

**Rural Livelihoods, Gender Dynamics, and Intersectional Inequalities in
South China**

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Abstract

China has been increasingly integrated into the global economic system since the initiation of market reforms in the late 1970s. This process has led to rapid livelihood changes in rural China. While some rural livelihood studies pay attention to gender difference in rural livelihoods, showing that women tend to be more divided than united, little has been done to explore the more complex inequalities created by the intersection between gender and class (defined as the possession of wealth and power). The possession of economic capital is the primary consideration in this analysis whilst the consideration of political capital is a secondary element in this analysis. This research deals with the lacunae in existing livelihood studies by examining village women's access to livelihood resources which were intersected with gender and class in South China from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s. It addresses the following research questions: 1) What are the institutional processes that have mediated and influenced Chinese village women's access to livelihood resources over the past four decades? 2) How have intersectional gender and class dynamics shaped village women's access to livelihood assets? 3) How and why have women's access to livelihood resources and their livelihoods varied under the effects of market reforms and wider dynamics in the historical context of China's tremendous societal change and transformations? These questions are answered through adopting an integrated conceptual framework combining a livelihoods approach which emphasises access, the concept of intersectionality, and qualitative research methods. Data was collected through fieldwork in Pin village in South China by means of life history narratives, focus group interviews, observations, and documentary analysis.

The research finds that village women's access to key livelihood resources, especially land, water, healthcare, and social security, was mediated by formal and informal institutions, including local power, market forces, and gender dynamics, and intersected with class in the context of increasing commodification and social stratification in rural China. The study shows that utilising gender as a single analytical category cannot fully explain the different experiences of different women in regard to their access to livelihood resources. The study argues that women's access to assets is not determined solely along gender lines, but that class must be taken into account too. Women's class status, determined by their differential association with a male-dominated power structure, complicates the ways in which they access livelihood assets. Women from better-off households are at an advantage compared with poorer men and women. These women possess greater financial and political capital that facilitates

their access to land, water, healthcare services, and social security programmes, whereas poor women are disadvantaged and marginalised. The research also argues that the increasing rural marketisation has further widened the disparity between the rich and the poor, leading to greater intersectional inequalities among village women.

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List of Abbreviations

CMS	Cooperative Medical Scheme
CPC	Communist Party of China
HRS	Household Responsibility System
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
NCMS	New Cooperative Medical Scheme
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
NPCSC	Standing Committee of the National People's Congress
NRPS	New Rural Pension Scheme
PRC	People Republic of China
TPA	Targeted Poverty Alleviation
WIA	Women In Agriculture

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores the context and dynamics of village women's access to livelihood resources in South China. It examines how this access is mediated by institutions and gendered power, and how gendered power intersects with class. Class is defined as the possession of wealth and power, namely, the possession of economic capital and political capital (Wang et al., 2018). The possession of economic capital is the primary consideration in this analysis whilst the consideration of political capital is a secondary element in this analysis. Since marketisation processes in China enlarged rural social stratification by widening the gaps of economic and political capital among villagers, a definition of class that emphasises economic and political capital is appropriate to explore how access to assets and livelihoods has influenced wider societal change in rural China. With a focus on livelihoods there is an emphasis on exploring economic capital, though this is also tied up in political capital, as the analysis will make clear. This thesis situates women's experiences within the wider context of societal change and the transformation of livelihoods witnessed in rural China from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s. This chapter provides the background and context of market reforms and changes to rural livelihoods in China, which this thesis draws on. Then it introduces the research questions, and concludes by addressing the research contributions and presenting the outline of this thesis.

1.2 Background and context

China has experienced profound socioeconomic, political, and cultural changes over the past four decades. This section draws specific attention to market reforms, reforms to the administrative governance system, the influence of marketisation on rural society, and the changes to rural livelihoods. The 1978 Reform and Opening-Up policy started to reform China's state-planned economy and establish the socialist market economy (Qu et al., 2009). In the rural areas¹ of China, the 1978 Household Responsibility System (HRS) marked the beginning of socialist market reform. HRS is the engine of the socioeconomic transition of

¹ According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the scope of 'urban areas' includes the areas of cities, districts/counties, and towns that are governed by municipal governments, district/county governments, and town governments respectively. 'Rural areas' refers to areas that are excluded by urban areas, which usually includes townships (*jizhen*) and villages.

rural society, specifically in regard to its market economy, grassroots political system, and social welfare system. Along with the transition of rural society, individual and household livelihoods have undergone remarkable changes. These changes can be presented in two stages: the early 1980s to the early 2000s, and the early 2000s to the mid-2010s (Qu et al., 2009).

In the first stage, marketisation reforms started in the early 1980s and developed rapidly afterwards (Qu et al., 2009). In rural China, HRS dismantled the system of collective production that was governed by the state-planned economy and established a household-based production system. HRS allocated productive assets and tools to households. Land tenure rights were also given to individuals and households. Households were able to autonomously engage in production, manage household labour, distribute products, accumulate crop residue and access productive resources (Pei, 1994; Pei and Gunnarsson, 1996). As a result, the autonomously-managed agricultural products and the released labourers that previously engaged in agriculture contributed to the rise of rural markets and the diversification of livelihood strategies. HRS improved agricultural productivity and increased the accumulation of residual outcomes. It laid the material foundation for the emergence of rural markets, which were growing in number and becoming more prosperous (Pei, 1994; Pei and Gunnarsson, 1996). The growth of agricultural productivity with HRS meant that agricultural labour was increasingly involved in labour markets (Lin, 2015). The free flow of labour in labour markets provided human capital to go with the rise of family-based industries, rural petty businesses, township and village enterprises, and rural-to-urban migration. With this, HRS stimulated the development of rural markets and the diversification of rural livelihoods.

In association with the market reforms, the political system changed to keep pace with the growth of the economy. To keep the market as the primary mechanism for allocating socioeconomic resources, the Chinese Central Government implemented the Fiscal Responsibility System (*Caizheng baogan*) from 1979 to 1993 (Qu et al., 2009). According to the Fiscal Responsibility System, the Central Government granted township and county governments more fiscal autonomy in order to stimulate the local market economy. It enabled local governments to be more responsible for revenue income and expenditure, and they took the initiative to facilitate grassroots industries to increase income, and then collected taxes from these industries. One consequence was the flourishing of township and village enterprises. Thus, the flourishing non-agricultural industries in villages and towns absorbed a large amount

of the local agricultural labour (van der Ploeg and Ye, 2010). A considerable number of villagers worked in the local township and village enterprises (Ning and Ye, 2016).

From the early 1990s, the market reforms continued and rural markets continued to grow. In 1992, the 14th National Congress of the Communist Party of China highlighted that the overarching objective was the development of the economy of China. This congress made the goal of achieving a socialist market economy top priority. As a consequence, the market economy in rural areas has been continuously improving at a rapid pace. In this stage, the Fiscal Responsibility System, which had lasted for ten years, started to have some negative effects on the market economy. Problems such as tax evasion, an overheated economy, and local governments' overarching financial rights were barriers to the socialist market economy (Qu et al., 2009). Thus, the Tax-Sharing Reform (*Fenshui zhi*) was launched in 1994, which replaced the Fiscal Responsibility System.

The vertical tax-sharing system of the Tax-Sharing Reform, between the Central Government and local governments, made a difference. The Central Government centralised fiscal income by withdrawing the fiscal autonomy of local governments and by gathering more revenue from multiple local governments. The Central Government transferred a certain part of its top-down finances to local governments, to sustain their expenditures through the Financial Transfer Payment System. Meanwhile, the Central Government transferred expenditure responsibilities to local governments (Ye, 2015). Due to the vertical and hierarchical administrative systems, town governments at the lowest administrative level received the least amount of tax revenue from the Central Government but undertook the heaviest burden of fiscal expenditures. Therefore, local governments were unable to provide financial support to local industries. Township and village enterprises in central and western China became depressed and even broke down (Qu et al., 2009). Non-farm employments in these local enterprises therefore reduced (Ning and Ye, 2016).

Additionally, the Tax-Sharing Reform was a burden on the livelihoods of peasants. Because the revenues of local governments were gathered by the Central Government, to balance the revenues and expenditures of local governments, township governments had to impose heavy taxes and fees on peasants (Kennedy, 2013). In this way, the role and responsibility of local governments shifted, from providing public services to local industries to collecting more taxes from the people (Kennedy, 2013). As a result, in the late 1990s, peasants suffered from a heavy

financial burden and some of them started to depart agriculture (Ning and Ye, 2016). Facing the decline of local enterprises and the increasing burden of taxes and fees, rural-to-urban migration became a primary alternative livelihood strategy for most rural households (Lin, 2015). Rural areas have experienced increasing rural-to-urban migration ever since. Men were the pioneers of migration in rural areas and women were left behind (Ye et al., 2014).

Market reforms profoundly affected the provision of social welfare. In the 1980s and 1990s, the state withdrew from the provision of social welfare and exposed individuals and households to market forces (Zhang, 2012). From the late 1980s, to improve the Chinese economy and strengthen economic competitiveness in foreign and domestic markets, the Central Government and local governments reduced investment in social welfare and increased investment in the economy to attract more foreign capital and trade (Guan, 2005). The success of the market reforms made the government believe that rapid economic growth is more useful than the provision of social welfare in dealing with social problems (Guan, 2005). Consequently, housing, medicine, and education were gradually incorporated into the market. Individuals and households had to pay for social welfare through markets (Duckett, 2012; Guan, 2005). Having to access social security through the market increased the burden on people's livelihoods (Zhang, 2012).

In the second stage, from the early 2000s to the mid-2010s, the marketisation of the Chinese economy became deeper and wider. In 2001, China joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This introduced China to a wider and more competitive global market. This global market stimulated the growth of China's export-led economy. Export-oriented assembling and exportation, foreign capital investments, overseas investments, and international trades boomed. As a result, a large number of labour-intensive industries emerged in the eastern coastal areas, which attracted plenty of rural-to-urban migrant workers. Along with the rise of coastal industries, the outflow of rural-to-urban migrants maintained a steady growth (Lin, 2015). Thus far, rural-to-urban migration has been significant for rural household livelihoods.

In rural areas, migration led to split households, which became a common pattern of rural livelihoods (Ye et al., 2014). In these split households, household members straddled the line separating rural and urban geographic regions (Ye et al., 2014). Some household members worked away from home and stayed in urban areas or abroad, while other household members were left behind in villages (Ye et al., 2014). The livelihood strategies composed in these

households encompass both rural and urban areas (Ye et al., 2014). These split households have received wide attention in terms of issues such as health, household care responsibilities, marital relations, the feminisation of agriculture, and its negative impact on agriculture (Fan, 2003; Horton, 2008; McEvoy, 2008). Since men were pioneers of migration while village women were left behind, left-behind women had to bear productive and reproductive household burdens, and experienced symptoms of emotional pain and psychology pressure, such as loneliness, anxiety, and fear (Ye et al., 2014). In this regard, livelihood changes under marketisation are different for men and women. The gender dimension needs to be taken into account when examining the effects of marketisation on rural livelihoods.

Manifold crises in rural areas were identified in the 2000s, such as land abandonment, unprofitable farming, rural/urban income disparities, and rural social stratification (Wen, 2005). The state turned its attention towards dealing with these rural crises, so as to relieve social tensions and establish a harmonious society. A series of No.1 Central Documents and the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China highlighted the importance of balancing rural/urban socioeconomic development, developing modern agriculture, reviving the rural economy, and increasing the income of farmers (Dong, 2008). Agricultural subsidies and social welfare have therefore been provided by the Central Government since the mid-2000s (Zhang, 2012). For example, subsidies for the cultivation of crops was provided to encourage peasants to engage in farming. Also, commercial/modernised agriculture at a large scale was encouraged to deal with wasteland, and the taxes and fees collected from villagers were reduced and finally exempted in 2006 (Qu et al., 2009; Ye, 2015). Most of these measures reshaped the distribution of livelihood resources and influenced the composition of livelihood strategies (Ye, 2015).

In the 2000s and 2010s, the political system of the Financial Transfer Payment System made a difference in dealing with these rural crises. As mentioned before, the Central Government centralised and governed tax revenues in the Tax-Sharing Reform and transferred top-down finances to local governments through the Financial Transfer Payment System. The Financial Transfer Payment System included Fiscal Transfer Payments and Special Transfer Payments. Fiscal Transfer Payments are used to pay salaries in local administrative institutions. Special Transfer Payments are used to fund public supplies and services. Until 2005, the amount of Special Transfer Payments surpassed Fiscal Transfer Payments (Qu et al., 2009). Special Transfer Payments started various projects to support public supplies and services in regard to healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation. These projects improved infrastructure and

public social services in rural areas and relieved social security burdens on livelihoods (Shen and Williamson, 2010).

The above market-oriented social changes in the past four decades resulted in the social consequences of livelihood diversification, rural social stratification, agrarian changes, and income disparities among villagers in rural China (Yan, 1992). Because HRS enabled rural households to control property and autonomously manage the processes of production, distribution, and consumption, peasants could accumulate residual outcomes in agriculture, specialise their farming, and free their labour from agriculture to work in non-farm sectors (Unger, 1994). Thus, income disparities emerged and enlarged among villagers under HRS. The income disparities existed among provinces, among villages within a province, and among households within a village (Wan and Zhou, 2005). Homogeneous peasants were gradually divided into different social classes (Bian, 2002). Eight categories of emerging rural classes were defined in the early 1990s, such as rural cadres, private entrepreneurs, and peasant labourers (Lu and Zhang, 1990). However, the stratification of rural society and class categories was not rigid, but has been shifting along with increased marketisation (Wang et al., 2018). The deepening market reforms and livelihood diversification enlarged the gaps in income, political capital, and social capital between the wealthier and poorer populations (Wang et al., 2018). In this regard, it is necessary to take the dimension of class into account in our understanding of rural livelihood changes.

Given these historical socioeconomic and livelihood shifts, it is necessary to explore further how wider market-oriented social transitions influence rural livelihoods. A fact that cannot be ignored is that men and women have different livelihood experiences and bare different costs in the process of marketisation. Village women are described as being more frustrated, undertaking more responsibilities, and bearing more costs in the transformation of rural areas (Arora-Jonsson, 2011; Ye et al., 2014). Village women are more likely to engage in low-remunerative livelihoods and slip into poverty (Xu, 2016). Regarding this, gender is a key dimension to livelihood changes, and particular attention will be paid to women in this study. The existing research concerning rural livelihoods and gender concentrates on gender differentiation in the pursuit of livelihood strategies, gender inequalities in the distribution of outcomes, and gender constraints on access to livelihood resources (see Chapter 2). While some pioneering studies have examined power relations and politics in livelihoods, particularly in regard to accessing assets, they are still marginal to the dominant trend in rural livelihoods and

gender research. In the context of China, few studies has revealed the deeper social and political power relations that mediate access to livelihood assets. More attention is required on the power relations and structural/institutional constraints influencing rural livelihoods and access to assets in China.

Additionally, the existing literature tends to consider village women as a homogeneous group when addressing their disadvantages in livelihoods. The literature fails to explain the disparities among village women. Since Chinese market reforms have stimulated and deepened rural stratification, village women of different class status must undergo different experiences and hold different abilities. This study intends to introduce a class dimension into rural livelihoods research and explore Chinese village women's access to assets from the perspectives of class and gender. Also, rural livelihoods have changed under marketisation in multiple ways. As such, a historical perspective encompassing Chinese marketisation will be considered when investigating women's access to assets. Finally, current research critically emphasises social restrictions on women but ignores their agency in livelihoods. It leaves room to examine Chinese village women's agency in access to assets. From this background and investigation of the lacunae of current research in rural livelihoods and gender, the following research questions were generated for this study.

1.3 Research questions

This study intends to address the following research questions:

- 1) What are the institutional processes that have mediated Chinese village women's access to livelihood resources over the past four decades?
- 2) How has the intersection of gender and class dynamics shaped village women's access to livelihood assets?
- 3) How and why have village women's access to livelihood resources and their livelihoods changed under market reforms and the wider historical context of China's tremendous societal change and transformations?

The research questions are tackled by applying an integrated conceptual framework which combines a livelihood framework which emphasises access and the concept of intersectionality. This integrated framework indicates that access to livelihood assets is mediated by institutional

power. It also addresses the social differences between actors and the social relationships among them. Finally, it highlights a perspective of political economy by revealing social inequalities and the influence of wider social changes on access to livelihood assets (see Chapter 3). Guided by this conceptual framework, this study analyses the ways in which village women's access to livelihood assets is mediated by institutions and gendered power, and how gender dynamics intersect with class (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7). Empirical data was collected through fieldwork in Pin village in South China, through the methods of life history narrative, focus group interviews, observation, and documentary analysis (see Chapter 4).

1.4 Research significance and original contributions

This research has theoretical and empirical significance in regard to the literature on rural livelihoods and gender. It makes three main theoretical contributions to livelihoods research. First, this study tackles the lacuna of power and politics in current research by examining access to livelihood assets in rural China. As previously discussed, concerns about power and politics are marginalised when it comes to understanding rural livelihoods and gender. This study fills this gap and brings power and politics into the centre of rural livelihoods research, by discovering how political economy influences women's access to livelihood assets. This study found that village women's access to vital livelihood resources—particularly land, water, healthcare, and social security—is mediated by formal and informal institutions, including local power, market forces, and gender dynamics, which intersects with class in the context of increasing commodification and social stratification in rural China. Rich village women were able to use their financial and political capital to influence the decisions of cadres and officials regarding the distribution of resources. Poor women tended to negotiate with cadres and officials directly in order to access resources. These village women also accessed resources through markets and marital social networks.

Second, most of the current research tends to utilise only gender as an analytical category to understand rural livelihoods, but this cannot fully explain how and why women themselves are divided in terms of their access to livelihood resources. This study incorporates a class dimension by extending the focus beyond gender inequality to emphasise inequality at the intersection of class and gender in assets access. Class-based inequality refers to the unequal distribution of financial and political capital. Gender-based inequality refers to the male-dominated power structure, such as the gendered division of labour, political participation, and

labour market participation. Women's class status and their differing association with a male-dominated power structure complicate the ways in which they access livelihood assets. Women from better-off households were at an advantage in livelihood assets access compared to poorer men and women. These women were able to resist patriarchal constraints by possessing greater financial and political capital, which facilitated their access to land, water and social security programmes. Poor women were disadvantaged and marginalised in assets access because they were inhibited by their lack of financial and political capital and the male-dominated power structure.

Third, this study provides a historical perspective to discover how wider societal changes have influenced women's access to assets. The existing literature concerning gender and rural livelihood assets access primarily emphasises household-level dynamics and rarely sheds light on wider societal changes. This study draws attention to the household-level and village-level dynamics of access, but also goes beyond this to examine the effect of wider societal changes on livelihoods. This study adopts a historical perspective to unravel the power relations embedded in asset access against the backdrop of marketisation in rural China from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s. It reveals that rural marketisation has further widened the gap between the rich and the poor, leading to greater intersectional inequalities among village women. Poor women were more marginalised than rich women in assets access.

This study makes multiple contributions to research on rural livelihoods and gender dynamics in China. As discussed previously, the existing literature on livelihood studies sheds little light on access to livelihood resources in the context of rural China. This study addresses this gap by examining how power and political relations mediated village women's access to livelihood assets. It also enriches the knowledge of power and politics in Chinese livelihoods research. Additionally, this study contributes a class dimension and emphasises the intersection of gender and class. It goes beyond an understanding of rural livelihoods from the sole analytical category of gender to a much more complex perspective on intersectional inequalities of gender and class. Finally, this study addresses the changes brought about by marketisation in the context of China and offers historical insights into livelihoods research. To illuminate historical changes, this research adopts the method of qualitative life history narratives. It allows the village women's agency to play out in terms of their livelihood, and the influence of broader societal change on their access to livelihood assets, to be conveyed through their own life experiences.

1.5 Thesis outline

This thesis, which examines Chinese village women's access to livelihood assets and the intersection of gender and class, is laid out in eight chapters. Chapter 1 gives the research background and contexts. It maps out the market reforms in regard to the economy, politics, and social security in rural China, and outlines the changes that have happened to rural livelihoods under the process of marketisation. This chapter also outlines the research questions, which is to examine what and how institutions intersect with gender and class to mediate women's access to assets. It concludes by emphasising the significance of this research.

Chapter 2 provides a critical review of the existing literature by focusing on the relation between rural livelihoods and gender. It discusses livelihood strategies, livelihood outcomes, and livelihood assets from a gender perspective. Gaps in the current literature are highlighted, and the contributions of this research are identified. Chapter 3 outlines the conceptual framework, which is the theoretical basis of this research. This framework combines a livelihood framework and the concept of intersectionality. This chapter presents the strengths and weaknesses of the livelihood framework of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and incorporates a theory of access to theorise access in this framework. Then, this livelihood framework which emphasises access further incorporates the concept of intersectionality, in order to address the intersection of gender and class in our understanding of asset access.

Chapter 4 elaborates the methodology of this study. It first outlines the research questions. Following the research questions, it discusses the selection of Pin village as my fieldwork site and maps out its historical changes. Then it provides details of my access to Pin village, the participants of this study, and the concrete data collection methods. This chapter further elaborates my method of data analysis by outlining the coding process. It concludes by discussing reflexivity and ethics.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 analyses the empirical data and presents the findings of the research. These chapters look at what and how institutions intersected with gender and class dynamics and mediated women's access to land, water, healthcare, and social security from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s. Chapter 5 addresses the open-ended and historical question of how women's access to rural land has been influenced by gender and class. This chapter presents land access,

in the forms of land distribution and land transfer, in multiple ways. It analyses how formal and informal institutions, such as village cadres, government officials, markets, and gender ideology, mediated women's access to land, and how class dynamics informed these institutions, which differentiated both men and women along class lines in their access to land.

Chapter 6 examines how gender and class dynamics historically influenced village women's access to water, which they used for domestic purposes or for irrigation. It examines how cadres, government officials, and markets mediated women's access to water over the past four decades. Similar to Chapter 5, it also examines the mediation of institutional processes and power relations, which are informed by class and gender dynamics. Men and women across different classes are compared in terms of their access to water.

