclear families in the two researched cancer villages perceive and respond to industrialisation and its side-effects differently, they tend to treat entrepreneurs of the nearby polluting businesses and local-level administrators as ‘culprits’ for the problems and blame them for their uncaring attitude towards public goods and common interest. There is always tension arising from inequality between the business-government alliance and the ordinary residents who remain in a subordinated status. However, the level of grievance varies from case to case. Local residents are distributed in a spectrum of subordination and generate distinctive opinions and actions towards pollution, based on their identities.

This chapter summarises elements that constitute local residents’ identities in their digestion of industrialisation. It argues that the identity of individual resident is jointly shaped by the geographical location of his residence, his means of livelihoods, the family members’ mobility, his kinship network and his religious belief. These factors are subject to the tide of industrialisation, which underpins the social changes in the village.

3.1 Geographical settings

Zhejiang Province, a coastal province in East China, lies in the lower reach of the Yangtze River and faces the East China Sea. The province’s name derives from the Zhe River (Zhe Jiang 折江), now known as the Qiantang River (Qiantang Jiang 钱塘江), the course of which is meandering and circuitous. Zhejiang is well-known for its combination of maritime culture (haiyang wenhua 海洋文化) and watery region culture (shuixiang wenhua 水乡文化), the latter of which is best represented and demonstrated by Hangzhou, its capital city.¹⁷⁴ Traditionally, Hangzhou residents emphasise and respect education and business, which makes the region renowned for

¹⁷² Huning Wang 王沪宁, *Dangdai Zhongguo cunluo jiazu wenhua: dui Zhongguo shehui xiandaihua de yixiang tansuo* 当代中国村落家族文化：对中国社会现代化的一项探索 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1991).

¹⁷³ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*. Yunxiang Yan 阎云翔, “Chaxu geju yu Zhongguo wenhua de dengjiguan 差序格局与中国文化的等级观,” *Shehuixue yanjiu* 社会研究 4 (2006): 201-13.

¹⁷⁴ Hangzhou shizhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 杭州市志编纂委员会, *Hangzhou shi zhi* 杭州市志, available at <http://www.hangzhou.gov.cn/col/col805745/index.html>, accessed on 2018-11-10.

its prosperous economy and thriving culture throughout the history. The two researched cancer villages in this project, Jiangbin and Weiken, are located in the southeast suburb of Hangzhou City under the administration of Xiaoshan District. They represent the most developed rural regions of China both economically and culturally.

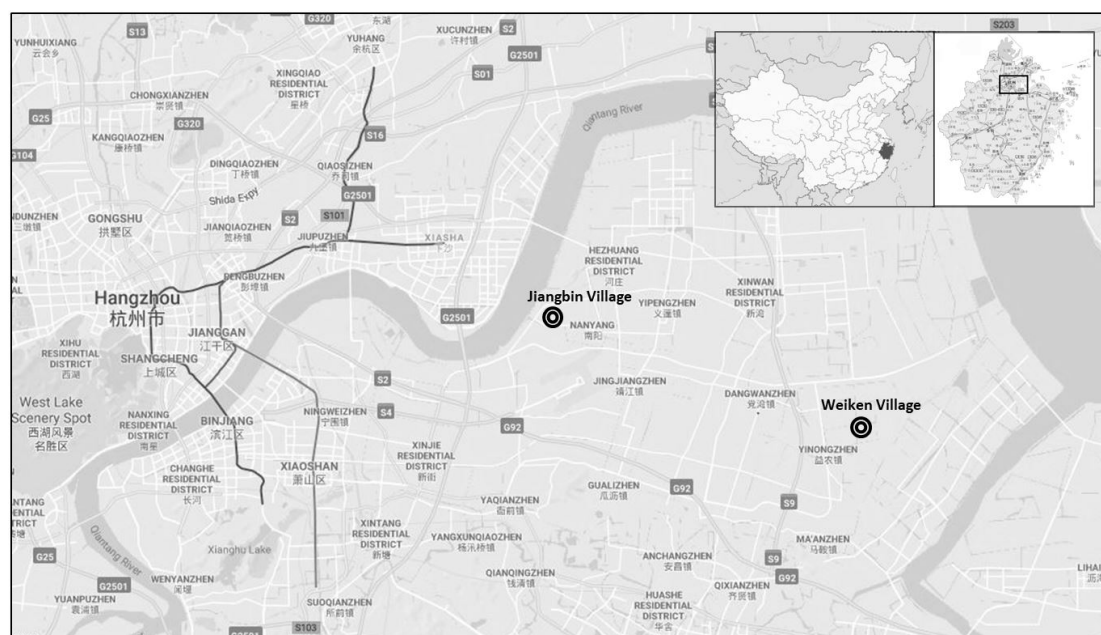


Figure 3.1. Rough geographical location of Jiangbin and Weiken Village (Data source: Google Maps)

Jiangbin Village is situated on the south bank of Qiantang River, facing the central business district of the Qianjiang New City (Qianjiang Xincheng 钱江新城) across the waters. Jiangbin covers a region of 3.12 square kilometres. The village has a long history that can be dated back to more than a thousand years ago in the South Song Dynasty. It is home to numerous cultural attractions.

The landscape of the village is hilly. There are three hills falling exclusively in the administrative boundary of Jiangbin, two wedging into the residential zones and one lying on the east periphery. Although none of the hills exceed 100 metres altitude in height, they enrich the bio-diversity of the locality and serve as a significant source of livelihoods for many local households. The residential zone of Jiangbin lies in a valley surrounded by the hills. Due to the restricted living space, villagers' houses are

closely arranged next to each other's off the four main roads. In the west of the village flows the Qiantang River. There is a long beach area along the river. Part of the beach has been turned into a park for observing the Great Qiantang River Tide (Qianjiang chao 钱江潮). The village is among the few best observing points. It attracts thousands of people to view this natural wonder every autumn. Between the river and the residential area is the infamous Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park. The industrial park covers more than a square kilometre of the 'golden area' in the village, where the land is relatively flat. It used to be the contracted farmland of Jiangbin residents and was acquired by the township government in 1992.

For a long time before villagers gained access to tap water in 2001, home-dug deep wells remained to be the major water source. Nearly every household in the village still keeps a well in the yard, though many are no longer in use because of water pollution. Apart from relying on underground water, villagers also used to fetch spring water from the hills. There are three springs in and around the village. The most famous one is called Dajing (大井), literally meaning 'a great well', which is hidden at the end of Dajing Lane adjacent to the Zhe Hill (Zhe Shan 赭山). Unlike significantly deteriorated underground water in the village, the springs are still clear nowadays. A significant proportion of villagers in Jiangbin follow the tradition and drink spring water, since they believe that the water coming from the mist in the hills is 'the concentration of the natural essence' and is thus beneficial to health. This argument is however refuted by many sceptical neighbours as they point out that even the mountain mist is polluted nowadays [Research log 76: Interview with Grandpa Zhu, conducted on 21st September, 2014; Research log 93: Interview with Qing, conducted on 26th September, 2014; Research log 129: Interview with Guantong, conducted on 9th October, 2014]

Jiangbin is not a typical village in the 'watery region' of China built upon dense canal networks. However, there are many ponds and streams in the village, which played a significant part in the local residents' life. In the past, households around a pond automatically formed a community, since the pond acted as a common field for laundry and other social events. The streams and ponds were also an important source of food for the Jiangbin people. Many elderly residents claimed to have survived in the Great Leap Forward famine in the early 1960s thanks to the catches from the river.

However, the water system inside the village has gradually lost its significance, as great changes took place in the local residents' lifestyle. Currently, most of the ponds have either vanished or been reduced to dumping sites where domestic sewage and garbage end up. Rivers are dried up because of deposit. The village committee suspended the dredging works for years allegedly due to a lack of funding.

Located five kilometres southwest to the town centre, Jiangbin is one of the most geographically peripheral administrative villages of Nanyang Township. However, in terms of its traffic location, Jiangbin maintains great advantage over other villages. Hongshiwu Motorway, the artery of transportation in Xiaoshan District, passes through Jiangbin and separates the village into two parts. Apart from an easy access to land transportation, Jiangbin also accommodates a major ferry in the lower reach of Qiantang River. These factors altogether make Jiangbin an ideal location for industries to thrive.

Unlike Jiangbin, Weiken is among the youngest villages in Xiaoshan District. It was set up in 1959, originally as a settlement point for immigrants from nearby areas. Most of the immigrants came to Weiken and participated in the great land reclamation project, known as '*weiken* (围垦)' in Chinese, literally meaning to enclose the coastal land for cultivation. There were also households that decided to relocate because of food shortage and very restricted land usage in their hometown. The village is located near the east border of Xiaoshan District next to Shaoxing City. It is on the south bank of the Qiantang River and is only ten kilometres away from the mainstream of the river nowadays. The administrative area of Weiken is 1.81 square kilometres, of which more than half is the reclaimed land from the river. Flat land and rich sandy soil facilitate agriculture in this area and make Weiken a major vegetable supplier in the locality.

A highly developed canal system which depicts the most identifiable geographic feature of Weiken Village is another legacy left by the land reclamation project. The canals run in a regular criss-cross pattern. They sustain a very accessible and convenient irrigation network for the deployment of vegetable farmers in the locality. These canals, usually three to four metres in width and less than two metres in depth,

are also habitats of various aquarium animals and plants. Weiken Village was once famous for its good natural environment and biodiversity of its wetland ecosystem. Many people from the nearby area only came here to free captive fishes and turtles (fangsheng 放生) because they believed that the animals would have a higher chance of survival if they were released in Weiken. However, people would not do this anymore nowadays, since nearby industries have made local surface water system heavily polluted. Not only were the canals contaminated, the underground water also became problematic. Weiken residents gained access to tap water in 2004. Before that, local residents who became aware of possible health hazard of drinking polluted well water collected rainwater as an alternative water source. Like Jiangbin people, some also fetched spring water for daily use. The cost of water fetching in Weiken is much higher however, as the nearest safe source of spring water from the village is located in another township twelve kilometres away.

Weiken consist of thirteen villagers' groups, each consisting of five to thirty households. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th villagers' groups surround a giant synthetic fibre company in the west part of the village, whereas the rest are scattered on the reclaimed land in the east. villagers' groups, which were previously referred to as production teams (shengchan dui 生产队), not only describe the geographic intimacy of their member households, but also denote a co-operative relationship in production. Considering the relatively short history and streamlined social network in Weiken, many local residents develop the relations of neighbourhood into a hyper-kinship connection in some particular cases, where family responsibilities such as caring the seniors and children are shared among community members. My research focuses on the first five villagers' groups in Weiken, as the polluting industry is literally on their doorstep. All the pro-ecological campaigns in the township were originated from these villagers' groups.

In terms of its traffic location, Weiken Village is situated in the intersection of Xiaoshan District and the bordering Shaoxing County. It is connected to the nearby villages and townships by a high-density road network. The village is close to both the political and the economic centres in Yinong Township. Weiken is at the east end of the busiest commercial street in Yinong. Both the supermarket and the farmers'

market are within walking distance. The township government is located in the northwest corner of the village. Many villagers can 'see the office building from home'. Weiken people have mixed emotions to the village's location. On the one hand, they enjoy the convenience of living in the heart of the township; on the other, they feel disturbed sometimes, as many complain about the feeling of being under the control and monitor of township officials all the time.

3.2 Demographical statistics and population health

By the end of 2013, Jiangbin Village had a permanent population of 1,603 in 508 households. Among the permanent residents in Jiangbin, 790 were male and 813 were female. The sex ratio was 0.974. 1,138 had rural household registration status, which took up 70.99% of the local population. In 2013, there were 11 cases of birth and 13 cases of death, making both the birth rate and the death rate of the village slightly higher than the average level of rural China. In spite of a steady natural growth of population, the number of permanent residents in Jiangbin is increasing in a staggering speed mainly due to marriage-related immigration. By 2013, the registered population had increased 102 since last census in 1999.

According to the data in 2013, the age structure of Jiangbin Village resembles the multimodal distribution in Nanyang Township, where peaks appear in age groups of 30 to 44 and 45 to 59. The average life expectancy of Nanyang levelled at 75.3 years. Of all the permanent residents in Jiangbin village, there were 327 senior villagers over 60 years old.

The population size of Weiken Village is much bigger than that of Jiangbin. In 2013, the population of permanent residents was 3,906, of which male were 1,989 and female were 1,917. Rural residents accounted for a proportion of 83.13% in Weiken. There were 840 senior residents over 60 years old. In 2013, there were 21 cases of birth and 19 cases of death in the village, making a positive natural growth of population levelling at 0.52‰. The average life expectancy of the township where Weiken situates was 75.6 years in 2013, which exceeded the national average and was significantly higher than the rural average level.

Both villages have observed a popularisation of university education in the past two decades. By 2013, residents with university certificates or diplomas above bachelor's level had increased to 17 and 31 in Jiangbin and Weiken respectively. 'University graduates' are no longer 'rare species' in the villages. At this stage, rural households become more willing to invest on education and more capable of providing support to younger generation's schooling and training than ever. In return, the better-educated generation begin to benefit their families and the rural communities by bringing income and information. At the other end of the education spectrum, illiterate and semi-literate population has significantly shrunk in both sites. According to the statistics from Nanyang Township, in 2013, the illiterate and semi-literate population in Jiangbin decreased to 352 from 747 in 1999.

A similar demographic feature that can be identified in both Jiangbin and Weiken is the outflow of young and middle-aged labour forces among the permanent residents. In many cases, the old life-style in the village and the job opportunities provided by the local industries can no longer satisfy the needs of young people in the locality. It is very common that they prefer to leave the village and work in more developed urban sectors or wealthier townships in the nearby region. To leave one's hometown and work elsewhere is not only the younger generation's will, but also an expectation of most local families. However, the young and middle-aged labourers from the villages do not usually 'leave home'. Working in the City of Hangzhou or nearby townships within driving distance, they choose to live a life of 'migratory birds in the city' and commute between their working places and homes in the village. The advantageous traffic location of Jiangbin and Weiken enables their everyday commuting. This recent trend has greatly changed the once isolated villages. The commuting younger generation of Jiangbin and Weiken bring in new information to the locality and connect the villages with the external world.

Contrary to western and middle provinces as major 'suppliers' of trans-provincial migrant workers in China, the financially advanced villages of Xiaoshan usually observe a net influx of young and middle-aged labourers. In Jiangbin and Weiken, numerous private enterprises never fail to attract migrant workers from other provinces. Most migrant workers live with host families in the villages. According to the statistics, the registered transient population in Jiangbin and Weiken were 237 and

375 respectively in 2013. However, the real population of immigrants living in the villages is much more than the reported number. Since the registration of transient population is conducted on a voluntary basis, the immigrants report their temporary residences to the local administration only when they find a job in a local enterprise. The local government does not track and count those newly arrived immigrants who have not yet secured a job and those who come with their spouses and choose not to work. The influx of migrant workers adds diversity to local demographic composition and brings vitality to the local society and economy. They also change local residents' means of livelihoods and influence their ways of thinking through daily interaction. In addition, my observation suggests that migrant workers play a pivotal role in bridging the private industries with villagers as a link of the interest chain in the locality.

Currently, health statistics in Jiangbin and Weiken are monitored by local medical stations (weisheng zhan 卫生站). In Xiaoshan District, the medical station in an administrative village, which usually consists of two to three doctors, a nurse, and a pharmacist, provides basic healthcare services to patients from the village, handles family planning affairs, and collects public health statistics. It reports to the medical centre at the township level on an annual basis by submitting community diagnostic reports (shequ zhenduan baogao 社区诊断报告). These reports serve as a reliable source to review the public health in the village.

According to the reports of 2013, among the 13 and 19 cases of death in Jiangbin and Weiken respectively, malignant tumour were the leading cause of death, followed by cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, accidents, and digestive diseases. By sorting out the death registration forms from the medical station, I identify eight cases of cancer death in Jiangbin and 11 cases of cancer death in Weiken between April 2014 and April 2015. The cancer death rates of Jiangbin and Weiken in 2014/15 were 2.5 and 2.8 times higher than the national average respectively. Doctors from both villages confirmed that a higher cancer death rate has been tracked in the locality for many years ever since the annual diagnostic report system began in 2005. Before 2005, residents in Jiangbin followed the practice of popular epidemiology and kept track of cancer patients in the village by themselves. According to their 'cancer list', there were 31 cases of traceable cancer deaths in the village from 1993 to 2005. When

the list was made in December 2005, there were 16 diagnosed cancer patients under various types of treatment. There is no high incidence for a particular type of cancer: out of the 47 traceable cancer cases on the list, there are 13 cases of lung cancer, followed by 8 cases liver cancer, 5 cases of oesophagus cancer, 4 cases of stomach cancer, and 4 cases of cervical cancer. The incidence of different cancer types in Jiangbin complies roughly with the overall situation of China at national level. Both Jiangbin and Weiken Village became infamous in the area for their higher cancer rates after being exposed under media coverage since 2005. It was also the point when they got their notorious reputation as cancer villages in rural China.

It is worthwhile noting that the healthcare system in the rural area of Xiaoshan District has been significantly improved in the past decade. As one of the pilot sites of China's rural cooperative medical scheme (RCMS), Xiaoshan initiated reforms in its medical system since 2006. Currently, rural residents above 25 years old can enjoy a free health check in the township-level medical centre every other year. For senior residents over 60 years old, the health check is provided on an annual basis and is compulsory. Residents are recommended to rely on and to make full use of local medical resources. They can enjoy up to 85% reimbursement of their medical bills from the township medical centre. To attract patients, the medical centre of Nanyang and Yinong provide various healthcare packages for chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. However, neither institute is capable of providing treatment and rehabilitation services for cancer patients. They have to refer the patients to larger hospitals in the City of Hangzhou, where the reimbursement rate of expenses for rural residents within the RCMS can be as low as 30%.

Local cancer patients have benefited from the improved medical services at the township level, since they can obtain earlier diagnoses rather than becoming aware of the diseases only when it comes to a more developed stage. However, the restricted medical resources and an absence of cancer care at local level result in a significantly higher cancer death rate in rural areas. For most households in Jiangbin and Weiken, cancer means not only an anticipated death but also a heavy burden on family finance. Nevertheless, my fieldwork in the two villages suggests that most households would try every method to find a cure (zhizhi kan 治治看) for cancer patients rather than to

give up at the final stage as many families in less financially developed provinces usually do¹⁷⁵.

Although the households in Jiangbin and Weiken regard suffering from cancer as a tragic and disgraceful matter, locals do not avoid talking about this disease. It is cancer that brings together individual patient families and creates communities in which resources are exchanged. Not all the households in Jiangbin and Weiken can afford the treatment provided by major hospitals in the city. Alternatively, they turn to natural therapy, Chinese herbal therapy, and other indigenous approaches (tu banfan 土办法). For many households, the patient families' group is among the most accessible and reliable sources of information. It is not rare to see many villagers pay group visits to herb doctors and take up similar health promotion methods. As they fight cancer on a common frontline, these families usually nurture mutual trust and become an important interest group in the village.

3.3 Economy and livelihoods

The hilly landscape of Jiangbin Village makes arable land a scarce resource in the locality. In the past, most villagers made a living out of fishery or commercial activities. Although production from the field was not a major source of life, local residents cherished their family plots. Like most rural residents in China, they carefully managed their small patches of land, which subsidised their families' food consumption.

Jiangbin is among the first few industrialised villages in Nanyang Township. Both of its village-owned enterprises, a pigment factory and a dyeing workshop, thrived after privatisation in the late 1970s, which set the stage for the spread of industrial culture in the locality. In 1992, the Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park was planned, with more than thirty chemical companies moving in successively in the following two decades. Where the industrial park is situated was originally the cultivatable land of local people. Surprisingly, the land deprivation did not bring about fierce objection at

¹⁷⁵ Lora-Wainwright, *Fighting for Breath*. Lora-Wainwright, "Perceptions of Health, Illness and Healing in a Sichuan Village, China."

that time, as each household was guaranteed working opportunities with a generous package and a land share as compensation. By the end of 1999, the number of agricultural practitioners in Jiangbin dropped down to 55, whilst 482 labourers from the village began to work in the industrial division.

The spectrum of professions is quite characteristic in Jiangbin. It is a key factor in the social strata of the village, in which rich and poor families with different means of livelihoods get 'classified'. Like the situation in most Chinese villages, wealth and power in Jiangbin are not evenly distributed among households but are rather concentrated in the hand of several particular parties¹⁷⁶. Rural cadres, entrepreneurs, and managers of local businesses possess a majority part of social resources in the locality. Most of the households in these classes no longer physically live in the village, though they tend to keep their old houses and refurbish them so as to demonstrate their advanced financial status among peers. The population of these top-tier classes in local social pyramid is not big.

What constitute a major social group in Jiangbin are assembly line workers employed by the manufacturing industries in the nearby areas. In order to sustain in the life struggle, many residents in Jiangbin have to catch up with the fast pace of industrialisation and abandon their familiar agricultural mode of production and lifestyle. Among the domestic workers in the nearby factories, most are villagers aging between 35 and 50, who lack necessary mobility in society. Usually, the private factories operate 24 hours a day. Employee's working time is divided into three 8-hour slots. Each day at 8:00 a.m., 4:00 p.m., and midnight, workers flood in and out the industrial park to change shifts (daoban 倒班). In most factories, employees are allowed to claim at most 2 working slots per day. They need to finish at least 25 working slots every month. The salary is calculated based on their posts and working hours. Averagely, the monthly payment for a worker in a low-risk post is 3,000 *yuan* RMB. For those who work longer hours and/or are exposed directly to toxic chemicals, the salary can reach 10,000 *yuan* per month. Most households in Jiangbin rely partly or fully on the payments from the nearby industries. However, villagers'

¹⁷⁶ Lu et al., "Zhuanxing shiqi nongmin de jiceng fenhua," 137-51.

financial dependence on these companies is becoming weaker nowadays, as the younger generation tend to work away from home and seek job opportunities in the urban area.

Jiangbin is also home to many active small businesses. The Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park brings a large influx of floating population to the locality. Many households become engaged in service industries targeting at the needs of migrant workers. There are many family inns, restaurants, and supermarkets distributed in the residential areas of the village. The owners and operators of these businesses constitute a class of 'self-employed workers'. The proportion of self-employed workers in Jiangbin may reach up to one third of its residence population, which is much higher than the national average.¹⁷⁷ Apparently, the livelihoods of these households are also tightly associated with and deeply influenced by the nearby industries.

Living by the Qiangtang River, a number of Jiangbin residents inherit the village tradition and feed on fishery. The population of professional fishermen increases from 19 in 1999 to more than 30 now. As a daily routine, fishermen set off for fishing in the morning. They do not need to worry much about the market since their fresh catches are always popular among the local restaurants and consumers. The average household annual income from fishery can reach 60,000 *yuan*, though many fishermen complain about a shrinking fish population which makes their work more difficult. Interestingly, fishermen in Jiangbin form a very intimate and co-operative community. They keep in close touch with each other and exchange information about tide, weather, seasonal fishery resources, and so on. The typical profession-based association marks another important type of local social networks.

Currently, there are very few villagers feeding solely on agriculture in Jiangbin. Most of the land-deprived residents in the village have adapted to their new identity and lifestyle as members of a deeply industrialised 'new village'. Nevertheless, the tradition of farming is still maintained by the old generation. Although the former

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

family plots (ziliu di 自留地) and contracted farmland (chengbao di 承包地) have been acquired for the construction of the industrial park, villagers manage to open up small patches of land for sowing and growing. They either turn their yards into vegetable plots, or reclaim wasteland in the nearby hills. Usually, these works are completed by passionate senior villagers who want to contribute a part to the livelihoods of families. The agricultural products from the patches are often consumed by the household members. Since the younger generation lacks interest in farming, it is foreseeable that the tradition of agricultural production among landless residents in Jiangbin will gradually diminish.

Like most residents in Xiaoshan, Jiangbin people consider it a good quality for one to work hard for the sake of family. A respondent of mine, a middle-aged woman who married a fisherman in Jiangbin 20 years ago, told me in the interview that she had been busy all year round ever since she came to the family.

'I work in a factory 8 hours a day. However, considering the endless household chores at home, my actual working hour is much more than a slot off the assembly line. I am working hard all for my son; I would not let him be a live-in sons-in-law (shangmen nüxu 上门女婿). In that case, I need to earn a house and a car for him before he gets married... Most middle-aged women in lower Xiaoshan live a life like me: if I did not work and went to play cards in the teahouse, I would be criticised by the whole village as an unqualified mother and wife.' [Research log 77: Interview with Grandpa Shan, conducted on 21st September, 2014]

It is true that under such a culture of striving for livelihoods, housewives in Jiangbin seize every minute to work. A majority of them assemble folding umbrellas to subsidise their families. They are quite skilful at the work. It takes 3 minutes at most to build up an umbrella, from which they can earn 1 *yuan* RMB. Local residents see hope of life from the endless and tedious manual labour. They feel a sense of security from what they refer to as 'living a down-to-earth life' (shidashi de guo rizi 实打实的过日子).

The main industries and means of livelihoods in Weiken are somewhat different from those of Jiangbin. Weiken village is well-known for its status as a largest vegetable cultivation base in Xiaoshan District. Arable land plays a central role in the local life since a large proportion of villagers feed solely on agricultural production. Nowadays, the fine cultivation techniques employed in vegetable planting can bring a net profit of up to 30,000 *yuan* RMB per *mu*¹⁷⁸ of land every year.

Rural residents in China do not own land. The right to use and contract cultivatable land is collectively controlled by the village community, and, as in the case of Weiken, distributed to the villagers' groups in accordance with the principle of proximity and the principle of tradition. As a result, households in a same villagers' group usually unite with each other in the bargains around land issues. The per capita share of land varies from different villagers' groups. For the 5 villagers' groups in Weiken, residents used to have a vast area of arable land. Apart from a 0.9 *mu* family plots distributed to each individual above 18 years old, household could also contract up to 5 *mu* land for planting designated crops. However, the expansion scheme of Fanchang Group, a synthetic fibre giant and pillar industry of the township, changed many villagers' life and their business of vegetable farming. Once a small village-owned enterprise situating in the middle of the farmland surrounded by the 5 villagers' groups, the company experienced unprecedented speed of development in the threshold of the new millennium. The expansion scheme in 2003 installed 4 new workshops into the main site of the company, making the factory 4 times larger than its original acreage. Having obtained support from Yinong government, the company worked jointly with township officials and village cadres on land acquisition. At the current stage, households from the 5 villagers' groups no longer have land to contract. Their family plots have also significantly shrunk. Many households noticed that they could not sustain on the income from the field any more. As a result, they rented out their scattered patches of farmland to professional growers (*zhongcai dahu* 种菜大户) for large-scale cultivation and sought livelihoods in other industries. As my observation suggests, apart from a very small proportion of households at the higher

¹⁷⁸ 1 *mu* equals 666.7 sq. metres.

end of the social strata in the village, most local residents in Weiken either shift to new mode of agricultural production or choose to work in Fanchang Group.

To mitigate land-deprived villagers' grievance, the village committee of Weiken decided to give the right of contracting the reclaimed muddy beach (haitang 海塘) near Qiantang River to the villagers' groups around Fanchang Group exclusively. Many households claim the land and turn it into ponds for fish and shrimp farming. Although being risky comparing to vegetable farming, aquaculture usually has a higher return, which pays off contractors' initial investment and endeavour. Among my respondents from Weiken, the annual income of a family engaged in aquaculture can reach 200,000 *yuan* RMB. For the other villagers who do not want to give up their familiar vegetable business, they become vegetable dealers and profit from wholesale and retail of vegetable products. Typically, a couple undertaking this business can make approximately 40,000 *yuan* RMB every year. Not sufficient to cover up the subsistent of the entire household though, vegetable transaction only take place in the morning, which allows time for dealers to find other means to subsidise the family.

In Weiken, a large proportion of residents take up job offers from Fanchang Group. Unlike Jiangbin, where only middle-aged residents tend to work in the nearby industries, villagers of all ages in Weiken consider it an attractive opportunity to join the synthetic fibre company. They enjoy the convenience of working locally. The welfare system and the relatively competitive salaries from the big company give them a sense of security and belonging. Currently, a newly employed workshop apprentice is paid 2,500 *yuan* RMB per month. Those experienced employees will be promoted as masters, with their payment increasing to up to 5,000 *yuan* per month. Some villagers have retired from the company. The retired workers continue to receive stipends from the enterprise, which reconfirms its image as a trustworthy employer. It is not rare to see that three generations of a family work together in the same company. This in a way depicts many local families' heavy dependence on the company.

Similarly, there is a culture that advocates private businesses and commerce in Weiken. Many villagers run family-owned businesses and turn their yard or part of

their house into workshops. Among the less than a hundred households in the five villagers' groups, there are five workshops featuring on furniture, metal machinery parts, buttons, and fabric finishing. They constitute an economically advanced and relatively independent class in the local area, though their businesses rely a lot on the township's policy and administration.

As a part of Xiaoshan District, Weiken accommodates the tradition of regarding working industriously as a family devotion. Being consistently busy is considered as a virtue. Despite the overall satisfactory household economic status, villagers tend to seize every minute to work. A most common work undertaken by female residents in their spare time is to decorate curtain edges. Intermediaries visit local households on a regular basis, taking away finished products to the factories and bringing bags of raw materials for the next phase. Villagers earn 10 to 20 *yuan* RMB from an hour's manual work depending on their skillfulness. This also constitutes a considerable part of income of many ordinary families.

In general, multiple means of livelihoods can be observed in Jiangbin and Weiken. Local residents demonstrate high level of adaptability and flexibility in the irreversible trend of industrialisation. Many have learned to take advantage of the nearby industries for a better household finance. For instance, a majority of local families rent part of their houses to migrant workers. Some others cooperate with the nearby industrial companies in various ways such as supplying agricultural products to the affiliated canteens. Although the heavy dependence on industries facilitates economic prosperity in the locality, it hinders the villagers' expression of their environmental interest.

3.4 Kinship networks

In many scholarships on rural China, kinship relations are regarded as the nucleus of Chinese rural society¹⁷⁹ and the foundation of various cultural and social ties¹⁸⁰ within traditional villages. Jiangbin and Weiken accommodate distinctive types of kinship

¹⁷⁹ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*.

¹⁸⁰ Wang, *Dangdai Zhongguo cunluo jiazu wenhua*.

networks, which frame local residents' social activities, dedication, and interest orientations in different ways.

In Jiangbin, the kinship relations that have sustained and developed over the past 1,000 years, bequeaths an enduring legacy to the village. There are four noticeably big clans in the village, i.e. Feng (冯), Shen (沈), Hu (胡), and Dai (戴). Each clan has its own genealogy, which delineates a traceable seniority structure among households that share a common surname. There are also minor surnames among permanent residents in Jiangbin. Most of the residents with minor surnames are married into the village. Unlike the majority of Chinese rural households which uphold a patriarchal tradition in marriage relations, Jiangbin people are accustomed to the phenomenon of 'recruiting' live-in sons-in-law (*shangmen nǚxu* 上门女婿). A better family financial status enables households in Jiangbin to support their female members in marriage as well. Rather than marrying *away* (*jia* 嫁) their daughters, Jiangbin people tend to have male spouses married *in* (*qu* 娶) to the village. In such cases, children bear the surname of the mother's family and are hence considered as members of the local clan. Due to this custom, the population of the four major clans in Jiangbin has significantly expanded since the early 1970s. Despite their growing sizes, each family draws a clear boundary from the other clans in the village. Residents in Jiangbin do not prefer marriage within the village. It was a tradition of the village that enthusiastic middle-aged women voluntarily formed a 'matchmaker group' (*shuoqin tuan* 说亲团) and went to the nearby counties to arrange inter-village marriages. Nowadays, although matchmakers play a less important role in arranging marriages, Jiangbin people follow the tradition and seek spouses from outside the village. This has in turn made the kinship relations in Jiangbin very streamlined. Every big clan maintains a relatively independent genealogy in the village, which frees itself from entanglements of interest in a reticular kinship network.

The kinship networks in Jiangbin are preserved and strengthened through both ceremonial activities and everyday interactions among households. Two of the four big families in Jiangbin, namely Feng and Hu, still have their ancestral halls. The ancestral halls, though being locked up and not in frequent use, demonstrate and maintain the authoritativeness of senior members in the clans and the dedication of

family members. A major collective activity within the big families is the celebration of the Chinese New Year, during which Feng and Hu's ancestral hall are opened to accommodate and banquet family members. Usually, the celebration lasts for three days and is hosted by each branch in the clan (fang 房) in turn. In addition, there are also ceremonial events in honour of senior family members and in memory of those passed away. The Shen and Dai clans in Jiangbin celebrate the Chinese New Year together as well, though the venues are often in the houses of senior or influential family members. There used to be more ceremonial activities within the major clans in the past. However, with the rapid pace of industrialisation, the tradition of holding ceremonial family events in Jiangbin is gradually vanishing. Nowadays, nuclear family gains increasing significance as an independent basic social unit, whereas the linkages built on ancestral kinship, or what Fei Xiaotong¹⁸¹ refers to as the outer sequences in the 'pattern of difference', become less important in the everyday life of rural residents in Jiangbin. Nevertheless, during family events such as weddings, funerals, and baby naming ceremonies, the hosts often receive more blessings and supports from relatives than other neighbours who have no kinship relations with their families. Everyday interactions among households in the same clan outline the responsibilities of family members in accordance with the local convention. This resonates with Putnam's classification of social capital,¹⁸² in which such linkage constructed in a kinship cluster is defined as of a bonding type. Both geographical intimacy and blood relations strengthen trust and relationship within big families.

Three types of resources are shared among households in each major clan of Jiangbin. Firstly, nuclear families establish close economic ties to each other within a same clan. The shared economic resources manifest themselves not only as reciprocity through courteous interactions, but also as responsibility to relatives. In Jiangbin, it has long been a social norm to give a 'whip-round' (fenzi 份子) to the household that celebrates a big family event. Normally, members from a same clan are expected to contribute a bigger part than neighbours who have no blood relations. If a household encounters a particular financial crisis, such as an urgent demand of money for

¹⁸¹ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*.

¹⁸² Robert D. Putnam, "The Prosperous Community," *The American Prospect* 4, no. 13 (1993): 35-42.

healthcare purposes, which is most commonly seen in the village, only members in a same clan are considered to have the responsibility for aiding the family. Based on kinship networks, local residents in Jiangbin have formulated several economic communities, in which responsibility, gains, and risks are shared among family members. This depicts the basic level of the cooperative economic structure in Jiangbin Village.

Secondly, the political resources in Jiangbin are carved up by the four most influential families. A most intuitive example of such distribution is the struggle in the village committee, where the Feng and the Hu Family compete fiercely for power. The current political landscape in Jiangbin shows a balance of power, since members from the Feng and the Hu Family assume the position of party secretary and village accountant respectively and thus divide up the administrative and clerical authority. The exercise of political power can bring real benefits to their family members. Since Feng Jianguan stepped into power and became the party secretary of Jiangbin in 2005, the Feng Family started to enjoy a series of privileges, such as the right of contracting the greening works, the privatised community hospital, and the river dredging project in the village. The small and medium-sized enterprises owned by members of the Feng Family also thrived in the past decade, since they enjoyed a favourable investment policy from the village committee. To consolidate their vested interest gains, each major family backs up its candidate in the power struggle at the village level. However, members within a same clan are not always united, given that benefits gained from political resources are not evenly distributed to each households. In the case of Jiangbin, Jianguan's relatives in his extended family are among the most direct beneficiaries of his authority, whereas those distant relatives have fewer opportunities to partake the interest. This phenomenon reveals the roots of disagreement and discontent inside a clan.

Lastly, the four major families in Jiangbin have established their respective channels of information. My observation suggests that many local residents value information as an important resource. As a consequence, information concerning sensitive issues such as investment opportunities, local power structure changes, and collective actions, is often kept in a closed circle in the village. The kinship networks in Jiangbin become channels for disseminating information and delineate a boundary for

information proliferation. A series of family rituals and daily interactions among family members provide effective channels for the word-of-mouth mode of information dissemination, which is most popular in contemporary rural China. As each clan has independent information sources and isolated fields of communication, households in the same clan sometimes generate highly convergent ideas and actions.

Unlike Jiangbin, there is a relatively weak tradition of clans in Weiken, since most residents migrated from different villages nearby in the late 1950s. The scattered origins of villagers result in a collaged family composition. The only three households that claim kinship relations with each other are branches of an extended family with a surname of Xie. The old house of Xie Family was divided up by three brothers in the 1990s. Since then, the three branches live separately in the same neighbourhood.

Weiken is an example of numerous new villages (xincun 新村) in China, which were founded in the two major construction periods before and after the Cultural Revolution. Most of the new villages were established with an aim of facilitating land reclamation and regional development. As a result, kinship networks which outline the social structure of traditional Chinese villages are replaced by the cooperative relations in these newly-founded villages. Nevertheless, the absence of kinship networks does not necessarily impede the accumulation and function of social capital in Weiken. To the contrary, villagers have developed close relationships based on their neighbourhood, which they claim as ‘not originally a family but better than a family’ (bushi yijia ren, shengsi yijia ren 不是一家人，胜似一家人). The semi-kinship relations represent another type of horizontal ties in the differential mode of association and confirm the argument that the bonding type of social capital is more likely to be an asset of a neighbourhood.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Larissa Larsen et al., “Bonding and Bridging: Understanding the Relationship between Social Capital and Civic Action,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 24, no. 1 (2004): 64-77.

3.5 Religions and beliefs

Being a significant part of the social system, religion is renowned for its unifying, cooperative, and functional capacities.¹⁸⁴ Religion not only fulfils individual needs by providing a personal sense of community and belonging,¹⁸⁵ but also reinforces social order at the societal level.¹⁸⁶ Against the backdrop of a decaying communist belief and the loosening policy of cultural control, rural China has observed a revival of religion since the Reform and Open Up.¹⁸⁷ Apart from traditional ancestral worship, other religious faiths such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Taoism have also gained popularity in the public sector of rural regions. However, as the situation in Jiangbin and Weiken show, the popularity of a certain religion varies in different locations.

Buddhism is the most identifiable religious belief among people in Jiangbin. The village is home to five Buddhist temples and convents, of which two are built on the Wuli Hill and three are hidden in the residential zone. All the five temples, despite their various sizes, are of high prestige among believers not only in the village but also in the nearby areas. Baima Temple, the largest temple in Jiangbin, has a history of over 600 years. It is dedicated to the Bodhisattva, also known as the Goddess of Mercy. The temple accommodates about 30 professional and lay Buddhists who live on-site and conduct religious activities. On the 29th day of the 2nd month in Chinese rural calendar every year, over 1,000 believers gather to celebrate the birth anniversary of the Bodhisattva, of which ‘some even come from the Hangzhou city’. This is the biggest religious event in Jiangbin, which demonstrates the thriving religious life of the village.

Apart from going to temples and convents, residents in Jiangbin also practice their faiths in everyday life. It is not rare to hear Buddhist music and the sound of wooden

¹⁸⁴ Peter Augustine Lawler and Dale Mcconkey, *Social Structures, Social Capital, and Personal Freedom* (Westport: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2000).

¹⁸⁵ Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture, and Other Essays* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944). Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, Michael Banton ed. (London: Routledge, 2004): 1-85

¹⁸⁶ Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, *Taboo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹⁸⁷ DuBois, *The Sacred Village*. Pui-Lam Law, “The Revival of Folk Religion and Gender Relationships in Rural China: A Preliminary Observation,” *Asian Folklore Studies* (2005): 89-109.

fish (muyu 木鱼), a percussion instrument used to accompany Buddhist priests, from the villagers' houses. Many households set up Buddhist altars at home. It is a custom to bring home neighbours and friends who share the same belief and practice religion together by reciting or chanting Buddhist scriptures. Such rituals can take up to 12 hours a day in some particular occasions. The believers of Buddhism in Jiangbin are mostly middle-aged women and elderly people.

Buddhist religion plays a central role in the social life of local residents in Jiangbin. It is an important medium of communication that facilitates the establishment of social ties and mutual trust in the community and further shapes public opinions and collective actions in the locality. The constructive power of Buddhist belief as a typical type of social bond lies in the tendency of this religion, the network it creates, and the role of local religious leaders.

Usually, villagers claim that their family members and neighbours who believe in Buddhism 'become detached from the real community' [Research log 127: Interview with Shanhu, conducted on October 9th, 2018]. The emphasis on seeking a peaceful mind (xiu qingjing xin 修清净心) in Buddhist doctrines shifts followers' attention from everyday life concerns towards religious activities. Nevertheless, the pursuit to inner serenity does not necessarily lead to individualised religious practices. To the contrary, Buddhist believers establish their own social networks based on religious connections, which enable close interaction and information flow among nuclear households. Religious rallies take place every fortnight, which make local temples one of the most important meeting places and news centres in the locality. The home-based religious practices can also bring together households and create opportunities for exchanging information. Based on a shared belief, some Buddhist followers develop small groups, in which member households aid each other and maintain intimate 'hyper-kin' ties. As a villager in Jiangbin commented, Buddhist followers tend to 'spend more time with other believers than with their family members' [Research log 127: Interview with Shanhu, conducted on October 9th, 2018]. Their dedication to the religious community serves as an important source of social connections in the locality.

The shared interests in the Buddhist communities are often guided by local religious leaders. Unlike many Buddhist sites which are run by monks, the five temples and convents in Jiangbin are either contracted and operated by lay Buddhists or owned by the village. The village committee is the supervisor *de facto* of religious activities. Consequentially, local religious leaders maintain a close relationship with village cadres and higher administrative bodies in the township. In the temples of Jiangbin, it is never rare to find publicity columns filled with slogans and posters about socialist core values such as harmony, patriotism, and dedication are posted. Local religious leaders are, or would pretend to be, faithful guardians of these values. They are powerful enough to shape opinion in a religious community through instructing teachings and manoeuvring information shared by the followers. This makes the grassroots religious sites a part of the ‘united front’ of the country, where members behave in accordance with the promoted values and the national goal of maintaining stability. The influence of religious community are further passed on to families, since many senior Buddhist believers have a high position in the local kinship networks and can influence the interest orientation of the whole clan.

Christianity is another major religious belief in Jiangbin which has the second largest number of followers. It is very ‘identifiable’ because the believers’ families in the village tend to decorate their iron fence or house exterior walls with crossings. They also put up spring festival couplets with religious contents. The estimated number of families with Christian beliefs is 20 out of the 508 households. Although there is no church in the village, it does not dampen the enthusiasm of the Christians. They attend services together in the Church of Nanyang Township which is 5 kilometres away and hold religious events at each other’s home. A good sense of community lays the foundation for Christians’ convergent ideology and collective action in Jiangbin.

In Weiken, religion does not manifest itself as a type of significant social bond. It is partly because of the shorter history and the relatively streamlined social networks of the village. During my fieldwork, I spotted residents with Buddhist or Christian beliefs sporadically in the village. Most of them keep their faiths private. In order to do so, they even simplify the religious rituals: many villagers in Weiken who claim to be Christians have never been to Church. What they do is merely hanging up the portrait of Christ given by relatives or friends and worshipping Him just as they pay

homage to their ancestors. Nevertheless, the private rituals are meaningful. They resonate with Malinowski and Geertz's argument on the significance of religion as a spiritual fulfilment at individual level.¹⁸⁸ It is however difficult to define the extent to which religions act as adhesives among people and promote collective action in the locality.

3.6 Industries, pollution, and the environment

The geographical intimacy with and the economic dependence on chemical industries are among the core features of Jiangbin and Weiken, though the industries near the two villages are different in terms of their type, number, and size. In turn, they bring different forms of pollution and challenges to the local eco-system.

Jiangbin is home to two former village-owned enterprises, the businesses of which are still thriving nowadays. Both companies specialise in dyeing and pigment manufacturing. They have a history of over 40 years and have undergone privatisation in the late 1970s. Shengshan Group is located in the Northeast corner of the village, next to the 1st villagers' group. It has a coverage of 500 *mu* and over 3,000 employees. Yingshanhua Company is situated in the valley of Wuli Hill, boarding the 4th and 5th villagers' group. It takes up 210 *mu* of acreage and has over 1,200 employees. Apart from the two local businesses, there are also a group of small and middle sized chemical industries which are attracted by the favourable investment policy of Jiangbin. They are situated in a vast flat area between the Qiantang River and the village called Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park. Established in 1992, the industrial park accommodated as many as 39 companies at its peak. Currently, among the 31 companies in the park, 13 feature on fine chemistry, with the rest spreading in various industries from pharmaceutical manufacturing, metal plate coating, synthetic material, machineries, furniture, automobile parts, to washing and laundry services. The business turnover of the industrial park reached 6.7 billion *yuan* RMB in 2012. It contributed a significant share of 250 million *yuan* RMB to the local taxation (*defang tiliu* 地方提留), which accounted 57.73% of Nanyang's revenue of the year.

¹⁸⁸ Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*. Geertz, "Religion as a cultural system," 1-85.

The industrial setting in Weiken is somewhat different from that of Jiangbin. There is only one large company located exclusively within Weiken, surrounded by its five villagers' groups. Fanchang Group is a leading company in the country specialising in raw materials for the production of synthetic fibre. The major site of the company is literally on the villagers' doorsteps, where their houses and yards are separated from the workshops by a wall. Local residents have never heard of the national regulation which requires chemical factories to be built in an 800-metre radius safety distance away from residential zones. Over the years, they gradually become aware of the company's unshakable status in the local economy and the way to coexist with this industrial giant. The group's rapid rise from a village-owned workshop to a leading company of textile industry in less than 20 years is beyond the expectation of all the villagers. Being a pillar business in Yinong Township nowadays, Fanchang Group achieved a revenue of 70.5 billion *yuan* RMB in 2014 and yielded a taxation of 4.01 billion *yuan* RMB to the local government, which accounted 80.6% of the township fiscal revenue. The government of Xiaoshan District praised it as a 'star enterprise' of the year. In 2011, the company created approximately 3,500 jobs. More than 60% of workers are employed locally.

Regardless of their difference in type, number, and size, the chemical industries in both Jiangbin and Weiken remain a major source of pollution in the locality. Back to the earlier years before 1990 when the newly privatised workshops started up, they barely took any measures to protect the environment. Thanks to the limited scales of the businesses at that time, the sewage and gas emission were still within the carrying capacity of local eco-system. In the mid-1990s, pollution became 'noticeable' in the locality. At that time, Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park became filled with enterprises while the production capacity of Fanchang Group significantly upgraded. The fast pace of industrialisation, coupled with the weak environmental awareness of polluting industries and administrators, resulted in rapid deterioration of the local ecology. Only when it came to the threshold of the new millennium did the local government strengthen its environmental regulations. Nevertheless, both townships failed to implement these regulations successfully, not only due to their heavy economic dependence on the industries, but also because of a low cost of non-

compliance.¹⁸⁹ Although most companies installed environmental protection equipment such as dust absorbers, gas desulphurisation devices, and sewage treatment facilities, they ‘only turned them on when they were under inspection’ [Research log 77: Interview with Grandpa Shan, conducted on 21st September, 2014]. Some enterprises were even ‘willing to pay penalties for pollution, since the cost of running environmental protection equipment would be 10 times higher than the fine’ [Research log 78: Interview with Lao Qin, conducted on 21st September, 2014]. Against this backdrop, a series of pro-ecological campaigns emerged at the grassroots level. Local green activists played a positive role in turning environmentalism into a commonly accepted ideology in the locality and raising public attention towards pollution and its devastating effects. However, facing an unbalanced distribution of power and resources, they could hardly influence the polluting businesses’ strategies of profiting at the cost of the environment.

As seen in Jiangbin and Weiken, the pollution caused by nearby chemical industries manifests itself in four main aspects. The most noticeable and serious environmental effect imposed by the factories is their influence on local water system. Water is a central link in the production of most companies. It is widely used as ingredient and medium in heating, cooling, and flushing procedures. The geographic location of the two villages significantly lowers the costs of factories’ water consumption. For a long time, it was a common practice to derive water from and to discharge sewage back into the local canal system and the Qiantang River, which made the water body in both villages deteriorate rapidly. In Jiangbin, pollutants in water vary from heavy metal ions, organic contaminants, to harmful microbes. Major pollutants identified in the sewage of Fanchang Group are aniline compounds and chromium (VI) ions. In addition, the production of nitrocellulose colour chips makes the total nitrogen content in and the acidity of sewage much higher than the standard level.¹⁹⁰ It was only till the late 1990s did the factories install their own sewage treatment equipment and become linked to the sewage treatment plant through pipe. However, in order to cut down the costs of sewage treatment, companies tried every method to ‘steal’ emission rights. To

¹⁸⁹ Xiaoying Ma and Leonard Ortolano, *Environmental Regulation in China: Institutions, Enforcement, and Compliance* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000).

¹⁹⁰ National Water Quality Standards (WQS), available at <http://kjs.mep.gov.cn/hjbhbz/bzwb/shjbh/swrwpfbz/201211/W020121116662298626393.pdf>, accessed on 2016-01-28

name a few, Fanchang Group built underground sewage pipes which linked the factory to canals in the locality, whereas Sunflower Pigment Company in Jiangbin drilled deep wells to bury the sewage, which caused irreversible pollution to the local underground water system. In addition, scandal about the sewage treatment centre of Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park was uncovered in 2005. According to media report, the profit-driven plants were operated only in the daytime; during the evening, it secretly dumped untreated waste water to the Qiantang River.

The contaminated water has posed life-threatening challenge to the local residents, though very little evidence about water pollution has been traced and preserved. According to a water quality test in 1998, the underground water in Jiangbin Village was rated as Grade V, meaning not suitable for human contact or consumption. As the report suggested, lead and chromium (VI) levels (0.283 and 0.271 mg/L respectively) in the underground water of Jiangbin almost tripled the safety standards. The sulphate (414 mg/L) and total nitrogen content (71.3mg/L) were also abnormally higher. More recently in 2005, villagers in Jiangbin carried out a test on water samples collected from the industrial park's sewage drain near Qiantang River with the help of a journalist. The results demonstrated an astonishing level of contamination, which later triggered public anxiety about the water security of Hangzhou's mother river. Worse still, it is worth noting that tests can only reveal the severity of water pollution to a certain degree, since they only include limited test items. In Jiangbin and Weiken, a wider range of contaminants which are 'invisible' in the tests also posed an imminent threat to the ecological system and local residents.

Waste gas emission is another important form of pollution in the locality. Air pollution often has a more significant social impact since it is quite visible to the public. For most chemical industries in Jiangbin and Weiken, their coal-centred energy consumption inevitably leads to problems such as smoke, dust, and sulphur-rich acid gases. Although the government has required every factory to install flue gas desulfurization and electrostatic dust removal facilities, factories activate the devices only occasionally. The industries are criticised for discharging waste gas after dusk. Local residents repeatedly report smoky gases coming out of chimneys at night. They believe that the companies 'save the most poisonous processes to the evening when they can secretly discharge pollutant behind the cover of darkness' [Research log 15: Interview

with Changming, conducted on 4th July, 2014; Research log 30: Interview with Aunt Li, conducted on 10th July, 2014; Research log 32: Interview with Grandpa Kang, conducted on 10th July, 2014]. In addition, local residents' health is threatened by the volatile organic compounds released by nearby workshops. Taking Fanchang Group as an example, the exhaust port of the ventilation system in its nitrocellulose colour chip workshop faces directly at villagers' residences. People often complain about bad odour from the factory, but seldom do they know what the impact of this unpleasant and unhealthy smell is. In my interviews, only 2 out of 57 respondents in Weiken could specify nitrocellulose colour chips as the 'most poisonous' products in the factory and the source of the bad smell in the air. In a sense, local residents are living with and dying of the fear of the unknown. Furthermore, untreated smoke and dust from some pigment factories in Jiangbin turn out to be an important source of heavy metal pollution in the locality. Many nearby residents reported symptoms of lead-poisoning among their younger family members. They feel desperate since they cannot hold their breath when they are surrounded by polluted air in the neighbourhood.

Contaminated water and air further lead to soil pollution in both researched villages. Soil degradation poses an acute threat to the livelihood of people in Weiken, as many of the households in the village live on agricultural production. According to a test carried out by the Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB) of Xiaoshan District in 2006, the soil near the factory's main site was severely acidified. The EPB called on 'measures be taken to restore the productivity of the fields' and urged Fanchang Group to shoulder responsibility. Apart from worrying about acidification and degraded fertility of soil, local residents concern more about the unknown health effect of consuming agricultural products grown in the contaminated soil. Hearsay about 'carcinogenic vegetables' in Weiken not only frighten the neighbourhood which feed on its home products, but also ruin the village's reputation as a reliable vegetable supplier in the district.

The last type of pollution from chemical industries in Jiangbin and Weiken targets at specific population groups. Frontline workers are among the direct sufferers from indoor air pollution and toxic materials in the workshops. Companies seldom take labour protection measures even though the adverse health impact of exposure under the toxic environment is obvious. It was only recently that companies of larger size in

the industrial park began to invest on equipment such as dedusting systems, showers, and professional respirators for the sake of workers. For some employees who work in the weighing and batch charging workshops in dyeing and pigment manufacturing industries, they usually refuse to put on protective gears because of the extremely hot and humid working environment. The adverse health effect usually manifests itself within a year when many employees begin to demonstrate symptoms of leukopenia, persistent dizziness, irritated skin, and discomfort in respiratory system. Although a significantly higher package for these hazardous posts attracts waves of workers, local residents regard it as an ‘unsustainable work in which workers trade their health for wealth’ and assert that ‘seldom can one work in succession for over two years’ [Research

log 54: Interview with Lao Zhao, conducted on 3rd Aug, 2014]

Although local residents feel and talk about the aforementioned four types of pollution in their everyday life, there is not much materialised or quantified record which tracks and measures its impact on villagers’ health and the environment in the locality. Likewise, local people’s experience of ecological degradation over the past three decades and the existing environmental challenges are personalised. More often than not, local residents made observations based on their memory and life experience. They tend to complain about the absence of clear sky and canals. Biodiversity loss is also repeatedly referred to by the villagers as a visible indication of ecological degradation. Residents in the 1st villagers’ group of Jiangbin mentioned a sharply decreased population of crested ibises in the nearby hills and claimed this phenomenon was tightly associated with the deteriorated environment. Similarly, fishermen in the village attributed the reduction of their catches to the problematic water quality of the Qiantang River. Residents’ life experience truthfully reveals their anxiety, yet the fragmented and individualised accounts hardly arouse sympathy from the wider society or get accepted by the authorities as evidence of pollution. Nevertheless, it creates a common ideological ground of environmentalism among villagers, which significantly shapes their behaviour pattern against the irreversible trend of industrialisation and the challenges to their health and life.

3.7 Industrialisation and villagers' open actions against the nearby industries: A chronicle

The following section presents a chronicle of villagers' open actions against the industries in the past two decades. As revealed from the fieldwork, there has long been dispute between local residents and the industries holding insurmountably different positions. In Jiangbin and Weiken, villagers' grievance centres on the side effects of industrialisation, including land acquisition, [un-]employment in the agricultural sector, and a number of environmental hazards caused by the industries nearby, which altogether pose a threat to their livelihood and wellbeing. More often than not, ordinary rural residents in China are referred to as victims in the tide of industrialisation, who 'reluctantly eat the bitter fruit of economic growth and prosperity' because of their inferior status in both the rural-urban division in the country and the power structure in the locality. However, it is worth noting that not all the villagers respond to the sufferings with silence, as a lot of open actions against the industries and the local governments have been observed in the two research sites.

Following James Scott's study on the resistance of subordinate groups, I define villagers' 'open action' against industries as their onstage mobilisation that involves public interactions of stakeholders and presses for a solution to their specific claims. Open action comprises both highly self-conscious operation with pre-formulated strategies and spontaneous action responding to a particular event or policy. It can be either a campaign implemented by an organised group or some individualised mobilisation for the benefit of nuclear family. Similar to the concept of 'public transcript' in Scott's theory,¹⁹¹ open action runs parallel with much offstage resistance, i.e., that with 'hidden transcript' in the realm of infrapolitics. The two types of resistance constitute local residents' struggle in the critical moment of transition powered by the irresistible tide of industrialisation.

By systematically examining villagers' open actions against industries in Jiangbin and Weiken Village since the late 1990s, this section aims to present background

¹⁹¹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

knowledge about industrialisation and pollution so as to facilitate the understanding of the different stances, roles, and strategies of stakeholders in the long-standing opposition. Open actions illustrate the changing social and power structure in the villages inflicted by the new challenges of industrialisation. Meanwhile, open actions provide a clue to understand the hidden transcripts in the locality. In a practical sense, open actions remain to be a most traceable part of local people's memory about social and power changes in the past 20 years. As a consequence, this research treats the timeline as a map to analyse the impact of industrialisation and pollution on individual villagers' behaviour, social networks, and the ethics shared in the communities. It also enables me to explore the evolution of the social landscape in both villages.

3.7.1 Jiangbin Village

Jiangbin became one of the first few industrialised villages in the district, thanks to its geographical advantages and investment-attraction policy. The village set its first step towards industrialisation in the early 1990s, when the two village-owned dyeing and finishing workshops became privatised and expanded in scale. Meanwhile, the village started to accommodate factories relocated from the City of Hangzhou. The lower rent and the supportive local government earned a good reputation for Jiangbin as 'a paradise of investors'. In 1997, Jiangbin was chosen as the site for the Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park. 23 companies moved into the industrial park and started up their businesses in 2002 when the park was founded. The number of member industries amounted to 37 at the peak time. Villagers had no choice but to live with the industries 'on their doorsteps'. Noteworthy enough, the introduction of industries to the villages, as a double edged sword, has been controversial from the beginning. The local residents became beneficiaries and victims of industrialisation simultaneously. The friction between villagers and the industries in the locality has never quieted down. Local people's concern centred on the distribution of collective-owned property, land acquisition, the adverse environmental impacts, and the consequential health hazards.

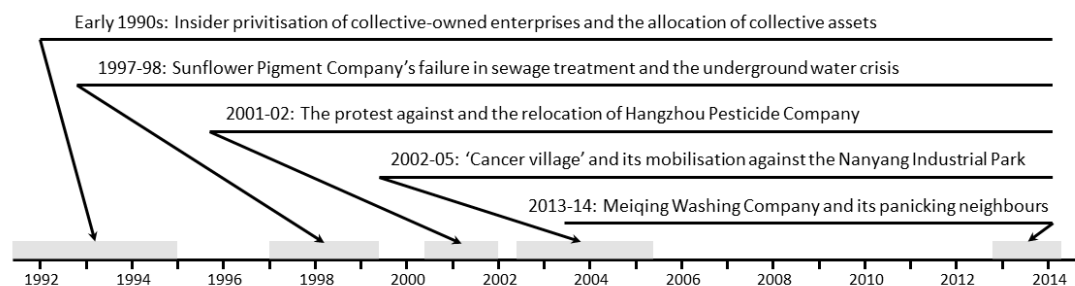


Figure 3.2. A timeline of villagers' open actions against industries in Jiangbin

Early 1990s: Insider privatisation of village-owned workshops

Back to the early 1990s, the two village-owned workshops underwent privatisation in succession. The taking off of the two workshops, respectively specialising in pigment manufacturing and textile finishing, marked the first step towards industrialisation of Jiangbin. Both workshops proved themselves highly competitive in the market after the transition and became the leading enterprises in the district in a short time. They brought a lot of benefits to the villagers, including employment opportunities, business prosperity, and infrastructure improvement in the neighbourhood.

However, not every villager felt happy with the success of the privatised workshops. As the fortune of the enterprises accumulated, disputes over the distribution of the formal collective assets emerged between entrepreneurs and the local residents. The two workshops in Jiangbin were bought out by either former village cadres or their relatives. The transaction was facilitated by the party branch of Jiangbin through secret operations: villagers criticised the practice since they 'were only informed of the results but never consulted for opinions' [Research log 87: Interview with Dongying, conducted on 24th September, 2014]. As a typical case of 'insider privatisation' in a Chinese fashion, the transition of the two previously village-owned workshops resembled that of many similar firms with obscurely defined responsibility, right, and assets.¹⁹² Many villagers questioned the fairness of the buy-out, as it created a significant gap of social status and fortune among villagers, who appeared to be equal back in the time of the

¹⁹² Yuanzheng Cao, Yingyi Qian, and Barry R. Weingast, "From Federalism, Chinese Style to Privatization, Chinese Style," *Economics of Transition* 7, no. 1 (1999): 103-31. Gary H. Jefferson and Jian Su, "Privatization and Restructuring in China: Evidence from Shareholding Ownership, 1995-2001," *Journal of Comparative Economics* 34, no. 1 (2006): 146-66.

people's commune. The differentiation was further reinforced by the rapid industrialisation, thanks to which the new owners of the workshops became millionaires. The discontent villagers cast stress on the entrepreneurs by private visits, open talks in small groups, and public negotiations via village committee and party branch office. They claimed for a share from the interest of the enterprises. As they were old neighbours from a same semi-kinship village, neither party wanted to 'tear up faces' with each other. This allowed room for village cadres and township officials to step in and moderate. Finally, the entrepreneurs agreed to provide stipend to the village committee for infrastructure construction and offer financial support to the senior people and school age children. These arrangements marked the end of a seesaw battle that lasted for over two years.

1997-98: Sunflower Pigment Co. and the underground water crisis

Although the owners of the privatised enterprises made a polite gesture to reward the village with the donation of goodwill, the tension between them and the ordinary villagers was not eased. The 'water crisis' in 1997 was caused by Sunflower Pigment Co., one of the former collective-owned workshops situated in the northwest corner of the village, for its negligence on the sewage treatment system when the company celebrated its expansion. It triggered another round of conflict, when local people in Jiangbin collaboratively fought for their environmental rights for the first time.

In the spring of 1997, Feng Jianqing, the ambitious owner of Sunflower Company, decided to install two new production lines to the factory, aiming at doubling the capacity of the plant. However, a severe problem came to existence once the factory started its expansion scheme. The waste treatment system of the factory was not upgraded accordingly. As a temporary solution, the company drilled a deep well and buried the sewage by injecting it into the underground. The sewage from the pigment workshops soon coloured the underground water. At that time, residents in Jiangbin relied on the wells as the only source of water for drinking and daily consumption. The water pollution rendered the villagers into a tough situation. Hearsays about the health hazards of the polluted water proliferated in the neighbourhood quickly, which further intensified the relations between the local people and the polluter. The angry villagers soon located the company and considered it as the culprit for the crisis.

To press for a solution, villagers tried out various means of mobilisation, ranging from private negotiation, gathering, demonstration, to cursing and open confrontation. They urged the entrepreneur to invest on the infrastructure and provide access to tap water for the local households. This was however far from the affordability of the company. As the negotiation came to a deadlock, Zhou Yongmu, a villager who worked as a part-time legal professional in the locality, decided to file a lawsuit on behalf of the neighbours. Villagers collected evidence, brought in media, and attended the trial under Yongmu's instruction. Although villagers lost the case at court, they managed to cast pressure on the polluting industry nearby. It marked the emergence of the pro-ecological forces and environmental actions in Jiangbin. Noteworthy enough, villagers' opinions towards the fight for their environmental rights were not united. Such fragmented stances influenced the organisation and the outcome of mobilisation against industries at further stages. After two years' struggle, the water crisis finally came to an end, when the village was connected to the tap water pipeline system in the district.

2001-02: Protest against the relocated Hangzhou Pesticide Company

Hangzhou Pesticide Company was among the first few 'settlers' in Jiangbin. It was originally located on the north outskirts of City of Hangzhou. The nearby residents fiercely criticized the company and forced it to relocate. After the company settled in Jiangbin, it enjoyed 5 years' rapid development, well before the issues of pollution and safety were brought on the table once again. Villagers in Jiangbin complained about the 'stinky smell' from the factory, which travelled with the wind. The factory situated in the very middle of the village. As a villager once complained, 'my yard was enveloped in the smell nearly a half of the 365 days in a year when the wind is eastward. For the other half, it was the households from the other side of the village' [Research log 89: Group interview, conducted on 25th September, 2014]. Some villagers worried about the smelly waste gas for being poisonous and hazardous. They used their network and got in touch with a professor at Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, who told them about the national regulations on the safe distance of industries.

In the mobilisation against the pesticide company, local residents in Jiangbin appealed for attention and assistance from the upper level government. Through a number of

petition attempts, they managed to drive the factory away from the village. It was one of the very few successful grassroots campaigns against industries in the village. As many villagers pointed out, the pesticide company was only willing to move because the upper government granted a new vast piece of land by the sea as its new site [Research log 89: Group interview, conducted on 25th September, 2014]. Nevertheless, people in Jiangbin did not care about the next stop of the factory. This tagged villagers' mobilisation as a typical NIMBY movement among many pro-ecological actions in China.

However, not all the villagers celebrated the success, as the factory was a big contributor to local economic prosperity. Since the enterprise was state-owned, it provided better packages and welfare benefits to the employees, including the most be-cherished urban household registration at that time. Villagers who were employed in the company lost their jobs after the factory's relocation, and questioned the green activism in the locality.

2002-05: Climax of the anti-industry mobilisation in Jiangbin

The campaign against Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park marked the climax of villagers' grassroots anti-industry mobilisation. The industrial park was born to controversy. Local people became discontent with it for a hybrid of reasons. Land acquisition was a most heatedly debated issue: villagers felt that they were deceived as the annual dividends from the land share did not reach the level they had been promised. Worse still, many of the land-deprived villagers failed to prove themselves competent for the role as industry workers. Without effective professional training schemes, the village observed massive structural unemployment. In the meantime, the influx of migrant workers into the village also caused turbulence in the previously closed community. All the grievances were lit up by the environmental impacts of the industrial park. Fishermen noticed that the factories discharged untreated sewage directly to the Qiantang River, which almost ruined their means of livelihood. Villagers living next to the chemical plants also complained about the smell from the waste gas, noise, and waste water spillage that contaminated the local canals. Worse still, soon after the establishment of the industrial park, an increasing number of cancer cases were reported among villagers. After the coverage of mass media, Jiangbin got its notorious title as a 'cancer village'. Local people established the

causality between pollution and diseases almost naturally. They blamed the companies for being the culprits of the devastating problem and the local government for being irresponsible since ‘it did not clean the house before inviting the guests (dasao hao wuzi zai qingke 打扫好屋子再请客, by saying which they criticised on the inadequate infrastructure in the industrial park)’ [Research log 87: Interview with Dongying, conducted on 24th September, 2014].

At the beginning, local people fought against the companies and the township government on a scattered basis. They usually raised household-specified claims with the aim of obtaining compensations. Later, Dongying, a fisherwoman married into Jiangbin from Guangxi, decided to organise the villagers for a collective movement with a pro-ecological purpose. She managed to collect evidence of pollution in and around the industrial park and kept a detailed record in a journal referred to as ‘a rural lady’s diary about environmental protection’ (yige nongfu de huanbao riji 一个农妇的环保日记). During the three years’ campaign, Dongying almost emptied the ‘toolbox’ of resistance ranging from persuasion, open protest and confrontation, attracting media, seeking assistance from ENGOs, all the way to petition and litigation. She aimed at halting the operation of the whole industrial park before it met the national environmental regulations. Dongying’s struggle attracted much attention from without the village. The story of Jiangbin as a ‘cancer village’ and its environmental mobilisation became widely known to the public. Dongying was honoured as a ‘civilian heroine’ (pingmin yingxiong 平民英雄) in 2005 for her effort in environmental protection. However, not all the villagers support Dongying for the pro-ecological campaign. The green activists only accounted for a very small portion of the villagers, whereas the majority remained indifferent or assumed the role as a free-rider. During the three years’ struggle, villagers successfully facilitated a thorough rectification of the polluting industries, with two factories being forced to relocate from the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, as people’s interest in ‘cancer village’ gradually faded, Dongying found it more and more difficult to mobilise in the name of environmental protection. Finally, the industrial park went back to its normal track and continued to pollute the neighbourhood. The green activism in Jiangbin died down and became silent for a long period of time since then.

2013-14: Concerns about contagious diseases caused by Meiqing Washing Co.

The arrival of Meiqing Washing Co. to the industrial park in the winter of 2013 triggered a new round of anxiety about the health hazards caused by the industries in the neighbourhood. Hearsays about the company proliferated in the village quickly. Meiqing Company. was a contractor for the washing services of big hospitals in Hangzhou. Local residents believed that the company would bring contagious diseases to the village considering that it accepted clothing and bed linens from medical institutes. Although the company reassured the villagers of the safety of its process, local people remained doubtful about its promise. After all, as Dongying pointed out, villagers had been deceived by the business and the local government time and again. They did not want to shoulder the environmental burden and risk their own health for the benefits of the entrepreneurs and officials anymore [Research log 87: Interview with Dongying, conducted on 24th September, 2014].

Despite villagers' objection, Meiqing Company secretly installed the equipment and started to operate shortly after the Spring Festival of 2015. Villagers became furious about this move. An open protest was organised as a reactive measure, in which local people blocked the factory gate with rocks and persuaded the workers out of their jobs. After the township government and police intervened, the protest escalated into a violent confrontation. 5 villagers were caught for obstructing law enforcement, of which Dongying, as the leader of the campaign, was detained for 7 days. The villagers were very disappointed about the outcome. They lost hope in the long battle against the business-government alliance. Many people chose to accept the fate as 'a sacrifice for the industrialisation'. The fatalistic remarks for a time prevailed in the whole village.

3.7.2 Weiken Village

Weiken followed a rather straightforward route of industrialisation compared to that in Jiangbin. The fact that there is only one industrial giant in the neighbourhood made the relationship between business and the local residents quite streamlined. Fanchang Group is a successful company specialising in synthetic fibre manufacture. The business used to be a small village-owned textile workshop situated in the middle of

Weiken, surrounded by villagers' group one to five. After more than two decades' rapid development, Fanchang Group has grown into a diversified company with an annual output of 70.5 billion *yuan* RMB in 2014.¹⁹³ The company is the pillar of the economy in Yinong Township. In 2014, it contributed 80.6% of the township government revenue¹⁹⁴. Local people have long lived in the shadow of the company. They were deprived of their farmland and the rights to a clean living environment. The relationship between the company and the villagers has intensified since 2005. During years that followed, villagers tried to fight for their rights a few times (see picture 2), but none of their attempts turned out to be fruitful. Facing the powerful business-government alliance, villagers gradually accepted the infringement of rights as a part of their fate.

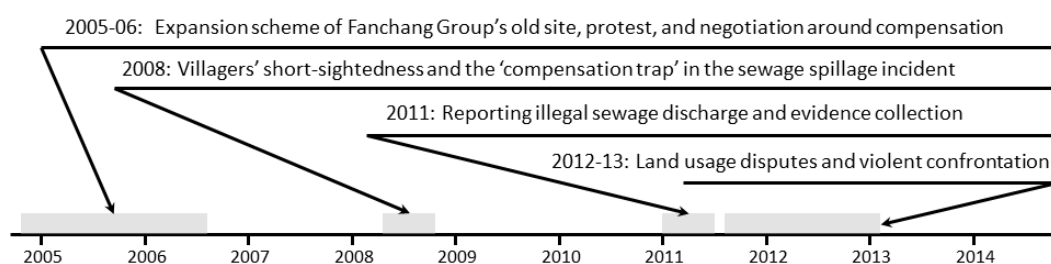


Figure 3.3. A timeline of villagers' open actions against industries in Weiken

2005-06: Fanchang Group's expansion scheme

In the early 2005, Fanchang Group initiated its expansion scheme. As the old site of the company was surrounded by villagers' farmland, the scheme would not be successful unless the company acquired land from its neighbours. However, it was far from easy to persuade the villagers to give up their family plots, on which most of the local families lived. For fear that the entrepreneur unilaterally started the project, villagers organised a patrol team to monitor the company's move. In the meantime, they visited Li Shuirong (referred to Agen by the local people, hence Agen hereafter),

¹⁹³ Hangzhoushi Xiaoshanqu renmin zhengfu difangzhi bangongshi 杭州市萧山区人民政府地方志办公室 ed., *Xiaoshan nianjian* 2015 nian 萧山年鉴 2015 年 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2016).

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

the owner of the company, time and again, hoping to sell their rights to the farmland for a better price.

The villagers and the company could not find a common ground at the beginning. Villagers aimed at securing funds from the company for a thorough relocation to modern buildings in a 'new village'. In order to achieve this goal, they argued that the air pollution caused by the factory was a threat to their wellbeing and organised a few open protests against Fanchang Group. On the other hand, Agen found it pointless to support the villagers' request for the relocation. As an alternative, he offered a one-off package for buying the right of using the farmland. The land was priced at 16,000 *yuan* RMB per *mu*. Villagers were not satisfied with the offer. They wanted a 'sustainable' solution to secure their livelihood after turning in the land. The deadlock was finally broken by the township government which stepped in and suggested that both sides terminated the dispute and bargain.

Finally, both parties agreed with a plan of compensation. Fanchang Group sponsored 80 policies of pension insurance for the land-deprived villagers. Since there were only 61 households in the four villagers' groups that were affected by the expansion scheme, villagers reached a solution to distribute one policy to each household and run a ballot for the rest. However, it was to the villagers' surprise that the township officials and village cadres took up nearly 30 places of the insurance before it went to the hand of the local people. Villagers were choked with silent fury. They did not dare to challenge the officials. At last, they had to distribute the remaining policies via a ballot, leaving a number of households empty-handed after the land acquisition.

2008: Water spillage incident and the 'compensation trap'

In the summer of 2008, the old site of Fanchang Group was flooded after a succession of heavy rainfalls. For fear that the waterlogging might threaten the equipment in the workshops, Agen decided to tear down the factory wall and let the water out. The sewage flowed through the crops in villagers' plots into the nearby canal, causing leaves to burn and roots to rot. Villagers felt sad for the plants ruined by the sewage. At the same time, they were worried about the long-term impact of the sewage on the

land. Many households went to the enterprise and urged Agen to give an explanation and to shoulder the responsibility.

Instead of organising a collective action, villagers talked with Agen individually and confidentially. As Xu Shuiming, a professional farmer (zhongtian dahu 种田大户) in the village, recalled, everyone had his own concern and expectation for the compensation. ‘Those who grew watermelons and peanuts apparently wanted a higher compensation than the rice farmers.’ [Research log 41: Interview with Lao Xu, conducted on 17th July, 2014]

The private negotiation centred on the compensation for the loss in the field. Agen did not let the villagers down. He generously bought in the remaining crops from the local people’s hands with the market price and cashed those who were no longer able to sell their agricultural products. By doing so, he successfully appeased the grievance of the local people. In these individualised negotiations, villagers focused on the calculable loss in the field. They aimed to maximise the compensation for their crops. As for the damage the sewage caused to their farmland, local people seldom raised the issue to the entrepreneur, since it only manifested in a longer term and could not be monetised instantly. How villagers sought compensation in the sewage spillage incident best exemplified the phenomenon of ‘compensation trap’¹⁹⁵, in which the opportunistic pursuit of instant economic gain diluted the pro-ecological concern in the community.

2011: Seeking evidence and reporting pollution: A competition among villagers

As of the initiation of the ‘Village Renovation Plans’ (qiancun shifan wancun zhengzhi 千村示范万村整治) in 2008, Fanchang Group was required to rectify and reform according to the national environmental standards. The company used to discharge its sewage through an open drain to the nearby canals. In order to fulfil the government requirement, Agen decided to bury the drainage and installed several underground pipelines instead. This qualified the company as a model of eco-friendly business in the locality.

¹⁹⁵ Van Rooij, Benjamin, Anna Lora-Wainwright, Yunmei Wu, and Yiyun Zhang. “The compensation trap: the limits of community-based pollution regulation in China.” *Pace Envtl. L. Rev.* 29 (2011): ii.

In the early spring of 2011, Zhao Yunming, a vegetable farmer from the 2nd villagers' group discovered the opening of the company's underground sewage pipeline by chance. Noticing that the company was discharging untreated sewage secretly, Yunming realised that it was a good chance to blackmail the entrepreneur. After talking privately to Agen, Yunming got what he wanted: Agen offered a significant sum of hush money to block the news from proliferation in Weiken.

Nevertheless, neighbours became aware of the secret deal between Agen and Yunming through grapevines in the village. In order to get a share from the 'business', many villagers started to hunt for the evidence of illegal sewage discharge from the company. They searched for the outlets of the pipelines in the canal and obtained water samples with plastic bottles, which they threatened to send to the EPBs for tests. Under this circumstance, the company changed its strategy. Instead of discharging waste water at a steady rate throughout the 24 hours, the company scheduled the emission in the late-night hours. Villagers soon realised the trick. Throughout the summer of 2011, there were villagers waiting on the bank of the canal day and night. It eventually became a 'competition' among villagers. Local people competed to get the water sample as the evidence of pollution caused by Fanchang Company. Sarcastically, the water samples were sent directly to Agen's office in exchange of 'the reward for tip-offs'. The competition died down a few months later when Agen installed new sewage treatment facilities to his factory, leaving the villagers disappointed of losing an easy way of money-making.

2012-13: Another round of dispute on land use and violent confrontation

By the end of 2012, Fanchang Group brought forward a plan to build a new road for forklifts. The construction work required a relocation of the factory wall slightly eastward, which would occupy local people's family plots. The company tore down its wall and initiated the construction project before it reached an agreed compensation scheme with the local people, which infuriated its neighbours.

Almost all the households from the 4th villagers' group were influenced by the project. Miao Zhengguang, an ex-service man from the army and owner of a moulding workshop, volunteered to organise a campaign to seek justice from the company on

behalf of the neighbourhood. Zhengguang's old father twisted his leg when he was trying to rescue the plants from the rubbles in the patches. This lit the anger of the villagers and made them unprecedentedly united in the mobilisation. Zhengguang decided to launch an open protest so as to make their voice heard. They blocked the gate of the factory with farm vehicles, put up posters, and randomly stopped employees of the company, asking for their support to condemn the entrepreneur. As the security team stepped in to intervene, the protest soon escalated into a violent confrontation. Zhengguang was on the front. He injured two guards of the company, which later became the main accusation for his 6-month imprisonment. The dispute was soon appeased by the township government. The villagers' group did not get any compensation from the company. Worse still, Zhengguang ended up in jail, which almost ruined his family. The neighbours spontaneously raised funds to support Zhengguang's household and shared the responsibility of caring for his son, which helped the family out from the difficulty.

Chapter 4. Changing Behavioural Basis: Rural Residents' Individuality

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses how the society in rural China changes at the individual level. It examines rural residents' individuality against the backdrop of industrialisation and the socio-economic development in contemporary rural China. Noteworthy for this research, Fei Xiaotong bases his theory of the differential mode of association on individual rural residents' behavioural pattern, which is referred to as 'a problem of selfishness' (si de maobing 私的毛病) and is regarded as a basis of the social system. However, as Chinese villages underwent industrialisation and the accompanying socio-economical changes, villagers developed a new type of individuality that differs from the inherent 'selfishness' in terms of form, essence, formation, and impact. By critically engaging with Fei Xiaotong and Yan Yunxiang's theories about social behaviour and social organisation at individual level, this chapter compares the connotation and manifestation of selfishness and individuality. It discusses how local residents' digestion of industrialisation changes and influences the organisation and function of the society in rural China.

In the book *From the Soil*, Fei Xiaotong depicts rural residents' individualised tendency as 'selfishness' and argues that it is 'a most serious shortcoming of the country people in China'.¹⁹⁶ Selfishness (si 私) marks a clear psychosocial boundary between self and others in rural residents' daily life. As a basic logic of each rural resident's social behaviour, it is regarded as the fundament of the differential mode of association in rural China. As Fei Xiaotong argues, each individual's selfishness adds up and forms a social egocentrism, upon which the rural society of China is constructed. Unlike its western counterpart, the egocentric society of China accommodates a set of distinctive behavioural and organisational principles. The

¹⁹⁶ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 60.

observation of a prevailing ‘selfishness’ among residents in China serves as a starting point of Fei’s original and profound theoretical system on rural Chinese society.

Fei exemplifies how the problem of selfishness is embodied in Chinese residents’ behaviour with reference to the dirty canals in the City of Suzhou. As Fei argues, it was only because the canals ‘belong to the public’ that local people contaminated them without self-restraint. In this case, selfishness ‘drove out social consciousness’¹⁹⁷ and [re-]set the code of actions which was tacitly accepted in the social norms and ethics.¹⁹⁸ As a typical example that denotes Garrett Hardin’s theory of tragedy of the commons, the case of canals coincidentally reveals the dilemma of environmental management in China, where selfishness is believed to have long been internalised as a generally accepted social value. The findings from Jiangbin and Weiken resonate with Fei’s narratives to some extent. In both research sites, the heavily contaminated habitat resembles the dirty canal water in Suzhou. Local residents’ individualised tendency is reinforced in the competition for the over-deployed environmental resources and the associated compensation. Villagers in Jiangbin and Weiken, despite not being culprits for the environmental problems in the locality, tend to follow a self-centred logic of behaviour when they attempt to trace the source of, to moderate the harm of, and to seek redress for the industrial pollution.

However, as my findings from the two industrialised villages suggest, it is oversimplistic to define rural people’s individuality as a selfish and morally degraded characteristic as Fei Xiaotong concludes in the book *From the Soil*. Rural Chinese residents’ individuality has a wide connotation, which is variable according to each individual’s social status and is subject to the social settings where they live. Accordingly, the formation and formalisation of rural residents’ individuality is a dynamic process tightly associated to the localised social landscape and the socio-economic context of the country. As Yan Yunxiang points out, Chinese society is undergoing a twofold social transformation, namely the rise of the individual in social practices and the individualisation of the society through structural changes of social

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 61.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 21.

relations.¹⁹⁹ The rise of individual echoes with the tide of economic reform and the untying (松绑 songbang) political institution domestically. It also ‘rides the soft wind from the west’ and resonates with globalisation and the rising consumerism that struck the rural society of China.²⁰⁰ The individualisation of the society is reflected in the changing social relations in the villages, which Yan Yunxiang exemplifies with the transforming roles of family, kinship, authority, and state in individual villagers’ social life. Accordingly, the ethical codes in the rural communities change to justify the relentless selfish pursuit of individual gain and the deliberate evasion of social responsibilities, which were once considered as ‘immoral’ practice in the villages.²⁰¹

Comparing to Fei’s attempt of theorising rural residents’ ‘selfish’ tendency, Yan Yunxiang’s observation and interpretation of the rising individuality in rural Chinese society demonstrate stronger explanatory power in the context of contemporary China. Consequentially, this research adopts the concept of individuality proposed by Yan Yunxiang as a starting point for analysis. By comparing Fei and Yan’s thoughts about individuals in the social organisation of rural China, I justify the popularising individuality and prevailing individualism in the contemporary rural society for three reasons. First, rural residents’ individuality in the contemporary context is associated with their more diversified social identities and deeper dependence on various newly emerged social institutes rather than the traditionally pre-dominant kinship organisations. Against this backdrop, villagers’ action inspired by individualism can be viewed as a result pre-determined by their positions in the local power relations and their status in the local society. This in turn neutralises individuality as a choice of the society rather than the individual himself. Second, villagers’ individuality is influenced by their significantly diversified interest orientations. The ever complicated interest structure in rural society brought by industrialisation and the associated socio-economic development blurs the boundary between private gains and public interest, which are often treated as a pair of black-or-white concepts in Fei Xiaotong’s works. As will be demonstrated in the case studies of the two heavily contaminated villages, it is possible to identify moments when public interest goes in

¹⁹⁹ Yan, *The Individualization of Chinese Society*: xv.