Chapter 7 looks at women's access to public services and social security, including healthcare and Targeted Poverty Alleviation (TPA). Under the mediation of cadres, officials, and markets, this chapter discovers how political economy dynamics intersected with gender and class, and influenced women's access to healthcare and TPA. Men and women in different classes are compared in terms of their access to healthcare and TPA.

Chapter 8 synthesises the main findings and key arguments of this study and reflects on how they address my research questions. Furthermore, the contributions of this study to livelihoods scholarship and policy debates on (re-)distribution of livelihood resources are highlighted. Finally, this chapter discusses the limitation of this study and suggestions for future research. In the next chapter, I will review the current literature on rural livelihoods and gender, and provide an academic background for my empirical analysis.

Chapter 2 Rural Livelihoods and Gender: A Critical Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the ongoing process of marketisation and political reforms over the past four decades have shaped rural livelihoods. Men and women have experienced different changes to their livelihood and borne different costs from social change. Accordingly, this chapter provides an analytical review of empirical research on the topics of rural livelihoods and gender. The concept of ‘livelihood’ has a very broad meaning and encompasses almost every aspect of people’s lives. The focus of this chapter is on access to livelihood resources as discussed in livelihoods research. Because livelihoods consist of livelihood resources, strategies, and outcomes, access to resources is integrated with and mutually influenced by livelihood strategies and outcomes (Ellis, 2000; Scoones, 1998). Hence, this chapter first maps out the general context of the gender differences in livelihood strategies and outcomes, to understand their relevance to assets access. Then this chapter looks at access to livelihood assets from a gender perspective.

This chapter is structured as follows: Section 2.2 presents the gender differences in agricultural and non-agricultural livelihood strategies. Section 2.3 delineates the gender dynamics of the distribution of livelihood outcomes, emphasising outcome distribution and poverty. Section 2.4 focuses on the gender dynamics of access to livelihood resources. Section 2.5 summarises the key arguments of the current livelihoods literature and defines the research gaps.

2.2 Gender and livelihood strategies

When it comes to rural livelihood strategies, research has primarily put them into three clusters: agriculture-based livelihoods, livelihood diversification, and migration. Existing research concerning the relation between these livelihood strategies and gender mainly provides insights into how gender dynamics determine the choice of livelihood strategies and its implications for livelihoods. This section will review each cluster of livelihood strategies.

2.2.1 Agriculture-based livelihoods

Farming is an important rural livelihood strategy to households around the world (Saith, 1992). It is widely agreed that gender gaps exist in smallholder farming (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). Gender disparities in agriculture primarily exist in the following ways: First, there is a gender disparity in agricultural participation (Abbas, 1997; Harris, 2014; Quisumbing et al., 2014). Men and women engage in different agricultural work in most areas of South and Southeast Asia (Mumtaz, 1995). Men engage in ploughing, land-levelling, land preparation, irrigation, and drainage, as well as using machines and applying fertiliser and pesticides. Women mainly do weeding, transplanting, homestead vegetables and fruit, and raise poultry and livestock. But women work with men jointly on harvesting, threshing, crop processing, and storage (Mumtaz, 1995).

Given the gendered division of labour in agriculture, the phenomenon of the feminisation of agriculture has been paid a lot of attention (De Brauw et al., 2008). Farming is gradually being dominated by women in China and worldwide (Chiriboga et al., 2008; Jacka, 1997; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006). Current thinking on the feminisation of agriculture tends to attribute women's improved powers of land management and decision-making rights to the absence of male agricultural labour (Fan, 2003; Gao, 1994). Rao (2006) argued that women's improved rights in agriculture are a result of a gender asymmetry in access to non-agricultural employment opportunities. This implies that women have fewer chances than men to diversify their livelihoods in non-agricultural sectors. Gao (1994) explained that women's difficult transition to non-agricultural sectors is caused by their domestic work burden, lower education, and land shortage constraints. Moreover, in the context of rural China, some researchers critiqued the term 'feminisation of agriculture' (Judd, 1994; Judd, 2002). Judd (1994) pointed out that the 'feminisation of agriculture' is problematic because access to agricultural resources and cooperation between households is entirely controlled by men. Hence, Gao and Judd suggested replacing the term 'feminisation of agriculture' with 'feminisation of agricultural labour'. The feminisation of agricultural labour is appropriate because women have made up at least two thirds of agricultural labour since the 1990s (Judd, 2002).

Second, men and women differ in the type of crops they cultivate in agricultural livelihoods (Abbas, 1997; Darity, 1995; Ellis, 1998). Men primarily produce crops with high market value to sell (Abbas, 1997). Women take over arable crops for subsistence, household food

consumption, and food security (Arora, 2014; Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). In some developing countries, women are estimated to produce 60-80% of food items (Quisumbing et al, 2014). For instance, in Nigeria, rural women produce two thirds of subsistence crops (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). The ratio is much higher in some countries in Southern Africa. In Tanzania, women contribute 87% of their labour to food crops. In Zambia, women dedicate 80% of their labour to household crops (Abdullahi, 2000). In addition to engaging in subsistence agriculture, women also assist men in cash-crop production (Arora, 2014).

Third, men and women differ in terms of labour inputs and decision-making in agriculture. Rural women take a leading role in agriculture and contribute the most labour (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). Women in Sub-Saharan Africa contribute the most labour in farming. Labour inputs are not only in food production but also in cash crops and livestock (Maigida, 1992). The situation of women's engagement in agriculture is determined by the shortage of alternative employments, the acquisition of technical knowledge, the temporary or permanent migration of men, and the lack of agricultural labour (Abdullahi, 2000; Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). However, despite women's leading role in agriculture, their contributions are seldom recognised by both men and women. Thus, women have little or no say in agricultural development (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). Even in some public policies, women's contribution to agriculture and decision-making rights at the household level are underestimated or ignored (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009).

Fourth, men and women are different in terms of agricultural productivity (Huyer, 2016). Women tend to produce lower yields per unit of land than men (Croppenstedt et al., 2013). According to Udry (1996), in Burkina Faso women's agricultural output is about 18% lower than their male counterparts. Similarly, Goldstein and Udry (2008) indicated that in Ghana women produce much lower output and therefore make much less profit per unit of land than men in the cultivation of the same crop. Moreover, a gender disparity in agricultural yields has been evidenced in male-headed households and female-headed households. For example, the households of widows have lower yields than male-headed households (Horrell and Krishnan, 2007). The gender disparity in productivity is caused by gender inequality in education, social norms, access to resources, services, and inputs (Croppenstedt et al., 2013). An overriding argument is that women encounter more barriers in accessing productive resources which can improve yields, rather than that women are worse than men at using technology (Croppenstedt

et al., 2013; Huyer, 2016). Productive resources for agriculture can be land, labour, credit, information, and technology (Razavi, 2011; Sheahan and Barrett, 2014).

These gender disparities have attracted increasing attention, with calls to improve rural women's disadvantaged position in agriculture. Many programmes have been conducted worldwide with the aim of narrowing the gender gap in agricultural activities. An increasing number of African women have demanded to be involved in agriculture-relevant policies and economic practices (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). In Nigeria, the women-in-agriculture (WIA) programme was carried out, which aimed to improve women's participation in agricultural activities. It assisted rural Nigerian women in healthcare and agricultural technology, provided forums to allow these women to express themselves, and encouraged them to establish WIA farmer groups. As a result, this programme successfully improved women's access to agricultural inputs and credits (Kotzé, 2003). In addition, international NGOs have also played a role in dealing with gender issues in agriculture by empowering women in developing countries (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). However, Franklin (2007) indicated that despite the increasing representation of women in these agricultural organisations in Africa, a lower proportion of women become organisation members, and they are excluded from leadership positions. Research demonstrates the various gender-based social restrictions placed on women when they engage in agriculture-based livelihoods. This is important in unravelling how the gendered division of labour and disparity in contribution in agriculture influences access to livelihood resources.

2.2.2 Livelihood diversification

Population growth and the lack of livelihood opportunities in agriculture stimulates the diversification of livelihood strategies (Francis, 2000). Diversification is defined as the process by which rural families create 'a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities' to improve livelihood security and living standards (Ellis, 1998, p.1). These diverse portfolios, which are constructed by households over time, encompass various agricultural and non-agricultural activities (Ellis, 2000). The purpose of diversifying agriculture-based livelihoods is to develop intensive agriculture, such as higher-value crops, commercial agriculture, and commercial livestock. The non-agricultural activities are increasingly diversified, such as migration, rural wage labour, and self-employment (Alobo Loison, 2015; Micevska and Rahut, 2008; Oluwatayo, 2009; Sana and Massey, 2005). Livelihood diversification is essential to

enhancing survival security and improving resilience to stresses and risks in most countries in Asia and Africa (Barrett et al., 2001; Zoomers and Kleinpenning, 1996). For wealthier rural households, livelihood diversification is also a process of accumulation (Hart, 1995).

Rural livelihood diversification is approached differently by men and women. Rural women are more likely to diversify agricultural livelihoods for household subsistence, because they are inhibited from engaging in diversified non-agricultural activities (Haggblade et al., 2007). But men are more likely to diversify livelihoods than women, not only in agriculture but also in non-agricultural sectors (Smith et al., 2001). In non-agricultural sectors, women comprise a much smaller proportion of labour market participation (Haggblade et al., 2007). Many diversified livelihood activities that men can be involved in are closed to women (Nelson et al., 2012). Women tend to be employed in low-paying, part-time, or seasonal jobs, because they lack education and work experience (Nelson et al., 2012). Also, cultural norms restrain women from doing some non-agricultural work at both a practical and ideological level (Oluwatayo, 2009). In rural China, patriarchal social norms grant men advantages in engaging in high-paying non-farm sectors in HRS, whereas women are primarily attached to agriculture-based livelihood diversification (Entwisle et al., 1995; Song, 2017).

Gender disparities in livelihood diversification are associated with household headship. It has been shown that female-headed households have significantly lower incomes than male-headed households (Dolan, 2004). Female-headed households are more likely to be in poverty (Loison, 2019). Because of low income and poverty, female-headed households are in greater need of diversification (Newman and Canagarajah, 1999). Moreover, household headship influences the choice of diversified livelihood strategies. In Uganda, female-headed households encountered more constraints in constructing high-paying non-farm diversified activities than male-headed households (Dolan, 2004). Female-headed households tend to engage in agricultural activities, work as low-paying agricultural wage labourers, and work in non-farm self-employment activities (Canagarajah et al., 2001; Simtowe, 2010). Only very few female-headed households are able to engage in non-farm diversification. In these households, the poverty rate has already declined (Newman and Canagarajah, 1999).

Research concerning gender and livelihood diversification indicates that the disadvantages of female-headed households in terms of diversification are constrained by cultural norms, access to productive assets, and human capital (Dolan, 2004; Manjur et al., 2014). In particular, access

to assets has an essential role in livelihood diversification (Martin and Lorenzen, 2016). As revealed by some studies using the sustainable rural livelihoods approach, assets are the prerequisites for the composition of livelihood strategies, and they determine the diversification of livelihood strategies (Ellis, 2000; Martin and Lorenzen, 2016). However, women's access to various assets in female-headed households is hindered by multiple socioeconomic, cultural, and physical obstacles (Martin and Lorenzen, 2016). Constrained in this way, some poor female heads cannot engage in diversified and high-paying activities (Haggblade et al., 2007). In contrast, women from wealthier families are more likely to be able to access assets and pursue livelihood diversification (Martin and Lorenzen, 2016). Hence, these studies reveal the gender dynamics that mediate the livelihood diversification of men and women. A few studies reveal the effect of class status on access to assets and livelihood diversification, by comparing wealthier women and poorer women. This is important in understanding how the gendered division of labour and household livelihood contribution in diversification affects access to resources for wealthier and poorer village women.

2.2.3 Rural-to-urban migration

A worldwide trend in rural livelihood diversification is the growth of rural-to-urban migration (Frances, 2000; Jacka, 2014). Two major concerns of the topics of migration and gender are what determines migration strategy and how migration affects livelihoods in rural sending areas (Donato and Gabaccia, 2015; Francis, 2010). The existing literature reveals that the primary determinants of migration are household livelihood strategies and the labour market. With regard to household livelihood strategies, the household strategies approach and the new economics of labour migration (NELM) regard the household as a useful unit in understanding the gendered nature of migration (Chant, 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003). They indicate that power relations, and negotiations within households about gender and generation, significantly determine migration (Chant, 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003, p.7). Both men and women can be rural-to-urban migrants, but they differ in terms of their priorities in different regions (Murphy, 2004). Female migration is popular in Latin America, the Caribbean, and South-East Asia, while male migration is dominant in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia (Chant, 1998). In China, migration—as a household livelihood strategy—is primarily pursued by men, while women are left behind in rural households (Jacka, 2014). Women are more likely to have their mobility impeded, because they are primarily responsible for domestic chores (Chant, 1998; Liu, 2012).

In addition to household-level dynamics, the wider labour market plays a central role in migration strategy. Due to women's lower literacy levels and lower wages in migration labour markets (Rao, 2006), the structure of labour markets favour male migration while restricting female migration (Chant, 1995; Chatterjee, 2012; Guo and Shen, 2016). In China, men and women are different in terms of their access to employment opportunities, labour markets, and wage incomes (Guo and Shen, 2016). The occupational options for female migrants in the urban labour markets are inferior to the options for male migrants (Fan, 2003). Moreover, migrant women are socially differentiated by labour markets according to their social identities, including age, marital status, education, location, household economic status, and regional characteristics. Gender dynamics intersect with these social identities, having an effect on migration (Canagarajah et al., 2001; Rogaly, 1997). Old women, pregnant women, and women with children tend to be excluded from employment opportunities in migration (Ellis, 2000, p.153). Childcare and the daily maintenance of the household are the predominant constraints on the migration of married women (Chant, 1998; Liu, 2012). As such, men of all ages increasingly embark on migration journeys (Donato and Gabaccia, 2015; Zhao, 2002), while women are left behind, attached to their rural origin communities (Zhang and Fussell, 2017).

The growth of employment opportunities in migration mitigates the discrimination of the market and stimulates female migration (Zeng et al., 2014). As mentioned in Chapter 1, when China joined the World Trade Organisation in 2001, foreign capital investments stimulated the rise of rural-to-urban migration. The expansion of the electronics industry, small manufacturing industries, and the demand for rural-to-urban domestic servants in the southeast coastal region of China, have created increasing non-farm opportunities for female migrants since the early 2000s (Guo and Shen, 2016). More village women have started to join the male-dominated migration journey, but most of these women are young and single (Mu and Van de Walle, 2009). Young women from rural areas are increasingly abandoning farming and fulfilling their economic commitments to their rural households through migration (Guo and Shen, 2016; Sun, 2008; Yan, 2008). These workers are referred to as 'nimble fingers' and 'disposable labour', which has contributed to China's image as the world's factory (Elson and Pearson, 1981; Wright, 2013).

Although these young female workers' economic contributions are remarkable, men and women are still differentiated in employment chances and wage income (Guo and Shen, 2016).

Guo and Shen (2016) found that the average wage of female migrants is less than the wage of male migrants. Women are mostly engaged in low-paid, 'feminised' employment in small manufacturing industries, the service sector, and textile and garment industries (Gaetano, 2004; Fan, 2003; Liu, 2012). Additionally, marriage and childbirth can prevent the migration of these young women and thereby impede them from obtaining stable and remunerative employment (Fan, 2004).

Second, the influence of migration on livelihoods in rural sending areas is a hot debate in the literature, focusing especially on the gendered division of labour and the influence of remittances on livelihoods. In China, the gendered division of labour and household livelihood contribution in rural sending areas has been reshaped by rural-to-urban migration (Mu and Van de Walle, 2009). Men and younger women have withdrawn from agriculture and migrated to pursue remunerative non-farm employments (Judd, 2009). In regard to income from migration, agriculture is secondary to household livelihood income contributions (Chuang, 2016). Nonetheless, agriculture remains important to most of the rural left-behind population, particularly the elderly (Judd, 2009). Middle-aged and elderly left-behind women have become the main source of farming labour, and they tend to undertake more agricultural work (Judd, 2009; Mu and Van de Walle, 2009). For these women, the farming is compatible with childcare and domestic chores (Short et al., 2002).

The phenomenon of the feminisation of agriculture emerged and proceeded in China. With the ongoing process of migration, the 'feminisation of agriculture' turned into the 'feminisation and greying' of agriculture (Huang, 2012; Ye, 2015). An increasing number of old women, rather than young or middle-aged women, became the backbone of agriculture (Ye, 2015). Regarding this development, some negative impacts on land and agriculture have been discussed (Mu and de Walle, 2011; Ye and He, 2008). Because of the outflow of agricultural labour to migration, the extensification of agriculture and land abandonment is increasing, while the variety of crops are reduced (Lu, 2016; Wu and Rao, 2009). The resultant issues, such as food and nutrition security, agricultural productivity, poverty reproduction, and land regimes, have been discussed by researchers (Mu and de Walle, 2011; Ye, 2015; Ye and He, 2008).

There is an ongoing debate about the economic contribution of migration income to the livelihoods of rural households. Remittances are sent from migrants back to their rural

households, which has some positive effects on recipient households (Beine et al., 2008). There is agreement among researchers that migrant remittances relieve financial pressure on the daily consumption of households (Woodruff and Zenteno, 2007). Migrant remittances can also help reduce household financial constraints on productive input for agriculture (Woodruff and Zenteno, 2007). In particular, much of the migration literature sheds light on the influence of remittances on left-behind women and female migrants (Beine et al., 2008; Chuang, 2016). In rural China, remittances can relieve left-behind women from the supply of labour in farming, childcare, and domestic chores (Beine, et al., 2008).

Remittances also have an effect on the status of female migrants in their rural households. The remittances sent back by female migrants greatly improve their bargaining rights in households, particularly when their economic contributions are numerous (Chuang, 2016). However, in rural China, despite the migration of women and their remittance contributions to household livelihoods, they are not equal to men in household financial contributions and decision-making rights (Jacka, 2012). This is because women remain under the control of a patriarchal legacy which sees men as natural leaders in households (Jacka, 2012). Overall, current research concerning gender and migration demonstrates that patrilocal inequalities inhibit women in the pursuit of migration and from making financial contributions to household livelihoods. A few studies further address the heterogeneity of women and the role of social identity in female migration. These studies highlight the importance of an intersectional analysis of migration strategy. This is relevant in examining how migration influences women's access to assets. The next section will examine rural livelihood outcomes and the distribution of outcomes between men and women.

2.3 Gender and livelihood outcomes

There has been considerable research concerning gender and rural livelihood outcomes (Francis, 2000; Li et al., 2008). This research primarily emphasises four aspects: the gender income gap, the distribution of income, financial rights on expenditures, and the relation between poverty and asset holdings (Francis, 2000; Li et al., 2008; Quisumbing et al., 2014). As mentioned in Section 2.2, the empirical evidence corroborates gender income disparities. It has been indicated that women earn less than men in non-farm sectors (Chaudhry and Rahman, 2009; Mueller, 2007). For instance, in Uganda women earn about 85% less income than men, and about 40% less in Ghana (Canagarajah et al., 2001). The literature confirms that the

gendered division of labour and gender inequality in education contributes to this income disparity. Because women perform the roles of mother and wife while men act as breadwinners and dominate the outside world, the distribution of household resources like education disproportionately favours men (Chaudhry and Rahman, 2009). As education is essential to improving non-farm incomes (Canagarajah et al., 2001), men—equipped with skills through education—are able to compete for more lucrative activities and earn more income than women (Chaudhry and Rahman, 2009). This gender disparity in access to education is most common in developing countries and poorer areas (Chaudhry and Rahman, 2009). In addition to education, the factors of age, location, access to markets, and geography have a negative impact on women's non-farm earnings (Canagarajah et al., 2001).

The distribution of household income and financial decision-making rights on the purchase of goods and services is different for men and women (Li et al., 2008; Quisumbing et al., 2014). Their different levels of engagement in income-generating activities determines the allocation of outcomes and rights of financial control (Francis, 2000). The gendered composition of livelihood strategies privileges men in the control of household financial rights and decision-making rights (Ellis, 2000, p.143). As Ellis (2000, p.143) pointed out, this allocation depends on 'who in the household is able to diversify, and the control that is then achieved over income streams'. Besides, gendered rights of control over finances results in gender disparities in consumption. Men and women cost in different ways with their controlled incomes (Quisumbing et al, 2014). In South India, women in some households spend almost all of the household income on household needs, while men spend a large proportion of their income on their own personal needs (Mencher, 1988). In Kenya, the empirical evidence shows that household income, when allocated by women, has a positive effect on household caloric intake (Kennedy and Peters, 1992). Compared with men, women's income is used more readily for households, especially child welfare (Kennedy and Peters, 1992). Current research acknowledges the significance of gendered livelihood strategies in determining men and women's differing financial rights and consumption, but it ignores the essential role of household wealth on household consumption. Men and women from wealthier households may consume differently to poorer households.

The burgeoning literature on rural livelihood outcomes discusses the relation between livelihood assets and poverty (Li et al., 2008). According to sustainable rural livelihood approaches, the status of asset holdings is the starting point from which to pursue livelihood

strategies and outcomes (Scoones, 1998). The status of asset holdings is a useful criterion in examining the sustainability of livelihood outcomes (Scoones, 2015, pp.15-33). De Haan and Zoomers (2005) conceptualised poverty as the failure to access resources. A lack of stable livelihood assets might put livelihoods at risk and cause everlasting poverty (Chambers, 1997; Scoones, 1998). Productive materials and financial resources are considered by rural men and women to be the most significant factors affecting poverty in China (Li et al., 2008). Land and savings are most important to the livelihood composition of village women (Li et al., 2008). However, women are disadvantaged in the ownership of these assets compared to men in rural China. Gender inequalities in land, roads, and water could cause more severe poverty among women (Li et al., 2008). Therefore, these studies have illustrated the significant differences in the distribution of livelihood outcomes between men and women. This is relevant to my study, because it investigates the effect of access to and control over household livelihood outcomes on women's access to assets. In the next section, I will review the relation between livelihood assets and gender.