²⁰⁰ Ibid: xviii, xxxiv.

²⁰¹ Ibid: xxxii.

hand with individual's interest and when individuality and sociality converge. Third, even though villagers tend to care for their own private space better than the public sphere, their individuality is still subject to a wider moral framework, which, as Lai Lili points out, is rooted in the habitus formed by 'the long-constituted relations' and 'the informality of village ties'.²⁰² With the habitus in place, rural residents follow a mechanism to check and correct individuality when it goes extreme or incompatible with the moral standards. Noteworthy for this study, the changing connotation and manifestation of rural residents' individuality sets the stage for the social organisation and the ethical codes in the community, hence being a starting point for the analysis of social change in rural China in the tide of industrialisation.

As this chapter shows, industrialisation plays a pivotal role in shaping and accelerating the transformation of individuality in contemporary rural China. It not only restores rural residents' identity and the local interest structure as the pre-requisites for the neutralisation of individualism, but also influences the social discourse in the formation of the self-correcting mechanism of each community member. A number of disputes caused by industrialisation, namely land acquisition, environmental pollution, and health hazard, become best occasions to examine the essence and the manifestation of rural residents' individuality. The change of rural residents' individuality from an ego-centric 'selfishness' in Fei Xiaotong's sense into a socially determined, increasingly compatible, and collectively monitored code of behaviour, as described by Yan Yunxiang and the later scholars, signifies the 'digestion' of industrialisation at individual level: rural residents adjust the behavioural code and logic so as to better fit in industrialisation as a theme in the contemporary rural society. In this sense, local residents' various means to digest industrialisation and the highly individualised outcome of digestion best exemplify the rise of individuality in rural China nowadays.

This chapter argues that rural residents' individuality is undergoing significant change in the tide of rural industrialisation. It no longer resembles Fei's depiction of selfishness that undermines social consciousness and collective welfare. Rather, the

²⁰² Lai, *Hygiene, Sociality, and Culture in Contemporary Rural China*, 111.

connotation and manifestation of individuality in the contemporary rural Chinese society correspond to Yan Yunxiang's conclusion in the sense that they demonstrate complexity as a consequence of residents' social identity, local interest structure, and informal regulation in the community. The change represents rural residents' digestion of industrialisation by adjusting their social behaviours. This chapter brings together three sets of literature on individualism, sociality, and social mobilisation in rural China respectively. It empirically contributes to the understanding of how villagers' individuality has changed over time. It also exemplifies rural residents' stance taking and action in face of challenges brought by industrialisation and sheds light on how their individualised choices form patterns and influence the structural organisation and morality of rural communities.

The following sections provide four ethnographic portraits of villagers living with industrial pollution caused by the nearby enterprises. Section 4.2 focuses on local residents' direct negotiation with the polluting industries. Villagers' individuality is reflected in the requests, the bargaining process, and the compromise they reached with the polluters. It examines the compatibility between individually specified interest concern and the collective welfare in local people's intention and actions. Section 4.3 discusses villagers' choice of participation in the open actions against the polluting industries. It brings forward the concept of spectrum of subordination to illustrate villagers' individuality in the stance taking in the pro-ecological campaigns. As will be discussed, the individually specified choice of villagers is embedded in their positions and statuses in the localities. The individuality is hence structurally framed by the social system to a large extent. This observation challenges Fei Xiaotong's thoughts about individualisation, which he defines as an inherent shortcoming of rural Chinese residents. Rather, it emphasises on the diversity of individuality and the rise of individuality as a society-driven and dynamic process. Both the ethnographic portraits in this section touch the role of the moral codes in the communities as 'checks and balances' on individualism in the two researched villages. They shed light on how the long constituted relations and values influence individual's behaviour in the community. The empirical sections are followed by a concise discussion in the concluding part, where the significance of the changing

individuality, the role of industrialisation in the transformation, and how it relates to the theory of differential mode of association will be analysed.

4.2 Negotiating with polluting industries: An individually specified business for the common weal?

As revealed in many previous case studies of villages threatened by pollution in China, the grassroots environmental campaigns usually start from local residents' negotiation with polluting industries.²⁰³ Rural residents act according to the simplest yet most obvious rule in the rural society, i.e., 'to liquidate a debt is perfectly justified' (qianzhai huanqian, tianjing diyi 欠债还钱, 天经地义) [Research log 51: Interview with Lao Ma, conducted on 29th July, 2014]. In their eyes, the industries are the culprits for the deteriorating environment in the locality and are thus indebted to the villagers who suffer from the pollution. The enterprises, in contrast, tend to justify the environmental externality by regulations, laws, or even agreements with the local governments and village cadres.²⁰⁴ The totally different stances of polluters and pollution victims make it difficult to yield any fruitful results through bi-lateral negotiation.²⁰⁵

Despite a consensus on the oft-seen disappointing outcomes of direct negotiation, the forms of, the motives behind, and the strategies incorporated in the negotiation between villagers and polluting industries in China lack sufficient attention and discussion in the existing literature. Among the limited scholarly attempts that record and analyse villagers' representations to the enterprises, Luo²⁰⁶ depicts the dilemma of a group of pollution victims in North Jiangsu Province. On the one hand, they felt angry about the potential environmental hazards which had been intentionally

²⁰³ Yajuan Luo 罗亚娟, *Xiangcun gongye wuran de yanyi yu chanshi* 乡村工业污染的演绎与阐释 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2016). Yajuan Luo 罗亚娟, "Xiangcun gongye wuran zhong de huanjing kangzheng – Dongjing cun ge'an yanjiu 乡村工业污染中的环境抗争——东井村个案研究," *Xuehai* 学海 2010(2): 91-97. Lora-Wainwright et al., "Learning to live with pollution," 106-24.

²⁰⁴ Kate E. Swanson, Richard G. Kuhn, and Wei Xu, "Environmental Policy Implementation in Rural China: A Case Study of Yuhang, Zhejiang," *Environmental Management* 27, no. 4 (2001): 481-91. Li-Wen Lin, "Corporate Social Responsibility in China: Window Dressing or Structural Change," *Berkeley J. Int'l L.* 28 (2010): 64.

²⁰⁵ Yajuan Luo 罗亚娟, "Xiangcun gongye wuran zhong de huanjing kangzheng – Dongjing cun ge'an yanjiu 乡村工业污染中的环境抗争——东井村个案研究" (Master diss., Hohai University, 2009), 25.

²⁰⁶ Luo, *Xiangcun gongye wuran de yanyi yu chanshi*.

concealed by the textile company; on the other, they had to seek dialogue opportunities with the ‘enemies’ to resolve the problem, which was reckoned as a humiliation. Findings from von Rooij’s and his team’s fieldwork,²⁰⁷ in contrast, indicate that rural residents, instead of focusing on the moral aspect of the strategy, emphasise the prospect for economic compensation in their negotiation with the industries. Tilt takes a step further and analyses the deeper psychological origins of local residents’ grievance about the polluting industries.²⁰⁸ He points out that the direct conflicts between the villagers and enterprises may have their roots in the history: it is the unbalanced distribution of the collective property through ‘insider privatisation’ that sets the stage for the tension nowadays. As for most of the villagers in Jiangbin and Weiken, their motives of negotiating with the polluters remain to be a hybrid request of environmental and economic rights. Rather than acting collectively for the campaigns, villagers from both of my research sites prefer to keep the negotiation private. This phenomenon, in a way, underpins the individualistic logic in rural residents’ struggle against pollution. The individualised attempts of negotiation may be referred to as ego-centric and selfish behaviours given the fact that they are intended for maximising the personal gains. However, from a consequentialist perspective of view, the institutionalised private negotiations in the localities benefit the common welfare as well by inspiring knowledge seeking of pollution among villagers, attracting concern from the neighbourhood, and casting pressure on the entrepreneurs. This, in a way or another, gives rise to the pro-ecological tendency and awareness in the neighbourhood.

4.2.1 Jiangbin Village

In Jiangbin Village, there has long been a mechanism of dialogue between the chemical plants in the nearby industrial park and local residents. Although the enterprises are separated from the residential zone by high walls, those walls never stops the endless fractions and disputes between the villagers and the enterprises. It is not rare to see villagers going straight into the office buildings and lodging their

²⁰⁷ Van Rooij et al., “The Compensation Trap,” 701-45. Lora-Wainwright et al., “Learning to Live with Pollution,” 106-24.

²⁰⁸ Tilt, *The Struggle for Sustainability in Rural China*. Tilt, “Industrial Pollution and Environmental Health in Rural China,” 283-301.

complaints directly to the entrepreneurs. This tradition has distressed both township officials and business owners. For fear of potential social turbulence caused by the aggrieved villagers, officials often choose to give acquiescence to their ‘bold moves’. In their anticipation, the villagers in Jiangbin are but ‘a gang of trouble-makers (diaomin 刁民) going after money’. Villagers are not likely to escalate the tension with enterprises after ‘tasting the sweetness’ (changdao tiantou 尝到甜头) from the compensation [Research log 128: Interview with Huaxia, conducted on 9th October, 2014]. As for the owners of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the locality, they have no other option but to adapt themselves to the practice as ‘a way to survive as a guest’ (jiedi banchang de shengcun zhi dao 借地办厂的生存之道) [Research log 148: Interview with Li Zang, conducted on 23rd November, 2014].

Direct negotiation has been routinized as a most frequently used tool to resolve disputes between the industries and local people in Jiangbin. Among the issues raised by the villagers, environment-related complaints account for a large proportion. The three parties, namely government officials, business owners, and villagers, maintain their distinctive stances respectively in the negotiation. Local government’s keen pursuit of social stability makes it a mediator for the conflict of interest. The profit-driven entrepreneurs prioritise the 24-hour operation of their factories and are thus willing to make concession to the villagers in prevention of any possible interruptions. The interest foci and the associated strategies of township government and businesses leave the villagers room for mobilisation so as to lodge their complaints about pollution. Throughout the past two decades, local residents have learnt the limits of the officials and entrepreneurs from a series of trials and errors. The private negotiation, i.e., making direct representations to the polluting industries individually or in small groups, appears to be the most effective and accepted way of achieving their goal. In the negotiation around the issue of industrial pollution, villagers usually demonstrate an individualistic orientation rather than fighting for a public cause. Their representations often aim at monetising the adverse environmental impact on their families and at transforming the loss into materialised compensation. Given a limited capacity of polluting industries, the individualised negotiation inevitably results in unbalanced distribution of interest in the rural collective. Only those villagers who speak to the enterprise can get the compensation. Villagers in Jiangbin take this

phenomenon for granted, since they all believe that ‘a crying baby is the first to get milk’ (huiku de haizi you nai chi 会哭的孩子有奶吃). This best exemplifies the individuality of rural residents demonstrated in their digestion of the challenges inspired by industrialisation.

The origin of the negotiation mechanism in Jiangbin Village can be dated back to the ‘water crisis’ in 1997, when the fraction between the Sunflower Pigment Chemical Company (hereafter Sunflower Company) and the local people intensified. Previously a village-owned workshop, the Sunflower Company was sold to Jianqing, a former village cadre, in the early 1980s and observed a rapid growth in the following decades. It has gone through a typical process of ‘insider privatisation’, termed by Li and Rozelle²⁰⁹, in the tide of economic liberalisation in China. This has set the stage for the company’s inextricable dependency with the locality. Taking a closer look at villagers’ negotiation with Sunflower Company around the issue of contaminated underground water in 1997, it is not difficult to find that the channels through which local people lodge their complaints overlapped with the entrepreneur’s personal social network to a large extent. Rather than acting collectively, the victims in the ‘water crisis’ mobilised in an individualised manner. The compensation scheme that covered villagers’ loss differed from family to family correspondingly.

Although the contaminated underground water posed a threat to the whole village, each family negotiated with the company seemed to have a full set of rhetoric for its suffering that was allegedly ‘above the average level’. Similar to Chen and his team’s observation on pollution victims who chose to selectively present or to exaggerate the environmental impact on their health and life²¹⁰, villagers in Jiangbin described their problems with plenty of half-falsehoods. The first few complaints were lodged through private meetings between the entrepreneur and some early-bird families. Unlike many pollution victims elsewhere who mobilised collectively for a shared and

²⁰⁹ Li and Scott, “Privatizing Rural China,” 981-1005. Li and Scott, “Insider Privatization with a Tail,” 1-26.

²¹⁰ Chen, Cheng, and Luo., “*Aizhengcun*” *diaocha*, 166.

clearly defined goal,²¹¹ villagers in Jiangbin did not intentionally unify their statements about the harm and the associated loss caused by pollution. As recalled by Lao Shen, the former gatekeeper of Sunflower Company and Jianqing's brother-in-law, when some villagers living nearby noticed the colour change in the well water after the sewage was pumped down to the underground, they came over to the factory office for an explanation. At first, villagers came by themselves or in small groups. Since most visitors were the neighbours in the village and acquaintances of the factory director (changzhang 厂长)²¹², Lao Shen had to let them in to the company's office building. Villagers accused the company for making the underground water 'dirty and stinky'. It was not a truthful complaint in the eyes of Lao Shen however, since the pigments were odourless. What further puzzled Lao Shen was local people's nicely fabricated but somehow contradictory rhetoric in the negotiation, which he overheard from Jianqing. It seemed that each villager tried to differentiate himself from the other pollution victims in the village.

'Those living closed to the factory claimed themselves to "have borne the brunt of polluted water", whereas those living in the southwest corner of the village argued that they were most influenced, since their houses were low-lying in the neighbourhood and that "water flows downwards" (shui wang dichu liu 水往低处流)... Some also mentioned the elderly or young family members as the most vulnerable group in the village.' [Research log 79: Interview with

Lao Shen, conducted on 21st September, 2014]

More often than not, such claims of suffering were grounded on various types of evidence and were associated with local families' requests for compensation. Surprisingly enough, local residents who chose to protest individually or in small groups seldom mentioned the health impact of polluted water in spite of the

²¹¹ Yanhua Deng 鄧燕華, *Zhongguo nongcun de huanbao kangzheng weili* 中國農村的環保抗爭: 以華鎮事件為例 (PhD diss., Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2010). Luo, "Xiangcun gongye wuran zhong de huanjing kangzheng," 91-97. Luo, "Xiangcun gongye wuran zhong de huanjing kangzheng." Graeme Lang and Ying Xu, "Anti-incinerator Campaigns and the Evolution of Protest Politics in China," *Environmental Politics* 22, no. 5 (2013): 832-48.

²¹² In the interview, Lao Shen mistakenly referred to the owner of Sunflower Company as the factory deputy (厂长). He forgot that the company was no longer village-owned and his boss was the owner *de facto* rather than the administrative deputy of the factory.

widespread suspicion in the village. Alternatively, they complained about the burning leaves of crops or sick cattle caused by the water pollution. This phenomenon resembles Lora-Wainwright, Van Rooij, and their team's findings from the industrialised villages in Sichuan,²¹³ where local people intentionally chose the easily measured and tangible form of loss as 'a less uncertain option for redress'. As the research team argue, this tendency may result in a 'compensation trap', where the opportunistic struggles for economic benefits replace solidary pro-ecological movements. In the case of water crisis in Jiangbin, local people's negotiation with the Sunflower Company exemplified the 'compensation trap' in the sense that they acted according to an individualistic logic and prioritised the economic gain from the compensation. However, the extent to which the solidarity in the community cause was undermined remains questionable. My observation suggests that the individualised representations and the private negotiation received acquiescence from members of the community. It has become a tacitly accepted means of interest seeking with low threshold for participation.

According to Jianqing, the company issued small funds with an amount of thirty to fifty to compensate those households claiming their economic loss through private negotiation. At the beginning, there were only a few villagers who came for the compensation. Jianqing thought it was not worthwhile 'tearing up the relations (sipo lianpi 撕破脸皮) with the neighbours for the small amount of money' [Research log 81: Interview with Jianqing, conducted on 22nd September, 2014]. Accordingly, villagers cooperated with the company and sealed their mouths after they took the money. Usually, the compensation was reckoned as a one-off deal that confirmed the establishment of an 'alliance' between individual villagers (and their core family members) and the polluting industry. Even though the negotiation took an individualised form, it was still regulated by the community. The finely knitted social network made the acts of secret representations transparent in the public realm of the neighbourhood. Consequentially, villagers' individuality was subject to and restricted by moral standard of the collective. Those who tried to repeatedly blackmail Jianqing for

²¹³ Lora-Wainwright et al., "Learning to Live with Pollution," 106-24. Van Rooij., "The People vs. Pollution," 55-77. Van Rooij et al., "The Compensation Trap," 701-45.

compensation were condemned by the neighbours for being excessively greedy (tanxin buzhu 贪心不足) [Research log 87: Interview with Dongying, conducted on 24th September, 2014; Research log 88: Interview with Donghai, conducted on 24th September, 2014]. The criticism effectively regulated the individualised compensation seeking and maintained the subtle balance of the relations between rural residents and the polluting industry. This exemplifies the change of individuality in contemporary rural China that begins to demonstrate compatibility with collective ethics.

Nevertheless, every little makes a mackle. It was till the winter of 1997 that Jianqing began to realise that the compensation accounted for a significant portion of the company's expenditure. As a result, he set up his mind to solve the water crisis from its root and terminate the endless investment on the relationship maintenance in the neighbourhood. The individualised compensation seeking, despite being 'selfishly' targeting at the each individual villager's personal gain, did cast pressure on the polluting industry. In this case, the interest concerns shaped by local residents' individuality brought forth the change of the entrepreneur's strategy, which won the community an overall welfare improvement. It illustrates a possibility that rural residents' individuality can go hand in hand with sociality towards collective interest as well.

The form of negotiation changed in the second phase of local people's mobilisation, when the aggravated villagers decided to act openly against the polluting industry to put an end to the water crisis. It took time to restore a safe water supply, but the angry villagers refused to wait. Despite Jianqing openly announced that he would search for a one-off solution for the polluted underground water rather than dealing with villagers' loss case by case, the private negotiation between villagers and the polluting industry still existed in parallel with the pro-ecological campaigns in the open realm. Unlike the previous stage when the selfish villagers lodged their complaints and requested for compensation from the company, the new phase observed 'secret bargains' in an opposite direction. It was the company that attempted to persuade the key figures to quit the mobilisation with promises of incentives. Born and bred in Jiangbin Village, Jianqing made full use of his network to approach the leaders of the mobilisation. He found that the most effective way to achieve the goal was to give

gifts (songli 送礼). Jianqing's gift-giving marked a typical 'new occasion' in Yan Yunxiang's sense, where the aim of gift extended from economic reciprocity into the exchange of power.²¹⁴ The gifts were targeted at villagers' individuality: once the bribery fulfilled the personal need of the opinion leaders in the pro-ecological campaign, the opposition against the polluting industry would die down. It was a common practice in the village and Jianqing was confident that it would work this time as well.

One of the key figures in the local mobilisation was Zhou Yongmu. As a legal professional living in the locality, he led villagers' collective action to press for a clean water supply. Jianqing visited Yongmu's home a few times. At first, he brought gifts with him during his visits. To his surprise, Yongmu did not even let him in to his yard. Feeling that giving gifts openly did not work at the critical moment of tension, Jianqing chose to call on Yongmu in the cover of darkness. He brought with him 'red packet', hoping the money could change Yongmu's position in the mobilisation against Sunflower Company.

Yongmu still remembered the night when Jianqing came to his place with the hush money. 'It was a thick packet,' recalled Yongmu. 'However, even though it happened at late night, it would never be concealed from the eyes in the neighbourhood. If I had taken the money, I would have been a traitor through the ages (qiangu zuiren 千古罪人) in Jiangbin Village.' [Research log 97: Interview with Zhou Yongmu, conducted on 29th September, 2014]

Apparently, Yongmu was tempted by the money as a purposeful gift. He and his family would benefit from the giving financially and he was pleased to be entitled to the exclusive offering. However, in the case of Yongmu, the individualistic concern driven by the interest was balanced by his commitment to the ethical standards prescribed in the social life of the community. Yongmu was fully aware of the social system he situated in, where the formal and informal social ties regulated every member's individuality. He did not dare to take the moral risk for the personal gain.

²¹⁴ Yan, *The Flow of Gifts*.

Nevertheless, Jianqing's attempt to appease the mobilisation was backed up by the township government. This gave Jianqing more bargain chips in the negotiation with the opinion leaders in the locality. Jianqing finally persuaded Yongmu by promising him the contracting rights of the greening project off the main road in the Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park sponsored by the local government. According to the neighbours, this project 'brought Zhou Yongmu a fat profit (fa le cai 发了财) of tens of thousands (RMB).' [Research log 98: Interview with Wencai, conducted on 30th September, 2014; Research log 100: Interview with Huifang, conducted on 30th September, 2014] Yongmu retreated from the frontline of the mobilisation and ceased offering guidance and support to the activists fighting for the environmental rights of the community. Without a leader in the campaign, the mobilisation soon came to an end. Yongmu's defection from the pro-ecological forces representing the collective welfare in the neighbourhood serves as another example where individuality defeated solidarity in the rural community. However, when taking a closer look at Yongmu's hesitation and his swinging stance during the first few rounds of negotiation, it was not difficult to spot the influence of the moral framework in the village collective on the manifestation of rural residents' individuality and behaviours.

4.2.2 Weiken Village

The power structure among industry, local government, and villagers in Weiken Village results in a different pattern of negotiation between the polluter and pollution victims from that of Jiangbin. As a business giant and the only polar industry of the township, Fanchang Group plays a central role in the local economy. The company's economic power further enhances its status in the local politics, making the entrepreneur a most powerful figure in the social network of the locality. Previous case studies of the severely contaminated sites in rural China indicate that many polluting industries tend to moderate objections and criticism through economic ways. Some manage to manoeuvre the public opinion by offering incentives to the pollution victims,²¹⁵ while others work in collaboration with local government to legitimate

²¹⁵ Lora-Wainwright et al., "Learning to Live with Pollution," 106-24. Luo, "Xiangcun gongye wuran zhong de huanjing kangzheng," 91-97. Jixia Lu and Anna Lora-Wainwright, "Historicizing Sustainable

their environmentally unfriendly development.²¹⁶ Unlike most cases in which the grassroots pro-ecological forces impose checks and balances to the business power, Weiken Village observes an excessive dependency on Fanchang Group. The overwhelming unbalance of power is reflected in villagers' stance taking and strategy making inspired by their individuality. It has given rise to a prevailing reluctance among the residents to support the pro-ecological campaigns and has made it even more difficult for the local green activists to mobilise openly against the business for the environmental rights of the village.

Nevertheless, villagers in Weiken, as direct victims of the industrial pollution caused by Fanchang Group, still press for compensation for their loss through a number of informal and private channels. Starting from the negotiation with the company, the compensation seeking in Weiken Village also followed an individualised route, where villagers acted according to an individualised logic. Since Fanchang Group is the only industry in the neighbourhood, local people do not have the problem of 'locating' the source of pollution. All what they have striven for in the past decades is to challenge the business repeatedly through individualised representations, just like 'an ant shaking the leg of an elephant' [Research log 33: Interview with Aunt Wu, conducted on 10th July, 2014].

Weiken residents' individuality is primarily reflected in the way they hunt for and handle the evidence of pollution caused by the industry. For each household, the possession of evidence not only serves as an important bargain chip in the negotiation with Fanchang Group, but also wins it an advantage in the competition for compensation, since the limited economic incentives would otherwise be snatched by the neighbours. In the past ten years, many local families benefited from the 'hush money' issued by the company, thanks to the individualised practice of evidence collection. Even though villagers' compensation seeking was intended for the material gain rather than solving up the problem of pollution for the community's sake, the individualised actions coined the pro-ecological causes and created a positive impact

Livelihoods: A Pathways Approach to Lead Mining in Rural Central China," *World Development* 62 (2014): 189-200. Luo, "Xiangcun gongye wuran zhong de huanjing kangzheng."

²¹⁶ Tilt, "The Political Ecology of Pollution Enforcement in China," 915-32. Deng, *Zhongguo nongcun de huanbao kangzheng*. Mark Wang et al., "Rural Industries and Water Pollution in China," *Journal of Environmental Management* 86, no. 4 (2008): 648-59.

on the local environment in the sense that they normalised the evidence collection as an everyday act of villagers, aroused the environmental awareness of the community, and consequentially cast pressure on the polluting industry. This process exemplifies the moment when villagers' private interest overlaps with public welfare and when the individualised logic of behaviour coincides with the collective spirit.

Lao Zhang is a master bamboo craftsman. Apart from being the owner of a small workshop, he also identifies himself as one of the keenest 'evidence hunters' in Weiken Village. He used to work as a boiler operator in Fanchang Group before retiring at the age of 56. He is among the 'luckiest' employees in the eyes of his colleagues and neighbours, because he receives the retirement pension from the company. Lao Zhang's household plot is situated next to the sewage treatment pool of the factory, which enables him to monitor the waste water closely.

Before 2008, the waste water from Fanchang Group was discharged directly into an open drain (mingque 明渠) that linked the sewage pool with the canals. The notorious drainage filled with smelly ditch water caught the attention of the district government in the second phase of the 'Village Renovation Plans' (qiancun shifan wancun zhengzhi 千村示范万村整治). Fanchang group was ordered to suspend its operation and to upgrade its waste treatment facilities, which caused an enormous loss for the business. To fulfil the command from the government, the company buried the drainage and installed several underground tubes in substitution. Although the untreated sewage could no longer be seen in the open air, it continued to pollute the canals, which posed a threat to the local ecological system.

Lao Zhang was among the first few villagers that spotted the chance of benefiting from the tension between the pro-ecological policy of the government and the profit-driven polluting industry. Since the sewage pipe went through his plot, Lao Zhang found out the distribution of the inspection openings soon after the pipeline was installed. Noticing that the company could not afford another suspension of operation anymore, Lao Zhang decided to 'talk about his findings' with the entrepreneur privately. He managed to open the concrete cover of the sewer and filled a plastic bottle with the dirty waste water. The bottle 'shocked Agen (the owner of Fanchang

Group)’, as Lao Zhang recalled the day of his representation. Lao Zhang threatened to send the bottle to the EBPs in Hangzhou²¹⁷ and to call the Zhejiang Television Station to report it. ‘Agen was fully aware of the “dirty business” and he knew it was not legal for the factory to discharge waste water secretly. He “softened his tone at once” (taidu yixiazi jiu ruanle 态度一下子就软了) when I put the evidence on his desk.’

[Research log 198: Interview with Lao Zhang, conducted on 4th April, 2015]

To reward Lao Zhang for his ‘cooperation’ of keeping the secret, Agen promised him company-sponsored pension and welfare. This satisfied Lao Zhang and fulfilled his individualistic demand for ‘a guaranteed life after the retirement’ [Research log 198: Interview with Lao Zhang, conducted on 4th April, 2015] It was until the summer of 2011 that Lao Zhang’s secret negotiation with the company became known in the neighbourhood. By that time, the company finally upgraded its sewage treatment equipment that met the national standards. As a consequence, it was no longer necessary for Lao Zhang to keep his deal with Agen as a secret anymore. For a time, Lao Zhang was under criticism from the neighbourhood for his individuality and for ‘selfishly selling the collective interest to the entrepreneur’. He alleged that he challenged the polluting industry on the behalf of and for the benefit of the whole village. Nevertheless, his rhetoric did not convince the neighbours. A lot of my respondents in Weiken mentioned that it was only because Lao Zhang reached a compromise with Agen that he could ‘enjoy the benefits as a retired staff from the company, which he would otherwise not have been qualified for’ [Research log 199: Interview with Uncle Xu, conducted on 4th April, 2015]. It took years before the moral criticism over Lao Zhang’s individualised and egoistic behaviours eventually died down in the village.

Noteworthy for this research, the evidence seeking has become routinized as a part of Weiken Villagers’ everyday practice ever since Lao Zhang’s successful negotiation with the Fanchang Group was publicised. As the interviews revealed, quite a few local residents followed suit and tried to get a slice of the cake from the polluting

²¹⁷ Later, Lao Zhang explained that he intentionally mentioned the EBPs at the municipal and provincial level because he knew that the company was under protection in the district as a star enterprise and major taxpayer. Lao Zhang believed that the company would have lost the shield if the case were escalated to the scope of the higher-level government.

industry. For a time, people even gathered at the bank of the canal at night with empty bottles in their hands, expecting to catch the unregulated waste water discharge and to get a bottle of sewage as evidence [Research log 199: Interview with Uncle Xu, conducted on 4th April, 2015]. Villagers' individualised profit-driven behaviours, in a way or another, became an action to regulate pollution in the village-wide campaign of evidence seeking. This best exemplifies the change of rural residents' individuality and its consequence that may fall in line with the public interest against the backdrop of industrialisation and the associated environmental degradation. My findings question the concept of 'compensation trap', in which pollution victims' individualistic and opportunistic pursuit to the economic incentives is believed to have undermined the pro-ecological goal (van Rooij et al. 2012²¹⁸). Rather, villagers' individuality may as well facilitate the environmental regulation from a consequentialist point of view.

The ethnography above corresponds to Yan Yunxinag's observation on the individualisation of Chinese society in the sense that both indicate that individuality has gradually been internalised as a part of the local culture and ethics in rural China. However, the community will not give unconditional acquiescence to the individuality-inspired actions, if it goes extreme and violates the moral standards of the collective. Uncle Xu, the former party secretary of Weiken, distained the villagers who faked the evidence of pollution and blackmailed Fanchang company for compensation [Research log 199: Interview with Uncle Xu, conducted on 4th April, 2015]. These attempts came to extinction soon when the village collective stepped in with the moral arbitration. The mechanism that the local society regulates its members' individuality is simple: villagers who go beyond the moral redline when pursuing their personal interest will be named and shamed in the community. The social networks in the rural community serve as the institutional settings that sustain the regulation and its function. Therefore, rather than complying with Fei Xiaotong's argument that the selfishness will inevitably 'drive out social consciousness',²¹⁹ my findings suggest that rural residents' individuality is still under regulation by the ethics and values in the community.

²¹⁸ Van Rooij et al., "The Compensation Trap," 701-45.

²¹⁹ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 61.

4.3 Open actions against polluting industries: Socially restricted individuality and the spectrum of subordination

When the negotiation escalates to a *vis-à-vis* conflict with the polluting industries, pollution victims have to take a stance and decide the extent to which they engage in the mobilisation. According to the 2003 Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), among the 3,878 correspondents who reported to have been affected by environmental hazards, 61.71% never took any actions in resistance. They constituted a ‘silent majority’ under the threat of pollution.²²⁰ Even though the general public in China tend to show concern on environmental issues in the contemporary age of industrialisation,²²¹ they remain cautious in actively practising environmentalism and openly fighting for their environmental rights. In contrast to the extensive research focusing on the open and organised pro-ecological actions in China, only limited scholarship features the phenomenon of the silence among the masses in spite of its prevalence. Among the literature in this regard, Deng and Yang²²² attribute the reluctance of participation to the constraints of community relations and economic dependency, whereas Stalley and Yang,²²³ Ho,²²⁴ and Lora-Wainwright²²⁵ outline the limited political space in the semi-authoritarian regime that suppresses for the survival and functioning of grassroots green activism and citizen’s agency. Anna Lora-Wainwright’s new ethnographic research²²⁶ on the pro-ecological mobilisation in rural China gives an insightful account and analysis of villagers’ reluctance to mobilise actively and openly. Termed as ‘resigned activism’, the phenomenon of lower engagement and resignation in the grassroots pro-ecological movement is believed to be rooted in limited access to scientific evidence, growing socio-economic

²²⁰ Shizheng Feng 冯仕政, “Chenmo de daduoshu: chaxu geju yu huanjing kangzheng 沉默的大多数: 差异格局与环境抗争” (PhD diss., Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2007).

²²¹ Noticing there is dispute around this point in literature at an earlier stage, when the ignorance of ecology and environmental problems is believed to be an unfulfilled prerequisite for the pro-ecological campaigns. Paul Harris, “Environmental Perspectives and Behavior in China: Synopsis and Bibliography,” *Environment and Behavior* 38, no. 1 (2006): 5-21.

²²² Yanhua Deng and Guobin Yang, “Pollution and Protest in China: Environmental Mobilization in Context,” *The China Quarterly* 214 (2013): 321-36.

²²³ Phillip Stalley and Dongning Yang, “An Emerging Environmental Movement in China?” *The China Quarterly* 186 (2006): 333-56.

²²⁴ Peter Ho, “Embedded Activism and Political Change in a Semiauthoritarian Context,” *China Information* 21, no. 2 (2007): 187-209. Ho and Edmonds, “Perspectives of Time and Change,” 216-25.

²²⁵ Lora-Wainwright, “Introduction. Dying for Development,” 243-54.

²²⁶ Lora-Wainwright, *Resigned Activism*.

inequalities, complex local realities, and local people's mentality of being powerless in face of industrialisation.

Complementary to the aforementioned scholarship focusing on the social roots of the lack of participation in pro-ecological mobilisation at the grassroots level, this research examines the role of rural residents' individuality in the two heavily contaminated villages as an internal cause of local people's reluctance to fight for their environmental rights openly and collectively. It is worth noting that individuality, despite being a personalised value and logic of behaviour, is again embedded in the social system where the rural residents situate. My observations suggest that villagers are distributed in a 'spectrum of subordination' and demonstrate various levels of enthusiasm and engagement in the environmental campaigns. Each villager's individualised stance taking and strategy making are reflected by their individuality, which is tightly associated with his or her economic, political, and social status in the local society. This resonates with Fei's proposition that rural residents' individuality has been internalised as culture and should be examined as 'a part of the entire social structure'.²²⁷ Based on the narratives of a number of typical figures in Jiangbin and Weiken's environmental mobilisation, this section aims at explaining the prevalence of silence and the associated free riding tendency among villagers, which creates a massive middle part in the spectrum of subordination. It unveils the manifestation of individuality reflected by rural residents' individual-specified roles in the mobilisation and the mechanism of how rural residents' social position and identity influence their individualised choices.

In addition, this section sheds light on how local residents' individuality shapes the forms and the features of open resistance against the polluting industries in the locality. It is always hard to establish an alliance among pollution victims in the village. Even among the local green activists, the subtle differences of each individual's interest results in fragility in the cooperation. The individualistic tendency in the actions further leads to the incoherence of pro-ecological mobilisation at the grassroots level. More often than not, the pro-ecological mobilisation in rural

²²⁷ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 61.

China is ‘event-oriented’, i.e., local people only respond to environmental emergencies and the most acute environmental threats.²²⁸ In the event-oriented mode of action, the long-term goals of pollution control and environment improvement is often obscured and omitted. This deepens our understanding of the compatibility of individuality-inspired interest and the collective welfare against the backdrop of industrialisation: the conjoint effect is limited under certain circumstances.

4.3.1 Jiangbin Village

The most recent conflict between Meiqing Washing Co. Ltd. (hereafter Meiqing Company) and the villagers in Jiangbin exemplifies rural residents’ individuality in the open anti-pollution actions. In the late 2013, villagers began to hear the news that Meiqing Company was going to be relocated into the Nanyang Industrial Park. After knowing that the company contracts the laundry services from hospitals in the City of Hangzhou, the villagers in the neighbourhood panicked. Soon after the plan was announced, Meiqing Company started its site construction. As a campaign aiming at eliminating the potential risk of contamination at the critical moment, local people’s fight with Meiqing Company required quicker response and more decisive actions. One of the opinion leaders in the village, Dongying, managed to gather around 30 villagers and organised a direct confrontation with the company after the Spring Festival of 2014, which marked the peak of the mobilisation. Dongying was unsatisfied with the final outcome of the campaign, since they did not prevent the company from settling down in the locality. What upset Dongying more was the uncaring and indifferent attitude most villagers demonstrated when they were asked to join the movement and to fight together for the welfare in the neighbourhood.

Despite a wide-spreading anxiety of the possible adverse health impacts the company might bring to the locality, most villagers did not show much interest in the campaign of resistance against the company’s relocation project. As the interviews suggested, the reasons behind this choice varied among households. However, it was clearly

²²⁸ Feng, “Chenmo de daduoshu: chaxu geju yu huanjing kangzheng.”

identifiable that all those reasons for the reluctance of action were based on villagers' individualised concerns.

When I asked villagers in Jiangbin Village why they chose to stay away from the green activism, a most frequent answer was that it never worked (meiyou yong 没有用). Like the villagers' feeling of powerlessness and the perceptions of 'inevitability' reflected in Lora-Wainwright's case studies,²²⁹ a prevailing pessimism was experienced by the local residents in Jiangbin and was reflected in their judgement about the power comparison between the businesses supported by the government and themselves. For the villagers, 'to challenge the business was much the same as to challenge the leadership and authority of the party and the government', which would inevitably result in a 'dead knot' (zixun silu 自寻死路) for an ordinary resident hoping to seek livelihood in Chinese society [Research log 69: Interview with Xu Da, conducted on 17th September, 2014; Research log 93: Interview with Qing, conducted on 26th September, 2014]. The instinctive tendency of staying away from the dispute has its root in the local residents' pragmatism. As many scholars point out, rural residents in China tend to avoid clashes with the government in the first place by carefully framing their claims²³⁰ and choosing their strategies²³¹ in accordance with the country's policies and legislation. Many villagers in Jiangbin put this tendency to an extreme by resigning to the business-government alliance and staying silent. Knowing the mere chance of eliminating health hazards by launching grassroots mobilisation, the pragmatic residents chose to live with the environmental risk so as to prevent further political risk arisen from the conflicts.

Local residents' individuality was also reflected in the NIMBYism in a miniature setting within the village boundary. Like many activists in the NIMBY movements

²²⁹ Lora-Wainwright et al., "Learning to Live with Pollution," 106-24. Lora-Wainwright and Chen, "China's Cancer Villages," 396-416. Lora-Wainwright, *Resigned Activism*.

²³⁰ Ho and Edmonds, "Perspectives of Time and Change," 216-25. Van Rooji et al., "The Compensation Trap," 701-45. Lora-Wainwright, "Introduction. Dying for Development," 234-54. Deng, *Zhongguo nongcun de huanbao kangzheng*. Deng and Yang, "Pollution and Protest in China," 321-36.

²³¹ Lianjiang Li and Kevin J. O'Brien, "Villagers and Popular Resistance in Contemporary China," *Modern China* 22, no. 1 (1996): 28-61. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," 31-55. Lora-Wainwright, *Resigned Activism*.

elsewhere in China, villagers in Jiangbin failed to realise or pretended as if they did not realise the non-discriminated harm of pollution to human health and to the ecological system on the neighbourhood as a whole. As Johnson points out in his research on NIMBYism in China,²³² with a predominating ego-centric orientation in place, environmentalism usually becomes a secondary pursuit to the localised interests. This inclination manifested itself in Jiangbin as a geographical distribution of the proneness to participating in the fight against Meiqing Company: those villagers who lived closer to the industrial park were more eager to protest whereas those who lived in the east corner of the village or by the upper stream of the waters felt less motivated to join the campaign as the threat was not so close to their backyard and thus remained to be less acute.

In addition, it is worth noting that both the aforementioned pragmatism and NIMBYism were simultaneously linked to local residents' social networks, economic positions, and political stances. In many cases, the political and economic dependence drove the villagers away from green activism. Sometimes, it even nurtured an active 'counterforce' against the pro-ecological campaign. As revealed by Zhihong, the village clerk of Jiangbin, village cadres got the 'political task' (zhengzhi renwu 政治任务) from the township government to monitor the activists and to talk their neighbours out of the protest by persuasion. Zhihong had no choice but to visit some relatives and close neighbours and to reason things out with them (he tamen jiang daoli 和他们讲道理). Nevertheless, even Zhihong himself was not sure if the company would be just as secure as the township government promised to the villagers. As a cadre working for the public (gongjiaren 公家人), he had to do his job and to accept the company's relocation project without openly expressing the objection through comments, let alone actions [Research log 72: Interview with Zhihong, conducted on 18th September, 2014].

Rather than being indifferent to the potential environmental hazard, the silent majority also expected a solution to the disputes and a safer living environment. Since Jiangbin

²³² Thomas Johnson, "Environmentalism and NIMBYism in China: Promoting a Rules-based Approach to Public Participation," *Environmental Politics* 19, no. 3 (2010): 430-48.

has accommodated active green activism for nearly two decades, many local residents chose to assume the role as free riders, hoping that someone else would speak and act for them. The individualised opportunism, as a typical manifestation of villagers' individuality, remained to be a source of the prevailing free riding tendency in the village.

Dongying's unsuccessful social mobilisation against the relocated Meiqing Company exemplified local residents' conservativeness about open actions and their free riding tendency. After a few rounds of negotiation, villagers reached a compromise with the business owner and the investment attraction office of the township to 'freeze' the situation before the company obtained a validated environmental impact assessment (EIA) report. However, it was to the villagers' surprise that Meiqing Company secretly set up the equipment one night at the cover of darkness and started to operate the other day. Shocked by the development overnight, the green activists felt deceived and betrayed. Dongying insisted on taking actions to stop the company and to cast pressure on the township government. She knew clearly that she needed the support from the masses. In order to gather people for the protest, Dongying and her fellow activists paid home visits to the neighbours one after another. Dongying was upset by the neighbours who scolded at her and slashed their front gate upon her visit. What disappointed her more were the seemingly caring people who promised to join the protest but did not show up on the day of action.

'We advertised our plan of blocking the Lijiang Road to prevent the dirty linens from being transported into the village. Most of the neighbours agreed to support and promised to send a family member to the site... We visited almost a hundred households, yes only less than 30 people showed up at the agreed time. We were fighting for the whole village. The empty promises made me bitterly disappointed (寒心)... I should have realised the politeness and the promise were but gestures since they did not want to "tear up the face" (撕破脸皮) with us; they would otherwise lose face in the neighbourhood.' [Research

log 87: Interview with Dongying, conducted on 24th September, 2014]

Despite feeling angry and disappointed with the free riders in the neighbourhood, Dongying inadvertently expressed understanding to their choices. She admitted that she should not have expected a ‘united front’ to be formed in the mobilisation that ‘brought together all the victims in the village’ [Research log 87: Interview with Dongying, conducted on 24th September, 2014]. After all, every family had its own problem, which might, in a way or another, prevent its members from joining the pro-ecological campaign against the polluting industries and local government. This exemplifies how villagers’ individuality is socially framed and determined. However, as shown in the narrative, local people tended to hide their free riding tendency in public. Although villagers tacitly justified individuality as a natural code of behaviour, they prefer not to talk about their ego-centric tendency or act it out openly. It is related to their images and ‘faces’ in the neighbourhood, since no one would enjoy being tagged as a ‘selfish’ guy in the community. The local green activists, as a part of the neighbourhood, have no choice but to tolerate the inconsistent words and deeds. Dongying’s setback in mobilising villagers towards a fight against environmental hazards denotes the dilemma faced by many local residents, whose socially determined individuality collides with their environmentalism and discourages their participation in the pro-ecological campaigns. In this sense, rural residents’ individuality associated with their roles as ‘a constituent of the entire social structure’²³³ remained a key to understand the limitations on the grassroots anti-pollution movements.

As reflected in the discussion above, local residents’ individuality is embodied in their reluctance to mobilise openly and collectively. It is rooted in the political pressure, economic dependence, and interpersonal relations in the locality, that form the realm and content of villagers’ social life. Individuality is embraced as a part of the social ethics in the locality: people give acquiescence to the ego-centric logic of behaviour and practise it themselves, though they cautiously avoid talking about it publicly. As the manifestation of a majority of local people’s individuality, the silence and the free riding tendency inevitably resulted in limitation of the pro-ecological agencies at the grassroots level. The first and foremost impact is the absence of unity among victims. In the case of Jiangbin, even though Dongying has rich experience in organising and

²³³ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 61.

steering environmental campaigns, she could not bring the mobilisation further without the support from the masses. The individualised initiatives in the grassroots pro-ecological movements further make it difficult to mobilise towards the goal of public welfare. Just like Feng's observation that the problem of individuality may jeopardise solidarity and continuity in the environmental actions,²³⁴ villagers in Jiangbin failed to realise the long-term impact and significance of the precautionary attempts of self-protection in the fight against Meiqing Company. As a consequence, their movements were more 'event-oriented'. This inevitably restricts the regulatory power of the grassroots pro-ecological campaigns.

4.3.2 Weiken Village

Unlike Jiangbin Village that accommodates a mature green activist force, Weiken seldom observes open and collective actions to challenge Fanchang Group, the industrial giant in the locality. Among a handful of conflicts between the business and the local people, the sewage leakage incident in 2008 was one occasion when pollution victims chose to lodge complaints openly and vent their grievance. In the protest throughout the sewage leakage incident, villagers' individuality is reflected in their reluctance to make their own voice heard in the bargaining in the first place. The claims for the loss among local people who chose to mobilise were disunited, reflected in their negligence of the long-term impact the sewage might cause to their farmland. Since the victims were striving for the household specified interest through open but individualised actions, there was not a collective campaign on which the Weiken villagers could free ride as their counterparts in Jiangbin did. The even more scattered mobilisation in Weiken exemplifies local people's distribution in the spectrum of subordination. Meanwhile, the analysis of villagers' attitude towards the individualised actions of compensation seeking in Weiken Village sheds light on the routinisation of individuality, which has gradually been internalised as a part of the ethical codes of the locality.

²³⁴ Feng, "Chenmo de daduoshu."

In June 2008, a long run of rainy days destroyed the drainage system of Fanchang Group. The waste water from the workshop spilt from the sewage treatment pond, causing severe waterlogging in the old site of the company. For fear of further damage the flood might cause to the equipment, Agen decided to tear down the wall of the factory yard. As the factory was surrounded by villagers' household plots, the spilt waste water destroyed villagers' crops, which 'were soaked in the sewage for a couple of days' [Research log 35: Interview with Lao Xu, conducted on 11th July, 2014].

Villagers soon noticed the impacts of the sewage spillage on their patches. A few days after the water receded, local people found that the vegetables became 'burnt and withered'. Among all the crops in the fields, peanuts and watermelons were the most influenced, which were drowning to death with no hope of rescue (yansi le, qiangjiu bu huilai le 淹死了, 抢救不回来了) [Research log 33: Interview with Aunt Wu, conducted on 10th July, 2014]. Villagers felt angry at the business in the first instance. Apparently, the company was the only responsible party for their loss. However, local families were reluctant to fight against the industry as an alliance. Rather than collectively lodging a complaint and claim for the compensation from Fanchang Group, many villagers chose to keep silent, since they did not dare to involve themselves in a clash with the enterprise. The silence at the initial stage of the incident was apparently a strategic choice of the local residents. It represented a family specified calculation of interest when they realised that there was an insurmountable power imbalance between the polluter and pollution victims. The silent majority tacitly opted for a 'wait-and-see' attitude out of their individualised concern. Nobody would risk to break up the seemingly harmonious relations with the company, which would otherwise result in threats to the family member's employment and the household livelihoods. It was also because that villagers were generally pessimistic about the outcome of redress seeking through an organised campaign. Judging from their previous experience, the hope of getting the compensation at a village scale remained to be extremely low. As a correspondent pointed out, 'if I know it was like dashing an egg against a rock, why did I bother to waste an egg?' [Research log 35: Interview with Lao Xu, conducted on 11th July, 2014] In this sense, it was villagers' individualised concern that led to the prevalence of conservativeness and pessimism in the local community.

Nevertheless, the silence among villagers after the incident was not an indication of the appeased grievance. Lao Xu, a vegetable farmer aged 57, was the first person that decided to request the compensation for the loss caused by the sewage spillage. Rather than standing out on the behalf of the neighbours, his decision was driven by an individualised concern. Given that Lao Xu's family relied heavily on the revenue from his vegetable business, the loss was but a huge blow on the household economy. As a professional farmer (*zhongtian dahu* 种田大户) in the village, Lao Xu not only worked on his own family plots, but also contracted farmland from the village collective and his neighbours. During the incident, his watermelon field with a cover of 2 *mu* (approx. 0.13 hectare) was totally ruined while the two greenhouses of vegetable was half-burnt, with mere hope of survival.

Lao Xu half-jokingly referred to his decision of fighting against the polluting company as 'a struggle for livelihoods', since they 'would have had nothing to cook in the pot if they lost the harvest from the field that year (*dili mei le shoucheng, jiali jie bukai guo* 地里没了收成, 家里揭不开锅).' [Research log 35: Interview with Lao Xu, conducted on 11th July, 2014] He decided to act by his own, because he insisted that his claim for compensation was most justified in the village given the big loss. He believed that he was more likely to get the compensation in this way. 'Agen was so cunning,' commented Lao Xu. 'It was only possible to draw a small sum of money from his pocket. When it came to a bigger amount, the hope would be next to none (*zhao ta yao dian xiaoqian haiyou xiwang, daqian xiang dou buyao xiang* 找他要点小钱还有希望, 大钱想都不要想).' Despite following an individualistic logic of action, Lao Xu found it necessary to turn to the public and justify his demand morally. To make his claim 'visible', Lao Xu brought his cooking pot with him to the gate of the factory and cried out the hardship the incident had brought to his family whilst knocking the pot with a metal spatula. Lao Xu attracted the attention of the crowd from both the company and the neighbourhood very soon after he started the 'show'. He was invited to the office building of the group, where he had the chance to talk to Agen face to face. It was to the surprise of Lao Xu that the entrepreneur agreed to issue a full compensation of 12,000 *yuan* for the watermelons and took over the remaining vegetable from Lao Xu's greenhouses with the market price. Lao Xu accredited the success to his strategy, since 'the business owner did not want to lose face'. He felt

lucky to be the early-bird as he ‘got the exact amount he claimed (yao duoshao pei duoshao 要多少赔多少)’ [Research log 35: Interview with Lao Xu, conducted on 11th July, 2014].

Lao Xu’s success triggered a tide of redress seeking, in which more and more villagers followed suit and challenged Fanchang Group openly. Knowing that negotiation was far from enough to reach their goals, the victims introduced protest of various types, such as picketing and information distribution. These actions were, however, carefully maintained at a low intensity. In addition, local people preferred to protest individually or in very small groups consisting of members from extended family or close neighbourhood. A typical case that illustrated the characteristics of the protest in Weiken was Changming and his brothers’ struggle for the compensation. The three brothers jointly ran a nursery for decorative plants in the locality. The spilled waste water from the factory burnt most of their plant stock, causing a huge loss to the three households. To make their protest ‘visible’, Changming and his brothers piled the dead plants at the gate of the company. They kept talking to the employees passing by, trying to raise their empathy and moral support. The open actions won the three households an ideal amount of compensation, which was to the brothers’ delight. In the interview, Changming admitted that they did not intend to bring it further to a fiercer conflict with the business giant, nor did they dare to, as it would be too risky for ‘the ordinary villagers with no patrons’ (meiyou kaoshan de xiao laobaixing 没有靠山的小老百姓) [Research log 36: Interview with Changming, conducted on 11th July, 2014]. The brothers did not think of acting in collaboration with their neighbours either. At that stage, they even did not know that a number of villagers were planning to fight against the company at a same time. ‘If there had been a collective campaign in the village, we would not have joined it anyway.’ said Changming. ‘The loss in our nursery was calculated in thousands (shang wan kuai qian 上万块钱) and was far more than the loss in the crop and vegetable paddies. If the company had compensated the villagers at a same rate, we would have suffered a big loss (chi dakui 吃大亏).’ [Research log 36: Interview with Changming, conducted on 11th July, 2014] Changming’s calculation best exemplified his individuality. In this case, the individualised strategy of compensation seeking hindered the formation of alliance and cooperation in the neighbourhood.

It was also the villagers' individuality that drove the silent majority in Weiken to take actions to protect their own right at a later stage. Since the precedent significantly lowered the cost and the political risk of redress seeking through open actions, more and more villagers decided to give it a go driven by the economic incentives. However, through the repeated games, the entrepreneur gradually sounded out the intention of the local residents. As free riders, they did not have a clear expectation for the amount of compensation, nor did they uphold a pro-ecological cause in their campaign. As a consequence, Agen decided to offer a one-off solution: he lowered the compensation down to the level of RMB 500 *yuan* per *mu*, regardless of the real loss in the field. No further objections were burst out in the neighbourhood after villagers took the money from Fanchang Group, which marked an end to the sewage spillage incident.

Local residents' individuality inevitably resulted in an unbalanced allocation of benefits among victims in the sewage spillage incident. Surprisingly enough, villagers tended to accept what they were offered rather than further calling the distribution of compensation into question. Similar to the situation of Jiangbin, the individualised logic of social behaviour had long been internalised as a part of ethical codes in Weiken. Despite envying the early-birds' success in seeking redress and safeguarding rights, ordinary villagers took it for granted that those who took a lead to mobilise against the polluting industry deserved a larger share of compensation since they 'were more decisive' (*geng guoduan* 更果断), 'dared to act' (*huo de chuqu* 豁得出去), and 'had more channels' (*geng you banfa* 更有办法) [Research log 33: Interview with Aunt Wu, conducted on 10th July, 2014; Research log 35: Interview with Lao Xu, conducted on 11th July, 2014; Research log 39: Interview with Luozi, conducted on 12th July, 2014]. As for Lao Xu and the Changming brothers, it was natural to strive for the household's interest all by themselves without bringing in the participation from the neighbourhood, as it was an 'affair of the family' (*zijia de shi* 自家的事) [Research log 36: Interview with Changming, conducted on 11th July, 2014]. The morally justified individuality in the community serves as an ethical ground for villagers distributed in the different positions of the spectrum of subordination to adopt individual-specified stance and actions in the event of an environmental hazard.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter examines the connotation and manifestation of villagers' individuality against the backdrop of their interaction with polluting industries in the neighbourhood. It emphasises the significance of rural residents' individualistic logic of stance taking and strategy making as a behavioural basis of the organisation and the function of rural society in contemporary China. Starting from the inspection of the concept in Fei Xiaotong and Yan Yunxiang's writings, this chapter argues that rural residents' individuality has changed throughout the decades along with the social and economic development of the country. The four empirical cases in turn illustrate the change of individuality based on rural residents' negotiation with and open action against polluting industries that have posed a threat to their health, wealth, and well-being. It links the observation of pollution victims' choices to a broader social and moral context in the locality and hence contributes to our understanding of social changes inspired by industrialisation, reflected in the grassroots pro-ecological mobilisation in rural China.

Unlike Fei Xiaotong, who summarises the individuality of rural residents as a 'problem of selfishness' that inevitably undermines public interest, I define individuality as the right and freedom rural residents can enjoy in the private sector of life. Such right and freedom has so far been liberated from family relations, kinship, community, working unit, and the collectiveness of the state to a large extent. I argue that in the more diversified society of the contemporary era, the dichotomy between public and private is no longer so rigid as before. It is therefore important to understand rural residents' individuality as a neutralised value and code of behaviour. As demonstrated by the empirical cases, in the event of environmental pollution, villagers' individualised pursuit of compensation as economic incentives for themselves and their families may coincide with the mobilisation with a pro-ecological cause and may hence contribute to the public welfare. Although the collaboration is usually short-term and event-based, it still denotes the change of rural residents' individuality that may demonstrate compatibility with collective interest. Furthermore, rural residents' individuality at the contemporary stage manifests itself as a socially determined value rather than a spontaneously framed code of behaviour by the individual villager himself. The concept of the spectrum of subordination links

villagers' individualised strategy in the struggle against polluting industry to their social, economic, and political statuses in the local society. It is the social relations and the structure of dependence in the village that determine pollution victims' individualised decision. Consequentially, I tend to justify rural residents' reluctance to act for the living environment and the public goods in the community. The silence, in a sense or another, is similar to the participation, since both can be viewed as an individualised choice embedded in and inspired by the social background. Against this backdrop, it is not proper to morally justify individuality as a counterforce of social solidarity or a degradation of social consciousness. In addition, the ethnographies of local residents' interaction with the polluting industries also shed light on the role of the community on the regulation of individuality. The social ties and the moral standards in the community impose a restriction on rural residents' individualised behaviours. As discussed in the cases, both the mechanisms of self-checking and community exposure ensure that villagers' individuality is not practiced to an extreme end.

Noteworthy for this research, industrialisation is among the most important factors that sets the stage for the change of villagers' individuality. The challenge imposed by industrial pollution best exemplifies the complex interest structure in the society of rural China, where private and public interest intertwine. It is the tide of industrialisation that brings in new issues to rural residents' everyday life and diversifies their interest. The tide of industrialisation articulates changes of villagers' individuality, which are reflected in their social behaviours. They also strengthen the role of community as a regulator in local people's moral life. In return, the changing connotation and manifestation of individuality can be viewed as an alteration the local people have made for industrialisation and the socio-economic change it brings. The change has been internalised as a part of villagers' digestion of industrialisation in the two research sites of my project. Digesting industrialisation as a highly individualised process both in terms of the routes and the consequences is by nature an evidence of the individualisation of rural Chinese society.

Going back to Fei Xiaotong's thoughts on the individuality in rural society, it is admitted that the rigid dichotomy between individuality and collectivity proposed by Fei no longer reflects the complex interest structure and the mechanism of decision-

making among villagers in the contemporary rural society. By comparing Fei's theory with much recent scholarships on individuality and individualisation in rural Chinese society, this research examines the changes of rural society at individual level against the backdrop of industrialisation. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that this chapter follows Fei's logic to treat rural residents' individuality as a fundament for the differential mode of social association and the related morality in the social system. How rural residents uphold such an individual logic and perceive the other two pillar elements of the differential mode of association, i.e., the relative closeness and the ethical bonds, will be discussed in depth in the following two chapters.

Chapter 5: Changing Structural Pattern: Nuclear Family, Functional Groups, and Administrative Village

5.1 Introduction

Based on the discussion of villagers' individuality as the behavioural basis of the differential mode of association, this chapter examines the way rural residents establish and maintain their social networks. According to Fei Xiaotong, villagers' social relations are primarily kinship-based in the traditional rural community and can be extended to special relationships sometimes.²³⁵ By telling their 'own people in family' (*zijiaren* 自家人) apart from outsiders (*wairen* 外人), rural residents situate themselves in the midst of a finely woven network, in which 'family' plays a central role.²³⁶ Interestingly enough, the concept of 'family' is usually relatively defined in the rural society: 'the scope of *zijiaren* can be expanded or contracted according to the specific time and place' and 'can be used in a very general way'.²³⁷ The individually specified web of social links and the relativity of closeness in each individual's social relationships altogether determine the concentric circular pattern of social association in rural China, which resembles the ripples from a splash on the water. As Fei Xiaotong points out, each villager's nuclear family forms the inner circle in his or her social relationships, surrounded by many layers of groups preserved by strong or weak kinship ties. The village serves as an outer circle of rural residents' social life, hence marking the boundary of the pattern with a concentric circular shape.

The concept of differential mode of association and the pattern of social organisation remain an influential theory in the studies of rural China and an analytical tool to understand the organisation and the functioning mode of rural Chinese society. Much recent scholarship engages with the concept and develops the theory against the backdrop of the new social trends at the contemporary stage. The discussion features

²³⁵ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 63.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

the structure, the significance, and the realm of influence of the organisational pattern respectively. First, scholars point out that the concentric circular pattern of social networks still thrives in many rural communities as a prevailing logic of rural residents' social life, despite its tension with the uprising work unit system that has begun to penetrate in the rural society.²³⁸ Complementarily, Wang Sibin,²³⁹ Yang Shanhua, and Hou Hongrui²⁴⁰ argue that even though affinity relationship joins kinship as another binding force in the at present, the social structure in rural China preserved by the relatively defined closeness remains unchanged. Second, as can be widely seen in the literature, the differential mode of association represents a structure for resources distribution. It represents a non-institutional arrangement of resource allocation.²⁴¹ The exclusiveness reflected by the social circles in the differential mode of association signifies the rule and logic by which scarce social resources are distributed in the rural communities.²⁴² Given its structural explanatory power and significance, the concept has been widely cited in the studies of grassroots governance,²⁴³ township and village enterprises,²⁴⁴ and rural residents' changing employment structure and lifestyle²⁴⁵ in contemporary rural China.

²³⁸ Xuewei Zhai 翟学伟, "Zhongguo renji guanxi wangluo zhong de pinghengxing wenti: yixiang ge'an yanjiu 中国人际关系网络中的平衡性问题:一项个案研究," *Shehuixue yanjiu* 社会学研究 3, (1996): 146-62. Changli Bu 卜长莉, "'Chaxu geju' de lilun quanshi ji xiandai neihan '差序格局' 的理论诠释及现代内涵," *Shehuixue yanjiu* 社会学研究 1 (2003): 21-29.

²³⁹ Sibin Wang 王思斌, "Zhongguo renji guanxi chujihua yu shehui bianqian 中国人际关系初级化与社会变迁," *Guanli shijie* 管理世界 3 (1996): 184-91.

²⁴⁰ Yang and Hou, "Xueyuan, yanyuan, qinqing, and liyi," 51-58.

²⁴¹ Wanli Zhang 张宛丽, "Fei zhidu yinsu yu diwei huode 非制度因素与地位获得," *Shehuixue yanjiu* 社会学研究 1 (1996): 79-87.

²⁴² Liping Sun 孙立平, "'Guanxi', shehui guanxi yu shehui jiegou '关系', 社会关系与社会结构," *Shehuixue yanjiu* 社会学研究 5 (1996): 20-30.

²⁴³ Xuefeng He, "The Regional Variation of Rural Governance and the Logics of Peasant Action," *Chinese Sociology & Anthropology* 41, no. 1 (2008): 10-29. Can Chen 陈灿, Biliang Luo 罗必良, and Can Huang 黄灿, "Chaxu geju, diyu tuozhan yu zhili xingwei: Dongjin nongmu gongsi anli yanjiu 差序格局, 地域拓展与治理行为: 东进农牧公司案例研究," *Zhongguo nongcun guancha* 中国农村观察 4 (2010): 44-53. Yanchun Qu 曲延春, "Chaxu geju, suipianhua yu nongcun gonggong chanpin gongji de zhengtixing zhili 差序格局, 碎片化与农村公共产品供给的整体性治理," *Zhongguo xingzheng guanli* 中国行政管理 5 (2015): 70-73.

²⁴⁴ Jing Bai and Jun-wei Liu, "The Impact of Chinese Entrepreneur's Social Networks on the Development of Private Enterprises in China," *National Conference on Information Technology and Computer Science* (2012): 954-57.

²⁴⁵ Xianbi Huang, "Guanxi Networks and Job Searches in China's Emerging Labour Market: A Qualitative Investigation," *Work, Employment and Society* 22, no. 3 (2008): 467-84.

Noteworthy for this research, the tide of industrialisation that has surged in rural China since its economic reform brings about significant change to the social structure in rural communities. Unlike the authors that regard the concentric circular pattern of social association as the predominating social structure in contemporary rural China, I argue in this chapter that the fashion of organisation in rural Chinese society demonstrates a number of new characteristics inspired by industrialisation and the associated social and economic developments. By critically engaging with Fei's theory, this chapter examines the role of nuclear family, social groups, and village in the two industrialised villages. The new issue and the new interest in the locality introduced by industrialisation articulate changes of form and function in the layers of villagers' social relationships. First, members in a same nuclear family no longer demonstrate consistency in interest orientations. This has made the internal circle not as solidary as before. Second, in the middle layers of the pattern, kinship based organisations have been gradually replaced by overlapping functional groups. This interferes the concentric circular pattern of the social association in Fei's assumption. Third, although the administrative village still serves the role as the outer circle of rural residents' social life, it signifies a tactical setting for resource distribution rather than a geographical or cultural boundary of the community. These changes are intended for a better adaptation to and utilisation of the challenges brought by industrialisation. Therefore, they can be viewed as part of the process through which industrialisation is digested by the local people and local communities.

The examination of the changing pattern of social association in rural China and the driving force behind the transformation leads to the main arguments of this chapter. I argue that the structure of rural society in contemporary China is undergoing significant change, reflected in the role of nuclear family, social groups, and village. Industrialisation sets the stage for the change. Correspondingly, the change can be viewed as local people's adaptation and digestion of industrialisation and the associated challenges. This chapter brings together two sets of literature respectively focusing on the structure of rural society and rural industrialisation. It empirically contributes to the understanding of the relative and reflexive relations between the structural social change and industrialisation in rural China. The engagement with the theory of differential mode of association in the analysis of my empirical cases also

enriches Fei Xiaotong's thoughts in the studies of rural China by linking it to the contemporary context.

In the following sections, I present three pairs of ethnographic portraits of villagers and their families in Jiangbin and Weiken Village. Section 5.2 examines the role of nuclear family and the definition of core family interest against the backdrop of industrialisation. Section 5.3 discusses the rise of functional groups that substitutes kinship organisations in rural residents' social life. Section 5.4 shows the changing function of administrative village as a part of structure for resource distribution. In the concluding part, I relate the changes with industrialisation and discuss how the structural change in rural Chinese society can be perceived as a part of local people's digestion of industrialisation.

5.2 Nuclear families: The inner circle

The importance of family is a recurring theme in Fei Xiaotong's research on rural China. The significant role of the family unit in rural resident's social life has been reiterated in Fei's works.²⁴⁶ Fei Xiaotong regards the nuclear family that accommodates one pair of parent-child relation as 'the most stable single-core unit of household' and a fundament of rural society from which 'lineage expands out'.²⁴⁷ In the three papers on the structural changes of family published in the 1980s, Fei emphasises on the trend of miniaturisation among families in rural China and the reviving significance of nuclear family in rural residents' social life.²⁴⁸ Much recent scholarship resonates with the viewpoint, in which the single-core pattern of family organisation is regarded as a 'mainstream family form' in contemporary China.²⁴⁹ The

²⁴⁶ Fei, *Jiangcun jingji*.

²⁴⁷ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 83.

²⁴⁸ Fei, Xiaotong 费孝通, "Lun Zhongguo jiating jiegou de biandong 论中国家庭结构的变动," *Tianjin shehui kexue* 天津社会科学 3 (1982): 2-6. Fei, Xiaotong 费孝通, "Jiating jiegou biandong zhong de laonian shanyang wenti – zai lun Zhongguo jiating jiegou de biandong 家庭结构变动中的老年赡养问题——再论中国家庭结构的变动," *Beijing daxue xuebao: zhaxue shehui kexue ban* 北京大学学报: 哲学社会科学版 3 (1983): 7-16. Fei, Xiaotong 费孝通, "San lun Zhongguo jiating jiegou de biandong 三论中国家庭结构的变动," in *Zhongguo jiating ji qi bianqian* 中国家庭及其变迁, ed., Qiao Jian 乔健 (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1991).

²⁴⁹ Yi Zeng 曾毅, Wei Li 李伟, and Zhiwu Liang 梁志武, "Zhongguo jiating jiegou de xianzhuang, quyue chayi ji biandong qushi 中国家庭结构的现状, 区域差异及变动趋势," *Zhongguo renkou kexue*

prevalence of nuclear family strengthens its role in the differential mode of association as ‘the inner ring in a concentric social circles’ of each individual rural resident.²⁵⁰ It constitutes a basic unit of interest, which, as Fei believes, cannot be subdivided. The core interest shared in a nuclear family is defined by Fei Xiaotong as earthbound livelihoods and reproduction, based on his ethnographic research of Kaixiangong Village.²⁵¹ These assumptions about nuclear family coincide with much recent research under the framework of ‘family-centred culture (jia benwen wenhua 家本位文化)’ in China, where the responsibility, code of behaviour, and ethics within the social unit are emphasised.²⁵² Noteworthy for this study, the fashion to treat nuclear family as an undividable basic unit comes under criticism for being unable to explain many recent trends in the rural society of China. A typical questioning voice was from Kleinman, who cites the prevailing individuality as a challenging force to the role of nuclear family in the domestic life of rural China.²⁵³ Similarly, Yan Yunxiang’s ethnographic research on Xiajia village in North China emphasises on the importance of the conjugal unit of husband and wife, whereas the children are excluded from the scope of analysis.²⁵⁴ Both works reveal a loosening unity within a nuclear family as a result of the rising individualisation in Chinese society and the diversified interest orientations of family members. It is equally important to understand the socio-economic background of the change: my research suggests that the changing role of nuclear family in the rural society of China is embedded in the tide of industrialisation and the economic development in the post reform era.

中国人口科学 2 (1992): 1-12. Mark Selden, “Family Strategies and Structures in Rural North China,” in *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era*, eds. Deborah Davis and Stevan Harrel. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: Stanford University Press, (1993): 139-64. Yuesheng Wang 王跃生, “Dangdai Zhongguo jiating jigou biandong fenxi 当代中国家庭结构变动分析,” *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中国社会科学 1, no. 96 (2006): 96-108.

²⁵⁰ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 83.

²⁵¹ Fei, *Jiangcun jingji*, 61.

²⁵² Yinhe Li 李银河 and Junjie Chen 陈俊杰, “Geren benwei, jia benwei yu shengyu guannian 个人本位, 家本位与生育观念,” *Shehuixue yanjiu* 社会学研究 2 (1993): 87-96. Shanhua Yang 杨善华, “Zhongguo dangdai chengshi jiating bianqian yu jiating ningjuli 中国当代城市家庭变迁与家庭凝聚力” (PhD diss., Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2011).

²⁵³ Yan: *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village*. Arthur Kleinman, “Quest for Meaning,” in *Deep China: The Moral Life of the Person*, ed., Arthur Kleinman et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 263-90.

²⁵⁴ Yan: *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village*.

By examining two nuclear families in Jiangbin and Weiken respectively, this section explores the dynamics within nuclear families and the changing connotation of the core family interest in the contemporary context. On the one hand, findings from my fieldwork confirm the central role of nuclear family as the inner circle of villagers' social. On the other hand, my findings also support a critical take on Fei Xiaotong's theories by challenging the assumption of a somehow uniformed social choice of individual family members and the homogenised definition of family interest. Based on the first case study, I argue that a number of new challenges inspired by industrialisation in rural residents' social life reshape the thoughts and demands within nuclear families. In the face of these new challenges, the different education backgrounds, employments, and social statuses of family members shape their differentiated attitudes and actions. Through the second case study, I demonstrate that in the present, the definition of core family interest in rural China varies from one nuclear family to another. No longer a homogenously defined value understood and tacitly accepted by the villagers, the diversified family interest inevitably leads to conflicts among households. Such conflicts are often irreconcilable, because the parties involved are usually driven by different sets of family interest and are hence difficult to reach reconciliation based on mutual understanding.

Both the following portraits reveal the role of industrialisation as a driving force for the changes of family value in rural China. The presence of industries in the two researched villages introduced new agenda to the family life, and therefore reshaped each individual's perception of nuclear family, as well as the responsibility, devotion, and dedication prescribed by the traditions. The changes resonate with the concept of the 'digestion' of industrialisation, which highlights rural residents' highly individualised approaches of internalising challenges brought by the social transformation in contemporary China.

5.2.1 Jiangbin Village

The following account records a conflict of opinion within a nuclear family in Jiangbin Village. Facing the challenge of industrial pollution and the call from the neighbourhood for pro-ecological actions, the father and the son in the interviewed household adopted contrasting attitudes and strategies. As will be analysed, their

decisions were by and large based on their definition of core family interest. This underscores Fei Xiaotong's emphasis on the importance of the nuclear family in rural China, which is interpreted as the inner circle in the differential mode of association and each individual villager's prioritised concern in their social life.²⁵⁵ Fei's observation from the field underpins a shared interest by all the family members.²⁵⁶ However, as the case study shows, the definition of the nuclear family's core interest is not unitary. It does not necessarily need to be coherent among family members either. This complicates villagers' digestion of industrialisation: the divergence of interest orientations within a nuclear family usually makes it more difficult for particular individual family members to take their stance.

Grandma Li, a housewife aged 61, lived in a three-storey semi-detached house in the Southeast corner of Jiangbin Village. At the time I stepped into her yard, she was picking vegetables from her small garden and preparing dinner for the family, waiting for her husband and her son to come back home from work. Lao Hu, Grandma Li's husband, inherited the family business of fishing at an early age. He was proud of his career and the fact that he 'managed to build up a big house and to send his son to the university by the money he had earned from years of hard work on the Qiantang River' [Research log 111: Group interview with Hu's family, conducted on 17th November, 2014]. The old couple's son Xiao Hu, aged 38, received a bachelor's degree in pharmacology. He was employed by a company in Hunan for 5 years after graduation before moving back home. At the time the interview was conducted, he was working for a pharmaceutical company in the City of Hangzhou as an engineer, from which he received a 'rewarding salary' [Research log 111: Group interview with Hu's family, conducted on 17th November, 2014]. Not wanting to marry, Xiao Hu chose to live with his parents so as to cut down the living expenses. Grandma Li's household represents a typical nuclear family in the locality enjoying

²⁵⁵ Xuefeng He 贺雪峰, "Gongsi guannian yu Zhongguo nongmin de shuangceng rentong – shi lun Zhongguo chuantong shehui nongmin de xingdong luoji 公私观念与中国农民的双层认同——试论中国传统社会农民的行动逻辑," *Tianjin shehui kexue* 天津社会科学 1 (2006): 56-60. Xuefeng He 贺雪峰, "Nongmin xingdong luoji yu xiangcun zhili de quyu chayi 农民行动逻辑与乡村治理的区域差异," *Kaifang shidai* 开放时代 1 (2007): 105-21. Rong Ma 马戎, "Chaxu geju: Zhongguo chuantong shehui jiegou he Zhongguoren xingwei de jiedu 差序格局: 中国传统社会结构和中国人行为的解读," *Beijing daxue xuebao* 北京大学学报 2 (2007): 131-42. Philip C Huang, "The Modern Chinese Family: In Light of Economic and Legal History," *Modern China* 37, no. 5 (2011): 459-97.

²⁵⁶ Fei, *Jiangcun jingji*.

an affluent and harmonious life. Each member contributed his or her part to the family and collaboratively kept the household spinning. However, the definition of the core interest within the household was not that consistent among its members. During the pro-ecological mobilisation against the Nanyang Industrial Park from 2002 to 2005, the family experienced a ‘crisis’ as a result of the conflicted opinions between the two generations. This observation imposes a challenge to the prevailing assumption about the nuclear family as the inner circle of individual resident’s social relations and the fundamental unit of interest in traditional rural Chinese society.²⁵⁷

When being asked about their opinions on the environmental challenges in the locality, Lao Hu and Xiao Hu demonstrated sharply contrasting attitudes. Lao Hu was an enthusiastic green activist and a core member of the fishermen’s association in the village. He detested the polluting factories in the nearby industrial park, which, as he believed, ‘destroyed the neighbourhood and deprived the villagers of their livelihoods’ [Research log 111: Group interview with Hu’s family, conducted on 17th November, 2014]. Contrary to him, Xiao Hu viewed the environmental problems with a sense of determinism. He reckoned pollution as ‘an unavoidable side-effect of development’ and ‘a bill that the villagers had to pay for the economic prosperity’ [Research log 111: Group interview with Hu’s family, conducted on 17th November, 2014]. Despite his father being a keen activist, Xiao Hu criticised the lack of mobilising power of the local grassroots pro-ecological forces, doubting what ‘a group of powerless ordinary villagers could achieve’ [Research log 111: Group interview with Hu’s family, conducted on 17th November, 2014]. Noticing the patently obvious displeasure of Lao Hu, I put an end to the conversation to avoid embarrassment and tension. In my returning visit another morning, Grandma Li recalled the conflict in the family when Lao Hu insisted on participating in the protest against the industrial park in 2002.

²⁵⁷ Yunxiang Yan 阎云翔, “Jiating zhengzhi zhong de jinqian yu daoyi: Beifang nongcun fenjia moshi de renleixue fenxi 家庭政治中的金钱与道义: 北方农村分家模式的人类学分析,” *Shehuixue yanjiu* 社会学研究 6 (1998): 76-86. Shanhua Yang 杨善华, “Gaige yilai Zhongguo nongcun jiating sanshinian – yige shehuixue de shijiao 改革以来中国农村家庭三十年——一个社会学的视角,” *Jiangsu shehui kexue* 江苏社会科学 2 (2009): 72-77. Tongxue Tan 谭同学, “Cong lunli benwei maixiang hexin jiating benwei – Lun dangdai Zhongguo xiangcun shehui jiegou de wenhua tezheng 从伦理本位迈向核心家庭本位——论当代中国乡村社会结构的文化特征,” *Sixiang zhanxian* 思想战线 1 (2013): 98-102. William R. Jankowiak and Robert L. Moore, *Family Life in China* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

At the time when Dongying called on her neighbours to mobilise against the polluting industries, Lao Hu was among the first few villagers that agreed to support these efforts. In fact, the pro-ecological initiative was by and large originated from a group of fishermen in Jiangbin, who sensed the adverse impact of the sewage on the water body of the Qiantang River. Lao Hu's decision of participation was for the sake of the nuclear family in the first place, since the pollution had threatened the livelihood of the household. Before the establishment of the industrial park, Lao Hu and Grandma Li could find a huge number of eel larvae in the Qiantang River every spring. The couple could earn more than 5,000 *yuan* each year from the business of eel larvae catching, which constituted a considerable part of the family income. However, the eels were on the verge of extinction in the part of the Qiantang River near Jiangbin Village, as a result of the exacerbated water quality. Worse still, the other species of fish, including the wild bighead carp and the wild Crucian carp Lao Hu used to harvest in the specific seasons, became more and more difficult to catch in the lower reach of the river. Lao Hu worried about the future of his business. Approaching his 60s, he could not abandon the fishing business and find a job as a worker on the assembly line like many of his neighbours did. All he wanted at that time was 'to carry on fishing for ten more years and to save as much as possible for his son's marriage and for his own life after retirement' [Research log 111: Group interview with Hu's family, conducted on 17th November, 2014]. At the same time, Lao Hu felt that he would have betrayed the family tradition if he had taken the compensation for pollution from the businesses and remained silent. He did not want to be forced to give up the lifestyle as a fisherman. The multiple concerns out of the family interest made Lao Hu a resolute opponent to the polluting chemical industries.

In contrast to Lao Hu's enthusiasm to the pro-ecological mobilisation, Xiao Hu was extremely reluctant to respond positively to the local green activism. Being frustrated and suspicious, he denied the prospect of terminating pollution through grassroots open actions in the first place, citing the insurmountable gap of power between the rich entrepreneurs and the ordinary villagers as a primary reason. Xiao Hu tried to persuade his father to stay away from the campaign, for fear that Lao Hu's presence in the protest might ruin the family's relations with the village cadres and the factory owners. He worried about the safety of his father too, as 'any conflict with the people

in power would place the nuclear family in a very difficult situation to live a normal life in the village’ [Research log 111: Group interview with Hu’s family, conducted on 17th November, 2014]. Xiao Hu also rebutted his father’s point on the carcinogenic pollutants that threatened the health of the family members. As Grandma Li recalled, Lao Hu and Xiao Hu debated fiercely over this topic at the time when Lao Hu’s younger brother died of oesophageal cancer in 2002 at the age of 48, after an extremely painful bedridden time of 1 year and 4 months. Xiao Hu tried to pacify Lao Hu by the knowledge he got from the university. He explained to his father the multiple causes of cancer and that the exposure to the pollutants would not cause the diseases instantly. Xiao Hu persuaded Lao Hu to stay away from the other green activists in the village, as taking part in the movement would increase the blood pressure of the father who suffered from hypertension for years. ‘If the opponents were too tough to fight against, we could at least avoid them (re bu qi, duo de qi 惹不起，躲得起).’ [Research log 111: Group interview with Hu’s family, conducted on 17th November, 2014] The frequently mentioned words reflected Xiao Hu’s attitude towards the polluting industries. The confident young lad promised his parents to relocate the family to the urban area of the Xiaoshan District as soon as he saved enough money, where the old couple could enjoy a relaxed life and did not need to work on the river any longer. As a consequence, Xiao Hu found it unnecessary to join the fight against the polluting industries in Jiangbin.

The father and the son could not persuade each other over during the fight against polluting industries in the village. Each time, their conversation on this issue ended up in a quarrel almost inevitably. In the eyes of Grandma Li, Xiao Hu had gradually taken over the role as the decision-maker in the nuclear family after returning home in 2001. He became the breadwinner of the household as of the old couple’s fishing business no longer thrived. Lao Hu and Grandma Li trusted ‘the only university student at home’, who ‘outwit the older generation in every aspect, thanks to the education and the experience that broadened his sights’ [Research log 111: Group interview with Hu’s family, conducted on 17th November, 2014]. They believed that what Xiao Hu did and recommended would doubtlessly be good for the nuclear family. However, Lao Hu refused to compromise with his son on this occasion. He insisted on going to the frontline of the collective actions against the industrial park. This placed Xiao Hu in a difficult situation.

Being unable to keep the old man away from the movement, Xiao Hu decided to accompany Lao Hu whenever he had time. He wanted to make sure that his father was not exposed to the risks of confrontation or any possible challenges to his physical health. Although Xiao Hu still remained uninterested in the pro-ecological claims of the grassroots green activists, he felt it difficult to refuse the request from his father and the neighbours to lend them a hand. In the mobilisation, Xiao Hu offered technical support to the activists, helping with the water sample test and arranging local people's health checks. This won him a very good reputation as 'the son fighting together with the father in a same trench' (shangzhen fuzi bing 上阵父子兵) [Research log 111: Group interview with Hu's family, conducted on 17th November, 2014]. Lao Hu was so proud of the contribution that he and his son made to the pro-ecological mobilisation in the village, since this added credit, or 'face' (mianzi 面子), to the family. Xiao Hu continuously questioned the influence of the collective action and the extent to which the family would benefit from it. The divergence in defining the family interest between the father and the son was clearly reflected in their stance on the anti-pollution campaign. It was only when they entered the open realm as a nuclear family that Xiao Hu cooperated with his father, which, as commented by Xiao Hu in a mocking tone, was but to preserve the 'face' of the old man in the household.

In the case study above, both the father and son based their attitudes and strategies on the core interest of the family. However, it is noteworthy that environmental pollution triggered by industrialisation, as a brand new issue in the social life of rural residents in China, enriched and diversified the connotation of the core interest within nuclear families, which was traditionally interpreted as earthbound livelihoods and reproduction by Fei Xiaotong.²⁵⁸ The diversification of core interest in the contemporary context of China resulted in different mind-sets and actions among family members. Unlike Fei Xiaotong's description about the typical rural household, in which each member acts in collaboration for the same target of family interest,²⁵⁹ it is common to see rural families accommodate conflicting attitudes and actions in the present. This case exemplifies how industrialisation is digested individually and

²⁵⁸ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 61.

²⁵⁹ Fei, *Jiangcun jingji*.

differently among the rural residents and how the new issues in the villagers' social life introduced by industrialisation influence the traditional organisations of family and the pattern of social association in rural China.