2.4 Gender and livelihood assets

A growing body of literature offers insights into gender inequality in access to livelihood resources. Studies concerning access to assets primarily concentrate on natural resources, human capital, financial capital, information, and social networks (Carney, 1998; Rakodi, 1999; Ribot and Peluso, 2003). Access to and control of these assets is fundamental to determining what livelihood strategies can be implemented and what livelihood outcomes are produced (Valdivia and Gilles, 2001). Because agriculture is an essential livelihood strategy for most rural households in many developing countries in the Global South, access to land, water for irrigation, crops, and livestock has drawn wide attention (Aviles, 2015; Crow and Sultana, 2002; Quisumbing et al. 2014; Razavi, 2003; Valdivia and Gilles, 2001). In this regard, this section primarily outlines the profound influence of gender dynamics on women's access to land and water.

A considerable amount of research discusses the implications of patrilocality on access to land (Cohen, 1998; Francis, 2000; Judd, 2005). These studies illustrate how patrilocality is a barrier in some respects to rural women's access to land ownership or land tenure rights (Francis, 2000; Judd, 2005). Patrilocal marriage customs place men at the centre of access to and control over household land (Agarwal, 2003; Walker, 1994; Whatmore, 1993; Zhang, 2003). In Koguta in

Kenya, women's access to land is largely dependent on their marital status (Francis, 2000, p.157). Due to their dependence on marriage for land, women's engagement in farming is also dependent on their kinship relationships, as wives, daughters, and mothers (Whatmore, 1993). Thus, in farming, women are subordinate to men (Whatmore, 1993). Moreover, patrilineal power relations exacerbate this reality when women get divorced or become widows (Agarwal, 2003; Bélanger and Li, 2009; Judd, 2007). Because of their dependence on marriage and male kinship for land claims, a marital breakdown threatens to expose women to landlessness and poverty (Jackson, 2003). Therefore, statutory laws and practical customs in many developing countries are geared towards protecting the land rights of divorced women or widows. However, these laws and administrative regulations are easily invalidated when they are in contradiction with the social practices of land inheritance in many countries (Bélanger and Li, 2009; Huyer, 2016).

There are some studies that examine the landlessness of divorced women and widows in rural China (Judd, 2007; Zhu, 2000). Chinese land law and official regulations intend to protect the equal land rights of women in the case of divorce or widowhood. For instance, the 2002 Land Law of the PRC, on rural land contracts, gives widows and divorced women equal land rights (NPCSC, 2002). However, in practice, due to the pattern of patrilocal marriage and patrilineal ideology, widows and divorced women are excluded from keeping the land tenure rights that they have been entitled to from both their marital families and natal families (Hare et al., 2007; Judd, 2007). With regard to land inheritance from natal families, the patrilineal system rationalises that sons should inherit land from their parents rather than daughters (Zhang, 2003). When daughters get married, their land in natal families is usually kept by their brothers and parents. Divorced women are unable to regain this land from their natal families (Zhang, 2003). In a word, 'social and administrative biases' create a rift between the legislation aimed at protecting women's land rights and social practices against their land inheritance (Agarwal, 2003, p.204). Consequently, women's landlessness exacerbates gender inequality within households, that is, landless women are further vulnerable to reduced bargaining rights (Zhang, 2003). Overall, current research concerning land and gender mostly emphasises the negative effects of patrilocal marriage on women's land inheritance, particularly in the case of divorce and widowhood. This point leads me to think about the influence of patrilocal marriage on women's access to assets.

In addition to land, access to water has received considerable attention in current research. The research concerning gender and water emphasises how the gendered division of labour, intra-household distribution of outcomes, and ownership and control of resources influences men and women's access to water (Crow and Sultana, 2002; Zwarteveen and Meinzen-Dick, 2001). The gendered division of labour delegates the responsibility of fetching water and the specific water-based needs of men and women. The gendered division of labour places women in the domestic sphere, and therefore women are in need of water for cooking, washing, livestock, homestead gardening, and caregiving (Lu, 2009). Women are primarily responsible for fetching water for domestic use (Lu, 2009). Besides, access to and right of control over water management is further highlighted (Crow and Sultana, 2002). Decision-making rights over assets and patriarchal gender norms constitute the unequal power relations of men and women in access to water (Jackson, 1998; Zwarteveen, 1997). Zwarteveen and Meinzen-Dick (2001) showed that in South Asia women's rights regarding irrigation are neglected by formal and informal membership rules and practices in irrigation-related organisations. Women's participation in water management in formal institutions cannot be guaranteed, because local norms and practices exclude their participation and prevent their voice from being heard. Instead, women have to use informal and insecure means to obtain irrigation services (Zwarteveen and Meinzen-Dick, 2001).

Access to other livelihood resources, such as technologies, credit, and information, has also been discussed from a gender perspective (Huyer et al., 2015; Huyer, 2016; Perez et al., 2015). These studies focus on patrilocal inequalities between men and women, but most of them use contexts outside of China. In terms of access to agricultural technology, the priorities of men and women are different, due to the gendered division of labour in agriculture. Men are primarily responsible for commercialised agriculture such as crop cultivation and raising livestock, while women are responsible for homestead gardens and raising livestock on a small scale (Huyer et al., 2015). In regard to accessing credits for agricultural production, female-headed households are at a disadvantage compared to male-headed households in most countries (Croppenstedt et al., 2003). Women face a series of constraints in accessing credit. For instance, collateral land is usually required when accessing credit from formal institutions such as banks. But women are less likely to be able to provide collateral land to a bank than their male counterparts (Croppenstedt, 2003). Additionally, women face restrictions in terms of education, mobility, social norms, and social networks with appropriate persons working in banks to access credit (Croppenstedt, 2003).

Overall, the literature reveals the structural/institutional constraints and the social and political power relations that mediate women's access to livelihood resources. Multiple social and political patriarchal inequalities and their effect on women have been addressed. But one shortcoming of the literature is that it rarely includes a class dimension. Class is essential to understanding the disparity in access to assets between the rich and poor, and it intersects with gender inequality to further differentiate access to assets among men and women of different class status. To fill this gap, my analysis focuses on power relations in access to assets, but it also examines the intersectional inequalities of gender and class.

2.5 Summary

This chapter critically reviewed the existing literature on the topic of livelihoods and gender. The literature revealed that in livelihoods, patriarchal inequalities benefit men while disadvantaging women. This is caused by male-dominated socioeconomic, political, and social structures. A number of patriarchal restrictions to women in the pursuit of their livelihoods have been identified. This chapter noted that gender disparities in the division of labour, labour market participation, household decision-making rights, and systemic gender biases in social norms impede women's access to livelihood assets, composition of livelihood strategies, and the distribution of livelihood outcomes. However, four unexplored areas in the topic of rural livelihoods and gender were identified.

First, although some pioneering studies have examined how social and political power relations shape the pursuit of livelihoods, particularly in regard to asset access, they remain marginal to the dominant trend in livelihoods and gender research. More attention is needed on the power relations and structural/institutional constraints that mediate livelihoods, which influence and determine who has what resources, who does what activities in certain pathways to make a living, and what livelihood outcomes people receive. To reveal power relations and structural/institutional constraints, my study focuses on access to livelihood assets and gender, because these two dimensions have rarely been analysed in livelihoods literature in the context of rural China. This study fills this gap by examining village women's access to assets in rural China.

Second, existing research has revealed how gender dynamics shape the livelihoods of men and women, but it has failed to include a class dimension. The gender dynamics that influence women's livelihoods cannot fully explain the disparity among women of different class status. Without an awareness of social division and how this affects women's livelihoods, livelihood analysis is very limited. For example, the rapid social stratification of rural China has been one cause of disparities in livelihoods (see Chapter 1). Therefore, the inclusion of a class dimension is essential to examining social and political power relations in livelihood analysis. This study goes beyond the gender dimension to examine the intersection of gender and class in asset access.

Third, previous studies have a limited understanding of how social changes influence livelihoods from a historical perspective. In the context of rural China, dramatic social transformation and marketisation has shaped livelihoods for the past four decades (see Chapter 1). But, thus far, the longitudinal changes of the relation between gender and rural livelihoods are poorly understood in China. This research will fill this gap and shed light on the effect of wider societal changes on village women's access to livelihood assets.

Fourth, due to gender inequality in livelihoods, current livelihoods research tends to depict rural women as a passive and inferior group, facing multiple restrictions in access to assets, the pursuit of livelihood strategies, and livelihood outcomes. But the agency of these women is rarely highlighted. This study puts women at the centre to understand their livelihoods. I not only pay attention to the social constraints on women in terms of their access to assets, but also address their opportunities and agency. In the next chapter, the integrated analytical framework of the livelihood approach which emphasises access and the concept of intersectionality will be presented, based on this review of the literature.

Chapter 3 Analytical Framework: Integrating Livelihoods and Intersectionality Perspectives

3.1 Introduction

As illustrated in Chapter 2, this study examines village women's livelihoods and access to assets in rural China. Current research, however, rarely considers the perspective of political economy or the dimensions of gender and class under Chinese marketisation and social stratification. To fill these gaps, this chapter applies the concept of intersectionality and the integrated theoretical framework of the IDS's sustainable rural livelihoods framework, which focuses on access. The main concern of this integrated framework are the social and political power relations of gender and class in the understanding of village women's access to assets.

This chapter is organised as follows: Section 3.2 gives a brief history of the livelihoods approach in rural development. This section also identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the sustainable rural livelihoods framework produced by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). Section 3.3 theorises 'access' in IDS's livelihoods framework by expanding it with a theory of access. Section 3.4 traces the development and implications of the concept of intersectionality. Section 3.5 summarises the integrated framework of the livelihoods access approach and the concept of intersectionality.

3.2 The sustainable rural livelihoods approach in rural development

Thinking on rural development switched from the top-down blueprint approach of the 1950s through to the 1980s, to bottom-up and participatory approaches (Chambers and Conway, 1992; Ellis and Biggs, 2001). Rural development has been characterised by community development (1950s), state-led small-farm growth (1960s and 1970s), integrated rural development (1970s), market liberalisation (1980s), participation and empowerment (1980s and 1990s), and sustainable livelihoods since the 1990s (Ellis and Biggs, 2001). This demonstrates that rural development thinking has shifted its focus from centralised national politics and modernisation to the perspectives of marginalised populations (Arce, 2003). For instance, participation and empowerment theory—which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s—introduced a strong participatory trend. For example, rapid rural appraisal (RPA), participatory rural appraisal (PRA), and actor-oriented perspective (Ellis and Biggs, 2001), empowers rural dwellers to independently make decisions to adapt to social changes (Ellis and Biggs, 2001).

Originating from participation and empowerment theory, the sustainable rural livelihoods approach became a guiding principle in the 1990s. In the face of global ecological crises in the 1990s, the international development and aid mechanism worked inefficiently to deal with social crises. Under these circumstances, the livelihoods approach provided a nuanced view. A large number of researchers, research institutes (e.g. IDS, DFID), international organisations (e.g. World Bank, FAO) and NGOs (e.g. CARE, SID) engaged in interdisciplinary field research, later known as livelihoods research. One outcome of this research is the term 'sustainable livelihoods', which emerged in rural development discourse in the 1990s (Bennett, 2010). A proliferation of definitions and frameworks for sustainable livelihoods arose in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Bebbington, 1999; Carney, 1998; Ellis, 2000; Rennie and Singh, 1996; Scoones, 1998). The origin of the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Approach (SRLA) is Chambers and Conway's working paper, 'Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century' (1992). The paper introduced this vital definition: 'A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living' (Chambers and Conway, 1992, p.6). This definition also highlights people's need for livelihood resilience to recover from stress and shocks, the maintenance and enhancement of capabilities and assets, opportunities for younger generations, as well as these contributions to other livelihoods in the short and long term at the local and global levels (Chambers and Conway, 1992).

One of the most widely used sustainable rural livelihoods frameworks is the livelihoods framework from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (see Figure 3.1). This framework conceptualises livelihoods as having five elements, and it perceives the interactive and dynamic relations among them. These five elements are contexts, livelihood resources, livelihood strategies, institutional processes, and outcomes. According to this framework, within a specific historical, political, and socioeconomic context, the ability to pursue livelihood strategies and outcomes is determined by the composition of livelihood resources. Also, access to resources, strategies, and outcomes is mediated by the matrix of power relations within institutional processes and organisational structures (Scoones, 1998). In other words, this framework emphasises how the ability to achieve sustainable livelihoods is influenced by institutional and organisational dynamics in a particular context. It involves three key dimensions: abilities, institutional and organisational dynamics, and historical and contextual conditions. These three dimensions enable me to reveal the ability of village women to access

assets and how this access is influenced by institutional dynamics formulated in a specific temporal and spatial, historical, political, and economic context. Therefore, the IDS's framework is a useful analytical framework for understanding village women's access to assets.

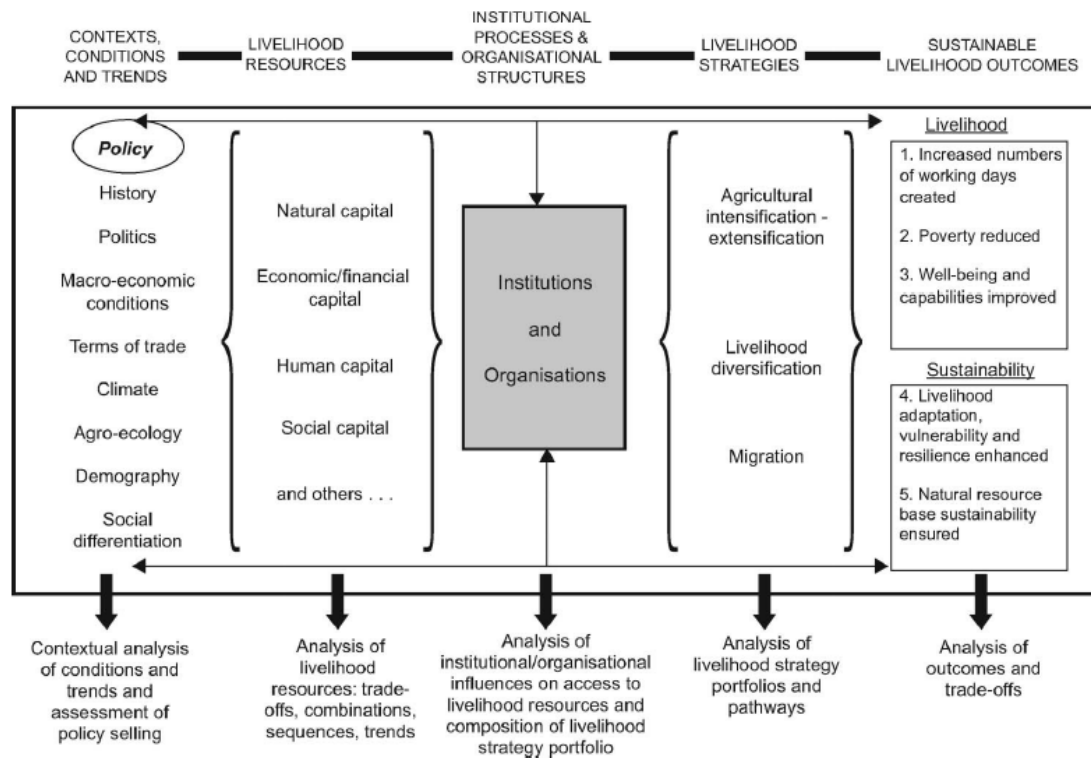


Figure 3.1 IDS's Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Framework

(Source: Scoones, 1998, p.4)

IDS's framework is more valuable than other sustainable livelihoods frameworks because it not only demonstrates two strengths but also remedies a weakness of SRLA. One strength of SRLA and the IDS's framework is their people-centred, actor-oriented, and bottom-up perspective. This is opposed to the deficiencies of top-down, bureaucratic approaches. They address people's abilities and agency in making a living. SRLA focuses on 'what the poor have rather than what they do not have' and wants to 'strengthen people's inventive solutions, rather than substitute for, block, or undermine them' (Moser, 1998, p.1). SRLA considers people as actors who have initiative and not just passive receivers, who can compose livelihood strategies based on various resources and changing social structures (Bebbington, 1999). In this way, the framework allows for the fact that village women are active agents who compose their livelihoods. Thus, the IDS's framework is useful in revealing women's agency and efforts in pursuing livelihoods, and also how they adapt to livelihood changes through examining their life experiences. This contributes to an understanding of what means women adopt, what

opportunities they seize, and how they deal with institutional constraints on livelihoods. Moreover, as the IDS's framework points out, the livelihood struggles of people not only enable them to make a living on their own, but also mediate the structure of institutions that influence their livelihood choices (Scoones, 2009). Hence, the IDS's framework can be further used to reveal how women's daily struggles reshape institutional processes in the mediation of access.

The second strength of SRLA and the IDS's framework is that they are open to diverse contexts and historical changes (Scoones, 1998). The IDS's framework shows that the composition of livelihoods is organised within a specific context. Contextual elements, such as politics, history, and the economy, have a significant effect on livelihoods. This framework acknowledges the importance of changes to livelihoods under these contextual elements (Scoones, 2009). However, most studies of livelihoods that use SRLA fail to take a long-term view in regard to rural socioeconomic and agrarian changes (Lahiri-Dutt, 2008; Lemke et al., 2009). As a result, most livelihoods research devotes too much attention to the situation and narratives of current livelihoods, while downplaying long-term livelihood shifts. As rural China has experienced rapid changes to its socioeconomic structure in the past four decades, village women made the effort to readjust their access to assets and pursue livelihood strategies that contend with wider societal transitions. Thus, applying the IDS's framework requires a dynamic historical examination of access to livelihood resources and its implications for livelihood strategies and outcomes (Scoones, 1998). Only by considering historical perspectives and context can the long-term shifts in village women's access to assets be revealed. Chapter 5, 6, and 7 will examine village women's access to livelihood resources from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s, against the backdrop of socioeconomic transition in rural China.

One weakness of SRLA is the absence of power, politics, and the link between livelihoods and governance (Scoones, 2009). The IDS's framework points out this weakness and emphasises the mediating roles of institutional processes and organisational structures. However, power and politics still remain marginal in current livelihoods research in SRLA. SRLA addresses how the construction of a livelihood is linked to its inputs (assets/capital/resources) and outputs (livelihood strategies and outcomes). The sustainable livelihoods frameworks are utilised as economic input/output checklists in order to concentrate on production and income and investments and gains, in the neoliberal view (De Haan, 2012). Assets are the foundation of the composition of livelihood strategies, and the checklists are used to examine assets. The

view of rural economics focuses on documenting assets and the interconnections among these assets (Bury, 2005). The ‘asset pentagon’, which outlines five core capital assets in SRLA, has been widely acknowledged (Carney 1998): ‘Natural capital’ means the natural resources and environmental services needed to make a living, such as land and water; ‘Financial capital’ refers to economic assets like cash, savings, and credits; ‘Human capital’ refers to health, education, and skills, which enable people to pursue diverse livelihoods; and ‘social capital’ comprises social networks and access to wider institutions and organisations (Carney 1998; Ellis, 2000). In a word, the economic view treats assets as the starting point of livelihood construction and addresses the material dimension of livelihoods. It examines how people combine the assets they hold and then translate them into livelihood strategies and outcomes.

The economic view ignores the effect of social and political power relations on access to assets and downplays the importance of livelihood governance (De Haan, 2012). Without addressing the role of power and politics in shaping livelihoods, village women, particularly poor women, might attribute livelihood constraints on their access to assets and inequality only to their own incapability, rather than institutional governance and wider structural changes. In fact, the constraints and inequalities are significantly caused by the intervention of structural and institutional power relations. Moreover, putting emphasis on assets cannot answer the question of why some people have resources while others do not. The social relations behind the distribution of resources are ambiguous. To bring power and politics to the centre of SRLA, the concept of access needs more elaboration.

3.3 Theorising access

The IDS’s livelihoods framework is valuable in examining village women's access to assets, because it already addresses ‘access’. Instead of focusing on material motives in production and outcomes in livelihoods analysis, ‘access’ sheds light on social constraints and inequality. This goes beyond a materialist view to consider power and politics in livelihoods. The elaboration of access in the IDS’s framework includes three aspects: that access is mediated by processes of institutional power; a socially differentiated understanding of social actors and their relationships in access; and a political economy perspective of access, by revealing wider social inequalities and changes (Scoones, 1998; Scoones, 2009; Scoones, 2015, pp.46-60).

3.3.1 Institutions

Access to livelihood resources and opportunities is mediated by and partly dependent on institutions, organisations, social relations, policies, power, and politics (De Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Ellis, 2000; Scoones, 1998; Scoones, 2015; Zhang, 2007). The IDS's livelihoods framework emphasises the effect of institutions, organisations, and political power on livelihoods (Scoones, 2015, p.35). Institutions matter in the analysis of access, because they can reveal the institutional processes and embedded power relations that formulate the perception of livelihood constraints and opportunities. In other words, when social rules, norms, and institutional practices create power relations that become embodied in institutions and socioeconomic structures, these power relations constitute contestations and negotiations which can include or exclude, advantage or disadvantage, different populations in accessing assets (Haan and Zoomers, 2005).

What are institutions? Institutions are defined as 'regularised practices (or patterns of behaviour) structured by rules and norms of society which have persistent and widespread use' (Giddens, 1979, cited in Scoones, 1998, p.12), and 'the rules of the game governing access' (North, 1990). Institutions are also perceived as the portfolio of formal and informal social rules and behaviour patterns which determine resource usage at the grassroots level (King, 2011, p.299). Ellis (2000) saw institutions as encompassing formal rules, customs and conventions, markets, and property rights. Institutions are implemented by organisations. Organisations are 'the players' who play the rules of the game (North, 1990). Ellis (2000) defined organisations as groups consisting of individuals with certain objectives. Organisations can be state agencies, local administrations, or non-governmental organisations (Ellis, 2000). They provide 'the organisational settings for implementing the rules' (Scoones, 2015, p.46). Scoones (2015, p.49) extended the range of players from state-based organisations to projects, private businesses, and local traditional elites.