5.2.2 Weiken Village

Unlike the scenario about the divergence between generations in Lao Hu's nuclear family, the following narrative gives an account of a semi-nuclear family living on the subsidies from Fanchang Group, an industrial giant located in Weiken Village. The way this family defined its core interest is rooted in its dependence to the industry. To secure their interest, the family members had to take a supportive stance and adopt cooperative strategies to the business when disputes between the company and the villagers broke out. The case study demonstrates much diversified interest orientations among nuclear families in the contemporary rural communities bathing in the tide of industrialisation. It no longer resembles the homogeneously defined family interest featuring reproduction and means of agricultural production back in the time when Fei Xiaotong set foot in the Kaixiangong Village. More often than not, the conflict of the household-specified interest lacks a middle ground, on the basis of which compromise may be reached. The diversified family interest has also made it more difficult for the local institutions to intermediate in the conflict, since families seeking different interest usually share little mutual understanding. This phenomenon foreshadows the revolutionary change of the concentric circular pattern of social association and sheds light on the family-specified digestion of industrialisation.

Zhao Yongyao, referred to as Lao Zhao in the following narrative, was the head of the 2nd villagers' group in Weiken Village. Aged 63, he retired from the Fanchang Group three years ago before taking up a new job as a vegetable vendor. Lao Zhao spent the morning transporting vegetables from the agricultural products wholesale centre 17 kilometres away from Weiken Village and selling them at his stall in the heart of the town. In the afternoon, he usually worked on the family plots. Lao Zhao's wife, Xinghua, worked part-time in a nearby rapeseed oil mill. They raised a son, Xiao Zhao, who suffered from impaired vision and intellectual disability due to a serious illness during childhood. Lao Zhao and Xinghua arranged a marriage for Xiao Zhao in 2008 when he was 29 years old. The newly married couple lived with Lao Zhao and

Xinghua in a two-storey house, making a stem family²⁶⁰ of four members. Being the very first storeyed building in the villagers group built in 1993, the house indicated the family's economic strength in the neighbourhood. However, their prominence began to fade in the midst of the newly constructed buildings with fancy exteriors since the beginning of the new millennium.

The family's finance depended heavily on the Fangchang Group nearby. To maintain dedication to the enterprise has long become the old couple's strategy to secure their income. Lao Zhao and Xinghua were among the first villagers that were employed by Fangchang Group in the early 1990s. At the time when the group was newly privatised and embraced the first wave of rapid expansion, the couple joined it without hesitation. At the beginning, Lao Zhao was trained as a forklift operator. Later, he transferred to the textile finishing workshop and was appointed as the person in charge of the workshop in 1997. Xinghua joined the batch charging workshop and worked there till 2001, when she had to quit because of rheumatic arthritis, which she suspected was caused by the extremely humid working environment. To commend the couple on their devotion to the company, Agen, the owner of Fangchang Group, rewarded Lao Zhao with the status of a retired employee in 2005. This means that Lao Zhao could get the pension from the company on a monthly basis and a series of benefits including healthcare insurance fully sponsored by the company. This status was usually intended for the middle or higher level employees from the board of managers or from the research and development team. Once the decision was announced, a lot of local residents who also worked for the company for years questioned its fairness. This led the employees to rethink the welfare system of the company and aroused extensive grievances.

The pension awarded to Lao Zhao was only one trigger for the tension between the stem family and the neighbours. What sparked the real conflict was the expansion scheme of Fangchang Group. In the summer of 2005, Agen initiated the plan to enlarge the scale of the company's old factory. Situated in the middle of the village

²⁶⁰ In this case, the stem family is regarded as a quasi-nuclear family. The old couple's daughter-in-law is an orphan. After marrying into the family, she did not stay in touch with her relatives anymore. In this sense, the marriage did not bring any further affinitive relations to the nuclear family.

surrounded by the five villagers groups of Weiken, the company had to ‘borrow’ lands from the village community, which were the family plots of the residents nearby and were originally intended for farming purposes. Instead of talking with the villagers, the company spoke directly to the township government and got its support for using the land. The villagers were only informed of the decision and offered a one-off compensation of 12,000 *yuan* per *mu* for the land acquisition. The job to distribute the compensation and collect signatures for approval from the villagers fell on the shoulder of Lao Zhao, the head of the villagers’ group.

Lao Zhao’s attempt to negotiate between the company and the local people was not successful. On the contrary, he fuelled the discontent of his neighbours each time he stepped into their yard. People unanimously criticised Lao Zhao for being ‘the broker’ (*xianggong* 相公²⁶¹) and ‘the accomplice’ (*goutuizi* 狗腿子) of the company, quoting Lao Zhao’s pension as the evidence of the collusion [Research log 55: Interview with Lao Jin, conducted on 3rd August, 2014; Research log 56: Interview with Shuigen, conducted on 3rd August, 2014]. Lao Zhao felt extremely frustrated by the criticism and curse he received from his neighbours. He fully understood that the compensation was far from enough to cover the loss of the land-deprived villagers. However, he did not dare to argue with the company and speak up for the local people. After all, ‘there were four mouths to feed in the family and the pension was by then the only source of family income and the money to save lives (*jiuming qian* 救命钱)’ [Research log 54: Interview with Lao Zhao, conducted on 3rd August, 2014]. Lao Zhao prioritised the dependence on the company as the core interest of his stem family. This placed him in a difficult position and prevented him from keeping in the same camp with his neighbours.

As for other nuclear families in Weiken Village, their expression of interest in the event of land acquisition remained highly diversified as well. The families living on agricultural production remained to be the staunchest opposing party to the project. They urged the company to buy them commercial pension insurance to help them sustain when their access to the land was deprived [Research log 32: Interview with Grandpa Kang, conducted on 10th July, 2014; Research log 34: Interview with Xiao kang, conducted on 11th July, 2014]. This proposal

²⁶¹ Meaning broker (*qianke* 掮客) In Xiaoshan dialect

was objected by nuclear families with members working in Fanchang Group. They condemned the proposal of exchanging land for insurance as being ‘too greedy’ and ‘too unrealistic’ [Research log 40: Interview with huasha, conducted on 17th July, 2014]. Drawing on Lao Zhao’s precedent, they asked for an improvement of employees’ welfare and offered to give up their family plots on the premise that the company provided them with a similar pension scheme. The split definition of core family interest divided the nuclear families into two camps and set the stage for different forms of resistance in the locality.

Although Fei Xiaotong also noticed the incompatibility of interest among nuclear families in rural China, he asserted that the divergence was based on a homogenous concern and could thus be moderated through localised mechanisms.²⁶² In comparison to the traditional villages back in the 1930s, rural communities in contemporary China observe a series of newly emerged challenges directly or indirectly linked to industrialisation, which have greatly complicated the interest orientations of nuclear families. Such diversification of interest orientations among nuclear families, as reflected in the portrait of Lao Zhao and his neighbours, serves as a basis of the individualised approaches to internalise industrialisation, hence an evidence for the individually specified manifestation of ‘digestion’. It is noteworthy that the diversified interest results in the absence of a common ground for mutual understanding. This has allowed little room for social networks, be them the traditional organisations in the village or the administrative channels, to mediate and appease the conflict. From this perspective, it is not difficult to understand Lao Zhao’s dilemma of stance taking and the failure to fulfil his role as the head of the villagers’ group in the local community.

5.3 Functional groups: The middle layers

Further to the emphasis on the nuclear family as the inner circle of each villager’s social association, Fei Xiaotong points out in the book *From the Soil* that rural residents are situated in a larger social network, where a relative concept of ‘family’

²⁶² Fei, *Jiangcun jingji*, 132.

(jia 家) plays a pivotal role.²⁶³ Rural residents tell the ‘outsiders’ (wairen 外人) apart from their ‘own people in the family’ (zijiaren 自家人). In the traditional rural society where Fei Xiaotong set foot, the notion of family can be as big as a whole clan or as small as a branch or even a nuclear family. By relatively differentiating the closeness between people in the kinship-based social system, villagers wove the middle layers of their own social networks, the pattern of which resembles ‘the ripples formed from a stone thrown into a lake’.²⁶⁴

Nevertheless, my observations in the two industrialised villages suggest that the tide of industrialisation and the associated developments in rural economy and society have reshaped the fashion of social organisation in rural communities. Not only does industrialisation dilute the significance of kinship in the organisation of rural society, it also introduces a set of new logic that redefines the relationships among the local people. As will be shown in the following two ethnographies, villagers, instead of sticking with the kinship networks, turn to functional groups to address their needs for social interaction. The functional groups, in turn, develop functions and assume responsibilities that originally belong to kinship-based organisations. As will be demonstrated in the following narratives, the tide of industrialisation that surges Chinese villages significantly complexifies the social relations in the localities. It creates multiple identities for each individual, which explains the interference of rural residents’ social association of a concentric circular type, as Fei Xiaotong recored from his observations on rural China in the pre-communist era. These overlapping functional groups restore the structure of the middle layers in each villager’s social networks. The change exemplifies a spontaneous digestion of industrialisation in the industrialised villages.

5.3.1 Jiangbin Village

The following description records a local family’s struggle after the father and the son were diagnosed with gastric cancer in succession. The disease not only took lives

²⁶³ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 62.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

away, but also threw the family into a deep financial and psychological crisis. Situated in multiple social circles, the family established connections with not only relatives, but also the local religious groups, professional associations, and other patient families. This has enlarged the family's *guanxi* from a pre-supposed kinship-based network in Fei Xiaotong's sense. Through analysing the family's endeavour of fundraising, healthcare seeking, and compensation seeking, this section unveils the functional social ties of a typical rural household in this region and how they are structured to form the household's social realm in the local community. The establishment of the functional groups in the rural society, as revealed by this case, is inspired by industrialisation and the associated new issues in the local everyday life. It further examines the family's strategy of applying these social links to fulfil different purposes. The observations suggest that the kinship-based network that sustains the differential mode of association is gradually substituted by many functional groups. The new pattern of association based on the social ties in the functional groups not only determines the mode of resource distribution, but also influences rural resident's information acquisition and actions in their daily life.

Haifeng, a young carpenter born and raised in Jiangbin Village, was diagnosed with stage III gastric cancer in 2013 at an early age of 27. The disease took the young life away in the spring of the following year, rendering the family distraught with great sorrow. Haifeng was the second cancer patient in the family. 11 months before his diagnosis, his father had died of the same disease. The successive catastrophic blows have almost ruined the family. After Haifeng's death, his wife went back to her parents' and took their son with her. Haifeng's mother, a half-blind lady aged 50, remained to live in the old house of the family in the southeast corner of the village. She was accompanied by Yufang, her husband's younger sister. Referred to as Xiaogu (小姑)²⁶⁵ in the following narrative, Yufang has become the backbone of the family ever since Haifeng's father fell ill. She has never married in her life. To take better care of the patients and help the family out from the predicament, Xiaogu moved back into the old house in 2009, and has been living with her sister-in-law ever since.

²⁶⁵ That is what she is called by Haifeng and Haifeng's mother.

The high cost of cancer treatments has plunged the family into severe financial predicament. Although more than 65% of the medical fees have been reimbursed thanks to the new rural cooperative medical scheme, the portion at their own expense has still created a substantial burden to the family finance. Both Haifeng and his father worked as carpenters in a construction team. The father and the son managed to save more than RMB 300,000 *yuan* at the time when the construction services were in high demand in the locality, making the family one of the most affluent in the village. However, when the men became bedridden in close succession, the family spent out the savings almost instantly and became indebted ever since Haifeng's diagnosis. Working in a local supermarket as a cashier, Xiaogu remained the only source of income of the family. However, the salary was only enough to cover the everyday living costs for herself and her impaired sister-in-law.

Xiaogu kept a record of the family's finance in an account book ever since she came to help the family in the crisis. According to the notes, it cost the family more than RMB 200,000 *yuan* to save Haifeng's father, who received two years and a half's routine cancer treatments before passing away in pain in 2011 eventually. At the time when Haifeng obtained his cancer diagnosis, there was still a surplus in the family's saving account. Although Haifeng only struggled against the diagnosed disease for less a year, his medical expenditure was more enormous than that of his father. Instead of going to the state-run hospital, Haifeng received the latter half of his treatments from a local clinic famous for its Chinese herbal therapy. The expenditure was not covered in Haifeng's medical insurance. It was also at this point that the family's savings ran out. To raise money for the treatments, the family had to borrow money within and without the village.

The fundraising accurately reflected the family's social ties and how they were utilised at the point of crisis. In addition, the amount of the monetary contribution quantified the benefactor's closeness to the patient family. It echoes with Fei Xiaotong's attempt of using cash gifts to delineate the stratified closeness in Kaixiangong Village.²⁶⁶ The fashion of quantifying the social network by featuring

²⁶⁶ Fei, *Jiangcun jingji*.

the flow of gifts was followed by a number of ethnographers in the studies of rural Chinese society.²⁶⁷

Xiaogu carefully recorded every sum of money the family received. Although a large proportion was given to the family as donations, Xiaogu believed that it was ‘a debt of gratitude’ and ‘must be paid off at some point in the future anyway’ [Research log 83: Interview with Xiaogu, conducted on 23rd September, 2014]. The family managed to raise RMB 64,600 *yuan* for Haifeng, all of which had been put into paying for treatments for the young man. The money, together with the remaining savings of the household and the aids from Haifeng’s parents-in-law, ensured that Haifeng would ‘have the medicine to take till the very last day of his life’ [Research log 83: Interview with Xiaogu, conducted on 23rd September, 2014].

Xiaogu showed me her notebook. By the spring of 2014, the family received a total number of 177 sums of money, of which the amounts ranged from RMB 50 *yuan* to 2000 *yuan*. To raise as much money as possible, Xiaogu and Haifeng’s mother exhausted all the possible channels they could think of. In this sense, the notebook mapped out the family’s entire social network.

The donors and lenders came in a number of identifiable categories. First, the relatives were considered responsible for supporting a member from the clan with grave disease financially. However, Haifeng’s stem family did not belong to any big clans in the village. To raise fund for Haifeng, Xiaogu travelled to their old home on the upper stream of Qiantang River, 40 kilometres from Jiangbin Village, where most of their relatives lived. At the same time, the family benefited from the extended kinship networks through Haifeng’s marriage. Often regarded as a far less significant bond in the traditional rural society of China, the relationship built on affinity has blurred its boundary with kinship at the contemporary stage. A large proportion of Haifeng’s visitors were relatives from his wife’s side. They offered unreciprocated assistance to the patient family to fulfil their social responsibility similar to that of the relatives from Haifeng’s clan.

²⁶⁷ Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets*. Yan, *The Flow of Gifts*. Andrew B. Kipnis, “The Language of Gifts: Managing Guanxi in a North China Village,” *Modern China* 22, no. 3 (1996): 285-314.

Another important type of social connection that functioned in the fundraising was profession based. The co-workers of the father and the son in the same construction team appeared to be the most generous donors to the family. They came to see bedridden Haifeng in groups and left money to the family together. The profession-oriented networks also extended to the local people who once benefited from Haifeng and his father's services. Some of the former clients visited the patient and donate money out of goodwill.

The Buddhist community to which Haifeng's mother belonged and the cancer patients' informal association in Jiangbin Village represented the family's social ties with contemporary and local characteristics. A devout Buddhist, Haifeng's mother went to the Baima Temple in the village on a regular basis. She also joined a small group that practised Buddhist ceremonies at home every day. Sarcastically, the temple was privatised and was under operation for business purposes. The owner turned down Haifeng's mother's request of fundraising for the cancer patient. This infuriated the believers from the practice group who knew the situation of the family well. They volunteered to spread the information through their own channels within and without the religious community and managed to secure a fund for the family. At the same time, Xiaogu was actively engaging with other cancer patient families in Jiangbin Village. The relatively higher prevalence of the disease in the locality, coupled with the media coverage of the 'cancer village' in the 2000s, greatly enhanced the identification of the patient families as the most disadvantaged group and victims of the industries in the locality. Apart from jointly seeking media exposure and casting pressure on the polluting industries nearby, the families also formed a network of a reciprocal type, in which information and resources were shared. A similar experience of the disease deepened the patient family's sympathy to Haifeng and his father. Many families, despite their own tight household budget, chose to help Haifeng with an open hand. Xiaogu appreciated their donations very much and called them 'genuine support out of adversity' (huannan zhijiao 患难之交).

Lastly, the neighbours constituted an important source of the fundraising. The geographical intimacy improved the closeness of local families to a large extent. Neighbours not only offered financial aids to Haifeng's family but also volunteered to

help with the daily care of the patients and household chores. However, the intimacy is only kept in a small area of the neighbourhood. The proximity descended significantly when the geographical distance increased. The tragic news of two diagnosed cancer patients in a stem family did not even reach the 1st villagers' group, which was partitioned from the main section of Jiangbin Village by the hills and the motorway. My interviews with respondents from the 1st villagers' group confirmed this phenomenon, as most of them only heard the sufferings of Haifeng's family for the first time when I opened the thread.

Interestingly enough, apart from the donations of relatives and the contribution in bundles from the previous co-workers of Haifeng and his father, the amount of each sum of donation remained at a relatively uniformed level. People usually left RMB 100 *yuan* or 200 *yuan* when they visited the patient, regardless of their proximity to the patient family or their own financial conditions. As Xiaogu explained, the amount of money was fixed predominantly because of the local convention. Villagers did not even need to exchange views on what the appropriate amount of giving should be. Unlike the observations of Yan Yunxiang,²⁶⁸ which emphasises the correlation between the proximity and the value of gifts in the reciprocal society of rural China, this case resonates with more recent literature that treats gift giving as a ritual, a convention, and a homogenous formality.²⁶⁹ Although the amount of donation remained at a fixed level, the name in which the money was given differed from case to case. It differentiated the visitors with various level of closeness to Haifeng and to the family. Xiaogu usually promised to return the money to the distant relatives and not-so-proximate villagers. As for the close neighbours, Xiaogu often accepted their goodwill along with their additional offers of assistance more naturally. Even though gift-giving was conventionalised as a traditional reciprocal practice in the locality, the slight difference of the message associated to the gifts helped identify the structure of proximity where the patient family situated, as per this case indicates.

²⁶⁸ Yan, *The Flow of Gifts*

²⁶⁹ Qian Wang et al., "Chinese Cultural Values and Gift-giving Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 24, no. 4 (2007): 214-28.

The mode of social association demonstrated by the case of Haifeng exemplifies the individual centred and particularistic pattern of social relations. However, unlike what was observed by Fei in the traditional rural community, the social network of the family no longer bore the characteristics of a stratified structure of proximity that resembles the waves from a splash on the water.²⁷⁰ This phenomenon is rooted in the ever-complicated social roles of rural residents in the first place. At the contemporary stage, individual rural residents are more often than not interlinked through multiple social ties, centring on not only kinship but also employments, social establishments, and interest groups. It was not rare to identify donors who appeared to be Xiaogu's workmate, Haifeng's client, and the family's close neighbour simultaneously. The multiple identities of villagers resulted in overlapped social circles in the rural community. It is also worth noting that the diminishing kinship network in many modern villages of contemporary China serves as another reason for the disturbance of the circular differential mode of association. The absence of a clear-cut parameter, e.g. the closeness in the consanguinity, to quantify inter-personal proximity shakes the root of a regular structure of each individual's social network in the traditional rural society of China.

The observations from Jiangbin Village suggest an increasing significance of functional social circles in individual rural resident's realm of social activities. It corresponds to a pragmatic tendency in villagers' daily life. The functional groups add new elements to the social structure of rural society. In some particular cases, they even reshape the pattern of organisation and the structure of proximity traditionally defined by the kinship networks. As can be seen in the case of Jiangbin, the informal association of families with cancer patients best exemplifies the social interaction driven by pragmatic purposes. Xiaogu felt indebted for the material assistance and psychological support she received from the association, without which she 'would have not got through the difficult time' [Research log 83: Interview with Xiaogu, conducted on 23rd September, 2014]. The cancer patient families in the neighbourhood offered help ranging from voluntary patient care all the way to free rides when Haifeng needed to get health checks in Zhejiang Cancer Hospital, which is 25 kilometres away from the

²⁷⁰ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*.

village. In a sense, the families in the network were taking the responsibility that was normally shared by relatives. It is not difficult to understand the somehow inverted pattern of proximity, when functional groups replace kinship connections and constitute the closest circle in the social network of Haifeng and his stem family. This tendency inevitably interferes the concentric circular pattern of association, the prescriptive social structure in a kinship-dominated rural community proposed by Fei Xiaotong.

As for each individual in the rural society, the definition of proximity in his network has also changed over time. Influenced by the prevailing tendency of pragmatism in their daily life, villagers tend to invest more time and resources on functional connections rather than the kinship networks. Against this backdrop, the stratified structure of closeness defined and determined by the latter has lost much of its significance. Although Xiaogu thought of seeking help from the clan in the first place, she did not expect much from the distant relatives who resided miles away and with whom she seldom contacted. The proximity was reduced as a psychological expectation to a prescriptive social duty, which did not necessarily reflect the responsibilities shouldered by the relatives in the reality.

Noteworthy for this research, industrialisation and the associated health and environmental impacts set the stage for the changing social association in the rural community under review. The diagnosis of cancer, as a moment of crisis for the patients and their families, makes the point when individual villager reflects upon the whole realm of his or her social relations. As shown in the fund raising of Huifeng's family, not only did they take advantage of their social relations and exhaust the sources through family members' networks, they but also created new social connections by allying with other patient families. This is yet another evidence for the impact of industrialisation on rural society and its structure. Meanwhile, it exemplifies rural residents' adaption to the industrial transition, where the 'digestion' takes the form as an intentional expansion of social association out of each individual villager's pragmatic concern against the backdrop of industrialisation and the associated challenges.

5.3.2 *Weiken Village*

The following case study illustrates the pattern of social networks in a ‘man-made’ village. Unlike traditional rural communities in China with deep-rooted lineage connections, Weiken Village accommodates streamlined relations of a cooperative kind. Villagers’ group (cumin xiaozu 村民小组), formally known as production team (shengchandu 生产队) before the reform and as a basic form of settlement and cooperation in production, gradually develops the function that resembles an extended family against the backdrop of the blood relationship’s absence. Based on the narrative of a confrontation between Fanchang Group and the 4th villagers’ group in Weiken Village, this section examines where the social bonds among local households originate, why they are diminishing at the contemporary stage, and how they get reinforced in the event of an emergency. It argues that the tide of industrialisation incubates functional changes of communities in rural China by transforming the administrative organs into organisations of a semi-kinship kind. The functional changes, in turn, serve as evidence for how industrialisation and the restructured power relations are digested locally. In this case, the concept of responsibility and the code of mutual assistance in the neighbourhood are redefined. By doing so, villagers divide the burden in the community so as to make it more ‘digestable’ for each individual member.

As I explained in Chapter 2, Weiken Village only bears a history of 50 years. The fact that most villagers settled in this area in the early 70s as volunteers for the land reclamation project from the Qiantang River makes Weiken one of the numerous ‘man-made villages’ that emerged in the two major waves of rural construction in China since 1949. The 4th villagers’ group is among the 13 villagers’ groups of Weiken. It is located in the northwest corner of the village, bordering the workshops of the giant synthetic fibre manufacturer in the locality. The group consists of 14 households. It is the second smallest villagers’ group in the village.

It took me a few days to figure out that the fiercest confrontation between villagers and the polluting industry in the locality actually took place in this villagers’ group. Even now, many local people treated this history as a taboo, since they were ordered by the local government and the police department to ‘seal their mouth’ [Research log 47:

Interview with Uncle Fan, conducted on 21st July, 2014]. Nevertheless, Zhengguang, an energetic middle-aged man who led the mobilisation in 2009, welcomed me and shared his experience in the campaign against the industry. Now the owner of a workshop manufacturing machinery parts, Zhengguang seemed to have recovered from the years in prison. He described the experience as ‘a nightmare’, which he would not dare to repeat.

The tension between the members of the 4th villagers’ group and Fangchang Group gradually intensified after the company brought forward a plan to build a new road for forklifts. The construction work required a slight relocation of the factory wall eastward, which would occupy local people’ family plots. Fangchang Group did not manage to offer a satisfactory compensation plan to the villagers after rounds of negotiation. It was also through this prolonged process that the villagers became suspicious about the sincerity of the company in seeking for an agreement. After the spring festival in 2009, the company took action without notifying the households nearby. It tore down the walls, leaving bricks and concrete scattering in the land where the villagers’ vegetable grew. This infuriated the villagers, who later decided to ‘give a lesson’ to the company as a revenge.

Zhengguang’s house is located at the west end of the villagers’ group, adjacent to the factory wall. The family suffered from the biggest loss of land as a result of the scheme. The unnotified construction work ruined the cabbages in Zhengguang’s family plot. Feeling extremely pitiful for the plants, Zhengguang’s father went to the site and tried to rescue some remaining vegetable from the rubble. It was to his disappointment that nearly all the plants were destroyed. Worse still, he twisted his right leg severely on the construction site, which made him bedridden for a few days.

Zhengguang felt indignant over the company’s actions. Realising the fact that a number of other families also faced a loss of their crops and vegetables, Zhengguang decided to organise a protest so as to vent the grievance in the neighbourhood and to tell the public what an irresponsible company Fangchang Group was. The villagers’ group demonstrated great unity in supporting Zhengguang’s plan. The core members were the families whose land was influenced by the project. There were also neighbours who chose to support Zhengguang because of ‘the very intimate

relationships for years' [Research log 44: Interview with Grandpa Wang, conducted on 20th July, 2014], even though their rights to the contracted farmland was not affected. The fact that Zhengguang's father was injured and that Agen, the entrepreneur, did not even made a gesture to show his concern made many neighbours angry too. Years of neighbourhood solidarity had cultivated strong social ties in the community resembling that within a clan. Many followers of Zhengguang treated his father as the senior of their own households. They could not tolerate the arrogant attitude of the company owner, which they regarded as an insult.

Zhengguang's plan was simple. All he wanted was a chance to make the situation visible to the public, so as to win more bargain chips in the negotiation with the entrepreneur. The protest was backed up by a number of villagers in the group. On the day of action, Zhengguang parked the farm vehicle at the entrance of the company. The protest was scheduled at 8 o'clock in the morning precisely, as it was the time of shift changeing for the workers. Zhengguang and other villagers put up posters against the gate and the wall of the company, in which they showed evidence of their infringed rights with pictures and words. Zhengguang's father was asked to sit in the farm vehicle as a 'live evidence' for the loss of the villagers' group. Apart from repeatedly broadcasting the issue by loudspeakers, the villagers also randomly stopped workers from the factory and asked for their support to condemn the company owner. The protest caught the attention of the security guards almost instantly. Encouraged by the managers, the security team started to intervene, which soon escalated the protest into a physical confrontation. Zhengguang was on the front. He injured two guards and got wounded simultaneously.

Later, the police arrived at the scene. Zhengguang was captured and detained along with a few neighbours. The conflict was regarded as an incident that jeopardised public safety. Zhengguang was prosecuted for leading the protest and was sentenced 6 months' imprisonment. The other villagers involved got administrative punishments, ranging from penalty to detention. It was a devastating blow to Zhengguang's life and his family. The sentence appeared to be unequal in his eyes. He suspected there was collusion between the company and the local authority. However, the family was incapable of mobilising any further for Zhengguang. Being hopeless and helpless, they accepted the sentence as their fate.

The imprisonment of Zhengguang rendered the family into a difficult situation. Zhengguang's wife had to find a job to support the family. The busy farming season kept Zhengguang's parents spinning all the time. Zhengguang's 3-year-old son was left unattended at home all day long. Seeing the family's predicament, the neighbours in the villagers' group spontaneously raised fund to support. With the organisation of the villagers' group's head, all the 13 families agreed to donate RMB 600 *yuan* each to stipend Zhengguang's household. None of the families had objection to this plan, as they all regarded Zhengguang as the hero that fought for the collective interest of the community.

As a typical cohesive community, the 4th villagers' group demonstrated high level of unity when facing challenges to the collective interest. The mechanism through which the cost of mobilisation was distributed among the members, as reflected by the case of Zhengguang, demonstrates how the cohesion in a community is maintained and reinforced by the social connections. Unlike traditional lineage villages, the 4th villagers' group represents a typical 'man-made' rural community under the communist regime intended for cooperation in production. The cooperation in the land reclamation project from the Qiantang River in the early 1970s cultivated deep-rooted bonds among families in the same work bloc. It also laid foundation for a strong sense of belonging to the collective among the members. The geographical intimacy of the households in the integrally planned community further reinforced the inter-personal proximity in the locality. In the eyes of the first generation of migrants in Weiken Village who have now become the senior members and virtue heads of households, the collective memory of teamwork in the 1970s played a particularly significant role in shaping their social realm and mode of social association. In the interviews, many respondents regarded Zhengguang's father's injury as the trigger of the explosive confrontation. It was the social ties among 'the old buddies' and 'the comrades' that provoked a wide participation of Zhengguang's campaign, behind which the opinions of the senior members played a central role.

However, it is noteworthy that the collective memory based on the collaboration of the first generation of migrants was not sustainable. Although Zhengguang managed to mobilise most of the families in the villagers' group to support his protest, he could notice the divergence of attitudes within the households clearly [Research log 48: Interview with

Zhengguang, conducted on 21st July, 2014]. Some people were reluctant to get themselves involved in the mobilisation because of the risk. Although not having been extrovertly expressed, the different opinions could be felt each time when Zhengguang was paying home visits to his neighbours. The decaying role of collective memory in preserving cohesion of the community was particularly vulnerable in the village under industrial transition. In Weiken Village, a large proportion of younger people have abandoned the traditional means of livelihoods, i.e., agricultural production. This has undermined the spirit of collectivism in the community. The ever-diversified employments redefined the thinking pattern and the interest orientation of the new generations. This is an evidence of the challenge reflected in the digestion of industrialisation and a common problem many 'man-made' rural communities are facing in contemporary China.

Another intriguing phenomenon reflected in the case of Weiken Village features the functional evolution of the social ties among Zhengguang and his neighbours. The absence of lineage system in the locality created a semi-kinship role of the villagers' group. In the mobilisation, many villagers demonstrated deep concern when they heard that Zhengguang's father got injured because of the company's construction project. Zhengguang was touched by his neighbours who treated his father as one of their own. Likewise, after Zhengguang was sentenced the imprisonment, the neighbours in turn shouldered the duty of caring for his son, which would normally be a part of the responsibility shared within the clan. The functional evolution in the 'man-made' rural community, to a large extent, marked the practical and psychological demand of rural residents for an organisation resembling an extended family in their social life.

Returning to the comparison between my observations and Fei Xiaotong's theories on the social structures of China's rural communities, the equidistant relations among families demonstrated in the 4th villagers' group do not comply with Fei's assumption of the differential mode of association, where individual defines the proximity with each of his acquaintance case by case differently. The structure of interpersonal relations in the villagers' group is more similar to that of the western society, which is

described by Fei Xiaotong as an ‘organizational mode of association’.²⁷¹ The ‘man-made’ rural community in Weiken Village is equivalent to the ‘group with clear boundaries created by the people’. Villagers do not intentionally differentiate the proximity with members in the community. They only emphasise on the exclusiveness of the community, making it a closed circle of each member’s social networks. This phenomenon has its root in the wider political and economic context of China, the evidence of which can be traced from the history of rural development in the country.

5.4 Administrative village: The outer boundary

This section examines the changing role of administrative village in rural residents’ social life. Noteworthy enough for this study, the earlier works of Fei Xiaotong on rural Chinese society treat village as a basic unit for analysis. Fei reiterates the significance of village as ‘a boundary for the realm of rural resident’s social activities’²⁷² and the outer circle in the differential mode of association.²⁷³ This coincides with my observations from the field, where local people flag up the administrative village in their identity and in their everyday life.

However, when taking a closer look at the role of village in Fei’s empirical cases and under the contemporary socialist regime respectively, it is easy to spot that the ‘boundary’ is attached with different meanings in different circumstances. Back in the 1930s, rural residents’ social life was confined within villages because it was subject to a number of geographical and cultural conditions. In contrast, villagers nowadays emphasise the significance of administrative village as a part of their tactics to secure their access to resources and benefits. Against this backdrop, this section argues that the administrative village outlines the local structure of interest and resource distribution of current stage. The tide of industrialisation in the two researched villages reinforced the role of village in this regard, since a lot of benefits incurred by industrialisation, such as the compensation for land acquisition and pollution, are only

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid., 9.

²⁷³ Ibid., 66.

intended for and distributed within members of the village. The village membership becomes a standard for local residents to tactically differentiate ‘self’ from ‘others’. This observation resonates with Fei Xiaotong’s proposition about the relative closeness in the theory of differential mode of association.

5.4.1 Jiangbin Village

By presenting a record of Shen Guoshui’s failure to form an inter-village alliance in the mobilisation against the Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park, this section discusses the role of administrative village in rural residents’ social life. It argues that a village often outlines the boundary of villagers’ social networks. The observations in Jiangbin Village echo with Fei Xiaotong’s theory, in which a village is treated as the outer circle in the differential mode of association. This case study confirms on the psychological influence of an administrative village on its members, reflected in the villagers’ identity and loyalty. Such psychological boundary overlaps with the boundary of the interest structure in the rural society, where administrative village marks the entity in which material benefits are distributed. The new function of the administrative village as a unit for resource distribution is reinforced by the tide of industrialisation, since industrialisation significantly complicates the interest and the mechanism of its distribution. It can be viewed as a part of local people’s digestion of industrialisation when villagers coincidentally flagged up the importance of administrative village in the mobilisation against and compensation seeking from the nearby polluting industries. They are doing so to safeguard and maximise their own interest.

As will be discussed in the following narrative, Guoshui’s setback in fostering cooperation with villages nearby in the pro-ecological mobilisation was due to both the villagers’ mentality and their interest orientations. When it comes to the village-specified interest, people within the village tend to differentiate themselves from the outsiders. The exclusiveness of a village is a good evidence of the relatively defined proximity in the differential mode of association. This phenomenon resonates with Fei Xaitong’s famous proposition that treats the differential mode of association as a structure for resource distribution.

Guoshui is a 49-year old fisherman from Jiangbin Village. He lives with his wife and son in a newly-refurbished 3-storey house with a big yard. Guoshui's wife, Yongjuan, works part-time in a local umbrella factory. For the rest of the time, the energetic woman busies herself with chores ranging from cleaning, cooking, taking care of the family plot, all the way to making preserved vegetables (gancai 干菜) to subsidise the family. The couple spent their savings on refurbishing their house in 2011. Now, they are saving towards the next goal, i.e., the marriage of their 23-year old son who just graduated from college.

Yongjuan was born and bred in Jiangbin Village. She married locally in the village whereas her elder sister married to Qiming, a mason from the neighbouring Yongli Village. The two sisters meet each other quite frequently, making the two nuclear families closely connected. It was because of this connection that Guoshui, an enthusiastic green activist in Jiangbin Village, decided to mobilise across the village boundary and to seek collaboration from Yongli Village that was exposed under the threat of pollution from the Nanyang Chemical Industrial Park too.

Guoshui played the role as a core member and leader in the anti-pollution campaign from 2002 to 2005. Apart from actively mobilising for the support and participation within Jiangbin Village, Guoshui also found it necessary to call for assistance from a wider range. Since the industrial park extends several miles along the bank of Qiantang River, bordering Yongli Village to the north, Guoshui reckoned the villagers in Yongli as potential partners to the green activists in Jiangbin. Although Yongli Village is only 2 kilometres away from Jiangbin, Guoshui rarely set foot on it before. His sister-in-law who frequently visited him became his only source of information to the close but strange neighbour.

The attempts to involve villagers from Yongli in the pro-ecological campaign against the industrial park were more difficult than Guoshui had expected. The grievance about pollution among residents in Yongli was far less than that of Jiangbin. Even though the villagers in Yongli were also breathing in the waste gas and living with water pollution in the local canals and the Qiantang River, they did not ever think of the option to protest and to fight for their environmental rights. Against this backdrop,

Guoshui decided to start with educating the villagers so as to make them aware of the devastating impact of pollution in the neighbourhood.

As a grassroots campaign, the environmental education was kept private by paying home visits to ordinary villagers through the introduction of acquaintances. In most cases, it was Qiming that brought Guoshui and the villagers in Yongli together. The visits were often ‘awkwardly embarrassing’, as Guoshui recalled, since ‘no one would welcome a stranger to spread the ominous (bu jili 不吉利) words at home.’ [Research log

147: Interview with Guoshui, conducted on 21st November, 2014] Guoshui reluctantly accepted the situation that most villagers in Yongli remained indifferent to the polluting industries in the neighbourhood. He used to think that the education might evoke public concern and help recruit a few supporters for the anti-pollution campaign in Jiangbin. After a few unsuccessful attempts, Guoshui lowered his expectation time and again.

Interestingly, Guoshui’s proposal to bring in partners from Yongli Village did not get much response and support from the green activists within Jiangbin Village either. The somewhat romantic plan of uniting the pro-ecological forces in the neighbouring villages was far from being realistic in their eyes. For most of the participants in the mobilisation, it would be more practicable to address the issue in and for their own village. Instead of seeking support from a wider range, villagers in Jiangbin confined their mobilisation against the chemical industrial park in the village boundary. This in turn made Jiangbin the only beneficiary of the compensation from the polluting industries.

Guoshui’s experience resonates with the scholarly debate around the question of how a village contours the realm of a rural resident’s social life. A number of scholars have discussed the possibility, motives, and prospects for Chinese rural residents to establish social ties beyond their residing villages, inspired by the expanding market,²⁷⁴ the increasing economic demands,²⁷⁵ and the changing political

²⁷⁴ G. William Skinner, “Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China, Part I,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 24, no. 1 (1964): 3-43. G. William Skinner. “Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China Part II,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 24, no. 2 (1965): 195-228. G. William Skinner. “Marketing and Social Structure in rural China, Part III,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 24, no. 3 (1965): 363-99. G.

landscape.²⁷⁶ Even Fei Xiaotong, a loyal advocate of village studies, chose to shift from the micro level studies on villages to a wider perspective at the township level so as to ‘avoid the restrictions of “micro sociology” in the dimensions of space, time, and culture’.²⁷⁷ Despite the widely discussed patterns of rural residents’ social network and activities that extend beyond the village boundaries, the existing literature seldom touches the mentality of individual villagers in this process. Although rural residents in contemporary China receive much external impetus to enlarge the domain of their social relations and activities, my observations in both Jiangbin and Weiken suggest that the acquaintance circles within the village remain to be their comfort zone in the social life. As indicated by Guoshui’s attempts, it required courage for individual villagers to get out of the comfort zone so as to purposefully establish new networks. As for the villagers in Yongli, the refusal to join Guoshui for the anti-pollution mobilisation was by and large subject to their psychological reluctance to the request for interaction from without the village, which was incompatible with the existing social networks in the neighbourhood. In the meantime, villagers in Yongli also found it awkward and embarrassing to welcome a stranger to their home selling ideas that sound threatening and ominous. It challenged the traditional mode of social interaction inside the villagers’ comfort zone that they were familiar with. Even if the expansion of social domain is almost an irresistible trend for rural residents in contemporary China, the local people still tend to maintain a psychological boundary that overlaps with the boundary of administrative villages, within which the traditional rule and fashion of social interaction are endorsed and observed. This sets a psychological foundation for the significance of village as an outer circle in the mode of association in rural Chinese society.

Apart from being a psychological entity, administrative village in contemporary China also functions as a unit in the structure of resources allocation and distribution. It marks a closed circle, in which benefits are exclusively intended for and enjoyed by the members. The role of village in resources distribution enhances the identification

William Skinner, “Rural Marketing in China: Repression and Revival,” *The China Quarterly* 103 (1985): 393-413.

²⁷⁵ Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*: 283-88.

²⁷⁶ Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*.

²⁷⁷ Fei, *Jiangcun jingji*, 340-41.

of its members and reinforces the psychological boundary between villagers and the outsiders. Such a role is in the first place embedded in the political regime and the administrative settings of the country. Administrative villages act as an agency to link rural residents to organisations of the government at the grassroots level. Like what was observed in Jiangbin Village during its pro-ecological campaign against the industrial park, it was the village committee that officially represented the villagers to claim the stipend from the township government and the compensation from the polluting industries. The stipend for land acquisition became a 'land share' that went to the village committee's account, while the compensation for pollution was paid to the village in the name of 'a contribution to the local infrastructure development' (gongjian fei 共建费). Both the stipend and the compensation were then distributed on a per capita basis among residents with household registrations of the village. The seemingly fair and just practice did not meet the spirit and the standard of social equality in a larger scale, since it neglected the fact that the adverse environmental and health impact of pollution was not confined in the geographical coverage of Jiangbin Village. Jiangbin was the only village that received the compensation since it was the only village in the region that protested collectively in the open realm. By differentiating Jiangbin from other villages nearby where less grievance emerged, the government-business alliance managed to moderate the tension at a lower cost. Many villagers in Jiangbin were satisfied with the village-specified benefits. Some even felt lucky for being a member of the infamous cancer village [Research log 77: Interview with Grandpa Shan, conducted on 21st September, 2014; Research log 78: Interview with Lao Qin, conducted on 21st September, 2014]. In the differential mode of association in rural China, the relative gains within the social circle are often valued by villagers as tags of identity in a given social group. As revealed by this case, such mentality of the local people was utilised by the government and businesses to foster compliance. The case study also exemplifies how the material significance of administrative villages corroborates the existence of the psychological boundary among residents from different villages.

Even though the expanding size of villages and the increasing density of population in the economically advanced regions of China have blurred the geographical village boundaries, the identity and the structure of resource distribution still keep members from different villages apart. The role of village as an outer circle in the differential

mode of association, as suggested by Fei Xiaotong, still shapes rural residents' mentality and social behaviour at present. Back to the analysis of Guoshui's failure in representing the pro-ecological forces in Jiangbin Village to foster an alliance with residents in Yongli, the psychological and material processes to identify proximity endorsed by the villagers remained a big hurdle to realise the plan. On one hand, many villagers in Jiangbin did not want to bring in extra stakeholders, which would otherwise dilute the resources and benefits to be shared within the village. On the other, Guoshui entered Yongli Village as an outsider and a challenger to the existing networks and patterns of social interaction in the locality. It was difficult for him to win trust from the local households, even though he was introduced by his relatives. The fact that the compensation was allocated in a village-specified manner and that Guoshui could not promise any material rewards for participation further discouraged villagers in Yongli from joining the anti-pollution campaign and lending a hand to their neighbours. According to Guoshui, all the families he visited for help put him off with a vague answer. The coincidence represented a social choice based on rural resident's judgement of proximity in the differential mode of association. Apparently, Guoshui was reckoned as an outsider from the villagers' circle. The phenomenon echoes with and explains a number of case studies on environmental mobilisation in rural China, in which the sphere of participation and the influence are confined within the village boundary.

5.4.2 Weiken Village

The following narrative gives account of a migrant worker and his families who resided in Weiken Village for years. It focuses on the unbalanced distribution of environmental burdens between the migrant workers and the local residents, and how the injustice is perceived by both parties. The case study serves as an example to demonstrate the encapsulating nature of rural communities in China. According to the findings from Weiken Village, local residents were differentiated from the migrant workers. This was reflected by the discriminative accesses to healthcare service and other social welfare in the first place. Apart from the policies, local people also differentiated themselves from the non-members of the village by excluding the tenants from approaching the environmental rights they deserved. The exclusiveness of the village was best exemplified by the villagers' secret actions when they were

claiming for the compensation from the polluting industry, regardless of the fact that migrant workers living in the village were equally victims of the hazardous pollutants from the factory. This narrative leads to the discussion about the role of administrative village as an established social circle in the differential mode of association in rural China against the backdrop of industrialisation. It resonates with Fei Xiaotong's argument that villagers tend to uphold an identical identity when it comes to the struggle for collective interest of the community and that villages, as an important circle in the pattern of social association, represent the structure of resources distribution in the rural society.²⁷⁸

Guoqiang and Fengxian came to Weiken Village in 2011. Originally from a small town in Chongqing Municipal City some 2,000 kilometres away, the couple had never imagined that they would settle in the suburb of Hangzhou in their life. Guoqiang was employed in Fanchang Group as a worker in the moulding workshop, while Fengxian remained home and took care of the household chores. The couple brought their 4-year-old daughter with them. They were expecting their second baby when I for the first time stepped into the shack they rented. Although the family lived solely on Guoqiang's wage and had a tight budget, the couple were generally happy with life in Weiken, which they reckoned as being 'far better than remaining in the old home' where they 'saw little future' [Research log 26: Interview with Guoqiang and Fengxian, conducted on 8th July, 2014].

Guoqiang and Fengxian were not alone. The giant synthetic fibre manufacturing company employed more than 2,000 workers, of which 70% migrated from other provinces. The migrant workers lodged in the villages near their factory. In the four villagers' groups of Weiken Village alone lived more than 60 migrant families. The population of migrants even exceeded the local residents in this area. Most of the local families built up rows of shacks to accommodate the tenants. As introduced in Chapter 3, the rent accounted for a significant proportion of the local families' revenue. The concrete and brick structured shacks are usually 10 square metres in size and 2 metres in height, covered with flat roofs made of asbestos tiles. The rent ranges

²⁷⁸ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*.

from RMB 150 *yuan* to 250 *yuan* depending on the size and condition. The poorly refurbished shacks met the migrant workers' basic need for living. The only fact Fengxian complained about it was the sultry summer days, when the shack became inhabitable because of the extreme heat and the poor ventilation.

Despite the fact that migrant workers lived under the same roof with the local people in Weiken Village, their interaction with the villagers remained at a surprisingly low level. Seldom did they develop intimate relationship with local residents. For some of the migrant workers, it was because of the local dialect that created a natural barrier for mutual understanding. More tenants, in comparison, believed that the barrier would not have been lifted easily even if they had been able to understand each other, since the villagers in Weiken treated the migrant workers in a discriminatory way. According to my respondents among the migrant workers living in the locality, such discrimination was reflected in local people's sense of superiority and arrogance in the everyday communication. Most of the migrant workers said that the only occasion their landlords spoke to them was the time when the rent was due each month [Research log 28: Interview with Xiao Guizhou, conducted on 9th July, 2014]. By looking into the situation further, it was not difficult to understand that the attitude was mainly shaped by the different social and economic statuses of both parties. A series of discriminative policies and administrative practices differentiated the migrant workers from the local people. This was further reinforced by the villagers' deliberate emphases on the boundary between locals and newcomers, aiming at safeguarding their interest and status. The classification made the migrant workers the most disadvantaged group in the locality.

A best example to illustrate the division between the villagers and the migrant workers is the unbalanced distribution of the environmental rights and burdens between the two social groups. Living in the same region next to the synthetic fibre factory of Fanchang Group, both the local residents and the guest migrant workers were exposed under pollution at the same level. Symptoms of sore throat, irritated skin, and constant coughing were reported frequently within both groups. However, the medical expenses and the accessibility of medical services to address the health problems were different between local villagers and migrant workers. The new rural cooperative medical care system in Zhejiang Province ensured that every villager can have an easy access to the village clinic and township medical centre in the locality,

the expense of which was reimbursed for 85% at most. In comparison, the medical care fees of the migrant workers were covered by commercial insurance partially sponsored by the employer. According to Fengxian, the workers opted in for the insurance had to pay an annual subscription fee of RMB 400 *yuan*. Worse still, the reimbursement was intended for the part above a threshold of RMB 1,000 *yuan*. The conditions discouraged a large number of migrant workers from participating in the scheme. Fengxian and Guoqiang did not want to spend money on the insurance either. They thought that they were young and could get over minor illnesses anyway [Research log 26: Interview with Guoqiang and Fengxian, conducted on 8th July, 2014]. The discriminative distribution of healthcare welfare denoted the role of government in shaping the segregation between villagers and outsiders in the localities.

Not only did the discriminative policies segregate migrant workers from the local people, villagers in Weiken also deliberately differentiated themselves from the tenants by drawing a closed circle among village members. The boundary stipulated the rule of resources allocation in the first place. Going back to the distribution of environmental rights and burdens among people living around the factory, it is clearly identifiable that the Weiken villagers kept their struggle for environmental justice strictly within the members of the village (*zijiren* 自己人) and excluded the migrants (*waidiren* 外地人). Even though the migrant workers residing in the area were threatened by the industrial pollution as well, villagers did not offer them the chance to participate in the collective actions so as to make their voice heard. Accordingly, the migrant workers' rights to claim for compensation as pollution victims were also denied.

Fengxian still remembered the accident in Fanchang Group two months after she moved to Weiken Village in 2011. Due to a failure of the dust absorbent facilities in the factory, the smoke from the chimney became dark in colour, carrying loads of black 'cotton-like' patches. The pollutants went up straight to the open air and then descended to the vegetable fields and residents' yards nearby. Hearsays proliferated around the village quickly, in which the patches were identified as 'daosheng' (道剩) and were described as 'the most poisonous chemical among the raw materials of the factory' [Research log 54: Interview with Lao Zhao, conducted on 3rd August, 2014]. Agen, the owner of the

company, spotted the problem in the first instance. However, he did not put a stop to it at once because he could not afford to suspend the operation of the factory so as to avoid pollution. It took more than a month before the new gas treatment facilities got installed. The behaviour of the entrepreneur infuriated villagers. They went to the factory in groups, pressing for an explanation. At that time, Fengxian was still in her lactation period. Worried by the hearsays about the adverse health impact of the pollutants, Fengxian urged Guoqiang to go along with their landlady and see if they could get any suggestions for self-protection and health promotion from the company. However, to the couple's surprise, the landlady did not allow Guoqiang to join local people's campaign against the polluting industry. She told the couple that their presence would not be of any help, since 'only those who knew the entrepreneur personally could speak to him' [Research log 26: Interview with Guoqiang and Fengxian, conducted on 8th July, 2014].

A few days after the accident, people living in Weiken Village began to realise that the black patches fallen down from the chimney were erosive and poisonous. Many residents who contacted the pollutants by accident reported rash on their skins. In the meantime, more claimed that they experienced respiratory burns. Both the locals and the migrants suffered from symptoms caused by the pollutant. However, Guoqiang and Fengxian were once again excluded from the representatives who mobilised solely for the rights of the local people. It was the villagers that organised the campaign against Fanchang Group. They chose to ask for compensation in the name of the poisoned poultries and burnt crops. Like many other environmental mobilisation in rural China, where pollution victims raised evidence of quantifiable economic loss so as to address their requests for compensation,²⁷⁹ villagers in Weiken strategically avoided to mention the adverse health impact, the causal relation of which with pollution was somewhat ambiguous and hard to be proven.²⁸⁰ The observation in Weiken Village resonates with other scholars' argument on the pragmatism and opportunism of grassroots pro-ecological mobilisation in rural

²⁷⁹ Lora-Wainwright, "Plural Forms of Evidence and Uncertainty in Environmental Health," 49-64.

²⁸⁰ Lora-Wainwright and Chen, "China's Cancer Villages: Contested Evidence and the Politics of Pollution," 396-416.

China.²⁸¹ In addition, it depicts a strategy of exclusion adopted by the local people. The astute villagers deliberately centred on the loss in their field so as to exclude the migrant workers on site from claiming compensation from the company. In this way, the boundary of Weiken Village reflected in the membership shaped a structure of resources distribution in the locality, where villagers monopolised the benefits for the pollution victims, leaving the migrant workers the party that shouldered the environmental burdens without any compensation.

The village boundary that preserved the unbalanced distribution of environmental rights and burdens in turn resulted in an indifferent attitude towards industrial pollution among the migrant workers. Although Fengxian and Guoqiang felt angry about the exclusion and discrimination, they were not capable of challenging such a structure prescribed by the policy and reinforced by the villagers' everyday practices. They had to accept it as part of their fate and the 'inferiority of the new comers' that 'would unavoidably be treated in an unfair way' (waidiren zongyao chidian kui 外地人总要吃点亏) [Research log 26: Interview with Guoqiang and Fengxian, conducted on 8th July, 2014]. Like Fengxian and Guoqiang, many migrant workers residing in Weiken do not care about the pollution at all nowadays. It was partly because that they were not the permanent residents. As Fengxian's neighbour, a middle-aged worker from Guizhou, commented, 'although I am breathing the poisonous air here now, I can return to my old home whenever I want. The local people have nowhere to relocate. They are bound to die of the pollution in the village' [Research log 28: Interview with Xiao Guizhou, conducted on 9th July, 2014]. His expression of grievance can be perceived a counterattack to the closed social circle among the villagers and to the associated injustice. It marked the opposition and tension between the social groups inside and outside the local community, partitioned by the nominal boundary of the administrative village.

Fengxian and Guoqiang, along with their fellow workmates in Fanchang Group, are among the 172 million off-farm migrant workers in mainland China. A significant proportion of the migrant workers are injected into the economically advanced and industrialised rural areas in East China, creating a population influx to the

²⁸¹ Van Rooji et al., "The Compensation Trap," 701-45.

industrialised villages. As a typical industrialised village, Weiken accommodated altogether 277 migrant workers in the five villagers' groups surrounding Fanchang Group in 2014 [Research log 29: Interview with Doctor Qi, conducted on 9th July, 2014]. The migrant workers introduced new elements to the local rural residents' social relations. One of the most important impacts, as revealed by the case study above, was the strengthened notion of village boundary in the locality. As Fei Xiaotong points out, the definition of 'self' in rural China's differential mode of association demonstrates relativity between within and without the social circle.²⁸² It was only when the migrant workers played the role as the 'others' in the village did the local residents consciously flagged up the village membership as a parameter to determine proximity and distance among people. Administrative village defines the rule and the pattern of resources allocation in the first place. As the outer circle of each villager's social relations, the boundary of village excluded the migrant workers as 'outsiders'. This inevitably resulted in a series of structural social injustice that was difficult to eliminate: even though both parties were digesting pollution and health hazards as the adverse side-effects of industrialisation simultaneously, the outcome remained to be totally different.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter examines the structural change in the rural society of contemporary China, reflected in the pattern of each individual villager's social relations. Citing Fei Xiaotong's theory on the differential mode of social association in traditional rural society of China as a reference, this chapter discusses how nuclear family, social groups, and village, as the three layers in villagers' social networks, manifest themselves against the backdrop of rural industrialisation and change over time. The three pairs of narratives contribute to our understanding of the change empirically. It is noteworthy that all the ethnographies focus on the industrialisation as a theme in villagers' social life and an underlying motive to the structural dynamics in the community. The chapter aims to unveil the role of industrialisation as both a context and a driving force of the social changes. Simultaneously, the changing social

²⁸² Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*.

landscape in the two researched villages serves as an evidence that industrialisation has been internalised in the rural residents' everyday life and digested locally.

Through analysing the empirical cases, this chapter argues that the structure of social organisation in contemporary rural China no longer resembles that of the traditional time. As shown in Chart 5.1, the concentric circular pattern of the differential mode of association has undergone profound change. The change occurs in the inner circle, the middle layers, and the outer boundary of each individual villager's social network, which has been discussed in the three empirical sections of the chapter respectively. Section 5.2 discusses the diversified connotation of family core interest, which sets the stage for the emergence of an inter-generation discrepancy within nuclear families and the irreconcilable conflict among nuclear families pursuing different types of interest. Although my observation suggests that nuclear family still functions as the inner circle of villagers' social relations, it questions Fei Xiaotong's proposition about nuclear family as an undividable unit with all the members unified by a same interest goal. Section 5.3 sheds light on the rise of functional groups, which gradually substitute the kinship organisations and become the middle layers of villagers' networks. The functional groups are alliance of villagers with a same identity. They take the form of professional associations, villagers' groups (formerly production teams), religious groups, cancer patients' network etc., as revealed by the ethnographies. The functional groups are usually overlapping with each other as a result of the multiple identities one villager may possess at a same time. Section 5.4 focuses on the changing role of village. It confirms on the revitalising significance of administrative village at the present stage as an outer boundary of rural residents' social connections. However, the mechanism through which village functions in the local life changes. Rather than being a geographical and cultural boundary of rural community, contemporary administrative village outlines the entity in which benefits and resources are distributed. Local people flag up the significance of village and differentiate village members from outsiders tactically because they do not want their interest to be diluted. The change in nuclear family, social groups, and village, as three component parts of villagers' social relations defined by Fei Xiaotong, altogether determines the new pattern of social association in the industrialised villages. The change has generated profound influence on rural residents' social life.

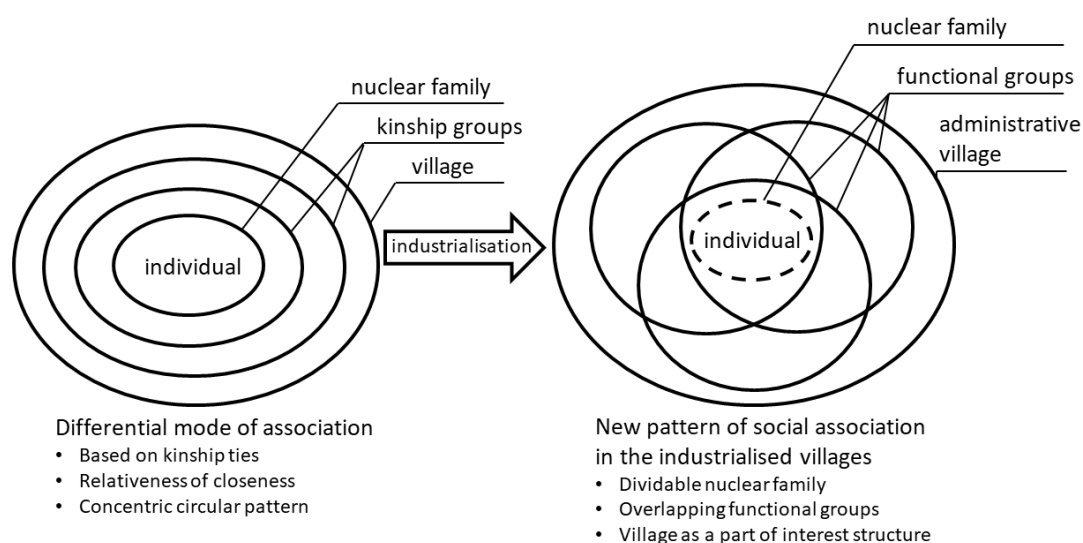


Figure 5.1 Changes in the mode of social association in the rural society of China

This chapter discusses the structural change in the rural society of contemporary China with reference to industrialisation as a substantial background. It argues that industrialisation is among the most important catalysts for the change. As revealed by the empirical cases in the chapter, the significance of industrialisation in contextualising the changing pattern of social association lies twofold. First, it introduces new issues to villagers' everyday life that require reaction by mobilising their social relations. Against this backdrop, many functional groups emerge, which represent local people's social demand in face of the new challenges. Second, it reshapes the interest structure in the localities. The benefits and burdens brought by industrialisation as well as their distribution in the local community articulate institutional change in the social settings of the two industrialised villages, which is more often than not a spontaneous process. From another perspective, the structural social change can be perceived as an adaption the local people and the local society have made to industrialisation and development. By altering the pattern of social association, villagers not only mobilise their *guanxi* to better cope with the challenges but also find themselves a best position in the local interest structure where they can maximise their gains from the tide of industrialisation. This matches the core concept in this study. I therefore argue that the structural change of social network is a part of local people's digestion of industrialisation.

The horizontal structure (差) of rural Chinese society is an important component of Fei Xiaotong's theoretical framework. In the differential mode of association, the social relations of each individual rural resident are disassembled into three layers, which perfectly frame my analysis at different levels. In addition, Fei's description on the traditional pattern of social association and its functioning mode serves as a starting point of my analysis and a good target with which I compare my empirical findings from the field. The structural social change explored and discussed in this chapter links the discussion on the behavioural basis and moral bonds and completes my critical examination of the differential mode of association proposed by Fei Xiaotong. It contributes to Fei's thoughts by empirically developing his theory against the context of contemporary China.

Chapter 6: Changing Moral Bonds: Human Relationships and Their Contemporary Variations

6.1 Introduction

Following the discussion about the behavioural basis and structural manifestation of the differential mode of association, this chapter explores the factors that sustain China's rural communities morally. In the book *From the Soil*, Fei Xiaotong accounts for the formation of the differential mode by introducing the concept of human relationships (renlun 人伦) from Confucian philosophy.²⁸³ Defined as 'the moral ties among people' and 'the basic characteristic of Chinese social structure',²⁸⁴ human relationships signify a discontinuous classification in Chinese people's social life and highlight the *differential* nature of the mode and patterns of their social relations. As Fei puts it in the book, '*Lun* (伦) stresses differentiation.'²⁸⁵ Fei Xiaotong brings forth his interpretation of the rules of Chinese society through the typical human relationships he identifies. In a healthily functioning social system, 'everyone should stay in his place,' where 'fathers are differentiated from sons, those remote from those close, and those who are intimate from those who are not.'²⁸⁶ In other words, human relationships act as a set of traditional ethical codes that normalise the differential pattern of association and standardise each individual's choices of social activities. This assumption forms the basis for Fei's studies of rural China and his later research on functional communities, families and reproduction, gentry culture, the economic changes, and the institutional reforms which transformed China in the late 20th century.²⁸⁷

Fei Xiaotong's assumption about how human relationships function inspires extensive discussion in the studies of rural China. Drawing on his theoretical legacy, many

²⁸³ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 65.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 66.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ R. David Arkush, *Fei Xiaotong and Sociology in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

scholars explore the mechanisms that determine the organisational patterns and social networks in China's rural communities. It is through this process that Fei's theory of the differential mode of association is developed. Yan Yunxiang²⁸⁸ gives an intriguing interpretation of Fei's model by referring to the differentiation mode of association as a multi-dimensional concept. According to Yan, the term 'differential mode of association' (chaxu geju 差序格局) has two components, with *xu* (序) featuring on the horizontal individually-centred networks of differentiation and *cha* (差) referring to the vertical classification reinforced by traditional ethics in the form of social order.²⁸⁹ By neglecting this vertical stratification, academics have reduced Fei's model to a map of social structure in rural communities, which veils the logic behind the differentiation in the rural inter-personal networks. Yan points out that the differential mode of association relies on a series of cultural and ethical norms.²⁹⁰ This view resonates with two branches of literature elaborating the connotation and the function of human relationships under Fei's theoretical framework respectively.

Like Fei Xiaotong, many scholars probe into human relationships and the classification of proximity in rural China from the perspective of social ethics preserved in the kinship networks. Traditional human relationships in rural China are defined as a natural differentiation of seniority in a patrilineage system.²⁹¹ Such differentiation is considered to be inherent in the social ethics and is respected by members of extended families who cooperate with the rules of the elders (zhanglao tongzhi 长老统治).²⁹² Even the modern aggregated families united by the need of cooperation in production abide with the rules and the order.²⁹³ Noteworthy for this study, there are researchers who look into the counter currents against human

²⁸⁸ Yan, "Chaxu geju yu Zhongguo wenhua de dengjiguan," 201-13.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 212.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 213.

²⁹¹ Wang, *Dangdai zhongguo cunluo jiazu wenhua*. Yuan-Kang Shih Cao, X. Zhong, and L. Kebin, "The Isomorphism of Family and State and the Integration of Church and State: On the Differences between the Confucian Political Tradition and Democratic Politics, in *Culture and Social Transformations in Reform Era China*, eds., Cao Tianyu, Zhong Xueping, and Liao Kebin, 97-118 (Leiden: Brill: 2010).

²⁹² Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 114.

²⁹³ Elisabeth Croll, "New Peasant Family Forms in Rural China," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 14, no. 4 (1987): 469-99. Elisabeth Croll, *From Heaven to Earth: Images and Experiences of Development in China* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

relationships in the differential mode of association, such as the increasing significance of affinity and semi-affinity relations²⁹⁴ and the rise of local elites in the grassroots politics.²⁹⁵ They have shown that the new types of human relationships have transformed the traditional family relations characterised by the father-son relationship and the institutional settings of the seniors' rule²⁹⁶ without radically changing social classifications based on seniority and proximity. This phenomenon is further supported by Jonathan Unger²⁹⁷ and Wang Sibin²⁹⁸'s findings. The authors reach a consensus that the toppled distribution pattern of wealth and means of production respectively emerging at the mid and the late 20th century has not necessarily challenged social ethics based on kinship-oriented human relationships in China.

As for the function of human relationships in rural China, it is widely agreed that the system of morality created by human relationships preserves the social structure of rural China. The traditional morality, summarised by Fei Xiaotong as 'subduing the self and following the rites' (keji fuli 克己复礼),²⁹⁹ is endorsed and abided by the rural residents in their everyday social life. Richard Madsen³⁰⁰, Jing Jun³⁰¹, and Wang

²⁹⁴ Yang and Hou, "Xueyuan, yinyuan, qinqing yu liyi," 51-58. Shanhua Yang 杨善华 and Xiaojing Liu 刘小京, "Jinqi Zhongguo nongcun jiazu yanjiu de ruogan lilun wenti 近期中国农村家族研究的若干理论问题," Available at <http://www.aisixiang.com/data/45661-3.html>, accessed on 2011-10-28.

²⁹⁵ Shanhua Yang 杨善华, "Jiazu zhengzhi yu nongcun jiceng zhengzhi jingying de xuanba, juece dingwei he jingying gengti 家族政治与农村基层政治精英的选拔, 角色定位和精英更替," *Shehuixue yanjiu* 社会学研究 3 (2000): 101-08. Tsai, "Cadres, Temple and Lineage Institutions, and Governance in Rural China," 1-27. Bu, "'Chaxu geju' de lilun quanshi ji xiandai neihan," 21-29.

²⁹⁶ Jieqiong Lei 雷洁琼, *Gaige yilai Zhongguo nongcun hunyin jiating de xin bianhua* 改革以来中国农村婚姻家庭的新变化 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1994). Yan, Yunxiang, "The Triumph of Conjuality: Structural Transformation of Family Relations in a Chinese Village," *Ethnology* Xxxvi, no. 3 (1997): 191-212.

²⁹⁷ Jonathan Unger, "The Class System in Rural China: A Case Study," in *Class and Social Stratification in Post-revolution China*, ed. James L. Watson (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 121-41.

²⁹⁸ Sibin Wang 王思斌, "Jingji tizhi gaige dui nongcun shehui guanxi de yingxiang 经济体制改革对农村社会关系的影响," *Beijing daxue xuebao: zhexue shehui kexue ban* 北京大学学报: 哲学社会科学版, no. 03 (1987): 28-36.

²⁹⁹ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 74.

³⁰⁰ Richard Madsen: *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village*

³⁰¹ Jun Jing, *The Temple of Memories: History, Power, and Morality in a Chinese Village* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

Xiaoxia³⁰² argue that the daily practice of morality and ethics in the differential mode of association has set forth a series of behavioural codes and standards that rural Chinese use to discern right from wrong. Even though the Chinese government have introduced legal systems to the villages, ethics still thrives at the local level in rural communities of China, making governance through rites (礼治 *lizhi*) an important supplement to the rule of law.³⁰³ In addition, a number of institutions (e.g. ancestral halls) based on human relationships and the associated ethics have observed a revival in the post-reform era. This further legitimises the notion of ‘relationship-bound ethics’ in rural China.³⁰⁴

Nonetheless, Fei bases his theory on the traditional lineage villages with agricultural production as the main, if not only, means of livelihood. Many scholars question the role of human relationships as the functioning social ethics in contemporary rural communities by citing villages that recently underwent industrialisation as counterexamples. The increasing mobility,³⁰⁵ diversified employment,³⁰⁶ and prevailing consumerism³⁰⁷ in the contemporary rural society of China have deeply

³⁰² Xiaoxia Wang 王晓霞, “Rujia wenhua zhong de renji guanxi lilun 儒家文化中的人际关系理论,” *Daode yu wenming* 道德与文明, no. 5 (2000): 45-47.

³⁰³ Yunxiang Yan, “The Culture of Guanxi in a North China Village,” *China Journal* 35 (1996): 1-25. Yunqing Zhou 周运清, “Zhongguo nonggeng jingji biange yu xiangtu shehui jiegou zhuanxing de tuijin – Zhongguo shehui jiegou de yuanying yu yanhua 中国农耕经济变革与乡土社会结构转型的推进——中国社会结构的原型与演化,” *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 社会科学研究, no. 5 (1999): 85-91. Steinmüller, *Communities of Complicity*. Lai, *Hygiene, Sociality, and Culture in Contemporary Rural China*.

³⁰⁴ Jun Tang 唐军, “Dangdai Zhongguo nongcun jiazu fuxing de Beijing 当代中国农村家族复兴的背景,” *Shehuixue yanjiu* 社会学研究, no. 02 (1996): 24-28. Guohua Zeng, “Adaptation, Revival, and Reconstruction: Clan Organizations and Rural Power Structures: Two Case Studies from Southern Jiangxi and Eastern Guangdong,” *Chinese Sociology & Anthropology* 37, no. 1 (2004): 34-50. Lixiong Cai 蔡立雄, “Gongneng zhuanhuan yu dangdai Zhongguo nongcun zongzu zhidu yanhua 功能转换与当代中国农村宗族制度演化,” *Zhongguo jingjishi yanjiu* 中国经济史研究, no. 4 (2010): 144-51.

³⁰⁵ Zhao, “Leaving the Countryside,” 281-86. Biao Xiang, “How Far Are the Left-behind Left Behind? A Preliminary Study in Rural China,” *Population, Space and Place* 13, no. 3 (2007): 179-91.

³⁰⁶ Thomas Reardon et al., “Household Income Diversification into Rural Nonfarm Activities,” *Transforming the Rural Nonfarm Economy: Opportunities and Threats in the Developing World* (2007): 115-40. Hualou Long, Jian Zou, and Yansui Liu, “Differentiation of Rural Development Driven by Industrialization and Urbanization in Eastern Coastal China,” *Habitat International* 33, no. 4 (2009): 454-62. Sylvie Démurger, Martin Fournier, and Weiyong Yang, “Rural Households’ Decisions towards Income Diversification: Evidence from a Township in Northern China,” *China Economic Review* 21, no. 1 (2010): S32-44.

³⁰⁷ Bin Zhao, “Consumerism, Confucianism, Communism: Making Sense of China Today,” *New Left Review* 222 (1997): 43-59. Jonathan Rigg, “Land, Farming, Livelihoods, and Poverty: Rethinking the Links in the Rural South,” *World Development* 34, no. 1 (2006): 180-202.

affected the spirit of community and the associated traditional social ethics. Along with industrialisation, the devolution of state power, the empowerment of local elites, and the rise of businesses as new stakeholders in the locality have also changed institutions and values in the rural sector.³⁰⁸ Noteworthy for this study, the accelerated pace of industrialisation has substantially reshaped the morality and the structure of social association in rural communities. Residents perceive the benefits and hazards of industrialisation differently, which inevitably dilutes the local solidarity. The highly diversified approaches to perceive industrialisation render different stances and strategies in digesting industrialisation and its social impacts. Rather than sticking with the traditional human relationships, villagers tend to follow an individualised, pragmatic, and opportunistic code of morality. This threatens the traditional social ethics and evokes a transform of value in the industrialised rural communities. In this research, the changing moral landscape is regarded as an effort of adaptation rural residents and rural communities have made for the new issues and challenges in the everyday life brought by industrialisation. The examination of the fading significance of human relationships and the rising ‘industrialised’ moral standards in substitution provides us an alternative approach to understand how industrialisation is digested in contemporary rural China.

This chapter focuses on the tension between the traditional social ethics summarised by Fei Xiaotong and the newly emerged value and moral standards in two industrialised and heavily polluted villages. It resonates with Fei’s works and argues that moral obligations between people sustain the differential mode of association in rural China, and that the social ethics based on human relationships are forms of ‘differentiation’ (cha 差) reflected in the social order. However, by examining how social ethics function in two cancer villages bathing in the tide of industrialisation, this chapter argues that traditional human relationships are exposed under challenges, reflected in the socio-economic changes in rural China. The challenges are primarily from the institutional transformation, including the transplantation of the work unit

³⁰⁸ Athar Hussain, “Rural Enterprise Development in China, 1986–90,” *The China Quarterly* 136 (1993): 1009-010. Wang and Yang, “Grassroots Democracy and Local Governance,” 1635-649.

system (danwei zhi 单位制³⁰⁹), the rise of elite rule, and the extended realm of market. As a result of these changes, human relationships compromise with a set of new social ethics defined by industrialisation and the associated social changes. Consequentially, this chapter confirms on Yang Shanhua and Hou Hongrui's argument on the differential mode of association that human relationships gradually lose their significance in certain spheres of villagers' social life.³¹⁰

This chapter brings together two bodies of literature about human relationships and rural industrialisation in China. By analysing empirical data gathered from the two villages, this chapter assess how industrialisation, as a new theme in villagers' everyday life, affects traditional social ethics. Together with the discussion about the behavioural basis and the structural manifestation, the examination of the binding forces and the moral settings in the differential mode of association completes my quest to understand the changing social life in China's rural communities under Fei Xiaotong's theoretical framework. It also supplements the understanding of how industrialisation is digested locally in rural China from the perspective of morality and social ethics.

In the following two sections, I present four ethnographic portraits of households in Jiangbin and Weiken Village. Section 6.2 focuses on how the changing social, economic, and political landscape of the industrialised villages affects the connotation of human relationships. Section 6.3 discusses how the functioning mode of traditional ethics evolves against the backdrop of industrialisation. The empirical sections are followed by a brief discussion, where the origin and impact of the changes affecting human relationships in rural China and how industrialisation is digested morally in the locality are analysed.

³⁰⁹ David Bray, *Social Space and Governance in Urban China: The Danwei System from Origins to Reform* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

³¹⁰ Yang and Hou, "Xueyuan, yinyuan, qinqing yu liyi," 51-58.

6.2 New social ethics in rural China and the changing connotation of human relationships

This section examines the connotation of human relationships as an underlying ethical power that sustains the differential mode of association in rural China. As Fei Xiaotong points out, human relationships are reflected in the life of rural Chinese as ‘proper arrangements, classifications, and orders’.³¹¹ In a traditional lineage village, human relationships usually centre on the hierarchical differentiations defined by seniority, the ‘most fundamental principle in the Chinese kinship system’.³¹² This has made the ‘rule by elders’ an ‘almost natural form of power structure’ in the community.³¹³ In the meantime, human relationships also prescribe the pattern of social association by differentiating the closeness between pairs of people, which ‘signifies the ripple-like effect created from circles of relationships that spread out from the self’ and ‘produces a pattern of discrete circles’ in the community as an institutional and moral basis for the administration and social life at the grassroots level.³¹⁴

However, the traditional human relationships and the associated pattern of social association are exposed to challenges nowadays. The connotation of human relationships is changing along with the political, economic, and social transformation of rural China inspired by industrialisation. My fieldwork suggests that the significance of the ten pairs of relationships (shilun 十伦) prescribed by the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 礼记),³¹⁵ as the fundament of human relationships in rural China, is gradually replaced by values inspired by industrialisation. In the two cancer villages, the social value in favour of the economic and political power has triggered a competition for the favourable economic statuses and higher positions in the government among local people. As will be argued in the following parts, it is in this process that seniority is replaced by the order based on power. Consequentially, the differential mode of association is substituted by social stratification, where local

³¹¹ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 65.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 118.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 119.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

³¹⁵ *Liji* 礼记, Jitong 祭统, No. 25.

families are classified according to the social resources they can access.³¹⁶ The shifting value in the two industrialised villages exemplifies the changing ethical landscape in the rural communities, where industrialisation is digested by the locals morally.

6.2.1 Jiangbin Village

The ethnographic portrait of Chen Xin's household exemplifies the tension between the traditional social ethics based on human relationships and its contemporary variations in rural China. It keeps a record of the two generations' career choices and their expectations to the young man in the household who is about to set foot in the job market. This maps out the change of value in the family against the general backdrop of industrialisation and the political and economic decentralisation of the country. Xin's parents sought after the membership in a 'work unit' (单位 *danwei*) in the tide of industrialisation so as to change their social identities from earth-bound peasants to urban workers, whereas Xin entered the township government seeking after political and administrative power at the grassroots level. The family pins its hope on Xin's son and urges him to seek opportunities in the business sector of the chemical industry, in spite of their resentment of the polluting industries in the neighbourhood. The preference of occupation endorsed by the three generations in Xin's family represents a common definition of 'success' in Jiangbin Village. The tendency of abandoning the traditional means of livelihood and escaping from the rural communities for better personal development threatens the human relationships preserved in the boundary of village and in local people's lifestyle. In the meantime, the changing value reflected in the definition of 'success' among rural residents adds new elements to the ethics in the community. The transforming connotation of human relationships gives rise to the stratified social order based on the possession and the distribution of social resources. It challenges the previously predominating differential mode of social association in Jiangbin Village.

³¹⁶ Yanjie Bian, "Chinese Social Stratification and Social Mobility," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 91-116. Xueyi Lu 陆学艺, *Dangdai Zhongguo shehui jiegou* 当代中国社会结构 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010). Xueyi Lu 陆学艺, "Dangdai Zhongguo shehui jieceng de fenhua yu liudong 当代中国社会阶层的分化与流动," *Jiangsu shehui kexue* 江苏社会科学, no. 4 (2003): 1-9.

Chen Xin is among my first few respondents in Jiangbin Village through the introduction by an acquaintance. He is an energetic middle aged man working as a civil servant in the government of the township adjacent to Nanyang. Xin and his wife, a nurse in the medical centre of the township, live in Jiangbin Village where he was born and bred. They live together with Xin's mother, a 70-year-old affable and talkative lady. The couple raise a son who is a third-year college student majoring in business management. The couple set the model of 'a successful household' in the neighbours' eyes for 'having status, money, and an outstanding son' [Research log 12: Interview with Xu Zheng, conducted on 29th June, 2014]. The acknowledgement has truly made the family members proud.

It is not difficult to tell from the praises and compliments of the envious villagers that the family's success is rooted in the social status of its members, reflected in their occupations. In Xin's family, each member sensed the frontier of the social development and pioneered in the most promising sector of employment of the time. Their choices in the job market not only showed the way in which personal value and self-fulfilment were defined at each stage, but also reflected the adaption they made to the revolutionary changes of society and policy. Meanwhile, the preference of occupation among the villagers underpinned the social value shared in the community. It is worth pointing out that such social value emerging against the backdrop of industrialisation, power devolution, and expanding businesses in contemporary rural China is not always compatible to the traditional social order and ethical codes based on human relationships. This explains why Chen Xin and his family's choices serve as a lens to reflect the conflict between traditional human relationships and its contemporary variations.

Chen Xin's mother and his late father were workers of the community-owned Second Pesticide Factory of Nanyang established in 1979, which was later turned into a contracted factory of the state-run Hangzhou Pesticide Company in 1995. At the beginning, the prospect of working in the factory was not attractive in the local people's eyes. The decision was reckoned as a 'bold move' by relatives and neighbours, who criticised the couple for 'wasting the good farming plots' (fangzhe haotian buzong 放着好田不种) [Research log 21: Group interview with Chen Xin's family, conducted on 6th

July, 2014]. As the economic impact of industrialisation began to manifest itself in Jiangbin Village, more and more local residents decided to abandon the old-fashioned agricultural production and to make a living by working in the factories. According to Xin's mother, the pesticide factory turned out to be a hottest destination (zui qiangshou de gongzuo 最抢手的工作) for the villagers, since the industry was highly profitable and the products were in high demand. More importantly, the factory was situated in the centre of the village. It meant that the employees could work 'on their doorstep' and could spare more time to take care of the family plots and household chores. With the limited vacancies being filled in a short period of time, those local people who were not lucky enough to get a place had to seek job opportunities elsewhere from factories out of the village reluctantly.

To the delight of the old couple, the national acquisition of the factory in 1995 brought them further benefits. As senior workers that joined the factory since its foundation, Chen Xin's parents were given status of permanent employees in the plant. This entitled them to a number of welfare improvement, including access to medical care services, retirement pension, and more importantly, the urban household registration. Chen Xin's mother was so satisfied with and proud of the arrangements. The fact that she was still receiving pension from the Civil Affairs Bureau of Hangzhou on a monthly basis further reinforced her sense of identity as a member of the work unit. Xin occasionally made fun of her mother by calling her 'Hangzhou perseon' (Hangzhou ren 杭州人) rather than 'Xiaoshan person' (xiaoshan ren 萧山人), since she 'kept a closer relation with her former workmates spread in the City of Hangzhou than with her neighbours.' [Research log 21: Group interview with Chen Xin's family, conducted on 6th July, 2014] The old lady spoke every word in favour of the pesticide company, even at the time when disputes about its adverse environmental impact on the neighbourhood burst out in 2002. Despite the fact that her house was among the closest to the site of the factory and the smell of triphenylamine was noticeably bad, she never criticised the company in line with her neighbours. This inevitably isolated her from the local community.

Unlike his mother, Chen Xin chose to stay in close touch with the rural communities in the locality. Xin returned to the village in the late 1980s after graduating from the

former Teachers College of Shaoxing. He became the coordinator of publicity in the Committee of Jiangbin Village. Later, he was selected to the government of the township nearby and was eventually promoted as the head of the Economic Development Office. This made Xin a public servant ‘salaried and subsidised by the state’ (chi huangliang de gongjiaren 吃皇粮的公家人) and won him much admiration and jealousy in the neighbourhood [Research log 21: Group interview with Chen Xin’s family, conducted on 6th July, 2014].

Xin never regretted his choice, even though he could have moved to the urban area by working in the education industry as a secondary school teacher after graduation. The role as a civil servant at the grassroots level gave him a superior social and financial status in the locality, which met his expectation and satisfaction. The time when he returned to the hometown was the period of rapid development in the villages of Xiaoshan, where numerous social changes took place. Xin soon realised that the influence of big families and elderly people on the village affairs was gradually replaced by the administrative power of the township government. Furthermore, the agenda in the village affairs underwent changes, where the significance of traditional issues concerning family relationships, agricultural production, and ceremonial events was outweighed by that of economic development. The changes were by and large inspired by the tide of industrialisation in the locality. Xin clearly noticed the opportunities in industrialisation-driven economy. As a village cadre, he actively cooperated with the township government in the land acquisition for the construction of the Nanyang Industrial Park. This won him the chance to get a promotion and step into the centre of the local political power.

Chen Xin’s career path represents a typical route through which the elite in rural China seizes power in the grassroots administration. It exemplifies the competition for the administrative power between traditional social powers legitimised by the human relationships and the bureaucratic elites backed up by the state. Xin’s rise was described by the neighbours as ‘a rebellion’ (yizhan chengming 一战成名) [Research log 24: Interview with Jianmao, conducted on 7th July, 2014] and ‘a betrayal to the community’ [Research log 25: Interview with Lao Peng, conducted on 7th July, 2014]. Xin’s idea of pooling villagers’ family plots as land shares was adopted by the Government of Nanyang Township as the rhetoric to

legitimise the massive land acquisition in 1992. Later, when the villagers of Jiangbin realised that the dividend was disproportionate to the yield from the land and was far less than what the township government had promised, they asked Chen Xin for an explanation. At that time, Chen Xin had already been selected as a public servant in the township. The neighbours believed that he was the best person to pass their claims to the government and that he should take the responsibility for the village's loss. However, Xin refused the request from the villagers for challenging the township government on behalf of the local people. Even though the senior members of the village and his relatives came to persuade Xin, he did not change the mind. As a result, many villagers criticised Chen Xin for 'being unreasonably stubborn, heartless, and irresponsible' (wuqing wuyi 无情无义) [Research log 24: Interview with Jianmao, conducted on 7th July, 2014; Research log 25: Interview with Lao Peng, conducted on 7th July, 2014]. For a time, Xin and his family had to reduce the frequency of going out so as to avoid the criticism from the neighbourhood. However, Xin believed that it was unavoidable to restore the order of the community and the fashion of rural residents' life when the village embraced the tide of industrialisation and development. 'We are subject to the state and to the law' (women bixu jiang zhengzhi, jiang fazhi 我们必须讲政治, 讲法制), commented Chen Xin. 'The state encourages changes. If I were not the person to bring the change to the village and challenge the conventional thoughts of the villagers, there must have been someone else taking up the role.' [Research log 21: Group interview with Chen Xin's family, conducted on 6th July, 2014] Sarcastically, when the residents in Jiangbin became used to the lifestyle in the industrialised village, the criticism of Xin gradually died down. Once again, Xin was set as an example of a successful person in his generation for seizing the political power at hand.