Institutions are created and reshaped by social power relations. Institutions, in the mediation and governance of access, are not static but consistently recreated and reconstituted by economic, political, and cultural changes (Berry, 1993). Formal changes to institutions like laws and policies are transparent, but the informal characteristics of institutions are not transparent and are more complex in their relation to power (Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Scoones, 2015, pp.46-60). Thus, institutions are socially, politically, and culturally embedded and

constructed by unequal power relations, which poses a challenge to social justice and inclusivity (Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Scoones, 2015, pp.46-60). For instance, it is widely understood that institutional processes mediate the allocation of land (Zhang, 2003). Land tenure rights are governed by formal laws. However, in practice, land allocation is also mediated by informal 'customary law'. This 'customary law' is guided by local conventions, daily practices, and routines (Moore, 2000). The allocation of land through customary law may also be organised and operated by a traditional rural leader (Chanock, 1991). In this process, land allocation, governed by formal law, is mediated and altered by informal customary law, which is constituted by local social relations and the power of traditional rural leaders (Scoones, 2015, p.47). For this reason, the role of formal and informal institutions in the mediation of women's access to assets will be examined in Chapter 5, 6, and 7. More attention will be paid to informal institutions since they are most influenced by unequal power relations.

This moves us on to the question of how formal and informal institutions are created and shaped by unequal power relations. The access theory outlined by Ribot and Peluso (2003) could provide us with a possible answer. Ribot and Peluso (2003) indicated that access can be shaped, influenced, determined, and conditioned by a collection of complementary and overlapping mechanisms. These mechanisms are access to technology, capital, markets, knowledge, authority, social identities, and social relations (Ribot and Peluso, 2003). These mechanisms determine who will or will not have priorities in access to resources. For example, a person who has access to the technology of fetching water can obtain priority in accessing water. Moreover, these mechanisms could reveal 'who does (and who does not) get what, in what ways, and when' (Neale, 1998, p.48), and also 'who actually benefits from things and through what processes they are able to do so' (Ribot and Peluso, 2003, p.154). Guided by this theory of access, in Chapter 5, 6, and 7 I will examine village women's access to the mechanisms of technology, capital, markets, authority, social identities, and social relations, to reveal the bundles of power that influence their access to assets.

3.3.2 Social identity

As mentioned above, institutional processes greatly influence who can gain what (Leach et al., 1999). Here, a question that can be raised is why different people have unequal power relations in a particular circumstance. To answer this question, the IDS's livelihoods framework offers an insight into how social actors are differentiated. Differentiation means the different social

identities of actors, along the dimensions of gender, race, ethnicity, origin, age, class, etc. (Ellis, 2000; Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Scoones, 1998). Social identities determine people's differing social relationships and power relations in terms of access (Ribot and Peluso, 2003). Subject to different identities, people have particular social positions and hold different power relations, which determines the distribution of resources. Multiple dimensions of social division construct interlinking grids that contribute to differentiate people's access to assets in a particular historical context (Scoones, 1998). Thus, different people are included or excluded from access to assets, related to identity-based rights (Ribot and Peluso, 2003).

Class is a socially relational concept which can bring discussion of power and politics back into livelihoods analysis (O'Laughlin, 2004). Class as a social identity needs to be concerned in access (O'Laughlin, 2004). Chinese rural society has experienced social stratification under market reforms for the past four decades. Individual and household economic and political class status, which reflect in social occupations or livelihood strategies, are essential standards to divide rural population (Wang et al., 2018). For this reason, class is critical in mediating village women's access to assets. Given the distribution of livelihood resources within a village, village women's different abilities in access must not only be influenced by gender but also the power line of class. Therefore, Chapter 5, 6 and 7 will pay attention to the social identities of village women and examine the influencing processes of gender and class on women's access to assets.

3.3.3 A political economy perspective

By revealing institutions, power, and politics with social identities, the item of access has already incorporated a political economy perspective in the IDS's livelihood framework. But the political economy perspective of access requires going beyond local contexts to wider social inequalities within a specific historical context (Scoones, 2009). The changes to individuals and groups' access that take place at the micro level are influenced by wider societal changes (Scoones, 2009). Wider societal changes reshape the social power relations that influence access over time (Ribot and Peluso, 2003). As the arbiters of access, institutions have changed socially and culturally under these societal changes (Scoones, 2015). As a result, 'people have more power in some relationships than in others, or at some historical moments and not others' (Ribot and Peluso, 2003, p.158). Thus, the analysis of access needs to go beyond the local landscape and be understood as part of broader structural changes (Berry,

1993). As stated in Chapter 1, Chinese rural society has experienced great changes under the processes of marketisation and livelihood diversification. Driven by wider societal changes, power and social relations of village women's access at the micro levels have been reconstituting, reframing and reorganising. The abilities of individuals and groups for access were therefore shaped and reshaped over time. With this regard, Chapter 5, 6 and 7 will take account of the influences of wider structure changes on access to assets from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s.

Thus far, the IDS's livelihoods framework, along with access theory, constitutes a livelihoods access approach. It emphasises the mediation of institutions on the access to assets of village women with different social identities over time. While this is valuable in understanding village women's access to assets, it still has limitations. The social identities can constitute the bundles of power that intersect with institutions and then influence women's access. But a fact that cannot be ignored is that village women's social identities have multiple dimensions. The access of a village woman is determined by the intersection of multiple social identities instead of a single social identity. Thus, how a woman's different social identities are intermeshed and how their intersection constitutes the bundles of power cannot be fully explained by this framework. To respond to this omission, the concept of intersectionality will be integrated into this framework in the next section. I will firstly give a brief history of intersectionality theory, and then move on to the integrated framework of IDS's livelihoods framework and the concept of intersectionality.

3.4 Intersectionality

3.4.1 A brief history of intersectional analysis

Intersectional analysis in academia emerged during the second wave of feminism in the 1960s (Denis, 2008; Valentine, 2007). Male experiences, in most early sociological research, were presumed to be normative and universal, which resulted in the invisibility of women (Denis, 2008). Early research failed to incorporate women as independent research subjects (Monk and Hanson, 1982). This posed a challenge to sociology and was critiqued by many researchers (Denis, 2008). In the early 1970s, academic second-wave feminism aimed to shed light on women's distinctive experiences (Shields, 2008). In this period, the functionalist, Marxist, and radical socialist currents of feminism assumed women's subordination in the dualism of male and female (Denis, 2008; Nicholson, 2013). In the 1960s and 1970s, some research understood

women's distinctive experiences by emphasising the domination of a certain identity category (Denis, 2008). It prioritised and assumed the dominance of one stable identity category, like gender or class, and subordinated all other categories. Hancock (2007) identified this as a 'unitary' approach, which privileges one system of oppression and makes all others secondary. This approach usually addressed class or gender over other categories (Denis, 2008; Valentine, 2007).

These early currents of feminism have been critiqued by feminists of colour. One critique is that it homogenised women as primarily white and middle-class and failed to distinguish 'which women's experiences' (Shields, 2008, p.302). Because white middle-class feminists were the gatekeepers of feminist publications and did not recognise that their whiteness was embedded as a norm (Zinn et al., 1986), feminist research privileged the experiences and perspectives of Caucasian, heterosexual, educated, and middle class women, erasing the specificities of women of colour in regard to oppression (Denis, 2008; Looks, 1984).

The origin of intersectionality in feminism was the deconstruction of the categories of 'gender' and 'black' in Bell Hooks's book *Ain't I a Woman* (1981). This book laid the foundations of intersectional analysis. Drawing on it, various social identity categories, mostly concentrating on gender, class, and race, emerged (Brah and Phoenix, 2004). Intersectional analysis was used by feminists from both the Global North and Global South in quantitative and qualitative research (Boyd, 1999). Feminists from the Global South implicitly or explicitly tended to use intersectional analysis in postcolonial research (Alexander and Mohanty, 2013). Moreover, the ideas behind intersectionality gradually became more prevalent, and they were implied in multiple UN and NGO forums. For instance, in 2002, the 58th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights stated the importance of the effect of various patterns of discrimination on women's rights (Ghanea and Rahmani, 2003).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the main interpretative approach to intersectional analysis was the additive approach (Hancock, 2007). The additive approach emphasised the incremental addition of two or more static social categories in isolation of each other (Denis, 2008; Hancock, 2007). It reveals the cumulative layers of oppression on social groups, based on the addition of categories. Widely acknowledged was the notion of 'triple oppression', which was the experience of simultaneous gender, race, and class oppression (Hassim, 1991). The claim was that black women suffered from three different and additive forms of oppression: sexism,

racism, and classism (Hassim, 1991). Moreover, when an individual with more marginalised identities is identified, he or she suffers from greater layered oppression (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008). For example, disabled black women were considered to experience more oppression than black women, because the former suffered from the discrimination of disability in addition to sexism and racism (Valentine, 2007).

The additive approach has been criticized since the late 1980s. The additive process examines cumulative oppression by emphasising the addition of categories, but it fails to examine the mutual interactions among these categories (Glenn, 1999). Mutual interactions among multiple categories can generate a specific power position which determines the constraints and opportunities of an individual (Denis, 2008; Handcock, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 2006). For example, the additive approach assumes that black women experience the individual discriminations of racism and sexism. In this way, black women's experiences are understood by the addition of black men (race) and white women's (gender) experiences (Valentine, 2007). However, in fact, black women are placed at the intersection of gender and race oppression, in which gender and race are enmeshed and mutually constituted. The meaning of black women's racial category is altered or reshaped by their gender. Racial oppression may mean something different for black women compared to black men (Valentine, 2007). For this reason, the additive approach is inappropriate for an intersectional analysis of rich and poor women's access to assets, because it fails to examine the mutual constitution of gender and class.

Since the early 1990s, the concept of intersectionality has been used by some critical race theorists to elucidate the interconnection between multiple categories of oppression (Crenshaw, 1990; Crenshaw et al., 1995). For example, one of the most cited studies in the field of intersectionality is Kimberlé Crenshaw's article, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Colour' (1990). In this article, she critiqued the invisibility of black women in domestic violence. Gender equality projects focused on white women while anti-racist projects focused on black men. Feminist and anti-racist studies ignored the intersectional identities of women of colour. Crenshaw used the concept of intersectionality to understand the interdependent relations of gender and race, in order to fill the knowledge gap of the distinct experiences of black women in domestic violence.

Subsequently, growing recognition of the intersectional paradigm highlighted the 'multiple, intersecting sources of subordination/oppression', emphasising the constitutive process of

multiple categories (Denis, 2008, p.677). The starting point of the intersectional paradigm is to have multiple categories to identify people, such as gender, class, race, nationality, and so on (Salem, 2019). Each category has a specific ontological basis (Yuval-Davis, 2006) and is constructed by the other (Iyer et al., 2008; Whittle and Inhorn, 2001). These identity categories intersect rather than accumulate. As Yuval-Davis said, each category ‘is irreducible to other social divisions’ and ‘is constructed and intermeshed in other social divisions’ (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.195). Shields (2008) used a metaphor to highlight the mutually constitutive role of social identities in intersectionality. Namely, these identities are like interlocked beads rather than discrete beads on a string. In this regard, gender and other social identities, like race, class, and ethnicity, are mutually and relationally defined (Collins, 2002; Crenshaw, 1990; Spelman, 1988). The intersectional paradigm is more sophisticated in its understanding of the mutually constitutive relationships among categories. The concept of intersectionality as ‘mutually constitutive’ will be used to examine village women’s access to assets in Chapter 5, 6, and 7. The gender-dimensional inequalities in women’s access to assets may be altered by the class-dimensional inequalities. Rich women and poor women may face different gender-based constraints. In this way, access is determined by the intersection of class and gender, which locates women in a particular power position in which they suffer from specific challenges.

3.4.2 Doing intersectionality: methodological tools

One question that should be raised is how to empirically implement the concept of intersectionality. It is challenging to develop an intersectional interpretation of the interaction of several variables with qualitative data from a relatively small sample (Denis, 2008). What is needed is an understanding of the linkages among identities, and the process of identities in shaping one another through existing linkages or in the creation of new linkages (Valentine, 2007). The question of how to examine and elaborate mutually-shaped identity categories is part of the complexity of intersectionality methodology (McCall, 2005).

McCall (2005) clarified three types of methodological approaches used to reveal intersecting category relationships and complex social lives, including anticategorical complexity, intracategorical complexity and intercategorical complexity. These three approaches have different understandings of analytical categories and different ways of using the categories to examine the complexity of intersectionality (McCall, 2005). Anticategorical complexity and intracategorical complexity are most widely used by feminist poststructuralists of colour to

represent women's experiences of oppression (McCall, 2005). Anticategorical complexity deconstructs major analytical categories as being part of integrated category-based inequalities. The intracategorical approach aims to reveal the diversity and complexity of life experiences within social groups (McCall, 2005). This approach examines 'particular social groups at neglected points of intersection' (McCall, 2005, p.1774). It focuses on 'reconstructing intersections of single dimensions' across different social identity categories, rather than within categories (Winker and Degele, 2011).

Intercategorical complexity (categorical approach) uses categories strategically (Denis, 2008). The approach is concerned with unequal power relations among social groups and the changing nature of these inequalities (McCall, 2005). In contrast with the former two approaches, the intercategorical approach focuses on comparing various groups to reveal the multiple dimensions of inequality across different categories (Denis, 2008; McCall, 2005). When different social groups have already been constituted on the basis of identity categories, this approach explicates the relations of inequalities among these social groups (McCall, 2005). In this regard, this approach is essential in revealing the overall inequalities among social groups, since 'no single dimension of overall inequality can adequately describe the full structure of multiple, interesting and conflicting dimensions of inequality' (McCall, 2005, p.1791). Hence, the intercategorical approach is the most valuable methodological tool in revealing women's access to assets, since it allows for a comparison between different groups of women and an understanding of the unequal relations among them in mediating access to assets.

Applying the intercategorical approach involves three steps. The intercategorical approach begins with an analysis of categories that constitute social groups (McCall, 2005). Categorisation is essential and inevitable because it is the foundation of dividing social groups and constructing the unequal relationships among these social groups (McCall, 2005). Which social categories are included? Social division often but not exclusively includes gender, class, race, sexual orientation, age, and (dis)ability (Denis, 2008, p.679; Hancock, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 2006). The identified social divisions usually have greater importance than other divisions in constructing the social position of a particular group in a specific historical context (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Second, based on the already constituted social groups, it moves to examine one to two types of relationships between these groups, since a major concern of this approach is revealing the nature of the unequal relationships among groups (McCall, 2005, p.1785). It is noteworthy that these inequalities are changing over time, and therefore a historical perspective

is needed to examine the changing processes. Third, it needs to bring this analysis of relationships together, so that it is holistic and synthesised (McCall, 2005).

In the application of this intercategorical approach, the categories relating to village women's access to assets are identified as class and gender. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, livelihood diversification and rural social stratification in rural China have played an increasing role in livelihoods, through which class operates as economic status (e.g. occupation, livelihood strategies, income levels) and political status (e.g. political positions and political networks) in a village. Gender is understood as the social roles constructed by sexual differences and inequality between men and women (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Accordingly, in this study, village women and men can be divided into four social groups: two groups are men and women from better-off households (rich and middle-income households). They possess greater financial and political capital. The other two groups are men and women from poor households. They have less financial and political capital. Guided by the constitutive approach of intersectionality, this study emphasises the social relations between class and gender, particularly at the point of their intersection. Class and gender are enmeshed in the analysis of intersectionality. In Kessler and McKenna's words, gender and class 'abrade, inflame, amplify, twist, negate, dampen and complicate each other' (Kessler and McKenna, 1978, p.42, cited in Valentine, 2007). Either a gender-based or class-based dimension would fail to convey the experiences that take place at the intersectional points of gender and class. Thus, in Chapter 5, 6, and 7, this study is going to examine how gender and class mutually constitute each other and influence women's access to assets.

Two points at the intersection of gender and class will be highlighted to examine women's access to assets. Access to assets is not influenced by the single dimension of class status. Class enmeshes with gendered power and then they cooperatively influence village women and men of equal class status in terms of access to assets. The gender role of being a woman gives women particular advantages and disadvantages in comparison to men of the same class status. Besides, the intercategorical approach does not examine the effects of gender dynamics on access to assets but examines how gender dynamics intersect with class dynamics and how their intersection differentiates rich women and poor women in assets access. This point indicates that women's access to assets is not only determined by their gender, which differentiates them from men, but also their class status, which alters gender-based dynamics.

Class status creates advantages for one group of women while bringing in disadvantages for another group of women.

I will examine the relationships of inequalities among these already constituted social groups and then holistically synthesise these relationships. The categories of gender and class constitute different social locations and generate the social configuration of inequalities for these four groups. Each group in a specific location is defined and associated with specific opportunities and constraints (Denis, 2008), and also has its subordinate or privileged social relationships across various institutional levels (Yuval-Davis, 2006). For instance, with the example of poor village women, their access to assets is not simply influenced by wealthier women but is also associated with their relationships with rich men and poor men. These relationships must create advantages and disadvantages for the poor women in terms of access to assets. Thus, how the social relationships of inequalities among different social groups affect women's access to assets will be explicitly examined and systematically compared in Chapter 5, 6, and 7.

Finally, the social relationships in the intersectional analysis have drawn attention to different analysis levels (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 2005). Different social positions/divisions interweave power grids through various categories in a particular context. Through these power grids, social divisions are exercised through multiple-level institutions and organisations like households, markets, and state agencies. People located at different social divisions hold different power relations and play specific roles of being the agents of institutions or organisations. Social divisions in power grids therefore generate social relations of discrimination, oppression, inclusion, and exclusion at multiple levels (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Consequently, the multiple-level inclusive and exclusive boundaries 'differentiate between self and other, and determine what is "normal" and what is not, who is entitled to certain resources and who is not' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.199). Therefore, village women's access to assets, mediated by class and gender, is mainly analysed at the household, village team, and village levels in this study.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has elaborated on the combined theoretical framework that guides this study, namely, the IDS's livelihoods framework, further enriched by access theory and the concept of

intersectionality. IDS's sustainable livelihoods framework has been used for the empirical data analysis of this study because it is people-centred and open to diverse contexts and historical changes. In regard to livelihoods research in SRLA, it tends to focus on documenting household livelihood assets and activities, while paying insufficient attention to access. The IDS's framework has already addressed this gap and shed light on 'access', which is related to power and politics. The IDS's framework addresses the mediation of institutional processes in access to assets. It also points out the differentiation of social actors into multiple social identities, to justify their different experiences in terms of access. Moreover, the theory of access outlined by Ribot and Peluso (2003) helps to understand how institutions, particularly informal institutions, are constantly created and reshaped by unequal power relations, which influences access. Although the IDS's livelihoods framework, combined with the theory of access, draws attention to the mediation of different social identities on access, it fails to recognise that power relations in access to assets are not only determined by various social identities, but are also shaped by the mutual intersection of these social identities. This calls for a further step in understanding the complex, intersecting, and mutually constitutive relations among social identities. For this reason, the concept of intersectionality is integrated into the framework.

Drawing on the combined framework, I will explore how the causes and consequences of the mediating processes affect the inequalities of access to assets under social stratification. Based on the above discussion, I will take into account how the intersection of gender and class mediated assets access among village women of different class status. I will also reveal how the institutions mediated village women's access to assets, which was intersected with class and gender power relations. The comparison between wealthy women and poor women in access to assets will be underlined. Finally, since access to assets is not static but varies over time, concrete experiences of inequality are consistently produced and reproduced by each social category intermeshed with other categories. Thus, a historical perspective will be utilised in my empirical analysis. In the next chapter, I will outline the research questions and the methodology.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces an overview of the methodology and rationale for the analysis of rural women's access to assets. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this research addresses the question of what and how institutional processes—informed by gender and class dynamics—mediate women's access to livelihood assets, and its relevant implications for livelihoods. To address this question, this study needs to collect and analyse deep, detailed, micro and longitudinal fieldwork data under the direction of the integrated analytical framework illustrated in Chapter 3. Only qualitative research methods would be effective in the gathering of data, which will be further elaborated below. In this chapter, I will first revisit the research questions. Following the research questions, I will justify the rationale of the qualitative methodology. Then, I will discuss the reasons why Pin village was selected as my fieldwork site and give an overview of its history. I will also present the process of recruiting participants and the specific methods of data collection and data analysis. Finally, I will talk about reflexivity and research ethics.

4.2 Research questions

As mentioned in earlier chapters, for the past four decades in rural China marketisation has deepened social stratification and influenced the distribution of resources. Although an increasing number of studies have focused on gender and livelihoods in rural China, they have rarely noted political and power relations, social stratification, or historical changes under marketisation. Therefore, to fill these gaps, we are required to think about power relations, and use a historical lens and intersectional perspective regarding gender and class when examining village women's access to assets. Based on these gaps and the integrated conceptual framework illustrated in Chapter 3, the research questions are revisited as follows:

- 1) What are the institutional processes that have mediated Chinese village women's access to livelihood resources over the past four decades?
- 2) How has the intersection of gender and class dynamics shaped village women's access to livelihood assets?
- 3) How and why have village women's access to livelihood resources and their livelihoods changed under market reforms and the wider historical context of China's tremendous societal change and transformations?

4.3 A qualitative approach

Guided by these research questions and the integrated framework, I will adopt a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is appropriate to answer these questions for three reasons. First, qualitative research allows us to investigate what is going on by allowing participants to answer research questions beginning with ‘what’ or ‘how’ (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). It enables me to be closer to participants’ daily lives and capture detailed responses regarding what and how institutional dynamics influenced their access to assets. Second, a qualitative approach allows participants’ voices to be heard. In accordance with people-centred approaches to livelihoods, the interpretation of women’s access to assets shall be firmly based on information expressed by the village women themselves. A qualitative approach allows the women to express their opinions and represent themselves. With this approach, I can generate detailed and rich data in accordance with my research questions.

Third, examining how gender and class dimensions mediate access to assets requires me to investigate embedded power relations. A qualitative approach is able to examine social relations through people’s life experiences, by means of interviews and observation. Besides this, I am also concerned about an enduring critique of qualitative research, that is, its generalisability or representativeness (Horsburgh, 2003). It is doubted whether the interpretation or theory formation generalised in qualitative research is applicable to other contexts. However, instead of the generalisability or representativeness of my findings, my main concern is providing a descriptive, interpretative, and critical understanding of the specific and heterogeneous process of women’s assets access in rural China. Qualitative research can achieve a deep and rich collection of empirical data which quantitative research is unlikely to yield. For this reason, a qualitative approach is appropriate for this study.