Talking about the career perspective of Chen Xin's son, the whole family almost unanimously favoured the business sector. Chen Xin and his wife saw the thriving business of the chemical companies in the village. They wanted their son to start his career from joining the managing team of a big corporation and eventually set up his own venture in the industry. To realise this goal, Xin chose business management for his son as the major in his tertiary education. Xin also used his own network to arrange internships for his son so as to make him better prepared for the job market. It

seemed to be a very promising route leading to a bright future in not only Xin and his families' but also the villagers' eyes.

The family's choice for the career route of the younger generation was tightly associated with the alteration of power structure and social value in contemporary rural China. As witnesses of the increasingly significant role of businesses in the age of industrialisation, Chen Xin and his family became aware of the importance of one's financial status in the stratified society of rural China. The fortune accumulated from the business sector not only secured a better quality of life, but also, as the entrepreneurs in Jiangbin Village demonstrated, provided further access to social and political resources in the locality. Xin confessed that he never expected that his son could 'study hard and become a scholar' (haohao dushu, zuo dian xuewen 好好读书, 做点学问), since 'he did not have the makings' (bushi nakuai liao 不是那块料) [Research log 21: Group interview with Chen Xin's family, conducted on 6th July, 2014]. Even though Jiangbin has a tradition to prioritise the liberal arts education (zuo xuewen 做学问) of the young people, Xin sent his son to an institute that provides vocational education. This was driven by a sense of pragmatism in the social value shaped by the prevailing consumerism. As long as the profession-oriented education could provide a bright career perspective in the business sector, the local community also recognised the decision of Xin's family as a good one for the young man.

To summarise, the choices along the career paths of the three generations in Chen Xin's family reflect the impact of major social changes, namely industrialisation, power devolution, and expanding businesses, on the values of ordinary rural residents in contemporary China. Instead of sticking with the traditional pattern of social association defined and preserved by human relationships, the family became aware of the social stratification in the locality and strove to climb up for a higher status. This inevitably challenged the existing social order in the differential mode of association in the community. Surprisingly, the struggle of the family was recognised by the villagers as a route to success. It reveals the value and ethics shift among rural residents, which is gradually internalised as a new part of the human relationships at the contemporary stage. As a result, this ethnographic portrait exemplifies villagers'

digestion of industrialisation and the associated social trends, reflected in the reconstruction of the local moral landscape.

6.2.2 Weiken Village

The following narrative focuses on the social ethics incorporated in rural residents' household finance and dedication to the community. It reveals the changes of villagers' mentality influenced by consumerism and their awareness of community in Weiken by examining their demand for housing at different stages. Over the past four decades, the standard of 'ideal housing' has changed significantly among the local people, from 'brick cottage' in the 1980s, 'three-storey house with aluminium framed windows' in the 1990s, all the way to 'buying flats in the urban residential area and escaping from the heavily polluted village to the city' at the current stage. The upgrading needs of housing were tightly associated with the changing ethics regarding production and consumption, which has moved from that of a 'leisure economy' (xiaoqian jingji 消遣经济) defined by Fei Xiaotong³¹⁷ to the value in a consumerist economy (xiaofei jingji 消费经济).³¹⁸ It gave rise to the practice of making invidious comparisons financially in the neighbourhood, which challenged the mode and the order of social association based on human relationships in the rural society. Meanwhile, rural families nowadays observed a diminishing sense of community traditionally characterised by 'geographical intimacy', 'self-sufficiency' (ziji zizu 自给自足), and 'self-containment' (xiangdui fengbi 相对封闭).³¹⁹ Unlike what is suggested by much existing literature on development-induced relocation in China that the objection against the relocation projects arose from migrants' cultural identity,³²⁰ villagers in Weiken sought relocation as a prioritised solution to industrial

³¹⁷ Arkush, *Fei Xiaotong and Sociology in Revolutionary China*, 130. Xiaotong Fei 费孝通.

"Xiaochengzhen dawenti 小城镇，大问题." *Jianghai xuekan* 江海学刊 1 (1984): 6-26. Xiaotong Fei, 费孝通. *Lucun nongtian* 禄村农田. Chongqing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1943.

³¹⁸ Baifeng Chen 陈柏峰, "Qu daodehua de xiangcun shijie 去道德化的乡村世界," *Wenhua zongheng* 文化纵横 3 (2010): 93-97. Dunfu Zhang 张敦福, "'Xiaoqian jingji' de mishi: jianlun dangxia Zhongguo shengchan, xiaofei yu xiuxian guanxi de shiheng '消遣经济'的迷失: 兼论当下中国生产, 消费与休闲关系的失衡," *Shehui kexue* 社会科学 10 (2015): 47-54.

³¹⁹ Fei, *Jiangcun jingji*, 27.

³²⁰ Jun Jing, "Environmental protests in rural China," in *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance*, ed., Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden, 222-240 (London: Routledge, 2003). Sarah Rogers

pollution they were experiencing. When they chose to leave their hometown, they had to abandon the traditions and the human relationships preserved in the community and in the village life. However, as my findings indicated, local people did not express much reluctance to part with their old homes and community. This tendency denotes a preference over a one-off solution in the painful process of digestion for the villagers long living with industrialisation and its side-effects.

Xie Zhenfei lives in a cottage (pingfang 平房) in the 1st villagers' group of Weiken Village. He is currently self-employed and is contracting grove building projects in the nearby townships of Shaoxing. Aged 42, he is a father of two girls, the elder of which just graduated from a vocational secondary school and the younger is a 5th year primary school student. Zhenfei has two older brothers, Zhenhua and Zhenjun, whose houses are situated on the two sides of his cottage. The three families share the same courtyard and the well in it. The brothers divided the family in 1991, the same year as Zhenfei got married. After that, they 'lived their own life' (geguo gede 各过各的) for more than 20 years [Research log 51: Interview with Zhenfei, conducted on 2nd August, 2014].

The somehow shabby cottage of Zhenfei shaped a contrast to his brothers' two-storey houses nearby. In fact, it was the only remaining cottage house in the villagers' group. Zhenfei felt embarrassed and ashamed for being unable to refurbish his house, let alone building up a new one on the site. The cottage, as Zhenfei commented in a self-mocking tone, has become the namecard of his household as a financially distressed family (kunnan hu 困难户) in the village [Research log 51: Interview with Zhenfei, conducted on 2nd August, 2014]. The significance of housing condition manifested itself not only as the quality of life, but also as a symbol of the house owner's status in the community. Nevertheless, Zhenfei could not find a way to step out from the financial difficulty and improve the housing condition for his families.

Zhenfei inherited the cottage from his late father, who used to be a mason and leader of a construction team. Zhenfei's father was among the first few that benefited from

and Mark Wang, "Environmental Resettlement and Social Dis/re-articulation in Inner Mongolia, China," *Population and Environment* 28, no. 1 (2006): 41-68. Bryan Tilt, *Dams and Development in China: The Moral Economy of Water and Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

the market economy after the reform and opening up. He built up a three-section compound consisting of three brick structured cottages for his family. For one time, the cottages and the court yard became a landmark of the village. Villagers in Weiken all dreamt of owning a house of this kind. The cottages become a model that won Zhenfei's father a reputation of a good constructor and attracted him a lot of clients. For the local residents who were newly freed from the collective economy and the construction works in the land reclamation project of East Xiaoshan, the new housing was often beyond their means. However, most if not all of the villagers worked hard and saved every penny towards the goal. Throughout his teenage years, Zhenfei witnessed a number of new houses being successively completed in the neighbourhood.

The honour and glory that the compound cottages brought to Zhenfei's family faded as time passed by. Since the 1990s, the diversified means of livelihood inspired by industrialisation and the market economy accelerated the wealth accumulation of some households and deepened the economic inequality among families in Weiken Village. The only thing that remained unchanged was villagers' willingness to invest on the improvement of their housing conditions. Weiken Village observed the establishment of its first three-storey house in 1992, owned by a villager running a preserved vegetable workshop. The house was decorated by mosaics on the exterior and was covered with dark red tiles on the top. It led a new fashion in the village. Many households chose to build up a new storeyed house for the marriage of the young, which best demonstrated the family's economic status. For them, the storeyed house really stood out from the cottages in the neighbourhood.

Zhenfei reckoned himself not as clever as his brothers. After his marriage, Zhenfei tried to run a vegetable stall, to work for the factories as a security guard, and to work as an administrator of the farmers' market in the township. However, none of the employment significantly improved the economic condition of his nuclear family. In comparison, both of his brothers succeeded in their fields: the elder brother inherited the construction business of their father and the second brother became a teacher in the middle school of the township. They built their own storeyed houses in succession in 2000 and 2003, leaving Zhenfei's cottage a shabby contrast in the middle. The differentiated economic status alienated the brothers in their daily life, even though

they still lived in the same yard. Feeling ashamed for the cottage, Zhenfei tried to borrow money from his brothers, but neither lent him a helping hand.

It was since the mid-2000s that the hearsay about a village-wide relocation project began to prevail in the neighbourhood. Fanchang Group, the industrial giant in the township, planned to expand the scale of its factory. Should the scheme have been implemented, the villagers living next to the plant would have all been moved from the locality. In the meantime, the successive environmental incidents caused by the synthetic fibre factory of Fanchang Group made the local residents deeply concerned about their living environment. Local people cited the adverse health impact of pollution as a main reason to urge the entrepreneur and local government officials to take actions and accelerate the pace of the relocation project. Zhenfei was among the villagers who most eagerly looked forward to the relocation. He believed that the relocation funded by the government and the business would be a fantastic opportunity to improve the housing conditions of his family. This concern represented many local residents' real intention of their rigorous mobilisation for the relocation plan. Zhenfei heard from the neighbours that the compensation for the relocated families would be calculated according to the area and quality of their current houses. In order to get more compensation, Zhenfei rebuilt the pigsty in his yard and turned it into a shed where he claimed as a part of his house for storage and guest accommodation. To the disappointment of Zhenfei, the township government announced to abort the project in 2009 because of the funding shortage. Worse still, Zhenfei's shed was reported by an anonymous neighbour as an 'unapproved illegal building' (weizhang jianzhu 违章建筑) and was torn down by the township government. This incurred a loss for Zhenfei and rendered him the laughing stock of the village.

Although the public funded relocation scheme was abandoned, it deepened villagers' anxiety about the threat of industrial pollution. Some financially advanced families began to think about moving away from the village and purchasing houses elsewhere, which created a new trend in the local residents' housing demand. The common destinations were the less-polluted downtown areas in Xiaoshan or the City of Hangzhou, where people could enjoy better environment and access more social

resources at the same time. However, the high housing price in the urban area shattered the dream of most villagers. Among the 38 households in the 1st villagers' group of Weiken, only 4 managed to move away from the village since 2010. Zhenfei's second eldest brother was among the relocated families. Zhenfei commented on this with obvious displeasure, since his brother 'would rather leave his house in the village empty than sharing it with his brother of a same blood (qin didi 亲弟弟)' [Research log 51: Interview with Zhenfei, conducted on 2nd August, 2014].

Noteworthy enough for this study, ever since relocation entered into local residents' view as an option to improve housing conditions and to avoid the risks of pollution simultaneously, the whole village became enthusiastic about it. When the hearsays about government-funded relocation in scale broadcast the village, everyone felt happy with the prospect to move away from their hometown, with no voice questioning over whether the one-off break-up of the community would demolish the tradition, value, and ethics preserved in and by the neighbourhood. Later, when some of the local families chose to purchase estate elsewhere and leave the community, villagers expressed more envious feelings than the reluctance to part with the old neighbours. Weiken Villagers' mentality about relocation best exemplified the diminishing cohesiveness of rural community and the descending significance of traditional human relationships in rural residents' everyday social life along with the economic prosperity inspired by industrialisation.

According to Terry McKinley and Lina Wang,³²¹ housing reflects the wealth and the demand for consumption of households in rural China. Weiken village underwent a significant economic reform in the 1970s and 1980s when the collective form of production was gradually replaced by privatised economy. During this period of time, local people almost unanimously abandoned the mode of production and the lifestyle in the 'leisure economy'. Instead, they took up diversified employments and worked hard towards the improvement of living standard and the accumulation of family wealth. The changing definition of 'ideal housing' from the brick-structured cottage,

³²¹ Terry McKinley and Lina Wang, "Housing and Wealth in Rural China," *China Economic Review* 3, no. 2 (1992): 195-211. Terry McKinley, *The Distribution of Wealth in Rural China* (Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 2016).

the storeyed house, all the way to the estate in the downtown area throughout the past four decades marked the significantly improved family finance of villagers in Weiken. In the meantime, it reflected the widening economic gap among households in the locality, since the 'posh' housing gradually became a privilege of the economically advanced families.

In the tide of consumerism that struck rural China since the reform and opening-up, villagers in Weiken began to treat housing as a parameter to measure family wealth and life quality. It was such a direct and clear standard, as the housing condition is exteriorly exposed to the public. As Zhenfei's case indicates, the housing condition revealed the 'hierarchy' in the locality: those who could afford the best housing of the time enjoyed the admiration from the neighbours, whereas those who fell behind the trend withstood great psychological pressure. The classification of housing in Weiken was a miniature of the social stratification based on rural residents' economic status. The stratification significantly changed local people's value defined by the traditional human relationships and challenged the binding force in the differential mode of association.

The changing preference of housing among villagers in Weiken further exemplifies the tendency of disintegration in the rural community. Although Weiken, as an economically advanced village in North Zhejiang, witnessed fewer emigrating labourers that dissembled the unity of village,³²² it was still exposed under the risk of member loss and disintegration. Even though the village still stayed together as a geographical entity for now, the diminishing cohesiveness and the fading awareness of community reflected in the villagers' eagerness for relocation foreshadowed its obscure future as an integrate unit. The degradation of rural community into scattered nuclear families, as suggested by the study, is an inevitable side-effect of digesting economic development in the tide of rural industrialisation.

³²² Minchuan Yang, "Reshaping Peasant Culture and Community: Rural Industrialization in a Chinese Village," *Modern China* 20, no. 2 (1994): 157-79. Murphy, *How Migrant Labor is Changing Rural China*.

6.3 The ‘rationalised’ social life and the changing functioning mode of human relationships

Following the discussion on the connotation of human relationships and its contemporary variations in rural China, this section explores the realm and the mode in which the old and the new social ethics function in villagers’ everyday life. Based on the examination of human relationships’ origin and the source of compliance in the rural communities, Fei Xiaotong points out that human relationships have been internalised as a code of behaviour and morality that ‘covers the main themes of rural residents’ social life’,³²³ namely family relations, community services, and production activities.³²⁴ The codes sustain the normal operation of rural society in China, where ‘rituals and the elder people’s rule play a central role’³²⁵ in the social system ‘with an inactive government’³²⁶ and ‘without litigation’.³²⁷ In more recent literature, many scholars cite their own observations from the field to support Fei’s argument. For instance, Hans Steinmüller examines the Confucian ‘relational ethics’ in the Chinese moral frameworks and argues that the cultural values are essentialised in the daily life of rural residents.³²⁸ Likewise, Mayfair Mei-hui Yang³²⁹ and Yan Yunxiang³³⁰ track the flow of gifts as an evidence of the prevalence of reciprocity bounded by human relationships. They argue that the reciprocal practices form a culture and custom-centred pattern of behaviour and morality in the everyday mode of social interaction.

In comparison, this research sheds light on a shrinking realm of influence and a changing function of traditional human relationships and the social ethics based on the findings from the two cancer villages under investigation. As will be discussed in the following two narratives, the diminishing influence of human relationships is jointly shaped by the new issues in local people’s social life and the introduction of external powers to the ‘relatively self-contained’ rural communities. My observations resonate with Yang Shanhua and Hou Hongrui’s work, which clarifies the incompatibility

³²³ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 77.

³²⁴ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 95, 114.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

³²⁸ Steinmüller, *Communities of Complicity*, 21.

³²⁹ Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets*.

³³⁰ Yan, *The Flow of Gifts*.

between the relation-based social networks and the rational principles in the modern commercial activities. The phenomenon is termed as ‘the rationalisation of the differential mode of association’ (chaxu geju de lixinghua 差序格局的理性化).³³¹ According to Yang and Hou, rural Chinese people’s social life can be divided into two parts, namely the traditional affairs (e.g. rituals, relief works, and reproduction) and the businesses led by economic interest.³³² The influence of human relationships is refined in the sector of traditional affairs and is thus subject to an unavoidable decline nowadays. In the meantime, the changing power relations and political culture within and without the villages also limit the function of the traditional human relationships as a code of conducts and morality. The rise of administrative forces representing the states, business powers, local elites, and legal power in the village has reshaped the social landscape and the institutional settings defined by human relationships in the locality. Consequentially, the traditional ruling pattern in the villages has to consult and collaborate with the newly emerged powers so as to keep alive and to maintain its remaining impact on villagers’ social life. This observation denotes a new power structure and balance in the rural society as a consequence of its digestion of industrialisation and development.

6.3.1 Jiangbin Village

The following account features an old man’s persistence in keeping the spirit and function of the clan ‘alive’ in spite of the members’ decaying interest and dedication. Being the head of the Feng Family, the biggest and the once most influential clan in Jiangbin, Feng Huiquan strives to fulfil his role by actively initiating fundraising campaigns for the cancer patients of a same lineage and intervening in disputes among households in the locality. However, his influence has been greatly weakened as a result of many social changes the village has undergone. The fall of Huiquan’s power illustrates the changing power relations in the village, where the authority of the elders based on the traditional human relationships and the social ethics is

³³¹ Yang and Hou, “Xueyuan, yinyuan, qinqing yu liyi,” 51-58.

³³² Yuhua Guo 郭于华, “Nongcun xiandaihua guocheng zhong de chuantong qinyuan guanxi 农村现代化过程中的传统亲缘关系,” *Shehuixue yanjiu* 社会学研究 6 (1994): 49-58. Xiaoye She 折晓叶, *Cunzhuang de zaizao: Yige “chaoji cunzhuang” de shehui bianqian* 村庄的再造: 一个“超级村庄”的社会变迁 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1997).

gradually replaced by that of the elites from the younger generation. It also sheds light on the scope of influence of kinship networks, which serves as an evidence of the ‘dichotomy of social affairs in rural China’ as a consequence of the ‘rationalisation’ of the differential mode of association.³³³

Feng Huiquan is a 72-year-old retired engineer from the Xiaoshan No.2 Sewage Treatment Plant. He has been living in the old house of the Feng Family in the Dajing Lane of Jiangbin Village ever since his birth. It was also in the house that he established his own nuclear family and raised two sons with his wife. Huiquan assumed the role as the head of the clan since his retirement in 2001. He was regarded as the most suitable candidate for the position since he had a respectable employment and possessed sufficient knowledge about the community. Most importantly, Huiquan was a senior member of the family. The character Hui (惠) in his name indicated his senior rank in the family seniority, followed by Jian (建) and Qi (启) in the names of the younger generations. Huiquan took over the ancestral shrine cabinet from his late uncle as a ritual of stepping into the place of the clan head. At the beginning, he was confident enough to assume the role as an organiser and mediator in family affairs. However, the tasks turned out to be not that easy as he expected.

Huiquan was familiar with the role of the clan in education, rituals, and gatherings in the traditional context. He was brought up in the era when the clan played a pivotal role in the social life of villagers. Huiquan received his elementary education in the private school run and operated by the Feng Family, together with other children of a similar age from the same lineage. In his memory, the Feng Family used to have a grand ancestral hall which accommodated all the rituals for ancestral worship and important family occasions such as marriages and funerals. The ancestral hall was torn down during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and was not rebuilt afterwards. The memorial tablets and altars were reduced to a shrine cabinet, which was kept in a separate room in the clan head’s house. Consequentially, the rituals of ancestral worshipping were simplified into grave sweeping in the Qingming Festival on an annual basis. The big family gatherings were a best part of Huiquan’s early memory.

³³³ Yang and Hou, “Xueyuan, yinyuan, qinqing yu liyi,” 51-58.

Usually, the members of the clan gathered for important events and festivals several times throughout the year, with each branch (房) hosting the banquet in turn. The food on the feasts was the children's biggest delight in the era of enduring scarcity. The banquets brought the households together and served as an important occasion of socialising, during which information and opinions were exchanged. This reinforced the function of clan as a body that supervised and guided public opinions. Through this process, the traditional ethics of respecting elders and filial piety were internalised in family members' everyday behavioural code. However, the frequency of the gatherings has been reduced at the recent stage as a result of people's decaying interest and commitment to the family events. Rather than gathering hundreds of family members in the locality, people tend to keep the banquet within the households of a same branch nowadays. In the eyes of Huiquan, the clan is not as united as it used to be decades ago.

Apart from the declining solidarity within the clan, a number of new issues in the current rural society also imposed a big challenge to Feng Huiquan's role as the family head. Among the issues, industrialisation and its side-effects are the toughest to deal with, since it challenged the traditional lifestyle of rural residents and involved various factors including economic interest, administrative power, and family ethics, which were difficult to balance. Huiquan felt it particularly hard to coordinate the families in the clan when it came to the new issues in the era of industrialisation. He could not mobilise the human relationships as a moral tool to direct family members' stance and action. The absence of cohesiveness among families in the same clan resulted in failures of cooperation to tide over difficulties.

The first setback Huiquan encountered after the assumption of the responsibilities in the clan was the fundraising for a family in which both the husband and the wife were diagnosed of cancer in succession. Feng Jianxiang, the husband of the nuclear family, was employed in the printing and dyeing company as a worker before he died of gastric cancer in 2002. It was almost at the same time of Jianxiang's death that his wife obtained the diagnosis of breast cancer from hospital. The successive blows had rendered the family in a difficult situation. Huiquan believed that the clan should offer a helping hand to the widow who was struggling to survive. He decided to raise fund

from within the kinship networks to cover the further medical expenses incurred by the disease.

In 2002, cancer had not yet become a heatedly discussed issue in Jiangbin Village. Villagers questioned the severity of the disease and the family's affordability of the medical costs. The fact that Jianxiang's family had long been marginalised in the village worsened the situation. Rumour spread in the neighbourhood that Jianxiang, as one of the first few workers employed in the industrial sector, had made big money from the employment. The disease was but a sacrifice he made for the fortune he had dug from the industry. Some others linked the tragic with the lifestyle of the couple, citing the poor hygiene conditions in the household as the culprit of the disease, which 'left them to eat the bitter fruit' with 'no one else being able to help' [Research log 148: Interview with Huiquan, conducted on 18th November, 2014]. The irresponsible comments broadcast within the clan as well. Huiquan tried to forbid the proliferation of the rumour among the relatives in the clan by reiterating the issue to the senior members of branches. However, he could not stop the privately-delivered messages through grape vines.

The rumours foreshadowed Huiquan's unsuccessful attempts of fundraising for Jianxiang's wife. At the beginning, Huiquan thought of banquet as an occasion to clarify Jianxiang's situation to and attract concern from the clan members. Nevertheless, the tradition of hosting banquet as a fashion of gathering was not popular in the village anymore, especially among the younger generations. Huiquan held the banquet at home. Rather than making it a big moment in the clan like that of the old days, Huiquan only managed to call in some senior people of his age. When being asked to pass over the words to the young people from their own branch, the sympathetic elderlies said they could hardly do anything because it was their sons and daughters that controlled the household budget. They no longer respected the senior people and listened to their words [Research log 148: Interview with Huiquan, conducted on 18th November, 2014].

Huiquan was disappointed by the outcome of the first round of mobilisation. Later, he decided to pay home visits to the member households in the clan. However, Huiquan could not exert his authority as the clan head in the private persuasion either. Many, if not all, the families turned him down by complaining about their own tight family

budget. As Wang Xiaoxia³³⁴ and Bu Changli³³⁵ suggest, human relationships function on the basis of consent in the community. The power of human relationships is guaranteed by the scrutiny of the collective. The fact that Huiquan did not manage to bring the campaign of fundraising to the public realm doomed its failure. Fortunately, Jianxiang's wife made through the worst of the illness and became healthy again after the operation and medical treatments. Huiquan used his own network to find her a part-time job as an order packer for an umbrella manufacturer. In this way, she could work at home and make a living with her own hands.

The setback of fundraising for the cancer patients in the family made Huiquan rethink about the role and the function of human relationships and elder people's authority in Jiangbin. However, before adapting to his role as the clan head in the changing social settings of the village, Huiquan encountered another dilemma when he was trying to intervene in the local people's mobilisation against the Jianfeng Plastic Company. The intervention was developed into a crisis of trust, which made Huiquan 'an annoying busybody meddling in other people's business' (duo guan xianshi 多管闲事) in the neighbours' mouths [Research log 148: Interview with Huiquan, conducted on 18th November, 2014]. Apparently, the members of the Feng Family did not want the clan power to step into the affairs concerning specific household economic interest as an arbitrator. As a result, they turned to the new authorities in the locality instead of giving consent to the senior people in their kinship network.

Before the Spring Festival of 2003, villagers noticed the neighbouring plastic manufacturer starting to operate extra hours till midnight. The noise of the machines annoyed the residents living in the adjacent areas. People filed complaints to the township government and organised several rounds of protest. They proposed a 'compensation or termination' offer to Feng Jianfeng, the owner of the company, and threatened to block the factory if he did not take quick actions to address the problem.

³³⁴ Wang, "Rujia wenhua zhong de renji guanxi lilun," 45-47.

³³⁵ Bu, "'Chaxu geju' de lilun quanshi ji xiandai neihan," 21-29.

Jianfeng could not keep up with the schedule and meet the requirement of the clients if he shortened the operating time of the factory. As a result, Jianfeng sought assistance from his uncle Huiquan, expecting that he could step in and speak a few words in favour of the company so as to pull the business through the critical moments before the Chinese New Year. Huiquan noticed that many of the participants in the protest were from the Feng Family. He regarded it as a morally unjustified deed to deliberately make things difficult (zhao mafan 找麻烦) for members of a same clan. As a consequence, he decided to speak on behalf of Jianfeng in his capacity as the clan head and persuade the relatives to quit from the campaign. He passed the words to all the branches of the lineage and appealed for understanding on behalf of Jianfeng. However, the call did not get much positive response.

Worse still, criticisms about Huiquan proliferated in the kinship networks, where people questioned him for his partiality. The incident set forth a crisis of confidence within the clan. Rather than keeping it private within the clan as a ‘family affair’, villagers sought support from Feng Jiange, the party secretary of the village. They pressed for a fair solution from the village committee to safeguard their economic interest and right. Jiange is the nephew of Huiquan as well. He represented the middle-aged local elites who assumed the administrative power in the locality and played the role as a backbone in the grassroots governance. Although Jiange maintained a difficult position between the demanding protestors and the senior people in the clan, he exerted his administrative power in favour of the victims towards a negotiation, in which Jianfeng agreed to set aside a significant proportion of the profit as compensation to the households nearby.

As can be seen from the narrative above, the diminishing influence of Huiquan as a senior member of the clan indicated the changing power landscape and the weakening impact of human relationships in villagers’ moral and social life. Contemporary rural China observes a rebellious trend against the traditional social orders along with the country’s revolutionary industrialisation and the associated profound economic and social changes.³³⁶ In this trend, the order of seniority characterised by human

³³⁶ Jonathan Unger, *The Transformation of Rural China* (London: Routledge, 2016).

relationships is toppled. Meanwhile, the devolution of political power from the central government, the grassroots democratisation, and the increasing level of autonomy in the Chinese villages foster the rise of political elites from the locality in the local governance.³³⁷ As Gregory A. Ruf³³⁸ and Lily Lee Tsai³³⁹ observe, elites have gradually surpassed seniors in the power distribution of rural communities, which shakes the rule by elders based on the traditional human relationships.

As for the ordinary villagers, their interest in and dedication to the traditional social values preserved by the human relationships has declined too. Rather than treating clan as a most important institute in their social life, rural residents ‘differentiate the social affairs in a rationalised manner’ and ‘tell the interests (li 利) apart from the rites (li 礼)’.³⁴⁰ This has resulted a dichotomy in the influence of human relationships, as described by Yang Shanhua and Hou Hongrui in their assumption of the ‘rationalisation’ of the differential mode of association.³⁴¹ Human relationships only function in public affairs related to the traditions and rites, such as rituals and celebrations. When it comes to the issues concerning households’ economic interest, people usually prioritise the benefits of the core family and left the traditional ethics aside. Based on the ethnography of Huiquan and the disputes within the Feng’s clan in this section, I argue that the rationalisation of the differential mode of association serves as another evidence of local residents’ adaptation to and digestion of industrialisation and the associated new challenges, since industrialisation has significantly diversified the issues in rural residents’ social life and complicated the interest structure of the local society.

³³⁷ Kevin J. O’Brien and Lianjiang Li, “Accommodating ‘Democracy’ in a One-party State: Introducing Village Elections in China,” *The China Quarterly* 162 (2000): 465-89. Kevin J. O’Brien, “Villagers, Elections, and Citizenship in Contemporary China,” *Modern China* 27, no. 4 (2001): 407-35. Whiting, *Power and Wealth in Rural China*. Guohui Wang, *Tamed Village “Democracy”: Elections, Governance and Clientelism in a Contemporary Chinese Village* (New York: Springer, 2014).

³³⁸ Ruf, *Cadres and Kin*.

³³⁹ Tsai, “Cadres, Temple and Lineage Institutions, and Governance in Rural China,” 1-27.

³⁴⁰ Yang and Hou, “Xueyuan, yinyuan, qinqing yu liyi,” 51-58.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

6.3.2 *Weiken Village*

In the following ethnography, I present a protest initiated by land-deprived villagers in Weiken against the polluting industry and the disputes around the distribution of compensation. It aims to reveal the decaying role of human relationships as a set of moral codes to justify people's deeds. In Weiken, a highly industrialised and modernised village, human relationships have compromised with administrative forces, economic powers, and the modern system of litigation. In the compromise, human relationships gradually lose their independence and significance. The limitation of the traditional human relationships in the contemporary rural communities manifests itself twofold: individual villagers lack moral criteria for their actions whereas the village collective lacks a moral standard for the arbitration of public affairs. By recording and analysing the local people's struggles for their property and environmental rights, this narrative illustrates the collapse of the moral basis in the differential mode of association, which renders the village into 'a collection of nuclear families'.³⁴²

I passed by Grandpa Kang's drink stand in an extremely hot afternoon in the early August of 2014. It was literally a stand: Grandpa Kang sat beside a chest freezer under a parasol – that was all the equipment for his small business. Grandpa Kang was approaching his 80s. Rather than benefiting from his children (*xiang zisun fu* 享子孙福) and enjoying ease and comfort in his remaining years, he had to endure the scorching hotness of the summer time so as to subsidise the family. His stand was on the side of the road near his yard, where he could connect the freezer with the electricity power at home using two wiring boards. The targeted customers were the young workers in Fanchang Group, some of whom might grab a cold beverage or an ice cream when they finished their shift in the factory. Grandpa Kang could make 'RMB 5 *jiao* or 1 *kuai*' (*wujiao yikuai* 五角一块) from each transaction, which added up to an average income of 50 to 60 *yuan* per day [Research log 32: Interview with Grandpa Kang, conducted on 10th July, 2014]. 'I am too old to work on anything else, but I have to make money for a living,' said Grandpa Kang. 'It is a small business but it does not take too

³⁴² Xuefeng He 贺雪峰, *Xin xiangtu Zhongguo* 新乡土中国 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2013).

much effort.’ [Research log 32: Interview with Grandpa Kang, conducted on 10th July, 2014] The hot summer days were not annoying in Grandpa Kang’s eyes, since the cold beverage sold well on these days.

Grandpa Kang lived with his youngest son, who contracted land to grow vegetable in the nearby township. His daughter-in-law is a tailor in town. Grandpa Kang did not have any pension, which made him feel indebted as an ‘extra mouth to feed’ in the family [Research log 32: Interview with Grandpa Kang, conducted on 10th July, 2014]. As a result, he had to continue working so as to alleviate the financial burden of the younger generation. Talking about pension, Grandpa Kang became extremely disappointed. He cursed the Fanchang Company and the Township government for acquiring local people’s land unilaterally, which was almost an act of robbery. In the meantime, he felt sad about the results of the compensation distribution within the village, which ‘represented a moral degeneracy in the world nowadays’ (daode lunsang 道德沦丧) [Research log 32: Interview with Grandpa Kang, conducted on 10th July, 2014].

The expansion scheme of Fanchang Group in 2005 set forth a big land acquisition campaign, which affected almost all the households in the 1st to 5th villagers’ groups of Weiken. Backed up by the township government, the company offered a compensation package to the villagers, in which it offered to buy commercial pension insurances to the local people in exchange for their right to use the land for farming purposes. Grandpa Kang’s family had a plot with a coverage of nearly 2 *mu*. The family was keen on the offer, as Grandpa Kang counted on the pension to free himself from the land and enjoy a relaxed time after retirement. However, disputes around the form and the amount of the pension insurance emerged between villagers and the group: the local people insisted on a fully reimbursed insurance distributed on a per capital basis, whereas the company only agreed to shoulder a proportion of the insurance’s cost and tended to compensate the local households in ratio with their land usership.

The negotiation with endless bargaining was painful to both parties. For the villagers, it was particularly difficult to collaboratively push the negotiation to a favourable end because the opinions within the village were not unified. As a ‘man-made’ village

intended for cooperation in production, Weiken consists of migrant families from the nearby areas and hence does not accommodate much kinship relationship. The absence of institutions representing the authority based on the traditional human relationships made it hard for the local families to unite their voices. The families' stances were scattered as a result of their different economic and political stances. As a self-employed farmer, Grandpa Kang did not need to care about the pressure from the local business and the administrative powers. All he demanded was a higher ratio of reimbursement for the insurance from Fanchang Group. As for the employees in the company and the villagers working in the public sector however, they had to make moves cautiously and think about the relations with the employer and the political sensitivity of the issue, since the local government openly announced that the scheme was 'related to the township development' and called on support from the local people. Without the human relationships to unite the local people and specify the interest of the collective, the business and the political powers stepped in and took the control of speech in the village. They persuaded the villagers via different means and introduced legal practices by signing contract to the families so as to enforce the implementation of the scheme. By the end of 2015, the negotiation came to a conclusion, with the company offering 80 places of commercial pension insurance to the land-deprived villagers and letting the villagers decide how to distribute by themselves

The policy picked by the company for the villagers aimed at subsidising the beneficiaries' life when they got old. People opted in for the policy needed to pay in an annual sum of RMB 5000 *yuan* for 10 years before getting to 55 years old, or a one-off payment of RMB 35,000 *yuan* if they had already been 55 or above. Beneficiaries could get a monthly pension payback of RMB 1,500 *yuan* after reaching the age of 55 till they decease. Fanchang Group agreed to reimburse 75% of the policy expenses. This was appealing to the villagers in Weiken. Those villagers living on the yield of their family plots, like Grandpa Kang, were desperately in need of the insurance to secure their livelihood after the land acquisition. Other villagers employed in the business or public sector would also like to take advantage of the scheme, as there was much to gain and nothing to lose for their family finance. The

big demand for the insurance introduced another problem to the village, i.e., how to distribute the policies among the member families.

Since the compensation was only intended for the five villagers' groups, the township government and the village committee asked the head of each group to organise villagers for discussion. At the beginning, villagers brought forward a proposal that gave the senior people the priority to choose whether to buy the policy. It was suggested to rank the villagers according to their age and to consult the decision of each member following this sequence, till all the 80 places were taken. However, the plan attracted fierce objections. Many villages disagreed with it because they did not have a reason to concede with the elderly people. Some also questioned the efficiency, since the younger villagers are expected to benefit from the pension scheme for a longer term compared to the senior villagers who had already passed the age of 55. Later, the five group heads volunteered to evaluate the financial conditions of each member family and let the most impoverished families decide whether to opt in for the insurance first. This plan was opposed by the villagers again. Some people commented in an ironic tone that the families at the poorest end might not be able to afford the 25% of the cost even if they wanted to get the policy. More villagers expressed their lack of trust to the group heads and feared that the results might be partial and unequal if they let the five people decided the sequence of priority. Finally, villagers reached a compromise which balanced the interest of individual families and the ethics based on human relationships. Since there were 61 households in the five villagers' groups, people agreed to give each household one place and distributed the rest of the policies among those who had a more urgent need, including families with disabled, unemployed, old, and sick members.

However, when the township government and the village committee announced the implementation of the compensation scheme, the villagers were surprised to find that the number of policies for the five villagers' groups shrank from 80 as agreed by the Fanchang Group to less than 50. Many corrupt township government officials and village cadres also noticed that the pension insurance sponsored by the polluting business was a good deal. As a result, they arranged their close relatives to fill in the application form before the places were offered to the real victims of the land acquisition. Talking about this, Grandpa Kang was infuriated. However, he and his

neighbours could not do anything apart from accepting the bitter result as their fate. ‘The officials have absolute authority (difangguan jiushi tuhuangdi 地方官就是土皇帝). They can do whatever they want in the township without caring about the consequences, leaving us ordinary villagers to pay the bills,’ said Grandpa Kang. ‘The officials are rural residents like us originally. It is the political power that classifies us into grades (quanli ba women fencheng san liu jiu deng 权力把我们分成三六九等). I want to question whether the officials still maintain the conscience when they climb to the upper grades.’ [Research log 32: Interview with Grandpa Kang, conducted on 10th July, 2014]

In order to distribute the remaining places of insurance, villagers gathered again for a solution. Apparently, no member family wanted to be excluded from the compensation scheme. To make it fair, the villagers had to organise a ballot. Grandpa Kang was not lucky enough in the draw. His household ended up being among the ten-some families that did not get a place to buy the pension insurance. It was a heavy blow to the family that had long been living on a tight budget. Grandpa Kang tried to talk to the township officials and the village cadre to see if it was possible to create another place for the ‘poor old guy seeking for a living’, as he referred himself to. In the meantime, he begged his neighbours in the villagers’ gatherings, hoping to find anyone willing to transfer a place to him. However, the effort all ended up in vain. Unlike the elderlies that get due respect in the traditional Chinese villages reflected in Fei Xiaotong’s ethnographies,³⁴³ Grandpa Kang’s experience exemplified a powerless and pathetic state of senior people in Weiken Village, who were not treated with respect in conformity with ethics prescribed by the traditional human relationships in rural China.

Grandpa Kang’s recount denotes the decaying role of human relationships in the social life of rural China. The ethics sustained by human relationship has gradually become subordinated to the political and economic powers in the locality. The fading morality in Weiken Village was not only a result of its institutional settings, where lineage associations was not in place, but also tightly associated with the change of agenda in the everyday life and local people’s concept inspired by industrialisation.

³⁴³ Fei, *Lucun nongtian*, 27. Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 114.

The absence of human relationships resulted in morally unrestricted actions at the individual level. This was demonstrated in the township officials and village cadres' embezzlement of welfare originally intended for the collective. Meanwhile, without functioning human relationships, it was difficult for the village to form an effective set of moral standards to decide upon public affairs in the community. In the discussion about how to distribute the 80 places of insurance among local families, villagers were swinging among different options, with no one being able to endorse the traditional morality and persuade others. As Yan Yunxiang argues, it is the order, or 'xu' (序), that preserves the vertical structure of the differential mode of association.³⁴⁴ When the human relationships and the social orders no longer exist, the functional social circles and the village itself, respectively referred to as the middle and the outer layers in the differential mode of association, will also disappear, leaving scattered nuclear families as the only entities in the rural society.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter examines the changing morality in rural China as an indispensable aspect of local people and local communities' digestion of industrialisation. As Fei Xiaotong himself and many scholars argue, morality is the 'binding force' of the traditional Chinese society.³⁴⁵ It maintains the 'vertical' structure in the differential mode of association in rural communities.³⁴⁶ The morality in traditional rural Chinese society is based on human relationships. After clarifying the concept and connotation of human relationships with reference to Fei's book *From the Soil* and his other ethnographic research, this chapter probes into the connotation and function of human relationships in the contemporary era, against the backdrop of the newly emerged challenges in rural residents' social life inspired by industrialisation. The first two narratives feature the changing moral discourse in the villages, where the traditional human relationships were challenged by the prevailing pursuit of administrative and

³⁴⁴ Yan, "Chaxu geju yu Zhongguo wenhua de dengjiguan," 201-13.

³⁴⁵ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 71.

³⁴⁶ Sun, "'Guanxi', shehui guanxi yu shehui jiegou," 20-30. Bu, "'Chaxu geju' de lilun quanshi ji xiandai neihan," 21-29. Yan, "Chaxu geju yu Zhongguo wenhua de dengjiguan," 201-13. Ma, "Chaxu geju," 131-42. Xuewei Zhai 翟学伟, "Zailun 'chaxu geju' de gongxian, juxian yu lilun yichan "再论“差序格局”的贡献、局限与理论遗产," *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中国社会科学, no. 3 (2009): 152-58.

economic power in the tide of industrialisation, power devolution, and consumerism. The latter two narratives give an account of the changing function mode of human relationships. In the two villages, the traditional ethics associated with the human relationships either was marginalised and confined in the specific areas or became subordinated to the local powers and went on the verge of extinction.