4.4 History of Pin village

Village women’s livelihood experiences take place in certain physical and cultural settings during a particular historical period. It is crucial to select a specific village in order to qualitatively research changes to assets access. A primary concern for the village selection was its representativeness of the transformation of rural China. Before identifying Pin village as my fieldwork site, I had consulted an informant, originally from Pin village, in regard to the village’s history, resource endowments, and rural livelihoods. By comparing this information

with some policies and literature I reviewed, I learned that Pin village had experienced socioeconomic and political changes characteristic of rural marketisation and social stratification. I also identified that Pin village could satisfy my data collection needs, because it sheds light on the shifts in asset allocation in the past four decades. Changes took place in Pin village that can contextualise an understanding of how institutional and gender and class dynamics promote or hinder women's access to assets, composition of strategies, and livelihood outcomes. The second factor I took into account was the accessibility of the fieldwork site and potential research informants (Palinkas et al., 2015). In this regard, one of my relatives was an official in the Yong County Government. He functioned as a temporary contractor and assisted me in contacting a leader of Pin village after understanding my research purposes. His contact allowed me to gain some prior knowledge about Pin village and enter the village smoothly.

4.4.1 Geographical characteristics, population, and resources

Qualitative research requires a profile of the social context and overall setting within which participants operate (Horsburgh, 2003). I will first introduce a profile and history of Pin village, focusing on its geographical characteristics, population, resource endowments, economy and markets, politics, social relations, cultural activities, and so on. Detailed information was obtained from the interviews with village cadres, secondary documents from the Pin Village Committee, and Wang Town Government. Pin is a mountain administrative village located in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province. It is about eight miles southwest of the location of Wang Town Government and 42 miles from Yong county.



Figure 4.1 Maps of Hunan Province and Zhangjiajie City

(Source: Wang et al., 2016)

During the period of collective production from 1958 to 1981, the People's Commune had a top-down three-tier system, involving the commune (*gongshe*), the production brigades (*dadui*), and the production teams (*shengchan dui*). Correspondingly, in my fieldwork site, the system consisted of the Wang commune, Pin brigade, and several production teams. Since HRS was launched in Pin village in 1981, this system was transferred to Wang Town Government, Pin village, and village teams (*cunmin xiaozu*). Pin village consisted of 20 village teams, i.e. Yanwan, Rangshui, Shangping, Xiaping, Gehe, Baizhu, Laowu, Jiajia, Jiazhai, Tianwan, Hutian, Fanjia, Songhu, Songwan, Gangou, Ximu, Zaozhi, Lijia, Tangjia, and Yenong. Each village team was composed of approximately 100 members. When I did my fieldwork in 2016, there were 421 households and 1,825 villagers, including 935 males and 890 females. The entire labour force amounted to 932 people. It is noteworthy that the village's demographics have been shaped by the family planning policy implemented in 1979, reducing the number of newborn babies and resulting in a relatively smaller proportion of people below the age of 36.

In Pin village, from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s, provision of the most basic livelihood assets, such as land, water, fuel, and electricity, greatly improved. The total area of Pin village is about 26,300 *mu*,² which includes 21,400 *mu* of forestland, 1,394 *mu* of paddy land, 2,700 *mu* of dry land, about 600 *mu* of settlements, and 210 *mu* of ponds and reservoirs. Arable land and forestland were allocated in 1981 under the national 1978 Household Responsibility System (HRS). Paddy land underwent minor adjustment from 1981 to 1996 at the village level. In 1996, paddy land was allocated in the second round, while dry land and forestland remained unchanged. The ponds and reservoirs were the main sources of water for irrigation and domestic use. In the 1980s, villagers manually fetched water from wells and ponds for domestic use. Since the 1990s, a small number of villagers were able to pump and deliver water with pipelines. As water was limited, particularly in the dry season, irrigation could only cover the land near to water sources. From the mid-2000s, access to water was improved by state-funded water infrastructure projects.

Firewood, gathered from the mountains, was the primary source of fuel. In addition, some households with large forestland could make charcoals by cutting and burning tree trunks. Firewood and charcoals were cost-effective, and they were still important sources of fuel in recent years. Since the early 2010s, benefiting from improved transportation and increased

² One *mu* is equal to 666.67 square meters.

income, some households located near the village's main road started to use liquefied gas and induction cookers. In fact, some of the left-behind elderly population in these households prefer to use gas because they are too old to gather firewood. An electricity supply for daily use was established in the early 1980s. Access to electricity was enhanced by state electrical projects. The rural power grids of the Power Supply Enterprise (*nongwang gaizao*), implemented in 1994 and 1995, improved electric power infrastructure and ensured the stability of the electricity supply.



Figure 4.2 Gathered and Stored Firewood

(Source: Photo by author)



Figure 4.3 Making Charcoal

(Source: Photo by author)

4.4.2 Economy and village markets

Agriculture is the most basic form of livelihood in rural China and it has made fundamental contributions to the household and village economy under HRS. In the 1980s, crops in Pin village mainly included rice, maize, potatoes, sweet potatoes, peanuts, and rapeseed oil. Due to improved hybrid seeds, yields of rice and maize have been increasing for the past several years. The rice yield is about 320 kg/*mu* on average currently. Nonetheless, due to the limited income from subsistence agriculture, most households diversified their agriculture-based livelihoods. They increased the cultivation of cash crops like red chilli and tobacco leaves. Tobacco leaves became a dominant cash crop throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Rural households also planted high-profit timber, flowers, and fruit trees, such as pine, camellia oil, sand, fir, maple, plum, chestnut, and fragrans trees. Moreover, the burgeoning non-agricultural opportunities in Pin village and rural-to-urban migration diverted agricultural labour, mostly men and younger women. As a result, elderly women took their place in agriculture, which has led to the feminisation and ageing of agricultural labour since the 1990s. Meanwhile, driven by policies and commercialised agriculture projects at a large scale, land transfer and commercialised agriculture emerged in the mid-2000s. Family farms and cooperative agricultural organisations appeared, mostly focusing on the large-scale cultivation of tobacco leaves, chili, and tea.

Livestock and hunting and gathering also diversified agriculture-based livelihoods. Livestock in Pin village primarily consisted of pigs, goats, ducks, chickens, and geese. By interviewing the bookkeeper of the village committee, I learned that pigs and chickens were held in the greatest number. Commonly, a household may raise four to ten chickens and one to two pigs. Because the chickens are organic, they were sold at 44 *yuan*/kg in the local rural market and at a higher price of 50 *yuan*/kg in the urban market in 2016. Almost every household would slaughter, cure, and smoke a pig for the Spring Festival. The rest of the pork would be sold in markets. However, for the past several years, because of increased inputs for livestock and a fluctuating market, the amount of rural household-raised livestock went down dramatically, particularly the amount intended for market sale. Meanwhile, driven by the support of state livestock projects, since the early 2010s large-scale livestock farming emerged in Pin Village, including three pig farms, two chicken farms, and a goat farm. In addition, there were various wild herbs and animals in the village mountains. As wild resources were extremely valuable in urban markets, hunting and gathering were important cash-earning activities. The men liked to

hunt animals and the women gathered herbs. Wild resources were sold in Wang town or Yong county by the villagers themselves or through middlemen.



Figure 4.4 Farming and Livestock in Pin Village

(Source: Photo by author)

There were multiple types of petty businesses in Pin village. This mainly refers to retailers, timber processing, food processing, catering and restaurants, maintenance services, small retailer businesses, tractor transport, construction contractor, sewing and clothmaking, blacksmithing, shoemaking, and carpentry. Under HRS, the businesses of sewing and clothmaking, blacksmithing, and shoemaking gradually disappeared. But HRS stimulated the development of village industries and private business owners. Village petty businesses, which were independently managed by individual labourers and households, reached their peak in the mid-1990s. Specifically, the processing industries of timber and food were essential to household livelihoods and the rural economy of Pin village. Due to the large area of forestland in the village, more than ten timber factories have been established over the past three decades. The first timber factory was established in 1984 by a retired village leader. About ten years later, the factory was contracted by an external businessman for more than a decade. The largest timber factory was built in 1990 by a Pin villager, and it was sold to another villager in 2010. After trees used for timber had been cut down for many years, their supply was almost exhausted, and most factories were closed by 2014. By 2016, only four small timber factories, managed by local villagers, remained. The timber factories employed casual male labourers to cut down trees, manually move them, and make and transport timber.



Figure 4.5 A Timber Factory Managed in Pin Village

(Source: Photo by author)

Household-managed food processing emerged in the early 1980s, and included items such as tofu, rapeseed oil, tea seed oil, chilli sauce, and Pueraria (*gegen*). In the mid-2000s, state-funded projects increased in scale and some processing factories evolved into cooperative organisations. For instance, in 2014, a large chilli sauce factory was established under the name of the Agricultural Cooperative Organisation. This factory was funded by the specific project of ‘agricultural industrialisation’. The factory mechanised chili sauce production and only employed five to ten female workers to pack the bottled sauce. The sauce was sold in Zhangjiajie and the capital of Hunan province, Changsha. Additionally, the deepening processes of urbanisation and migration since the early 2000s reduced the village’s population and depressed the rural markets. Consequently, village businesses became depressed and, up until 2016, one third of village shops were closed. There were only four restaurants, three small breakfast shops selling noodles and Chinese steamed buns (*baozi*), two hairdressers, and four grocery shops in 2016.

The mineral industry and tourism made significant financial contributions to the economy and stimulated local employment opportunities. The mineral resource of rhaetizite (*baijing shi*) had been exploited in Pin village from the late 1970s to 2013. The mineral mountain, located in Hutian village team, was contracted and explored by external businessmen. The contractors submitted contract and management fees to Hutian team and Pin village. Also, some male

villagers were recruited as miners, drivers, or accountants, whereas some female villagers worked as cooks. Besides, when village tourism was designated an essential industry for rural development in the early 2010s, Wang Town Government encouraged Pin village to develop azalea tourism in Luofeng mountain. In 2011, the azalea tourism project, which had 90,000 *yuan* of funding, was directed to Pin village. Benefiting from the huge amount of funding, casual workers in Pin village were employed to cut down trees and deweed grass to reveal the azalea flowers. Subsequently, tourism facilitated the construction of roads and the establishment of guest houses and restaurants, contributing to greater earnings.

The market in Pin village became prosperous but since the mid-2000s has become depressed. Pin village market opened every five days on the 1st and 6th of the Chinese lunar calendar. The growth of the market from the early 1980s to the early 2000s has seen an increasing variety of goods, such as daily necessities (e.g. salt, soap, and food), clothes and shoes, seeds and fertilisers, living supplies, and locally-produced crops and livestock. A village woman said that the ‘village market was crowded and busy when it was flourishing in the 1980s and 1990s’. However, the dramatically decreasing population of the village, caused by migration, significantly depressed the village market. Along with a decreasing population, retailers and the market in local goods declined from the mid-2000s. Locally-produced goods were seldom sold anymore and were merely used for household consumption. Instead, off-season vegetables and non-local food were sold in Pin village. Moreover, improved transport links and increased vehicle ownership extended the range of market choices. Most Pin villagers preferred to purchase goods in the markets of Wang town, Yuan town and Yong county.



Figure 4.6 Markets in Pin Village

(Source: Photo by author)

HRS released rural labour from agriculture and allowed them to move freely. Earlier migration from the village began in the early 1980s. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Fiscal Responsibility System (*Caizheng baogan*), from 1979 to 1993, granted township and county governments fiscal autonomy, enabling these local governments to be independently responsible for income and expenditure (Qu et al., 2009). To increase revenue, the Wang Town Government and Yong County Government provided concessional terms to county, township, and village enterprises to access land, labour, and financial capital. Thus, some of the earliest migrants worked nearby in local enterprises, such as the Wang Town Forest Factory and Yong County Towel Factory. Simultaneously, start-up factories in the coastal areas provided some employment opportunities in the early 1980s. The earliest long-distance migrants from Pin village were men who migrated to Guangdong province due to their extreme poverty. Relying on kinship and networks of relatives, more migrants joined their long-distance migration journeys from the mid-1980s. Male villagers who migrated first engaged in urban construction, because the gendered division of labour put increasing economic pressure on men (Cai, 1997). A growing number of women started migrating from the late 1990s. Most of them worked in manufacturing in the southeast coastal areas of China.

Since the mid-2000s, the national strategy of ‘The Rise of Central China’ (*zhongbu jueqi*) has stimulated the economic development of small cities in central and western China. Driven by this strategy, employment opportunities in these small cities increased. The trajectory of rural-to-urban migration shifted from the southeast to the central areas (Duan et al., 2013). Zhangjiajie is a small city located in the centre of China. Benefiting from ‘The Rise of Central China’, this city developed rapidly and has attracted many more rural-to-urban migrants since the mid-2000s. An increasing number of Pin villagers started to migrate nearby to work in the city, which is near to their hometown, Pin village. Wang Town Government statistics demonstrate that about half of migrants and their families worked in Wang town, Yuan town, and Yong county in Zhangjiajie in 2016. They primarily worked as drivers, construction workers, and porters, and engaged in petty businesses like cafes. Migrants regularly transferred remittances back to the left-behind population to cover their daily expenses, or as compensation for their elderly parents’ efforts in taking care of their left-behind children.

4.4.3 Income levels, social stratification, and household expenditure

The annual per-capita income of Pin village has been growing for the past four decades, due to livelihood diversification and multiple state-supported policies, such as agricultural tax exemption and grain subsidies. According to Wang Town Government records, the annual per capita income of Pin village was 690 *yuan* in 1991 and 1,456 *yuan* in 2001. In 2016, the ‘Wang Town Annual Government Economic Report’³ suggested that annual per capita income had reached 3,700 *yuan*⁴. Also, diversified livelihoods and market reforms under HRS deepened rural social stratification. One manifestation of this is the disparity in income among households. The levels of household income were learned from Wang Town Government’s official income statistics and my interview data with Wang Town Government officials, Pin village cadres, and Pin villagers.

In Pin village, household income can be divided into rich, middle-income, and poor levels. The richest and richer households usually manage enterprises and petty businesses within and beyond Pin village, e.g. timber factories, furniture factories, and restaurants. Richer households depend on migrants who are factory managers or work in technical industries. These households became the economic elites of the village. This economic status enabled them to intervene in village political affairs and expand their social networks with local government officials. Middle-income households depend on rural-to-urban migration and professional occupations. A village leader explained the reason why a cadre’s household can maintain middle-income level. He said, ‘compared to common villagers, village cadres are more sensitive to useful information and have better judgements on what is worthy to do’. Relatively poor households mostly do agriculture and local casual work. Because the poverty line was 3,024 *yuan* in Yong county in 2016, the households whose per capita income was lower than this were identified as the poorest (see Table 4.1).

³ This annual report is produced at the end of each year. Since I conducted the fieldwork during 11/2016 - 04/2017, the most recent annual government report was the 2016 report.

⁴ The income presented in the report is usually higher than the real income, because a high income per capita demonstrates the achievement of local governments.

Table 4.1 Income-Based Social Stratification in Pin Village

Income level	Employment	Primary livelihood strategies and incomes	Annual income/per capita (yuan)	Ratio in Pin village
Richest	Enterprise founders and managers; individual business people	Village and township enterprises; household-based businesses	Above 40,000	2%
Richer	Migrant managers or technical migrants; individual business people	Migration; household-based petty trading	Above 25,000	6%
Rich and middle-income	Migrants	Nearby or long-distance migration with reliable remittances	5,000 to 25,000	65.5%
Rich and middle-income	Intellectual labour, e.g. cadres, doctors, teachers at the village and township levels, and staff of township enterprises	Professional occupations with stable pension and wage incomes	5,000 to 25,000	5.2%
Poorer	Peasants and casual workers	Agriculture and casual village work	3,024 to 5,000	16.6%
Poorest	Peasants and hired agricultural labour	Agriculture	Lower than 3,024	4.7%

(Source: Compiled from 2016 income records in Wang Town Government and my interview data)⁵

Household expenses include agricultural inputs, daily necessities, agricultural taxes and levies, household durable items, education, healthcare, and gifts for weddings and funerals. Before the early 2000s, the tax and levy system in Pin village accounted for a significant portion of household expenditure, resulting in a heavy financial burden. The system included three funds (i.e. public welfare fund, public accumulation fund, and management fund), five fees (e.g. education fee, family planning fee) and two taxes (i.e. agricultural tax, and tax on special agricultural and forestry products) (*Santi wutong liangshui*) (Ye, 2002, p.91). To reduce the financial pressure on villagers and narrow the rural/urban income gap, the state cancelled these taxes and fees in 2006. After, household consumption expenditure was primarily directed towards durable items and public services. These items included colour televisions, washing machines, and refrigerators. Washing machines were only used by households with piped water. After 2010, consumption turned to mobile phones, brick house construction, vehicles for

⁵ The annual income column can only be presented as a range. The sources of rural household income are diversified in the form of subsistence and cash, meaning it cannot be accurately calculated. Usually villagers treat income as a private issue and present an income lower than their real income. In the view of villagers, if their households are identified as poorer, they are more likely to be able to access government subsidies.

private use, and urban flats. Also, the cost of healthcare and non-compulsory education gradually increased due to the marketisation of social services (Guan, 2005; Hu et al., 2011). This resulted in some Pin villagers being unable to afford treatment for critical diseases, or senior middle school and higher education.

4.4.4 Politics

Villages were the lowest administrative unit and they were assigned the right of autonomy. The Communist Party branch of Pin village predominately guided all village affairs. The Pin Village Committee organised village affairs and implemented policies and regulations. The party secretary, as leader of the party branch, and the village director from the village committee, held vital political power. Village team leaders were responsible for the fulfilment of tasks assigned by the party branch and village committee. Furthermore, the Village Representatives Assembly was established to ensure democracy and the autonomy of village governance (see Figure 4.7). The Village Supervisory Committee was established in 2013 to improve political transparency (see Table 4.2). According to the interviews with cadres, there has been no female party secretary or director in Pin village since HRS in 1981, while men have dominated the positions of party secretary and director. Male party secretaries or directors usually had external political connections with higher-level governments, which allowed them to access government projects for infrastructure and public services.



Figure 4.7 Village Representatives Assembly

(Source: Photo by author)

Table 4.2 Institutions in Pin Village

Institutions	Composition	Administrative functions
Village party branch	Party secretary, deputy party secretary, three members (one female)	Guidance on and responsibility for all village affairs
Village committee	Village director, bookkeeper, head of women's union (female), security member	Organising village affairs, implementing state policies and government assignments
Village team	20 village team leaders (two females)	Organising team affairs, implementing the assignments of the village committee
Village representatives assembly	32 village representatives (six females)	Providing advices, deciding and supervising village committee's tasks
Village supervisory committee	Committee head and two members	Supervising village committee's work, particularly on financial issues

(Source: Compiled from my interview data with village cadres and village documents)

Revenue reforms have reshaped the relationships between local governments, village committees, and villagers. As mentioned before, the Fiscal Responsibility System granted local governments fiscal autonomy, which increased the income of Yong County Government and Wang Town Government. However, the 1994 Tax Sharing Reform (*fenshui zhi*) withdrew the fiscal autonomy of local governments and centralised income from local governments to the Central Government (see Chapter 1). Consequently, the Yong County Government and Wang Town Government faced deficits due to insufficient revenue. On the one hand, they increased the amount of taxes and fees they collected from villages under their governance, including Pin village, to increase fiscal income. Pin village cadres worked as agents of these governments to collect taxes and fees. This resulted not only in an increased financial burden on villagers, but also in conflicts between villagers and village cadres in the late 1990s. On the other hand, the Central Government implemented the Financial Transfer Payment System to make up the deficits of local governments, including Fiscal Transfer Payments and Special Transfer Payments (see Chapter 1). In terms of the Special Transfer Payments, the government started various projects, with funding, to support Pin village. The Yong county and Wang town governments decided how to implement these projects and intervened in Pin village.



Figure 4.8 A Meeting in the Office of Pin Village Committee

(Source: Photo by author)

4.4.5 Public services and social security

The provision of public services and social security schemes in Pin village has been supported by fees collected from villagers, villager labour, and state-funded projects. From the early 1980s to the mid-2000s, as noted before, money for public products in Pin village was collected from ‘three funds’ and ‘five fees’. The ‘three funds’ are the ‘public welfare fund (*gongyi jin*), public accumulation fund (*gongji jin*) and management fund’ (Ye, 2002, p.91). The public welfare fund was used to support ‘Five-Guarantee’ households (*wubao hu*), subsidise the poorest households, and provide cooperative medical care and other collective welfare programmes. The public accumulation fund was mainly for infrastructure, the purchase of productive fixed assets, and the establishment of collective enterprises. The ‘five fees’ included the ‘education fee, family planning fee, militia drilling fee, military support fee (*youfu fei*), [and] construction fee of township road’ (Ye, 2002, p.91). In 2006, the ‘three funds and five fees’ were cancelled, which ended the support of villager-collected fees for social welfare. Besides, villagers were required to contribute free labour towards village infrastructure in order to gain social welfare. In Pin village, villager labour was primarily used for irrigation infrastructure, like irrigation canals, and road construction, like the unpaved main road of the village.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the provision of public services and social welfare has been predominantly funded by the state since the mid-2000s. In terms of public infrastructure, state-funded projects improved piped water, irrigation canals, village roads, and constructed the village committee office. For example, the main village road, established in the late 1970s, was unpaved, uneven, dusty, and muddy on rainy days. In 2014, benefiting from the Targeted Poverty Alleviation project and others issued by the Yong County Government, the road was reconstructed and paved. The project funds were also spent on several village roads which connected households with the main road. Thus, transportation in the village was improved. Currently, a public bus departs from Pin village at 7 a.m. to Yong County Station and returns at 3p.m. Several coaches are privately used and can also be rented.



Figure 4.9 The Main Road of Pin Village

(Source: Photo by author)

School facilities and access to education have been improved in Pin village. The village also has a kindergarten and primary school. They were reconstructed and polished in 2014 with the help of a provincial school construction project. Access to education was facilitated by state-funded projects as well. In the 1980s and 1990s, unaffordability was the main factor behind school dropout. In 2006, tuition fees for rural compulsory education (primary school and junior school) were waived nationally. The fees for textbooks and accommodation were also subsequently waived in Pin village. The poorest students received further living subsidies. These supportive measures guaranteed rural students' access to compulsory education and lowered the dropout rate. The improved standards of education lowered the illiteracy rate of

the younger generation. As a village cadre said, ‘many elder villagers, particularly women aged above fifty, are illiterate, while almost all younger villagers are educated’. However, because of rural-to-urban migration and urbanisation, the number of rural students has fallen every year since the early 2000s.

Rural healthcare has changed in terms of the medical supply system and medical insurance. During the period of collective production, the Cooperative Medical Scheme (CMS), provided by the People’s Commune, covered most medical costs. But the CMS collapsed with the dismantling of Wang People’s Commune. Then, sick individuals and households had to pay medical costs by themselves. Because medical costs have been increasing with the accelerated marketisation of healthcare since the early 1990s, the unaffordability of healthcare became a major issue. To deal with this unaffordability, the state launched the New Cooperative Medical Scheme (NCMS). It was implemented in Pin village in 2008. More than 85% of Pin villagers participated in NCMS and benefited from medical reimbursement. Additionally, seriously sick individuals from impoverished households were allowed to obtain specific medical compensation from Yong County Government for critical diseases. Despite this, healthcare resources in Pin village and Wang town still lagged far behind those in Yong county and Zhangjiajie. In Pin village, the village clinic, which was managed by a couple of doctors, only provided a few basic medicines and injections for minor diseases. Similarly, the medical facilities and professional doctors in Wang Town Hospital were unable to deal with critical diseases. Critical diseases had to be diagnosed and treated in Yong County Hospital or Zhangjiajie Municipal Hospital.

Since the mid-2000s, the state has launched a series of aging support schemes and provided social assistance. In Pin village, aging support schemes included the New Rural Pension Scheme (NRPS), the pension for retired cadres, and the aging-support allowance for elderly parents with two daughters, or only one child regardless of gender⁶. The NRPS was introduced in 2011 and was cooperatively funded by the Central Government, Yong County Government, and individual participants. The pension provided by the NRPS increased from 55 *yuan*/month in 2011 to 80 *yuan*/month in 2016, for people above the age of 60. The pension meant specifically for retired cadres was issued by Yong County Government in 2000. A cadre could

⁶ In relation to family planning policies, the aging-support allowance awarded 960 *yuan*/year to each couple of parents aged above 60 with only one child or two daughters.

only benefit from this pension if he or she had worked continuously for at least ten years in the village committee, beginning from 1982 and thereafter. In terms of social assistance in Pin village, five households were covered by the Five Guarantees (*wubao*), and 18 households with 35 individuals were covered by the Minimum Living Allowance (*dibao*) in 2016. Ninety households have benefited from Targeted Poverty Alleviation since 2014.

4.4.6 Social relations and social organisations

The patrilineal relations of Pin village were inherited from historical patterns of marriage and residence. Pin village originated in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279). During this dynasty, when an ancient troop was defeated in battle, they escaped and lived in Pin village. As the surname of the troop leader was Zhang, this became a common surname in the village. Later, the main surnames of the household male heads would also include Gong, Zhou, and Ou. They formed four large patrilineal households in the village. Through a pattern of patrilocal marriage and patrilineal residence, the four households established wide and deep kinship networks, enhancing patrilineal relations. From the early 2000s, the rapid increase in migration and livelihood diversification stimulated the rise of neolocal marriage. The growing number of migrants started getting married and settling in urban areas. The increase in neolocal marriage shook the traditional pattern of patrilocal marriage. Nevertheless, patrilocal marriage still remains dominant in Pin village. Also, the predominant family structure was the nuclear family. Elderly parents divided households (*fenjia*) and lived separately after the marriage of their adult children. Only in the case of livelihood cooperation did parents assist their children in farming and childcare.

Social networks and organisations in Pin village fostered cooperation and mutual assistance among households, particularly in the use of agricultural resources like land, water, and farm tools, resistance to livelihood risks, and in weddings and funerals. The social networks were mainly built upon kinship, neighbourship, and friendship. Also, the social organisations included an art team and a religion committee. In the early 2010s, a village ‘square dancing’ team was established for community entertainment. A female teacher from the village primary school organised and led the dancing every day, except on rainy days. The dominant religion in Pin village was Christianity. In the late 1970s, villagers were more likely to participate in Christianity when they got ill or suffered from bad accidents. Their involvement in Christianity was directed towards seeking mental comfort and God’s blessing. Due to the village’s

decreasing population, only about ten older villagers were still participating in 2016. Because there is no church in Pin village, Christians used a shabby restroom as a site for religious activities.



Figure 4.10 Village Art Team

(Source: Photo by author)

In sum, Pin village has experienced many economic, political, and social changes from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s. Firstly, in the economic sphere, HRS instigated the marketisation of rural China. Various forms of capital, like land, labour, and finance, were incorporated into the market. This stimulated the flourishing of rural industries, businesses, and village markets. Household-based industries and village enterprises have dramatically increased since then. It also facilitated rural livelihood diversification and the process of migration. Because of this, the income gap between villagers and the stratification of rural society increased. The decline of the rural population since the early 2000s caused the decline of household-based businesses and the depression of village markets. Secondly, in the political sphere, village political institutions and the political relations among villagers, village committees and local governments, were reconstructed by revenue reforms. From the mid-2000s, the number of state-funded projects increased, which modernised agriculture and stimulated capital-intensive village industries. Third, in the social sphere, social security has been marketised, which has increased the individual and household cost of social welfare. The market has played a greater role in the provision of social welfare since the early 2000s. However, since the mid-2000s, the number of state-funded social schemes has risen, improving villagers' access to education, healthcare, and minimum living standards.

4.5 Data collection

With regard to the overarching research question of village women's access to assets and its implications for livelihoods, this study used a set of qualitative research methods to gather first-hand data in Pin village, including semi-structured interviews, in-depth open-ended life history interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and documentary research. These methods enabled me to access my fieldwork site and interact with and observe the participants in regard to their daily experiences in a particular context. They not only allowed me to obtain a specific and detailed picture of a rural village in transition—and how this temporally and spatially influences access to assets—but also learn about the intimate, vivid, and longitudinal livelihood experiences of village women. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Pin village for six months, from November 2016 to April 2017. In this section, I first discuss how I accessed my fieldwork site, Pin village. Then, I introduce details about my sample design, participant recruitment procedures, implementation process of the qualitative methods of data collection, and data analysis.

4.5.1 Access to the field

Gatekeepers are crucial elements in accessing fieldwork sites (Reeves, 2010). To gain access to my fieldwork site, obtaining a permit from a key gatekeeper of Pin village was important. As mentioned previously, the village party secretary holds vital decision-making power on village issues, meaning the party secretary Zhou was a key gatekeeper for me. Many studies have pointed out that personal connections with fieldwork sites and research participants can make access much easier (Duke, 2002). Therefore, I approached Zhou through a relative, who was an official in Yong County Government and also happened to work with Zhou. Through this introduction, I connected with Zhou and straightforwardly told him about my research purposes and focus. After assessing the value of my research and its potential influence on the villagers, he immediately permitted me to enter Pin village. He further told me about the village's history and geographical features, which were relevant to my research, to give me an overall impression of the village.

When I arrived in Pin village, I accessed an essential informant, Xinxiu, by Zhou's referral. Since I was 'vouched' for by Zhou, Xinxiu showed her willingness and enthusiasm to support me in conducting my proposed research. Xinxiu was born and grew up in Pin village. She was familiar with the dynamic livelihoods and changes to the economic, political, and cultural

context of the village. Her familiarity enabled me to access valuable information quickly. Because Xinxu was the head of the women's union, she interacted with villagers frequently in regard to administrative affairs. Her political standing meant she had close relationships with villagers and knew their household situations very well. Thus, she was able to help me efficiently identify and access potential participants. Here, Xinxu was a good gatekeeper because she was able to provide multiple data resources, such as participants, information about cultural sensitivity, and research permits (Campbell et al., 2006).

4.5.2 Sampling

Defining samples

As stated above, this study concerns how multiple dynamics influenced women's access to assets under social changes that took place within and beyond the village. In this regard, data collection required access to and information about the changing livelihood experiences of village women and their households, socioeconomic changes at the local village and wider societal levels, as well as the shifts in state projects and policy. Therefore, five groups of interviewees were identified: village women, their husbands, village cadres, village team leaders, and government officials.

One of the research questions is to understand in what ways institutions influenced individual village women's access to assets. To respond to this question, the women whose experiences were relevant to assets access were selected, including female native-born Pin villagers and women married into the village. Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the concept of intersectionality emphasises the inequalities among different groups of men and women, constructed by the intersection of class and gender. It also questions how class and gender dynamics inform institutions and how this influences women's access to assets. This indicates that Chinese village women are a heterogeneous rather than homogenous group. Based on the idea of sample heterogeneity (Robinson, 2014), the village women were greatly differentiated by class status. In terms of household economic status, women were selected from both rich and poor households (see Table 4.1). It stands to reason that these different women face different opportunities and barriers and have different experiences accessing assets. It helps to formulate a comparative understanding by comparing their similarities and differences in access to assets and livelihood strategies.

Examining women's access to assets requires an acknowledgment of husbands' views. Husbands may hold different attitudes to women in regard to household and public issues. Listening to husbands' opinions on the gendered division of labour and household decision-making rights enabled me to understand how such gender dynamics at the household level historically influenced women's access to assets and livelihoods. Husbands were also encouraged to express what kinds of public activities they had engaged in that either promoted or hindered women from accessing assets at the village level. Additionally, I was able to compare the views of women and their husbands, identify their main differences, and formulate an objective understanding of gender dynamics and household gender relations.

To get an idea of the distribution of resources at the village and village team levels in the past four decades, village cadres and village team leaders were identified. Given that the village committee, governed by village cadres, dominated and decided village issues, I aimed to encourage the cadres to tell me how they made decisions and how they dealt with challenges in terms of the distribution of land, water, and social security. It helped me to access knowledge about institutional dynamics in relation to village governance and the cadres' decisions. Moreover, according to the different political responsibilities of village cadres, the party secretary, village director, bookkeeper, and the head of the women's union were to be separately interviewed. As mentioned before, the party secretary was the head of the party branch and he was responsible for all village affairs. It was important to interview the party secretary to gain an overall understanding about the development of Pin village, such as its history, geographic characteristics, class divisions, and industries, which is a prerequisite for exploring assets distribution.

As the village director was primarily responsible for implementing state policies and government assignments, talking to him would help me gather information about the policies and assignments relating to assets allocation, as well the implementation procedures in Pin village. The head of the women's union was the sole female cadre in the Pin Village Committee, and she had responsibility over women-related and social security issues. Having her as an interviewee allowed me to gain a perception of the family planning policies, birth control, and health insurance. The duty of the bookkeeper was to record village affairs and statistics, such as meeting reports, state projects, population, endowments, and income and expenditure of the village committee. By talking to him, I could further record information in detail and guarantee the accuracy of the interview data. Also, village team leaders informed the distribution of

resources in their teams, including land allocation, irrigation, and the identification of TPA beneficiaries at the team level. I was able to acknowledge how women's access to assets was socially constructed and mediated by contextual dynamics at the team and village levels.

Wang Town Government and Yong County Government have intervened in the distribution of resources in Pin Village since the early 1980s. These local governments made a difference in conveying state policies, launching state-funded projects, guiding the implementation of projects, and dealing with petitions from villagers over time. Officials could introduce their decisions regarding the launch of projects and funding for land, water, healthcare, TPA, and other resources. They also informed me of how they guided the distribution of these resources and implemented projects, and how they worked in the village to alleviate poverty. In so doing, I was able to link women's experiences regarding access to assets to the efforts of higher-level administrative institutions, to avoid limiting my research only to individual women and their households' activities.

This study aimed to recruit two focus groups of village women. One group was the women from better-off households while the other group was the women from poor households. Participants were selected for the focus groups based on the criteria that they had similarities in socioeconomic characteristics (Richardson and Rabiee, 2001), knowledge on the studied topics, and were comfortable interacting with other interviewees (Burrows and Kendall, 1997; Richardson and Rabiee, 2001). Women would be encouraged to discuss the challenges and opportunities they faced in their access to land, water, social security, and other resources. In these discussions I could compare the responses of the two groups.

Selecting a sample strategy

In accordance with the differentiation of village women, I used purposive sampling strategies. The reason for adopting a purposive strategy is that, based upon prior theoretical knowledge of the issue under investigation, the researcher assumes that individuals have different and particular views (Mason, 2002). Considering this, the purposive strategy is helpful in gathering the different views and experiences of class-divided village women. It allows me to look at multiple cases of village women, compare the views of rich and poor women, and reveal their similarities and differences in assets access. Despite the fact that there are multiple purposive strategies, stratified sampling is appropriate for this study because it emphasises the stratification of samples (Robinson, 2014). This inspired me to compare the assets access of

women of different class status. Following this strategy, I intended to select several women who had variously experienced access to multiple key livelihood assets, such as land, water, and social security. Because village women's access to assets is influenced by their political and economic class (see Chapter 2 and 3), the participants were selected according to the stratification criterion of class.

Deciding on the sample size

The actual number for sample sizes for individual interviews and focus groups has been suggested by some researchers. In terms of ethnography and ethnoscience, Morse (1994, p.225) suggested 30-50 individual interviews, and Bernard (2013, p.178) indicated that most studies in ethnoscience were built upon 30-60 individual interviews. Accordingly, I prepared a provisional experimental design using a sample size of about 30-40 village women for the life history interviews at the outset of this project, in which half of them were rich while the other half were relatively poor. However, it's important to note that grounded practical factors may have affected data collection and alter this sample size (Silverman, 2000). Based on my fieldwork experiences, the sample size for the village women's life history interviews was set at 40. Besides, methodologists have recommended a range of ideal participant numbers in focus groups, e.g. six to eight (Krueger, 2014), six to ten (Howard et al., 1989), and four to eight (Kitzinger, 1995). Bearing this in mind, the number of participants in this study fell within these ranges. One focus group included six rich women and the other group included five poor women.

This sample size was also guided by the saturation as it is in most qualitative research. Data saturation refers to the point in research when no new information and insights can be gathered on the topic being studied (Mason, 2010). In practice, it was challenging for me to entirely predict the saturation in the collection of in-depth data. To ensure the data I was gathering would become saturated enough to respond to my research questions, I wrote diary and concluded the key points of each interview I conducted each day. After interviewing 30 village women and other participants I systematically synthesized the data and linked it to my research questions and current literature. Based on that, I identified the gaps between my research questions and the current literature, and conducted additional interviews to provide more insight.

Recruitment strategies and overview of samples

After I defined the sample types, sample strategies, and sample sizes for interviews, I recruited participants at my fieldwork site. I used the methods of referral by gatekeepers, snowball sampling, and flexible contacting to recruit participants. As mentioned before, the cadres of Xinxiu and Zhou were the gatekeepers of Pin village. After being informed about my research purposes and the criteria of recruitment, they helped me to identify and contact potential participants to ask whether they would be interested in being involved in my interviews. Xinxiu's frequent and close contacts with village women enabled her to efficiently identify and contact the conversable, patient, and experienced participants who met my recruitment criteria. Being the primary leader of Pin village, Zhou frequently contacted village cadres, village team leaders, and government officials, and thus he was able to identify these people as potential participants. For those who consented to take part in my interviews, Xinxiu and Zhou brokered an appointment with them. I interviewed village women at their homes, and only after receiving their permission were their home addresses and names provided to me. My interviews with village cadres and officials often took place at official sites, such as the village committee, Wang Town Government, and Yong County Government.

For the recruitment of focus groups, gatekeepers in the community can be helpful (Bedford and Burgess, 2001). For focus group interviews, Xinxiu also assisted in participant recruitment. Prior to recruitment, I informed potential participants of the research purposes, targeted participants, and the number of participants in each focus group. As part of my research, I also wanted to find women who were familiar with each other, as research has suggested that the familiarities and trust among them can facilitate the exchange of feelings and the expression of ideas (Rabiee, 2004). Xinxiu contacted several women for our focus group interviews. Given Xinxiu is a cadre, an anticipated drawback of her attendance in the interviews was the limited disclosure of participants. She therefore kept her distance at focus group interviews.

An alternative recruitment strategy I adopted was snowball sampling. This means that the researcher asks participants to recommend acquaintances who satisfy the researchers' participant criteria, which is repetitive and therefore formulates 'referral chains' (Noy, 2008; Robinson, 2014). After interviews with women, I asked them to recommend their female acquaintances who might qualify for participation and also their husbands who were willing to participate. This enabled me to access more potential participants and also lessen their suspicions. Before I visited the potential participants, the existing participants often contacted

them in advance. After they agreed for me to visit, the existing participants advised me on the most appropriate way to access them.

I also took initiatives to build contacts with some potential participants by myself. These participants were found by attending public activities, such as village meetings, square dancing, and chatting with villagers casually. In Pin village, villagers usually sit in street shops and talk. I visited these shops several times and identified participants when talking with them. Once I had found a qualified participant, I introduced my research project to them and asked whether they would like to participate in my interviews. After receiving their permission, I made appointments and exchanged phone numbers before visiting.

In total, I had 61 informants throughout my fieldwork trip (see Table 4.3 and Appendix A). Forty-four women from different households had participated in my life-history and focus group interviews, but only 40 of them were involved in my further detailed in-depth individual interviews. These 40 women were heterogeneous and divided by whether they were rich or poor. One of these 40 women was a village cadre and another a village team leader. Detailed profiles of these 40 women are provided in Appendix A.1.

Table 4.3 Summary of Fieldwork Participants

Groups of participants	Individual village women		Local government officials		Husbands	Village cadres	Team leaders	Total
	Rich	Poor	Yong County Government	Wang Town Government				
Quantity	21	23	2	2	6	5	4	61

(Source: Compiled from my interview data)

Notes: 1. One individual woman was a village cadre and another was a team leader, thus the total number of participants was 61 rather than 63.

2. The rich individual women include the richest, richer, rich, and middle-income women. The poor individual women include the poorer and poorest women.

4.5.3 Interview

Life history narratives

The qualitative research approach of life history narratives was used to examine village women's assets access. Life histories allow participants to identify their life milestones and

express their perception and feelings of their own experiences, as well as the effects of these events on their subsequent livelihoods (Dhunpath, 2000). The narratives of life histories and personal practices are deeply embedded in the contextual intersection of social, institutional, cultural, physical, interpersonal, historical, and bureaucratically organisational circumstances (Dhunpath, 2000). Life history methods were able to reveal how women's diverse livelihood experiences were systematically affected by particular economic, political, and social contexts. This method allows me to explore dynamics of assets in relation to contextualised social relations. As women's assets access and livelihood choices are influenced by social power relations in specific contexts, only assessing contextualised social relations can uncover the deep dynamics.

Life history narratives are tools to reflect the interaction of institutions and individual experiences by revealing practices and motives (Dhunpath, 2000). From a structural lens, life histories emphasise social exclusion and individual agency (Dhunpath, 2000). Life histories help when exploring the research question of what, and how, institutions influence women's assets access. According to the integrated framework of the IDS's rural livelihoods framework and the concept of intersectionality, the institutional dynamics set opportunities, barriers, exclusion, and inclusion for women's access to assets, which was further mediated by the intersecting dimensions of class and gender. Through using life-history methods, village women in different class statuses were able to reveal rich meaning of their access to assets by expressing their own perceptions on constraints and opportunities, as well as their agency to resist social barriers and struggle for assets. It also allows me to compare women's assets access using their narratives. The vivid description of life stories can sufficiently enable the researcher to have a knowledge of similarities and differences among different village women.

Life histories can reveal and make sense of wider social changes (Cole, 1994), because life experiences are framed, characterized and shaped by socioeconomic changes in a longitudinal way (Ohashi, 2008). Life histories inspire to investigate what has changed and what implications this has had. It satisfies my research by allowing me to examine how historical changes have influenced women's assets access and livelihood strategies. The longitudinal perspective of life history narratives enables me to trace village women's ongoing life experiences and learn about how these experiences process influenced their access to assets, as well as how they are shaped and reshaped by wider societal dynamics. Thus, women's story

narratives can not only witness and record social changes, but also manifest their perceptions of the interaction between their practices of assets access and wider social changes.

The method of biography was adopted for the individual narrative interviews to explore village women's life histories. Biography gives village women the opportunity to reconstruct 'their own perceptions of personal experience' (Dhunpath, 2000). Women are able to manifest themselves through storytelling which can organise and represent their practice and knowledge in the daily world. Biography has two stages in data collection, 'main narrative' and the 'period of questioning' (Rosenthal, 1993). Taking this into account, I began by using open questions when asking village women about their livelihoods, access to assets, and everyday life in the period of the early 1980s to the mid-2010s (see Appendix B.1). The use of open questions aimed to encourage these women to provide a full extempore narration of their own livelihood experiences as the 'main narrative'. Women's narratives tended to focus on land and agriculture in HRS, migration, water shortages, birth control, healthcare, TPA, finance, poverty and so forth. During their narratives, instead of asking additional questions to interrupt them, I showed interest and attention to encourage them for further narratives, as well as taking notes so I could ask further questions after. In some cases, when female participants' narratives were not confined to their livelihood experiences, but jumped to other non-relevant aspects of their daily lives, I encouraged them to return to the main topics. The first stage of these interviews lasted between one to two and a half hours.