Human relationships are by nature the differentiation of people. According to Yan Yunxiang, 'it denies the equal status of people and the equilibrium between rights and obligations',³⁴⁷ thus laying a basis for the inequality of Chinese society. It is noteworthy that the differentiation incorporated in the human relationships is rooted in and justified by the traditional culture, or the Confucianism to be specific, of the country.³⁴⁸ However, human relationships are now challenged and gradually replaced by a new type of differentiation in the rural society of China. The social stratification of contemporary Chinese society is characterised by people's possession of and access to social resources. It is according to the economic and political resources that residents are differentiated and distributed into different socio-economic tiers.³⁴⁹ The following figure (See Figure 6.1) reveals a series of substantial differences between the two patterns of social organisation. The transforming pattern of organisation in rural China from the traditional differential mode of association to the contemporary social stratification is tightly associated with the nature of social affairs and rural residents' ideology. For one thing, in the tide of industrialisation and rural development, families in rural China observe the change from collective economy to private economy. Accordingly, people are no longer satisfied with the self-sufficient lifestyle. They strive towards a more affluent life and better guaranteed welfare, of which the access to social resources is a pre-requisite. This articulates a fierce competition among rural residents and hence the stratification in the society. For another, the prevailing consumerism and the decaying significance of traditional culture in rural China set forth a number of conceptual changes among rural residents.

³⁴⁷ Yan, "Chaxu geju yu Zhongguo wenhua de dengjiguan," 201.

³⁴⁸ Fei, Hamilton, and Wang, *From the Soil*, 72.

³⁴⁹ Bian, "Chinese Social Stratification and Social Mobility," 91-116. Lu, *Dangdai Zhongguo shehui jiegou*. Lu, "Dangdai Zhongguo shehui jiecong de fenhua yu liudong," 1-9. Qiang Li, *Social Stratification in Contemporary China: Definitive Survey and Analysis* (Los Angeles: Bridge21 Publications, 2016).

As shown in the narratives of this chapter, the new social challenges and the changing ideas of villagers have significantly weakened the influence of human relationships and the differential mode of association based on them. Noteworthy for this study, industrialisation serves as a context for all the changes related to the moral landscape of the researched villages. As a consequence, I propose to comprehend the changing ethics in the rural communities as a manifestation of rural China's digestion of industrialisation.

	Differential mode of association	Contemporary social stratification
Determinant	Human relationships and proximity	Social resources
Format	Individual centred concentric circular structure	Tiers with clear boundary
Characteristic	Elasticity and relativity	Rigidity
Influence sphere	Traditional affairs	Affairs related to economic interest and political power
Channel of function	Moral obligations	Solidified class division

Figure 6.1. Comparisons between two modes of social association

Complementary to the previous two empirical chapters, this chapter focuses on the social order as the vertical pattern in the differential mode of association. It completes and finalises the multi-dimensional inspection of Fei Xiaotong's prestigious theory about rural society in China. Fei's theoretical legacy lays a sounded basis for the discussion in this chapter. As he points out, human relationships are the ethical power that maintains the functioning of rural society. To explore the connotation and the function of human relationships in current China thus becomes an underlying hint and logic in the development of my arguments. The empirical data presented in this chapter in turn enrich Fei Xiaotong's thoughts and the relevant research on contemporary China by providing insights into the changes in social ethics which accompany the tide of industrialisation.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

This thesis presents a picture of Chinese rural residents' social life at the time when industrialisation and development become a theme of the country. It focuses on how the residents perceive, process, and react to the changes and challenges brought by industrialisation to their everyday life. As the 14 ethnographic portraits in the empirical chapters indicate, industrialisation has substantially influenced every aspect of villagers' life, ranging from livelihood, lifestyle, welfare, to health and well-being. The fact that rural residents have begun to live with industrialisation and to embrace development reminds us of one's need for food, water, and air: industrialisation has literally come to be experienced as a necessity and a part of life in rural China. As a consequence, this thesis borrows the metaphor of 'digestion' to describe villagers' adaption, interaction, and internalisation of industrialisation and its impact. The connotation of digesting industrialisation is manifold. Empirical data from Jiangbin and Weiken demonstrate that villagers seldom confine their relations with industrialisation in the form of passive adaption. Rather, they struggle for a better position in the tide of industrialisation and try to take advantage of it. At the same time, the adaption villages made for the development sets up the social context for rural industrialisation, which is a process of 'internalisation' as this project terms to illustrate the mutual-shaping of adaption and industrialisation.

The ways rural residents digest industrialisation and its side-effects are best reflected in the changes of social life in the villages. The three empirical chapters engage with the changes of individual villager's interest orientation and behavioural code, the social structures and the networks within the villages, and social ethics and its sphere of influence. The ethnographic cases cited in the chapters clarify and exemplify the significant role of industrialisation in reshaping rural residents' value and practices when it comes to the issues of employment, land acquisition, relocation, pollution, health, compensation, etc. The life stories of the villagers and the documentation of the rural communities under the theme of 'change' demonstrate the process in which industrialisation is digested by the local society and the local people. The changes are triggered by the new issues in the era of industrialisation. They simultaneously

represent local people's effort to adapt to and benefit from the trend of development and a broader background where industrialisation takes place in rural China. In this sense, the discussion of the behavioural, social, and ethical changes in the two researched villages responds to the theme of this thesis, i.e., how rural residents digest industrialisation and its side-effects. The presentation of the changes is structured with reference to the three components of Fei Xiaotong's theory of differential mode of association, namely individuality, the concentric circular pattern of community organisation, and the bonding social ethics of human relationship. As seen in the thesis, Fei's theories not only frame my analysis of the social changes in rural China structurally, but also serve as a baseline and a subject of comparison through time and space. In return, this study enriches Fei's theory about rural China empirically.

The inspection on the changes in rural Chinese society inspired by industrialisation sets forth a deeper quest for its driving forces. The empirical cases touch the role of the flourishing capitalism, the overwhelming urbanisation, the grassroots institutional reform, and the gradually wakening legal awareness of the local people in the social life of contemporary rural China. These factors, as the underlying motives for the transformations in the villages, will be summarised and analysed in the following section. When examining rural residents and rural communities' digestion of industrialisation in a wider socio-economic framework, this project proposes that they are by nature digesting the policies, the structural transformation, and the social developments of the country as a whole.

The metaphor of 'digestion' is attached with theoretical significance in the context of this study for three reasons. First, it delineates the complexity of industrialisation that resembles the various sources of daily intake for a human body, be it good or bad for health. For rural residents in China, industrialisation can be a economically rewarding process but biased and toxic at the same time if we take its side-effects into consideration. Rural residents take industrialisation as a 'bundle offer' or a 'set menu'. This bands my study together with existing literature featuring industrialisation and modernisation as a double-edged sword in rural China, where the benefit is simultaneously reckoned as a liability for the residents. Second, the concept of 'digesting industrialisation' denotes the nature of the relationship between the state-endorsed route of development and the localities. Like the digestive system that

cannot choose what to process, villagers and their communities have to routinize industrialisation as a part of daily life. It resonates with the phenomenon of ‘forced development’ recorded in existing scholarship on rural China, which is believed as an origin for many associated social problems. Third, the digestion in human body is a complicated process. It corresponds to the fact, as my thesis discusses, that rural residents try to not only adapt to and co-exist with, but also take advantage of industrialisation. The changes villagers and the rural communities have undergone are evidences that industrialisation has been internalised, or ‘digested’, as a part of everyday life in the locality. By introducing the concept of ‘digestion’, this research gives an in-depth analysis of relationship and interaction between locals and industrialisation, which complements ethnographies of rural China in the post-reform era.

The following three sections in this chapter will summarise how industrialisation is integrated in rural residents’ everyday life, how villagers’ digestion of industrialisation is reflected in the changes of their social life, and the driving forces behind the transformation. By doing so, this chapter logically links the three empirical chapters and concludes this study with a reiteration of its empirical and theoretical significance.

7.1 Jiangbin and Weiken revisited: Industrialisation as a part of everyday life

What role does industrialisation play in the residents’ everyday life of Jiangbin and Weiken? The quest for the answer points the direction for sourcing empirical data and sets the stage for the analysis in this study. The ethnographic portraits selected for this dissertation delineate the relations between industrialisation and the rural communities and rural residents with thick details. The ethnographic portraits represent the life experience of the villagers in the industrialised villages. As shown in the empirical chapters, evidence from the field repeatedly points to an ‘integration’ of industrialisation and local residents’ life. The integration is primarily reflected in the existence and influence of industrialisation on many key aspects of life, such as family finance, living environment, and health. It cultivates a dependence on industrialisation among local people, who gradually embrace industrialisation as a part of their everyday life and lifestyle. The dependence is a key to understand the

manifestations and restraints when industrialisation is ‘digested’ by the villagers and their communities.

The integration of industrialisation into rural residents’ everyday life is economic in the first place. As the cases suggest, the traditional means of livelihoods on agricultural production have, by and large, been destroyed in the two researched villages since the rise of the industrial businesses. A significant proportion of local population is now living on the wages from the industries. For the younger generation, it is no longer attractive to return to agricultural works, nor are they able to do so, since the farmland is far from enough to sustain their livelihood after the land acquisition for industrialisation. Apart from the wages, the industries have brought economic incentives to the local families. The threshold to benefit from industrialisation economically is low. Needless to mention the numerous family-run businesses that thrive thanks to the industrial giants in the locality, nearly all the households in Jiangbin and Weiken make a fortune in the ‘migrant economy’ by catering and accommodating migrant workers. In addition, the industries reward local residents with direct stipends. As shown in the narratives, the stipends come in different names, such as dividends from land tenure, commercial insurance, contribution to the local development, and gifts for New Year greetings (拜年 bainian). These actions, coincided with the prevailing phenomena of ‘socially institutionalised bribes’, aim to legitimate the industries’ impact on rural residents’ daily life. Industrialisation has also brought opportunistic gains to the localities, for which many local residents chase. In the thesis, the recorded mobilisation against industries is more or less economically motivated, which inevitably reduces the campaigns into ‘compensation traps’³⁵⁰ and blurs their pro-ecological and pro-social equality causes.

Admittedly, industrialisation has brought prosperity to the rural communities in Jiangbin and Weiken and reinforced their status as the economically advanced villages in China. However, my in-depth examination of the households in Jiangbin and Weiken suggests that the economic reward of industrialisation and development

³⁵⁰ Van Rooij et al., “The Compensation Trap,” 701-45.

is not evenly distributed, which causes ‘particularised poverty’ in the affluent communities. Haifeng’s family that is impoverished by cancer deaths and Grandpa Kang’s family that is neglected in the compensation scheme of the land acquisition best exemplify the tough situation of the sufferers from the particularised poverty. As dwellers in the economically advanced village, they cannot benefit from the state-led poverty alleviation scheme. Worse still, as Chapter 6 shows, the industrialisation-inspired prosperity in the locality gives rise to a materialist value and morality in the villages, which renders the impoverished families into an even more uneasy situation both socially and psychologically. In all, the manifold impact of industrialisation on villagers’ source of income and family finance illustrates its integration into the locality. It redefines the livelihoods of rural China and hence becomes a necessity of local residents’ daily life. Villagers’ economic dependency on industrialisation is deepened as the economy develops. Industrialisation not only creates economic prosperity that involves wide participation but also gradually changes the ethical contour in the rural community. As a consequence, Jiangbin and Weiken, the two selected economically advanced villages, stand out from the vast area of rural China. They illustrate how rural communities become industrialised both materially and morally.

The situation in Jiangbin and Weiken suggests that industrialisation has been integrated into local people’s living environment as well. Villagers gradually accept the industries in the neighbourhood as their ‘old neighbours’. As discussed in the empirical chapters, although local people are aware of the adverse environmental impacts of the chemical industries on their doorstep, most of them tend to give acquiescence to it rather than to question the parties responsible. Seldom do villagers actively seek relevant knowledge to understand the environmental degradation. This enables the entrepreneurs to establish an environmental discourse in favour of the industries so as to routinise pollution in the locality. Unlike many communities that collectively initiate citizen science campaigns to cope with possible hazards of pollution, Jiangbin and Weiken observe high tolerance to the uncertainty among the residents. Some take individualised measures to protect themselves and their family members, whereas others, as recorded in numerous cases of interview, attribute it to fate pessimistically. The industrialisation-inspired environmental degradation only

provokes local people's resistance when it gives rise to acute challenges to the local people (e.g. the water crisis of Jiangbin Village in 1998 and the relocation of Meiqing Washing Company to Jiangbin in 2014) or causes direct economic loss (e.g. the sewage spillage incident of Weiken in 2008). For many villagers, environment and pollution are but a discourse framed for compensation and opportunistic gains. Consequentially, industrialisation becomes a part of their living environment of which they take advantage for granted.

Local residents' acceptance of industrialisation and its environmental impact determines their attitude toward health and diseases. Many of my respondents reported symptoms that are alleged to be a result of the pollution. However, apart from following everyday practices of self-protection and health promotion such as reducing outdoor activities or drinking more water for 'detoxification', there is not much that can be done by the villagers to address the problems and reduce the health risks. As time passes by, diseases, as a side-effect of industrialisation, have been normalised as a part of the local life. It is noteworthy that both Jiangbin and Weiken have been regarded as notorious 'cancer villages' for over a decade. My research confirms on the exceptionally high cancer incidence and death rates in the two villages. The industries located within the '800-metre safe zone' stipulated by the state are highly suspected to be a primary cause of the disease cluster. Surprisingly enough, the experience of living with industrialisation in the 'cancer villages' for years has gradually eased up local people's anxiety about this often fatal disease. Cancer has been routinized as a part of the local life as well. After witnessing her brother and her nephew's death of cancer, Xiaogu gradually steers her way of venting grievance from blaming the polluting industries to attributing the suffering to fate. The fatalistic attitude toward cancer denotes many rural residents' surrender to the overwhelming tide of industrialisation in the localities. This phenomenon, again, exemplifies the integration of industrialisation into the everyday life of rural China.

The integration between industrialisation and the local society makes the industrialisation-inspired challenges an unavoidable theme of rural residents' life in contemporary China, whereas the prevailing dependence on the burgeoning industries sets the stage for local people's stances taking and strategy making in their digestion of the benefits and challenges brought by the developments. All the 14 cases

included in this thesis show that rural residents digest industrialisation in various ways. Although it is admitted that ordinary villagers are situated in a relatively inferior position in the power relations, the level of their subordination to the political and economic powers varies from case to case. As the thesis argues and demonstrates, the stance taking and strategy making in the tide of industrialisation is tightly associated to villagers' personal experience, social status, and social networks. Their dependence on the industries plays an important role in shaping their attitudes and actions. This explains the villagers' various reactions to the challenges. Some villagers stand out to fight against the industries openly; some choose to remain silent as a free-rider; others resign themselves to the political and business powers tactically. Some refuse to compromise with the industries and to the offers of compensation and stimulus; some ambivalently accept the side-effects of industrialisation as a part of their life; others rigorously seek to take advantage of this process for their own and their families' benefit. The images of the characters and their personalised strategies of digesting industrialisation recorded in this thesis facilitate our understanding of how the rural society adapts and reacts to the new challenges of the time.

7.2 Digesting industrialisation: Social life and social change

This thesis focuses on the changes in the social life of rural China. The changes are a lens to understand how industrialisation is digested by the rural residents and rural communities. As the findings from Jiangbin and Weiken suggest, both sites have undergone revolutionary changes in individual villager's interest orientation and behavioural code, social structures and networks within the villages, and social ethics and its sphere of influence. This thesis delineates the role of industrialisation in the social transformations of contemporary rural China. It argues that the changes are by and large rooted in and inspired by industrialisation and challenges associated with it. The changes outline the adjustments that the local community and the local people have made for the new issues and new challenges of the time. By altering the behaviour, the social relations, and the code of morality in the communities, rural residents struggle for a better adaption to and a complementarity with industrialisation in their neighbourhood. This process signifies the phenomenon of 'digesting industrialisation' as a core concept of my project. Noteworthy for this study, not only does industrialisation trigger changes in Jiangbin and Weiken, the changing social

contour of the villages provides a context for rural industrialisation and influences its route and manifestation simultaneously.

As chapter 4 demonstrates, the social change in rural China in the age of industrialisation is reflected at the individual level in the first instance. In this study, the transformation of individual villager's logic of action is summarised as changes in three aspects, i.e., the definition of core interest, the individualised attempts of mobilisation, and the increasing tolerance to the 'selfish' actions in the local morality. First of all, empirical evidence suggests that rural residents, rather than sticking with a homogenised life goal defined by ample food and clothing (fengyi zushi 丰衣足食) and a growing family (rending xingwang 人丁兴旺) in the agricultural society, adopt more diversified standards of family interest. Industrialisation plays a shaping role in the expanding connotation of rural residents' core family interest. As the ethnographic portraits suggest, villagers become concerned with their employment status, the environment, the health of the family members, and the new power settings in the locality after the chemical industries step into the neighbourhoods. The multiple interest orientations in turn set the stage for local people's social statuses, upon which they form their stances on industrialisation and its side-effects on their everyday life. This reveals the mechanism behind the formation of a spectrum of subordination among local residents, which was vividly reflected at the time when Dongying summoned her neighbours to safeguard their environmental rights and fight against the polluting industries. Some activists followed Dongying and openly flagged up their pro-ecological concerns whereas the majority rest stayed silent as free-riders in the campaign. The ethnography shows that they all act so as to protect their own family interest. Secondly, the fragmented definition of interest gives rise to many 'uncivil individuals' ³⁵¹ in the villages and their individualised actions. Industrialisation serves as a context for the prevailing individualism among residents in Jiangbin and Weiken. It unfolds a surging chase for opportunistic gains among locals, as seen in the 'water crisis' in Jiangbin, the accusation of the illegal sewage discharge in Weiken, and the compensation seeking after Fanchang Group's sewage spillage incident. Rather than collectively acting against the polluting industries and

³⁵¹ Yan, *Private Life under Socialism*.

address the issue of the undermined public welfare, villagers opted for individualised actions, as they believed this would help maximise their personal gain if they take advantage of industrialisation. The findings from Jiangbin and Weiken resonate with the phenomenon of ‘compensation trap’, termed by Van Rooij and his team,³⁵² where the individualised purchase of opportunistic gains in the tide of industrialisation inevitably jeopardises the solidarity in the community and the pro-ecological tendency. Villagers give acquiescence to the uprising individualism and the decaying solidarity in the rural communities of China as they digest industrialisation. This leads to the third observation of the change at an individual level. Each individual villager’s moral standard is lowered when he or she opts in for the uncivil actions or expresses tolerance to the altruistic pursuits of gains at the expense of public welfare. This restores the framework of morality in the community. The three components of local residents’ digestion of industrialisation – the diversified definition of family interest, the individualised logic of action, and the changing moral standards – determines the businesses’ strategies of managing public relations in return. As shown in the cases, the companies in Jiangbin and Weiken secure a favourable external environment for development by secretly fulfilling the individualistic demands from the villagers. This is yet another evidence for the bi-directional process when industrialisation is digested locally in rural China.

The second category of social changes examined in this study feature the structural settings in the rural communities of China. The thesis sheds light on the transforming social organs at three levels, namely the nuclear family, the functional social groups, and the administrative village under the socialist regime of the country. It argues that the traditionally dominating kinship-based social networks in the rural society of China have been diluted and gradually replaced by social ties of other types. Findings from Jiangbin and Weiken suggest that industrialisation ranks as one of the most important factors that boost the evolution of the features and the functions of these social organs. The transformation can be viewed as a part of the process through which the local people and the communities adapt to and digest industrialisation. The six ethnographic portraits in Chapter 5 give details about how changes take place at

³⁵² Van Rooij et al., “The Compensation Trap,” 701-45.

the family, group, and village levels in response to the tide of industrialisation. Firstly, the examination of the inter-generation gaps in Lao Hu's family in Jiangbin questions the assumption that nuclear family is an 'inseparable fundamental unit of interest'³⁵³ in the social organisation of rural China. Industrialisation sets the stage for the divergent stances between the father and the son, and therefore serves as another evidence for the individually specific approach of digesting industrialisation and its side-effects. In light of Zhao Yongyao's struggle for 'a life-time guarantee' for his nuclear family by compromising the interest of the collective with the polluting industry, this research exemplifies the diversification of family interest in the age of industrialisation, which often serves as a source of disputes in the rural communities. Secondly, empirical evidence suggests that the traditional concentric circular pattern of social networks based on each rural resident's kinship relations have collapsed in Jiangbin and Weiken. The fundraising of a family with two cancer patients in Jiangbin Village illustrates the rising importance of networks based on profession, religion, and geographic intimacy, whereas a newly-formed man-made villagers' group (cunmin xiaozu 村民小组) of a cooperative kind in Weiken Village functions like kinship ties in the event of collective mobilisation against the industrial giant in the locality. Both cases demonstrate the trend in contemporary industrialised villages where functional groups substitute the blood relations and become a significant component of the social structure in rural society. The emerging functional groups represent the way rural community evolves to digest the challenges brought by industrialisation. Thirdly, new functions have been attached to the administrative villages in the age of industrialisation. As Chapter 5 discusses, Shen Guoshui's attempt to form an inter-village anti-pollution alliance failed because the stipend from the polluting industries was only distributed among villagers in Jiangbin. Similarly, villagers in Weiken deliberately excluded migrant workers who were also affected by the industrial pollution from the compensation. In both cases, administrative villages form a boundary of resources distribution. Its significance is emphasised when industrialisation becomes a theme of rural residents' everyday life. In all, the structural changes at the three levels of rural society denote how villagers and the

³⁵³ Yi Zeng, *Family Dynamics in China: A Life Table Analysis* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991): xvii.

communities spontaneously adjust themselves to adapt to the new challenges brought by industrialisation.

In Chapter 6, I discuss the transforming social ethics in Jiangbin and Weiken against the backdrop of the changing means of livelihood, economic prosperity, and a prevailing materialism among villagers brought by industrialisation. The human relationship (renlun 人伦), which Fei Xiaotong and many following scholars consider as a fundamental ethical code in rural society, is subject to significant change in terms of its connotation, channel of rule, and sphere of influence. The two ethnographic portraits featuring ordinary villagers' choice in career path and preference of housing conditions over the past decades depict a changing connotation of ethics throughout the social and economic transition of the country. The human relationship originally based on the order of seniority is gradually reshaped by the work unit system (danwei zhi 单位制), the rise of local elite, the expanding market, the materialist value, and local people's diminishing devotion to the community. The shrinking significance of traditional social ethics in contemporary rural China manifests itself in two aspects. First, as seen in Feng Huiquan's unsuccessful attempts of raising fund for cancer patients in the extended family and moderating the dispute around noise pollution, the traditional authority in the village based on human relations fail to function as a powerful agent. Local political elites gradually surpass seniors in the local power distribution and become backbones in the grassroots administration. Second, the 'rationalised' differential mode of association in contemporary industrialised villages results in a dichotomy in local residents' social life. While the traditional human relationship still maintains its an impact on ritual, spiritual, and cultural practices, its influence diminishes when it comes to the issues concerning material interest. The unfairness Grandpa Kang encountered in the compensation scheme for Fanchang Group's land acquisition exemplifies the limitation of human relationships which villagers could barely rely on to seek equality and justice. The ethical vacuum is soon filled by the 'modern' values inspired by industrialisation. Such values signify how rural residents digest industrialisation morally. The changing social ethics in the villages demonstrates compatibility with the values of industrialisation, which paves the way for the industries to thrive in rural China.

In this study, the analytical structure that brings together the individual, structural, and ethical aspects of rural residents' social life is inspired by Fei Xiaotong's thoughts. Fei unpacks the social settings of rural China with the differential mode of association (chaxu geju 差序格局) as a theoretical tool. In Fei's theory, the individualised logic of action serves as the behavioural basis of society, whereas the kinship-based ripple-like pattern of social network and the traditional ethics of human relationship are treated as the horizontal (差) and vertical (序) social orders. By engaging with the theory of differential mode of association, my thesis follows a clear logic to delineate the behavioural, structural, and ethical changes in the rural society of China systemically and comprehensively. In addition, Fei Xiaotong's description and theorisation of rural Chinese society in his earlier writings are based on the fieldwork in the 1930s. They yield rich and detailed insights of life in traditional rural communities, which lay a sounded basis for comparison and facilitate the understanding of the *changes* over decades of development in China. The critical engagement with Fei's works benefits my thesis structurally and empirically. In return, my adoption of Fei's theories in the analysis of social changes outlines the second objective of this research in parallel with unpacking rural residents' digest of industrialisation, i.e., to empirically enrich Fei's thoughts with findings from contemporary China and to innovatively apply Fei's theories to contemporary rural social settings.

7.3 Behind the changes: Digesting China in transition

Noteworthy for this research, the social changes in Jiangbin and Weiken inspired by rural industrialisation are situated in a larger context of the country's political, economic, and social transition. By probing into the driving forces behind the tide of industrialisation and the associated social changes in rural China, this research reveals the possibility and the significance of understanding the process of digesting industrialisation from a broader perspective. In the empirical cases, my thesis explicitly or implicitly examines factors that pave the road for industrialisation in rural China. These factors can be categorised into the following four aspects of the political and socio-economic developments in contemporary China, namely the flourishing capitalism, the overwhelming urbanisation, the grassroots institutional

reform, and the gradual awakening of legal awareness among its people. By digesting industrialisation, residents in Jiangbin and Weiken try to engage and keep in pace with the developments of the country. This observation consequentially outlines the essence of rural residents and rural communities' digestion of industrialisation: they are by nature adapting themselves to the policies, the structural transformation, and the social developments of the country. This section presents a concise reflection of how these developments manifest themselves in rural China, give rise to rural industrialisation, and breed changes in rural residents' everyday social life. Rather than elaborating the mechanism of influence in depth, I comment on the role of the country's transition where relevant to my empirical data, hoping to outline a broader set of literature to which this research resonates and to suggest a direction to further develop the arguments in this study.

First, the revitalisation of capitalism in the post-reform era brings changing forms of industrialisation, privatisation, and an ever-vigorous market to rural China. Against this backdrop, the industrial mode of production replaces the traditional earth-bound livelihood and lifestyle of rural residents. This results in the loss of arable land, agricultural population, and traditional cultural practices preserved in rural communities, as reflected in the two research sites of my project. The process does not unilaterally render rural residents into the bottom layer of the social stratification for exploitation. Rather, much evidence from my fieldwork shows that local people can benefit from the restructuring industries inspired by capitalism. Alongside with the adjustment of the country's industrial structure, the national tide of privatisation that marks the essence of capitalism also brings shock to the rural communities. It redefines the pattern of resource distribution in the villages and challenges the long-standing mentality that is maintained in accordance with collective economy. However, 40 years after capitalism restores its significance, villagers have already adapted to privatisation and its socio-economic impacts: they take jobs from private businesses, accept the gap of wealth and income, and attribute the unequal distribution and possession of means of production as a part of their fate. Fortunately, the market economy articulated by capitalism yields opportunities for many land-deprived rural residents to survive and thrive. Despite a diminishing discomfort among the residents, there are still signs of incompatibility between capitalism and rural society. The

grassroots mobilisation against industries in both Jiangbin and Weiken shows an anti-capitalist tendency, reflected in the appeals of the campaigns. It exemplifies rural residents' contradictory attitude toward capitalism even though they strive to adapt to and take advantage of it in their daily life.

Second, the industrialisation-inspired social changes in Jiangbin and Weiken are rooted in the national campaign of urbanisation. For many rural residents in China, the urban-rural dual structure signifies an unequal political landscape of the country, where their access to resource, information, and publicity is restricted. This makes local residents' resistance against industrialisation an effort with limited results. The examination of the grassroots mobilisation in both villages suggest that villagers tend to stick with the social resources in the locality rather than seeking external help from their urban counterparts, who would otherwise inject dynamics into the campaigns. This phenomenon is a result of both limited accessibility and a mal-functioning structure of trust that is embedded in the urban-rural discrepancy of the country. Nevertheless, it is important to clarify that urbanisation is by nature intended to narrow the urban-rural gap of the country, not the other way round. Jiangbin and Weiken are situated on the periphery of Hangzhou Metropolitan Zone and are hence among the first to benefit from urbanisation. Throughout years of economic and cultural interaction, villagers have shaped a flexible stance and strategy towards urbanisation, which enables them to benefit from the intimacy with the city and their rural identity simultaneously. This denotes rural residents' pragmatist philosophy in their adaption to the state-led social changes.

Third, rural China has undergone institutional changes at the grassroots level since the new millennium. By introducing villagers' self-governance, the state allows autonomy at the village level and advocates political participation of the ordinary rural residents. However, the extent to which the practice represents the interest of the villagers and reflects the spirit of democracy remains questionable. Admittedly, this political experiment gives rise to the local elites in rural communities. As revealed by the cases in my thesis, such process of empowerment challenges individual villager's action and value, the kinship-based social structure, and the authority of the seniors preserved by the traditional codes of social ethics. Nowadays, both villages accommodate a power structure in compatibility with the demand for industrialisation,

where the pro-business forces step to power and become agents for the villagers. The new power relations in the grassroots administration facilitate the implementation of industrialisation in rural communities, despite not always in a welcoming manner.

Finally, the awakening of legal awareness among rural residents redefines the social ethics in rural communities in a more complicated context. Findings from Jiangbin and Weiken suggest that villagers' legal awareness against the backdrop of rural industrialisation lies twofold. From within the village, the awakening of legal awareness catalyses the changing ethical codes and challenges traditional authorities. This is best exemplified by the moderation of the tension between local residents and industries, where activists stick with clear-cut claims for right under the legal framework rather than blindly accepting the intermediating rhetoric that aims at preserving peace and stability in the community. From outside the village, legal tools have been adopted by the villagers in the struggle against industries that violate their rights, despite their still limited effectiveness under the semi-authoritarian regime of China. The emerging legal awareness provides rural residents an alternative lens to understand their relations with industrialisation.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaire for the Basic Survey of Environmental Pollution

环境污染基本调查表

感谢您在百忙之中填写本问卷，并且关注家乡环境问题！

姓名		性别		出生日期	
住址					
是否为常住人口		是否自愿填写本调查问卷			
您家庭主要收入来源 (如务农、渔业、工厂 职工及其他)					
您所在地区有哪些河流 (包括小支流)					
您所居住的村庄附近的 工厂有哪些? (如化工类、普通工 厂、造纸、电厂、纺织 等)					

您是否关注和了解这些工厂如何排污？ 如了解，请举例说明	
您所在地区的河流污染情况如何？ 气味如何？ 颜色如何？	
您自己及家庭健康状况如何？	
河流污染是否对您的生计造成影响？ 若有，请举例说明（如过去与现在的收入对比、水产品质量的对比等）	
您是否就水污染问题和村委会、相关政府部门沟通过？	
您是否就水污染问题与其他村民讨论过？	

您是否愿意来关注家乡水污染问题并愿意付诸行动？	
对水污染问题您想怎么解决？您的期望是什么？	
您是否愿意接受法律、健康专家的培训？	
您是否愿意阅读一些关于水污染问题和法律维权的专业书籍？	
您的其他建议和想法	

我保证以上所填写内容为真实信息！

填写人：_____

调查人：_____

调查日期：_____

.....

Basic Survey of Environmental Pollution

Thank you for your participation and your attention to the environment in our hometown!

Name		Sex		Date of Birth	
Address					
Are you a permanent resident in Xiaoshan?		Is the participation out of your own will?			
What is the main source of income of your family? (E.g. agriculture, fishery, employment in the factories, etc.)					
What are the rivers and canals in the area you live?					
What are the factories near your village? (E.g. chemical factory, paper manufacturer, electricity station, textile factory, etc.)					
Do you know how these factories discharge pollutants?					

Please give examples.	
How is the condition of the water body in the local rivers? (E.g. the colour, the smell, etc.)	
How is the health condition of yourself and your family members?	
Did the river pollution influence your life and livelihood? If yes, please give examples. (E.g. income, quality of aquatic products, etc.)	
Have you communicated with the village committee or relevant government departments regarding the water pollution problem?	

Have you discussed the water pollution problem with other villagers?	
Are you willing to pay attention to the water pollution problem in our hometown and take action to address it?	
How would you like the water problem to be solved? What is your expectation?	
Are you willing to take up training from legal professionals and medical experts?	
Are you willing to read books about water pollution and legal affairs?	
Do you have any other thoughts or other suggestions?	

I certify that the information provided on this questionnaire is true and accurate.

Appendix 2: Respondent’s Basic Family Information Record Form

受访家庭基本情况记录表

访谈前基本观察						
家庭地址						
区位基本描述						
房屋建筑基本描述						
院落基本描述						
访谈信息采集与汇总						
访谈日期		访谈时间		访谈地		
受访者 A	姓名		性别		年龄	
受访者 B	姓名		性别		年龄	
受访者 C	姓名		性别		年龄	
受访者 D	姓名		性别		年龄	

核心家庭架构描述			
家庭成员职业描述			
是否有家庭成员担任公职？		是否有家庭成员在当地污染企业就职？	
家庭成员教育背景及程度			
家庭成员宗教信仰			
家庭收入来源			
家庭消费情况			
土地拥有情况			
家庭成员健康状况			

是否有癌症病人？		是否有职业病病患？何种职业 病？	
家庭成员医疗保 险类型与参与情 况			
亲缘关系			
其他重要社会关 系			
受访者联系方式			
回访相关情况			
是否回访？回访 基本情况说明			
备注			

.....

Respondent's Basic Family Information Record Form

Before Interview							
Household address							
Basic geographical settings							
Description of the house							
Description of the yard							
Data Collection in the Interview							
Date		Time		Location			
Respondent A	Name		Sex		Age		
Respondent B	Name		Sex		Age		
Respondent C	Name		Sex		Age		
Respondent D	Name		Sex		Age		
Household members and their relations							

Professions and employments of household members			
Are there any household members working for the public sectors?		Are there any household members working in the local polluting industries?	
Education background of household members			
Religions and beliefs of household members			
Sources of household income			
Household expenditure			
Ownership/usership of farmland			
Health conditions of household members			

Are there cancer patients in the household?		Are there occupational disease patients in the household?	
Medical insurance for the household members			
Kinship relations in the locality			
Other important social relations in the locality			
Contact info			
Return Visits			
Are there any return visits to the household?			
Notes			

Appendix 3. Standard topic guide for ordinary local households

访谈提纲

家庭人口信息
1. 家里有几口人，有几个孩子，老人是否健在？ 2. 谁是家里的劳动力？分别从事什么工作，在何处就职，收入如何？ 3. 家中成员教育情况如何？ 4. 是否有宗教信仰？若有，平时通常如何参与宗教活动？
生活基本条件
1. 住房条件如何？何时兴建/翻修？ 2. 是否在别处购置房屋？ 3. 是否购置车辆？ 4. 是否搭建棚屋并出租给外来务工人员？
家庭经济状况
1. 家庭年收入几何？ 2. 家庭收入有哪些来源？农业收入、非农家庭收入各有多少，各占多少比例？ 3. 政府对家庭有什么经济补贴，以什么名义补贴，数额几何？ 4. 村集体对家庭有什么经济补贴，以什么名义补贴，数额几何？ 5. 家庭最大的开支是什么？平时日常开支包括哪些项目，数额几何？ 6. 人情往来的开支包括哪些？占家庭开支的比例几何？ 7. 家庭经济状况在村里处于什么水平？
土地
1. 家庭现拥有耕地面积几何？耕地位于何处？ 2. 家庭原拥有耕地面积几何？土地去向如何？ 3. 村内如何分配耕地？ 4. 耕地是否仍然自用？由谁耕种？种植结构、产量如何？ 5. 耕地出产的农产品去向如何，是供自家消费还是出售？

日常社会活动与交流
1. 是否在本村有亲戚，平时是否时常走动？ 2. 家庭是否属于特定宗族组织？宗族组织平时有什么活动？ 3. 和邻居交往是否密切？平时会有什么形式的接触？ 4. 在村内还与谁交往密切？ 5. 村内是否时常组织村民活动？有什么形式的活动与聚会？ 6. 村内是否时常有外来人员出现？ 7. 村中重大通知以什么形式传达？信息如何传播？ 8. 家庭成员是否经常前往村委会？在什么场合下会前往村委会办事？ 9. 是否参加过村委会的选举？本村村委会如何选举？
工业化认知
1. 村内入驻的工厂是哪个/有哪些？从事哪一方面生产？ 2. 工厂何时入驻本村？ 3. 工厂进驻后为村庄带来的变化有哪些？譬如收入、就业、土地、环境、基础设施、人际关系、外来务工人员等。 4. 家中是否有成员在企业就职，工作环境、工种、待遇如何？ 5. 是否熟悉企业主？如何评价企业主？ 6. 是否接触过入驻本村的外来务工人员？平时如何交流，交流什么内容？如何评价外来务工人员以及他们对本村带来的影响？
污染认知
1. 近年来村内自然生态环境出现了哪些变化？譬如空气、水体、土壤等。 2. 是否观察到企业作为污染的来源？企业带来了哪些污染？ 3. 有什么证据表明企业带来了污染？ 4. 主要的污染物是什么？ 5. 污染对村民的生活有什么影响？是否对家庭造成过重大经济损失？ 6. 污染对家庭成员的健康有什么影响？
污染应对

1. 有什么措施应对污染对农作物的影响？ 2. 有什么措施应对污染对家庭成员健康的影响？ 3. 是否就污染问题尝试与企业主沟通、交涉？如何沟通、沟通的结果如何？ 4. 是否就污染问题尝试与村干部沟通、交涉？如何沟通、沟通的结果如何？ 5. 是否就污染问题尝试与政府沟通、交涉？如何沟通、沟通的结果如何？ 6. 是否希望搬离村庄，以此远离污染？
疾病
1. 家庭成员的身体健康状况如何？ 2. 遇到健康问题一般如何处理？如若需要就诊，通常前往什么机构？譬如私人诊所、村卫生站、镇卫生院、萧山区大医院、杭州市大医院。 3. 家庭一年的医疗开销几何？是否有医疗保险，参加何种医疗保险？ 4. 家庭成员的健康问题是否和工业污染有联系？有什么联系？有什么证据表明这种联系？ 5. 家庭成员日常保健的措施有哪些？ 6. 周围村民是否癌症病患？ 7. 是否听说过本村被称为“癌症村”？如何看待“癌症村”现象？

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Topic Guide

Family members
1. Who are the family members? 2. Who are the labours in the family? What are their professions, where do they work, what about the salaries? 3. How is the education of the family members? 4. Does any member have religious belief? If so, how do they usually practice their belief?
Basic living conditions

1. How is the housing condition of the family? When was the house built/refurbished? 2. Does the family own any other estates elsewhere? 3. Does the family own automobiles? 4. Are there shanks built for the migrant workers?
Family finance
1. What is the family's annual income? 2. What are the sources of the family's income? How much are the agricultural and non-agricultural income respectively? Proportion? 3. Does the family receive any stipends from the government? In what names and how much? 4. Does the family receive any stipends from the village? In what names and how much? 5. What is the biggest spending of the family? How do you break down the family expenditure? 6. How much is the spending on public relations? Proportion of the total family expenditure? 7. What is the financial status of the family overall in the village?
Farm land
1. How much land does the family have now? Where is the farm land? 2. How much farm land did the family use to have? Where are the land used for now? 3. How is the farm land distributed in the village? 4. Are there any family members working on the farm land? Who are they? What do they grow? How much is the yield? 5. Where do the products go (consumed by the family or sold in the market)?
Social life and communication
1. Are there any relatives in the village? Do you usually call on each other? 2. Does the family belong to any kinship organisations? What does the kinship organisation do in the village? 3. Is there any close communication and interaction with neighbours? 4. Who else do the family members communicate with closely? 5. Are there a lot of villager activities? In what form? 6. Have there been many new faces coming to the village these years? 7. How does the important notice broadcast in the village? 8. Do the family members go to the village committee often? For what purposes? 9. Have you participated in the village cadre election? How is the election organised in this village?

Knowledge of industrialisation
1. What are the industries in the village? Specialising in what area? 2. When did the industries come to the village? 3. What are the changes the industries have brought to the village (income, employment, land, environment, infrastructure, interpersonal relations, migrant workers, etc.)? 4. Any members working in the industries nearby? What department are they working in? How is the working environment? How is the package and welfare? 5. Are the family members familiar with the entrepreneurs? How do you comment on the entrepreneurs? 6. Have you interacted with the migrant workers living in the village? How do you usually interact? How do you evaluate the influence of the migrant workers on the village?
Knowledge of pollution
1. Have you noticed any change in the physical environment of the village (e.g. air, water body, soil, etc.)? 2. Do you identify the industries as a source of the pollution? What pollution do the industries bring? 3. Can you raise any evidence for the pollution caused by the industries? 4. What are the main pollutants? 5. What are the impacts of pollution on your life? Has pollution caused any big loss to your family? 6. Are there any family members whose health has been influenced by pollution?
Countermeasures to pollution
1. What are the measures to moderate the impact of pollution on the crops? 2. What are the measures to moderate the impact of pollution on family members' health? 3. Have you communicated with entrepreneurs on pollution? How to communicate? Any outcomes? 4. Have you communicated with village cadres on pollution? How to communicate? Any outcomes? 5. Have you communicated with government officials on pollution? How to communicate? Any outcomes? 6. Do you wish to relocate as a way to stay away from pollution?

Diseases
1. How are family members' health conditions? 2. What do you usually do when having health issues? Where to get healthcare services (private clinics, village health station, township health centre, big hospitals in Xiaoshan District/City of Hangzhou)? 3. How much is the family healthcare expenditure? Any medical insurance for the members? 4. Are the health issue related to the industrial pollution? In what way? Any evidence? 5. Do the family members take any everyday measures for health promotion? 6. Are there any cancer patients around? 7. Have you heard about 'cancer villages'? How do you think about 'cancer villages'?