The village women were asked more details in the second stage of the 'period of questioning'. The second stage was carried out in the second session after I had written a diary and taken some notes based on the 'main narrative'. In this 'main narrative', the interviews chronologically displayed the key social events and life turning points or milestones that women had experienced (Dhunpath, 2000). These life and social events were the turning points that shaped women's livelihoods and assets situations. Through their 'main narrative', the turning points, as indicated by my female participants, generally included marriage, birth, migration of family members, the death of family members, and so forth. Historical events in relation to livelihood assets primarily focused on money, state policies, and the assets distribution that was influenced by village practices and social relationships. Bearing these in mind, I asked the participants for more details of these individual events from the women's own lives. Women tended to tell me more about the barriers they faced in livelihoods that were caused by such turning points, and also informed me of the measures they adopted to deal with

these barriers. I also inquired about some historical events that related to women's individual stories. These historical events often took place within and beyond Pin village.

In this stage, elaborate narratives by women themselves on certain topics were gradually generated. Interviewing these women allowed me to become more aware of their life stories and their access to the primary assets of land, water, healthcare, and TPA. They informed me of the opportunities and difficulties they faced in the process of access to assets, and various dynamics that shaped their access at multiple levels longitudinally. Specifically, based on their narratives, women were encouraged to inform me of their gendered division of labour, financial decision-making rights, household structure, livelihood strategies, and socioeconomic status. Women were also asked about their opinions on social networks of kinship, neighbourship, team membership, the participation in public and political affairs, their negotiation with cadres and officials, and gender differentiation in employment markets. All of this information informed my understanding of the institutional processes, the intersecting gender and class dynamics, and the changes of wider society in these women's lives. Toward the end of the interviews, with the women's permission, photos were taken of the issues with their livelihood conditions, such as their houses, livelihood resources such as firewood, water sources and land. This second stage usually lasted for one hour to two and a half hours.

Throughout the life history interviews, I observed women's feelings and attitudes. Often they were able to easily recall unpleasant memories and unfair treatment, resulting in upset and sometimes tears. In these situations, I expressed my sympathy, understanding and encouragement to them. In some cases, we had to suspend the interview to calm them down.

Interviews with husbands and authorities

Interviews with husbands focused on the gender differences in livelihood and access to assets at both the household and village levels. At the household level, husbands' interviews primarily involved topics of gendered decision-making rights, the gendered division of labour, and gender disparities in household asset holdings such as land and finances. At the village level, topics mainly focused on gender differentiation in labour market participation, political participation, and participation in public affairs (see Appendix B.2). It was obvious that men had different attitudes to women towards some gender issues. For instance, women were often sensitive and depressed regarding their livelihood burdens, while men were more objective and seemed less concerned. Interviewing husbands provided me the chance to compare women's

and men's opinions to gender-related issues. I found that in the husbands' interviews, they often spoke of conflicts that happened in the village. This allowed me to gather information on how some men struggle for assets in a radical manner. Also, it was not easy to encourage them to maintain the flow of conversation or express their thoughts with much detail. Men also were not as conservative and patient as the women. Men did not have as much motivation to produce as many details, and we usually finished an interview within 30 minutes. To gather more detailed opinions of the husbands, I repeatedly asked for details about particular events they had mentioned.

Major topics in the interview with cadres included: the historical development of Pin village in economic, political, geographical and social aspects; the income of villagers and class division in the village; changes of state policies and local government regulations on land, water, and social security, such as first-round and second-round land allocation, family planning policies, NCMS, TPA, pensions, and so on; the processes of decision making on, implementation of, and the distribution of resources at a village level, particularly land, water and, social security; conflicts that occurred in the distribution of resources and particular solutions; the implementation and maintenance of state-funded projects; and the TPA-supported industries (see Appendix B.3). Also, my interviews with team leaders focused on the distribution process and management of land, water and other resources, as well as the selection of TPA beneficiaries at both the team and village levels (see Appendix B.3).

When exploring the interviews with officials, two officials from Wang Town Government and two officials from Yong County Government were recruited. These two township officials were asked to introduce a brief economy development history of the township, particularly about the industry of tobacco leaves, the administrative governance of Wang Town Government on Pin village, and the guidance and management for the implementation of state-funded projects in Pin village. I also interviewed two officials from Yong County Government. One, named Yuan was originally from Pin village. He shared with me information on several projects and funding that was issued by Yong County Government to Pin village. As a colleague of Yuan, Tian was the head of officials in the governance of Targeted Poverty Alleviation that was implemented in Pin village. He was mainly asked questions on the policies of TPA and their implementation in Pin village. Each interview lasted for two to three hours. After my fieldwork, I interviewed officials by phone several times to gather more detailed information.

Focus groups

Focus groups were advantageous in stimulating interactions and arguments between participants in order to gather data (Krueger, 1994). In the focus group interviews, specific groups of village women were encouraged to express their views and debate on given topics. To understand the influence of the intersection of gender and class dynamics on women's access to assets, I conducted and compared two focus groups of village women, i.e. rich women and poor women. The village women discussed the relationship between their class status and barriers to accessing land, water, TPA, healthcare, and other resources. For the group of poor women, participants interactively discussed the effects of poverty and the lack of political resources on their access to assets. For the focus group of rich women they discussed the role of their financial and political capital on their access to assets. The gathered data revealed the diverse experiences, practices and perspectives of these two groups of village women, and showed multiple differences in their access to assets.

I adopted some strategies to facilitate focus group interviews. Before the interview, I introduced myself and my research purposes, and spoke to them prior to avoid any poor responses. During the interviews, as a mediator, I asked open-ended questions on the basis of their discussions and interjected probing comments to facilitate the expression of ideas and summarising of judgements (Basch, 1987, p.415). I also followed Creswell and Poth's (2016) suggestion that all participants should share their opinions and have discussions in a focus group rather than one participant dominating the conversation. The length of each group interview was determined by the questions asked, participant's discussions, and the complexity of research topics (Rabiee, 2004). In my research, each interview lasted about one hour.

4.5.4 Documentary data

In addition to the data gathered from interviews, I also gathered documentary data. The documents are text-based and non-text-based. The majority of the documentary data is text-based and in the form of 'written text' (Ahmed, 2010), including files, statistical records, and records of official proceedings (Sullivan, 2003). Most of the data is 'grey literature', which has been produced outside of traditional publishing and distribution channels (Burnard, 2004). The non-text-based data is 'visual data', like photography, video, and film (Ritchie, 2014). In this study, I gathered the following primary documents in the field:

- 1) The official documents of the Pin Village Committee: profile of Pin village, village meeting reports, financial accounts of income and expenditure of the village, statistical data such as population, NCMS participation, the votes and lists of TPA beneficiaries, and records of their living conditions.
- 2) Government documents (issued and recorded by Wang Town Government and Yong County Government): government reports, notices, statistical data such as income per capita, the number of migrants, taxes, project-based funding, etc.
- 3) Photos: village natural settings, infrastructure, livelihood resources, village meetings, factories, etc.
- 4) Website information: background of Wang town and Yong county.

4.5.5 Observations

Throughout the fieldwork, observations were used to capture non-verbal data and information. Observations enable researchers to describe situations in context through a ‘written photograph’, build rapport in the field, act in a way that allows them to blend into the community, and it also encourages community participants to act naturally (Bernard, 2017; Erlandson et al., 1993). Guided by these principles, I observed the natural setting of Pin village, the day-to-day activities of the villagers, and the relations between villagers. I primarily observed the nonverbal data of feelings, attitudes, emotions, and the way that participants communicate with each other. I also participated in and was exposed to the routine political activities of Pin village, such as village meetings and the decision-making process of the village committee. This allowed me to understand power relations within the village committee and the interaction between cadres and villagers. Overall, these observations gave me a holistic understanding of the context of Pin village, made me aware of polite ways to communicate with participants, and generally helped me to learn information not covered by other methods. In the field, I wrote detailed notes every day to record the data I observed.

4.6 Data analysis

Guided by the research questions, data analysis includes the steps of data transcription, coding and sorting, reframing, conceptualisation, and interpretation (Rabiee, 2004). In this study, data analysis began by summarising notes, doing transcripts, and listening to records of raw information collected in the field. After the fieldwork, I first transcribed the interview

recordings word for word and read the transcriptions many times to be familiar with them. Secondly, I carried out the process of coding under the guidance of the coding system of Weston et al. (2001). Before the coding, a 'storyline', which could remind me of the research questions and identify themes to utilise in the analysis, was created. The storyline is as follows: With the integrated framework of the livelihoods approach which emphasises access and the concept of intersectionality, this study aims to examine what and how institutional and organisational processes, intersected with gender and class dynamics, historically influenced Chinese village women's access to assets and livelihoods. The following themes were identified: types of assets, institutional processes, gender-related issues, class-related dynamics, and livelihood changes.

Thirdly, I began the process of coding by starting to create codes. Given that this research focuses on women's access to assets, it is necessary to first answer the question of what type of assets they access. To answer this, the code '**asset**' was created. Once the assets had been established, I could reveal how village women accessed these assets. The IDS's livelihoods framework emphasises the influence of institutional processes on access to assets. I needed to know what kind of institutional processes played a role. Thus, the code '**institution**' was created. Also, in what ways institutions affected the access process needed to be answered. Extending the IDS's livelihoods framework, the access theory illustrated in Chapter 3 was applied to explain the 'how', namely, how the social and political mechanisms generated bundles of power that worked through institutions to affect access. Thus far, '**mechanism**' was a code under the theme of institutional processes. It helps to present, categorise, and synthesise the data on access to markets, technology, social relations, authority, social identities, and capital. Therefore, it helps to understand people's privileges in access to land, water, healthcare and social security.

After identifying the institutions and their embedded mechanism, I wanted to discover who could gain the mechanism and gain privileged access to assets. As illustrated in Chapter 3, gender and class divide men and women and differentiate their experiences in assets access. The concept of intersectionality is utilised to examine how gender and class intersect and mediate institutional processes in access to assets. For these reasons, the codes of '**class**' and '**gender**' were created to search for information that demonstrated how gender-based and class-based inequalities mediate access to assets. After examining access to assets, I wanted to find

out how access to assets was influenced by the composition of livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes. To answer this question, the code '**livelihood**' was created.

Fourthly, based on the above codes, I sorted and reframed my fieldwork data. I uploaded my transcriptions and documentary data to NVivo (Version 11). During this process, new codes and sub-codes emerged. All of the uploaded data was labelled and organised by the pre-set and newly emerged codes. I synthesised, compared, and summarised the coded and sorted data. At the same time, ideas and connections were made in analysis through the constant comparison of codes and reorganisation of data. I wrote down major ideas, concepts, and insights that appeared during this process. Fifthly, I linked these ideas and concepts to other forms of data, such as diaries and pictures. This gradually generated the backbone of my analysis and enabled me to gain an idea about theoretical topics and data interpretation. Finally, the data analysis inspired me to write my three empirical chapters.

4.7 Reflexivity: insider and outsider

Reflexivity is the conscious self-awareness of researchers in the process of understanding social phenomena, in order to maintain the credibility of research (Cui, 2015; Finlay, 2002). Reflexivity focuses on the researchers' role as an insider and outsider (Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt, 2008). A researcher is an insider if they are a member of the studied group, and an outsider if they are not (Breen, 2007). The roles of insider and outsider are determined by the researchers' multiple identities, which vary over field contexts (Cui, 2015; Kusow, 2003).

In this study, my role as an insider and outsider were constantly shifting, which significantly influenced the participation of informants and the credibility of interviews. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I was an outsider to the villagers because I had never been to Pin village. Participants were suspicious and cautious to respond to my questions, particularly in regard to their private issues. When I was not referred by a gatekeeper, I sometimes either received rejections from potential participants or they gave me very short answers. Sometimes, even if I was referred by a gatekeeper, or snowball sampling in certain circumstances, informants did not reject me directly to avoid disappointing the person who referred me, but they provided very brief responses in my interviews. Being an outsider, I was also constrained from engaging in several political meetings concerning sensitive information like village finances. In these

matters, I realised that my outsider status prevented me from obtaining certain kinds of information.

I tried to create some sense of being an insider, to close the distance between the participants and myself, by deciding to live in Pin village. Living in the village allowed me to frequently participate in public activities, such as square dancing and casual chatting. I also assisted some participants in their daily lives before they accepted my interview, by writing applications and tutoring their children. For example, a potential female participant, Anzi, intended to apply for certain government subsidies which required her to submit an application form. Anzi was unable to complete this form by herself. After understanding her reasons for applying, I assisted her in completing the form. In return, she accepted my interview. Also, to collect deep information from the Pin Village Committee, I assisted village cadres in some work, like filling multiple official forms. Eventually, I had a sense that I was gradually being accepted by villagers as an insider, and the participants began to disclose more information to me. Being an insider gave me a more complete and comprehensive understanding than being an outsider (Griffith, 1998).

Additionally, my identity also granted me some insider status. As a native researcher from Yong county, I was familiar with the local social context and spoke the same dialect as the participants. This paved the way to overcoming the barriers of language and culture. I had some pre-existing knowledge of the village women due to my previous research for my bachelor and master's degrees. My prior knowledge allowed me to more critically and clearly understand the village women.

In some cases, I was concurrently an outsider and insider, meaning I had an advantage in collecting private information. On the one hand, my insider status encouraged participants to share detailed information in regard to both their life history narrative and village political issues. On the other hand, considering I was an outsider and would eventually leave Pin village after my fieldwork, participants shared with me some 'bad' and 'shameful' things happening to them and their families, of which they were unwilling to inform their acquaintances. They also showed me the 'negative' side of village affairs, informed me of their unfair treatment in access to assets from the village committee, and expressed their dissatisfaction with cadres. Due to my position as an outsider, they believed that I would be unlikely to spread their

personal information and ‘secret’ opinions in the village. In this way, my role as outsider and insider enabled me to collect deeper and more complex information.

Despite closing the distance between myself and village cadres, I was still an outsider to them. In return for my efforts in their work, cadres shared with me some ‘secrets’, such as their decisions on the distribution of resources and state-funded projects. I was also permitted to participate in several ‘private’ village meetings and gain an idea about the distribution of resources and village funding. Nonetheless, given my role as an outsider researcher, village cadres advised me to just write proper things and omit improper things. They even advised me to change certain facts because they worried that it might have a negative effect on Pin village. I explained to them that I would conduct objective academic analysis which would not result in any negative impact on them. I further reminded them that all participants, and the village, would be anonymised and identified by a pseudonym in my research, to avoid exposing them to public or official censure.

4.8 Ethics

It is worth noting that my Ethical Review Application Form was approved by the University of Leeds in 2016. In this section, I will present the primary ethical issues that arose in my study and how I dealt with them. Before I carried out interviews, I informed participants of the research process in which they would be engaged, and ensured that they thoroughly understood the research questions, research process, principle of confidentiality, anonymity, and the application of research data. I also informed them that they had the right to withdraw their consent and terminate the interview at any time, without any reason, before the data was fully anonymised or amalgamated. With the permission of the interviewees, the interviews were tape-recorded. After being fully informed, each participant was requested to sign the consent form with their initials before the interview was conducted.

I guaranteed confidentiality and the anonymity of participants’ information, and protected this data safely and securely. Confidentiality requires data protection, both in the interview process and data storage. The interviews were primarily undertaken in private spaces, such as a woman’s home or a village cadre’s office. Some short structured interviews took place in public areas, i.e. field, village square. I was alert to people nearby and ensured that nobody else could eavesdrop. Additionally, all audio recordings and paper materials collected in the field were kept confidential, and this data will not be kept for longer than the completion of this research.

The electronic data, including interview audio recordings, transcripts, notes, etc., was strictly coded and encrypted, and stored on my personal laptop. When the fieldwork was completed, the data was retained on a secure personal University drive and password protected. The paper-based data, such as the interview records and signed consent forms, was stored in a lockable drawer in my accommodation. Given anonymity, individual identifying factors such as name, gender, contact details, addresses, photos, dates of birth and landmarks, were all anonymised in transcripts. Specific numbers, name initials, and pseudonyms were used to identify participants, to make sure there was no personally identifiable information.

4.9 Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the qualitative methodology I used to examine village women's access to assets. To answer the research questions and uncover how institutional dynamics—intersected with gender and class dimensions—influenced women's access to assets and its implications for livelihoods, a qualitative approach is most appropriate. This is because qualitative methods allow for the collection and analysis of deep, micro and longitudinal fieldwork data. Then, I gave a detailed historical profile of Pin village, including its economic, political, geographical, and social aspects. The history of Pin village witnessed a transition into livelihood diversification, rural social stratification, and marketisation. Moving on to data collection, I defined the sample, which included village women and their husbands, village cadres, village team leaders, and government officials. I used stratified sampling for my study because it emphasises the stratification of the sample. The sample size was determined by researchers' suggestions and the rationale of saturation. Participants were recruited through a series of methods, such as referral by gatekeepers and snowball sampling. To collect data, I used semi-structured interviews, in-depth life history interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and documentary methods. The method of life history narrative considers village women as active agents of change, and allows their voices, perspectives, and experiences to be heard and represented. Finally, the process of data analysis, reflexivity about the roles of outsider and insider, and the research ethics were presented. In the next chapter, I will move on to the empirical analysis of access to land.

Chapter 5 Women's Access to Land and Intersectionality

5.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 2, most research regarding gender and land in rural China focuses on women's land inheritance from natal and marital families, particularly under the circumstances of divorce and widowhood (Judd, 2007; Zhang, 2003). These studies emphasise the negative impacts of patrilocal marriage and social norms on women's land tenure rights (Hare et al., 2007; Zhu, 2000), but how these negative impacts are different for different women are poorly understood. Drawing on this gap, this chapter addresses what institutional processes mediated women's access to land and its implications for their livelihoods, and how the intersection of gender and class historically mediated this. Also, as explained in Chapter 1, the market reform in China has shaped women's livelihoods over time. Therefore, this chapter also examines the influences of marketisation processes on women's access to land from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s.

Land distribution in this chapter refers to land allocation under state policies, land readjustment, and land transfer. The land allocation includes the 1981 first-round land allocation and 1996 second-round land allocation. Between the first-round land allocation, village cadres designed the rules of land minor readjustment to readjust land in Pin village. Land transfer only refers to the transfer of paddy land rather than dry land because the dry land had poor soil fertility, a shortage of water, and was far from the villager's houses. Land transfer includes three types: 1) land transfer for tobacco leaf cultivation from the late 1980s to the late 1990s; 2) small-scale land transfer within social networks and in land rental markets from the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s, associated with the feminization of agriculture; 3) large-scale land transfer for commercialised agriculture with the support of state subsidies from the late 2000s to the mid-2010s.

This chapter is structured as follows: Section 5.2 presents the development and changes of land policies and land reform in rural China. Section 5.3 depicts a life story of a rural woman, Minghao. This is an example to reflect how women's access to land was shaped by state policies, land reform, village-relevant practices, changes of household livelihood portfolios, and the gendered division of labour. Section 5.4 illustrates women's access to land from the

early 1980s to the mid-1990s. Section 5.5 illustrates access to land from the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s. Finally, Section 5.6 summarizes and concludes this chapter.

5.2 Changes of land policies and land reforms

This section traces the changes of land policies and land reforms from 1949 to the mid-2010s in rural China to provide a historical background. From the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the land system has experienced three stages: the Land Reform from 1949 to 1953, collectivist production from 1953 to 1978, and the de-collectivization and HRS since 1978 (Ye, 2015). Land was owned by landlords at the beginning of the establishment of PRC. The Land Reform confiscated the land of landlords and equally allocated the land to peasants under the principle of egalitarianism (Chen, 2014; Chen and Tang, 2009). In 1953, collectivist production was established to gather agricultural surplus and support national industry development (Li and Liu, 2012). The state determined the production processes, managed the distribution of labour, and controlled output circulation (Wu, 2005). The collectivist production issued a three-phase programme of agricultural cooperation: Mutual aid teams (*nongye huzhu hezuozu*), Elementary Cooperatives (*chuji hezuoshe*), and Advanced Cooperatives (*gaoji hezuoshe*). In the Advanced Cooperatives, land was owned by the cooperatives and only a very small plot (*zi liudi*) was distributed to peasants for vegetable production (Li, 2015).

The collectivist organisation of the People's Commune (*renmin gongshe*) emerged in 1958 and was responsible for production, administrative governance, and the provision of social welfare, through the top-down three-tier structure, consisting of the Commune (*gongshe*), Production Brigade (*shengchan dadui*), and Production Team (*shengchan dui*) (Chen and Tang, 2009). The Commune and Production Brigade worked as state agencies and implemented state instructions and administrative regulations (Wu, 2005). They also supervised and assisted production teams (Wu, 2005). A production team was the collective owner of the land located within a particular geographical space (Chen and Tang, 2009). Each team member shared ownership of the team's land (Wu, 2005). The Work Point System (*gongfen zhi*) was utilised as a tool to distribute agricultural outputs. Each labourer earned corresponding work points according to his or her daily work (Wu, 2005). Yet, since labour input in agriculture was not easily measured accurately, peasants who worked harder or better might receive equal or even

fewer points than others. Consequently, the phenomena of free-riding and 'invalid labourers' increased (Lin, 1994), which reduced crop yields and peasants' incomes (Wu, 2005).

The collectivist production was replaced by the Household Responsibility System (HRS) in 1978 (Qu et al., 2009). The No.1 Central Document in 1984 officially approved the HRS (Central Committee of the CPC, 1984). In HRS, land ownership was held by the village while land use rights and land contract rights were held by rural households via land contracts with the village (Chen, 2014; Gao, 1999, pp.12-24). As demonstrated in the Land Management Law:

‘**Article 8** Land in the rural areas and suburban areas, except otherwise provided for by the State, shall be collectively owned by peasants including land for building houses, land and hills allowed to be retained by peasants; **Article 14** Land collectively owned by peasants shall be contracted out to members of the collective economic organizations for use in crop farming, forestry, animal husbandry and fisheries production under a term of 30 years’ (NPCSC, 2004).

According to this law, land ownership was collectively kept by the village, and thus, access to land in this study focuses on the access to land use rights and land contract rights. The land use rights and land contract rights were distributed to rural households through land allocations in two rounds (Gao, 1999, p.171). The first-round land distribution was started in 1978. Land was allocated on the basis of labour force in each household (Judd, 1994). According to the No.1 Document in 1984, the land tenure rights of rural households in this first round were extended to 15 years from 1978 to 1993 (Central Committee of the CPC, 1984).

The second-round land distribution was launched in 1993, when the land rights distributed in the first round were approaching their end (Judd, 2007). The second-round land tenure rights were extended for 30 years to encourage peasants to invest in agriculture in the long-term. The 2003 Rural Land Contract Law officially confirmed the 30-year land rights (NPCSC, 2003). Moreover, since frequent land readjustment may change land tenure rights and discourage the long-term investment in agriculture, the No.11 Central Document in 1993 terminated the land readjustments regardless of demographic changes (Jacoby et al., 2002). A result of this termination was the landlessness of the newly-arrived population through birth and marriage (Chen and Summerfield, 2007). Despite the prohibition of land tenure right redistribution in this second round, land was allowed to be gifted, rented, and inherited (Judd, 2007).

Land transfer has been increasing since the late 1990s. The modernisation of agriculture was approved by the state as a solution to deal with several rural crises since the late 1990s (see Chapter 1). In 1997, the modernisation, specialisation, and commoditisation of agriculture were addressed in the 15th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Ye, 2015). As agricultural modernisation relied on large plots of land and large-scale agriculture, land transfer was needed to gather land on a large scale (Ye, 2015). The No.1 Central Document in 2013 advocated for the transfer of land to leading professional households in agriculture (*zhuanyedahu*), farmer cooperatives (*nongmin hezuoshe*), and family farms (Central Committee of the CPC, 2013). By the end of 2016, the area of land transferred reached 470 million *mu*, equivalent to 35.1% of all land that was allocated in the second-round land distribution (Zhang, 2017). Overall, the distribution of land in rural areas has shifted in the past several decades. In the next section, I will tell a woman's life story to demonstrate how village women's access to land has varied in relation to these above land changes.

5.3 Women's access to land and livelihood changes

Minghao, born in 1960, is a female villager originally from Cai village, which neighbours Pin village. Her life story is typical, and provides insight into the historical changes in social relations regarding women's land use rights. The first-round land allocation under HRS was officially launched in both Pin village and Cai village in 1981. Villagers were entitled to a piece of land regardless of gender and age. Minghao received a piece of land in Cai village in 1981. However, when Minghao married in Pin village in 1982, the land entitled to her in her home village was withdrawn and redistributed by the Cai Village Committee. As a result of the 1981 land allocation, the newly-married women who arrived after 1981 were not allocated a piece of land in their marital village. Thus, Minghao had no land in either her marital village of Pin, or her home village of Cai. In the face of demographic changes, Pin village regulated 'minor adjustment every three years, major adjustment every five years' from 1981 onwards to readjust land. The relinquished land was readjusted within a village team. Nonetheless, Minghao did not receive a piece of relinquished land. Minghao's husband Rong was allocated 1.6 *mu* paddy land, three *mu* dry land and 35 *mu* forestland in the 1981 land allocation. Minghao had to depend on the land of her husband to make a living.

Tobacco leaf cultivation increased rapidly in the late 1980s. Tobacco leaves were a high-profit crop to enrich rural families and increase the revenue of local governments. The local county and township governments supported the cultivation of tobacco leaves. In Pin village, tobacco leaves were widely cultivated in both paddy land and dry land. Minghao and Rong reclaimed an additional 4 *mu* land in 1988 from their forestland to enlarge the cultivation area for tobacco leaves. They grew 5000 tobacco plants on 5.5 *mu* land and earned more than a thousand *yuan* in that year. However, in the early 2000s, the oversupply of tobacco leaves in the market and relevant state regulations lowered the sale price and profitability of tobacco leaves. Minghao and Rong cut half of the cultivation area of tobacco leaves. Rong also found a job as a timber worker in a village timber factory to sustain the family's livelihoods. As a result, he then engaged in the arduous agricultural work only occasionally. Minghao therefore was mainly responsible for farming, care of domestic animals, and carrying out household chores. Herein, Minghao's experiences during the two decades between the early 1980s and the late 1990s illustrate how access to land and the gendered division of labour within and outside the household was shaped and reshaped by socio-economic dynamics at the macro- (the wider institutional change, e.g. decollectivisation), meso- (the local agricultural policies, e.g. HRS, 1981 land reallocation, relinquished land readjustment) and micro- (land allocation and livelihood activities in households and villages) levels.

The second-round land allocation was launched in 1996 in Pin village. Minghao, who had no land from the 1981 first-round land allocation, received a piece of land about 1.5 *mu* in the second-round land allocation. Minghao put most of her efforts into diversifying agricultural production, e.g. rice, maize, potato, soybean, tobacco leaves, peanuts and vegetables. Minghao also gathered *Pueraria* and medical herbs during slack seasons in the hilly areas near to her house. Rong continued to engage in local non-farm work in a timber factory and in construction. Besides, as the 1996 second-round land allocation terminated land readjustment, the minor land readjustment in Pin village in line with household demographic change was phased out. Minghao and Rong had a son named Jianjun. Jianjun married Tianzhao in 2001. Tianzhao married into Pin village but she was unable to access land because of the termination of the land readjustment policy. As a consequence, Tianzhao became dependent on her husband's and parents-in-law's land. In 2002, Jianjun and Tianzhao bought a mini-bus and transported passengers between Pin village and Wang town. Minghao then became the main farming labourer in the household.

Rural-to-urban migration attracted more and more agricultural labour away from Pin village in the early 2000s. Jianjun and Tianzhao gave up their low-profit transport business and participated in rural-urban migration in 2004. Jianjun migrated and worked as a taxi driver in Zhangjiajie city. Since Tianzhao could only find a better job in Dongguan, she moved to Dongguan city in Guangdong province on the Southern seaboard, starting a job as a factory worker. Rong continued working as a local casual worker and helped with agriculture in busy seasons. Minghao abandoned the family's reclaimed forestland and part of the poor dry land in the hills. Instead, Minghao leased more fertile paddy land from her migrated nephew-in-law for free. In 2007, when a villager, Juan, wanted to rent land, Minghao's nephew-in-law took the land back from Minghao and leased it to Juan. Minghao had to return to her dry land in the hills. In 2011, Minghao turned to agricultural work on a villager's family farm. To sum up, Minghao's experiences during the late 1990s to mid-2010s demonstrate that access to land and the division of labour within and beyond the household were influenced by the macro socioeconomic changes (e.g. migration and diversified livelihoods), the meso-level dynamics (e.g. 1996 land allocation policy) and the micro dynamics (e.g. household, kinship networks and land rental markets). In the next section, I will link Minghao's life story to land distribution under market reforms to examine how women's access to land is affected by rural societal transformations.

5.4 Intersectionality and access to land

Most research on land and gender in rural China focuses on the 1981 first-round and 1996 second-round land allocation, but rarely examines the class dimension of land distribution (Hare et al., 2007; Zhu, 2000). Based on my fieldwork data, this section highlights how the gender dynamics intersect with class to influence women's access to land. The focus is on the analysis of power and politics that are embedded in access to land. This section offers nuanced insights into the land distribution by minor land readjustment and land transfer using intersectional analysis and political economy perspectives, in two stages. In the first stage, from the early 1980s to the late 1980s, the primary livelihoods were subsistence agriculture. Women's access to land was under the mediation of village cadres through land readjustment. In the second stage, from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, rural livelihoods changed with the increased cultivation of cash crops and the increasing rural-to-urban migration. Women's access to land by land transfer was mediated by government officials and land markets. In revisiting the research questions, this might lead us to consider the effects on livelihoods. What

did these historical changes in land distribution practices mean for the lives and livelihoods of women in Pin village? Drawing on my life history interviews, the next sections will offer historical perspectives on how these changes in land distribution were experienced.

5.4.1 Access to land by land readjustment in the 1980s

In the 1981 first-round land allocation in Pin village, land tenure rights were distributed to each household, while the land was owned collectively by Pin village. Paddy farmland, forestland, and dry hilly farmland were distributed. Given that only paddy land was readjusted and transferred afterward in Pin village, women's access to land in this chapter primarily refers to paddy land. Cadres and village team leaders guided village meetings and discussed land allocation. The first step of land allocation was to decollectivize the 1394 *mu* village paddy land and distribute it among 20 village teams (see Chapter 4). Following the first step, the land of a village team was allocated to households based on the number of household members. Each household member belonging to the village team was allocated equal land irrespective of gender and age. Individual men and women equally received a share of land use rights (Chen and Summerfield, 2007; Gong and Zhou, 1999). Furthermore, per capita land in Pin village was very limited. It was only about 1.5 *mu* on average and ranged between 0.8 *mu* and 2.5 *mu* among different village teams. In such circumstances, almost all the village land was allocated to villagers and there was no reserved land set aside for future minor redistribution in Pin village.

Women who married into Pin village after 1981 missed the first-round land allocation and were landless in their marital village. This was illustrated by Minghao's case; she did not receive a piece of land in 1981. As revealed by my fieldwork data, Pin village set a rule to readjust land so as to improve newly-arrived women's land rights. Concerning the demographic changes caused by birth, death, marriage and migration, the rule of 'minor adjustment every three years, major adjustment every five years' was implemented in Pin village from 1981 onwards. The Pin Village Committee and village team leaders calculated the population changes per year in each village team. Households with reduced members were required to relinquish their land, which would be reallocated to the newly-arrived people within the same village team. Additionally, the committee and team leaders ranked the newly-arrived people based on their arrival time. Theoretically, the people that arrived earlier would have greater priority to receive land. However, this rule was broken in practice because of the inadequate relinquished land for

newly-arrived people. One reason was that the number of newly-arrived population was more than that of the decreased population. As a former village cadre Chen said, 'there were more newly married-in wives and newly-born babies than outgoing and dead population'. The other reason was that some households refused the cadres' requests to relinquish the land. Due to the scarcity of relinquished land, landless women had to struggle for land.

The relinquished land was managed and governed by village cadres, who controlled land distribution. The village cadres held the local power to allocate the land and make decisions on the distribution of land. Linking to the sustainable livelihoods framework of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and a theory of access (see Chapter 3), access to authority determined or shaped the priority of access to assets (Ribot and Peluso, 2003). When village cadres came into power, they became the institution that determined people's access to land. Thus, those who had good social relationships with the cadres could influence the cadres' decisions regarding access to land (Chen and Summerfield, 2007). Village women's access to land was therefore determined by their access to the village cadres. The social relationships between women and village cadres played a greater role than the village distribution rule in determining land distribution. Women's access to land was therefore not consistent with the village rules of land readjustments. This point addresses my first research question, what institutional processes mediated women's access to assets?

Moreover, in the application of intersectionality (see Chapter 3), gender dynamics and the class-based factors of political and financial capital were intersected with each other, which were further intersected with the local power of cadres to mediate access to land. Rich women and men could make use of their capital to build good social relationships with cadres and access land. Poor men and women were less likely to use political and financial capital to contact cadres and access land. They intended to negotiate with cadres for land instead. This point addresses my second research question, how the intersectional class and gender dynamics made a difference in women's access to assets. Thus far, my research findings have yielded new insight in the intersectional analysis of class, gender, and political economy dynamics in women's access to land.

To the rich women and men with political capital, gender disparities in political participation and social norms differentiate rich women from rich men in terms of access to land, in which the rich women were constrained by these gender dynamics. Gender differentiation in political

participation distinguished between rich men and women in access to land. My interview data from Pin village revealed that men were advantaged in political participation and could obtain more political resources by occupying political positions. After the 1978 Reform and Opening-Up policy, women's political participation at the village level went down and was at a low level in rural China (Howell, 2006). Fan Yu (2000) found that only 1% of village heads were female, and about 20% of the cadres in village committees were female.

Moreover, women usually held a less significant position in Pin village. Female cadres usually worked as the head of the women's union, and this political position was mainly responsible for family planning issues. Male cadres held more important positions such as the party secretary and village director. Their positions granted them financial rights and decision-making power in village affairs. Female cadres were expected to perform as assistants and conduct supportive roles to key male cadres (Song, 2018). As described in Chapter 4, the Pin Village Committee consisted of five cadres, but there was only one female cadre, Xinxiu. Xinxiu was primarily responsible for women's affairs and she had no essential decision-making rights in village affairs. Besides, the number of female village team leaders in Pin village has ranged from one to three out of 20 team leaders in the past four decades. Rich women's political capital was therefore mostly built upon their marital relations and their husbands' kinship networks (Li, 2006). Being a wife or female relative of a man who held a political position gave access to essential political connections. As revealed by my interviewees, rich women who made use of political capital to access to land mostly relied on their male relatives' political capital. Their male relatives in a political position gave them priority of access to relinquished land, or influenced other cadres' decisions on land distribution.

Gender-biased social norms prevented these rich women with political capital from utilising the political capital to build social relationships with cadres privately. As discussed by my interviewees, social norms expected women to keep far away from the male political space, otherwise, women could lose their good reputation in the village. In this way, rich men with political positions could access cadres through political and financial capital to influence cadres' decisions on land distribution, whereas rich women usually relied on their male family members to access land. As illustrated by the three rich women with political connections in my sample, these women built connections with cadres through their male relatives' political efforts.

For instance, a village woman, Zhenmin, was married in 1985, which was later than many other landless women. She had political capital in Pin village because of her father-in-law Gonglin. Gonglin was the village team leader of Xiaping in the 1980s. Gonglin was responsible for supervising the land condition in the village team. He had access to information about land relinquishment. When a team member Linbo's daughter graduated from high school and moved to work in Yong county, he was required by Gonglin to relinquish land. As revealed by a cadre interviewee, instead of informing the village committee and villagers about Linbo's relinquished land in time, Gonglin contacted the cadre specifically responsible for land adjustment in private and requested for the land for Zhenmin. Through Gonglin's political position, Zhenmin received the cadre's permission to access that piece of relinquished land. Thus, Zhenmin was entitled to the 1.2 *mu* land which was previously contracted by Linbo's daughter. Benefiting from her political connections and male relative's efforts, although Zhenmin arrived in Pin village later than some other women, she gained land before them. In this case, the relationships with cadres generated the power and determined Zhenmin's privilege in access to land. The political connections enabled Zhenmin to break the rules of land readjustment and access the relinquished land with the permission of cadres. Despite Zhenmin being constrained by social norms, her male relatives were able to gain access to the land on her behalf. Zhenmin's land access broke the village rule that earlier arrivals should be allocated land first. As a result, it excluded other poor women without political connections from gaining their rightful land.

Among these rich women with political capital, a few of them had greater political connections with higher political positions than other rich women, which enabled these rich women to access land more smoothly. These women had male relatives who were village cadres rather than just village team leaders. Because of their higher political positions, these male village cadres had the power to decide land allocation straightforwardly. These cadres could also persuade other cadres to follow their decisions on land distribution. A few rich women were moved forward to access land as a result of their strong political capital through their male relatives, but they were prevented from contacting other cadres by social norms. For example, Guizhi married into the Jiazhai village team in 1986. Since there were a few women already on the waiting list of land readjustments according to the village rule, Guizhi would not be allocated land following her marriage. Guizhi's uncle-in-law Li was a cadre in Pin village. To access land in advance, Guizhi asked Li to 'take some actions' to gain access to land for her. By taking advantage of his cadre position, Li invited other cadres for a dinner and discussed a

deal to allocate a piece of relinquished land in Jiazhai to Guizhi. In the same year, the villager Bangman's father passed away and Bangman relinquished his land to the Jiazhai team. Due to Li's position, regardless of the waiting list, cadres issued the land of Bangman's father to Guizhi. In Guizhi's case, Li's political position afforded Guizhi political resources. In addition, through utilising his political position, Li not only controlled the rule of land allocation, but also took actions to persuade other cadres to allocate the land to Guizhi. Finally, Guizhi accessed a piece of relinquished land. Herein, with the assistance of male relatives who were village cadres, women with political connections were more likely to gain access to relinquished land.

In addition to political capital, financial capital made rich men and women are more likely to gain access to cadres. Compared with poor people, rich people were able to build connections with cadres and then access land by their financial capital. Moreover, rich men often sent gifts to cadres to cultivate good relationships in order to access land. Rich men created new social relationships with cadres which could develop into the power to access land. But rich women were unable to take the action of sending gifts privately. As mentioned before, social norms expected women not to have private contacts with other men in the political space. As a woman, Zhenmin said, 'it is shameful and inconvenient for a woman to build social relationships with any male cadre privately'. Constrained by the social norms, despite rich women having the financial capital to send gifts to cadres, they were unable to do so. Rich women's access to land was associated with rich men's efforts in building social connections with cadres.

In the case of another woman, Chanxi, her husband sent gifts to cadres in order to obtain land for her. As Chan recalled, 'instead of waiting for due land readjustments in sequence, my husband gave two chickens and some chicken eggs to the cadres in the village committee. In return, a cadre agreed to allocate land to me'. Chanxi was allocated with the land as soon as the relinquished land emerged in the following year. The social relationships that were cultivated by Chanxi's husband turned into the power that influenced the cadres' decisions on land allocation. Another woman, Qing, had similar experiences to Chanxi. Herein, the intersection of gender and class differentiated the ability of men and women to build relationships with cadres. Influenced by the intersection of financial capital and social norms, rich women's male family members utilised financial capital to connect with cadres and formulate the power to mediate cadres' decision-making on land allocation. Village cadres

therefore permitted a few rich women to access land regardless of the village rules on land readjustments.

In sharp contrast with rich men and women, poor men and women were less likely to use political and financial capital to contact cadres and access land. In Minghao's case, she did not receive a piece of relinquished land despite the fact that she married into Pin village earlier than other women. Two other women, Faju and Chanzi, had similar experiences to Minghao. Faju and Chanzi married into the Xiaping team earlier than Zhenmin. Faju and Chanzi married into Pin village in 1982 and 1984 respectively, while Zhenmin did so in 1985. According to the village rules, Faju and Chanzi should have gained access to relinquished land before Zhenmin. But in fact, Zhenmin took the relinquished land while Faju and Chanzi were excluded from the land that was due to them. Faju and Chanzi did not receive land until the 1996 second-round land redistribution. Due to their lack of political and financial capital, their due land was taken by other rich women, as Faju explained: 'I have no male relatives who are cadres like Zhenmin. Without political connections, my name on the waiting list for land is disregarded ... so I lost the chance to gain land'. In addition to the lack of political networks, Faju's family was poorer because her husband Jiayi suffered from tuberculosis. Constrained by limited financial capital, Faju's family was unable to spend any financial capital to gain authority and land. In summary, the relationships of inequalities constituted by gender and class excluded these poor women from the relinquished land.

In such circumstances, the poor men and women turned to negotiate with cadres for land. But men and women were different in the manners and outcomes of negotiation. Men usually negotiated in a more radical manner than women, involving physical violence or arguments. Men's negotiations were therefore more likely to pose threats to the cadres in control of access to land. As a result, men's negotiation outcomes were usually better. Women negotiated with cadres in a more moderate way and this made almost no difference in access to land. For instance, Minghao mentioned that she had negotiated with the village committee for land, but she was told that there was no more additional land to be allocated in the village. Similarly, Faju echoed Minghao's experience. Faju appealed to a cadre and complained about the unfair land allocation. The cadre just kicked the ball to other cadres or village team leaders rather than providing any explanation or solution to Faju. Faju's negotiation did not make a difference in influencing the cadres' decision making on land readjustment.

However, when Faju's husband Jiayi claimed land, he threatened the cadres with physical violence if they continued to refuse Faju her due land. He posed a threat to the cadres and this formulated the power to intervene in the cadres' decision-making on land readjustments. Faju's access to land was improved by that threat. Finally, cadres promised Jiayi that Faju would be allocated land once newly relinquished land emerged. Herein, the poor women were only able to negotiate with cadres, but not cultivate relationships with cadres like rich women. The gender roles forced poor women to adopt more modest negotiation methods, such as complaints, which were different from the radical negotiations of poor men. Women's access to land was therefore constrained by the intersection of gender and class. Access to land in rural China is not only determined by gender, but also by class power relations. These findings answer my second research question of how have intersectional gender and class dynamics shaped village women's access to livelihood assets? They also make an original contribution to the topic of livelihood resources and gender. In summary, through the life history narratives of village women, class differentiation in political and financial capital, interweaving with the gender disparities of political participation, social norms and negotiation manners, have been shown to influence women's access to land under the institutions of local power operated by cadres in the 1980s. Rich women were advantaged in access to land while poor women were disadvantaged. In the next stage, starting in the late 1980s, the rise of cash crops and rural-urban migration shifted the institutions of land allocation, and also changed the intersectional nature of class and gender in access to land.

5.4.2 Access to land by land transfer in the late 1980s–late 2000s

Tobacco production contributed essential fiscal revenue to the Central Government and local governments (Hu and Mao, 2002). The tobacco industry contributed 1.1 trillion *yuan* to national finance in 2018 (State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, 2019). The tax on tobacco leaves contributed 936 million and 888 million *yuan* to the fiscal revenue of Hunan Provincial Government in 2016 and 2017 respectively (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017). In Wang Town, the greatest yields of tobacco leaves achieved more than 450,000 kilograms per year from 2002 to 2005, which contributed about 1.02 million *yuan* per year to the Wang Town Government. In addition to the benefits to governments, tobacco leaves were also the main agricultural income sources for peasants and the primary economic engines of villages. Thus, the cultivation of tobacco leaves has been strongly advocated and supported by the governments at multiple levels.

In Pin village, the traditional type of tobacco leaf made up only a small proportion of the cash crops cultivated in the period of collectivist production. In the late 1980s, Hunan Provincial Government introduced a new type of tobacco plant which could produce higher-quality tobacco leaves. Cultivation of this new type of tobacco was supported by the Yong County Government, Yong County Tobacco Company, and the Wang Town Government. In Pin village, the arrival of this new type of tobacco leaf cultivation stimulated land transfer. In this case, the method of accessing land was land transfer. Access to land was primarily shaped by land rental markets in Pin village. The land rental market therefore became an institution to mediate women's access to land. Land for lease was scarce in Pin village in the late 1980s. This was determined by the situation of land endowments and agriculture-based livelihood strategies. In terms of land endowments, as Pin village was located in the mountainous area of middle China, the natural and physical settings made the overall arable land limited (see Chapter 4). This limited land was fragmented, situated on difficult topographies, and often a long distance from peasants' houses. The shortage of water and relatively low temperatures worsened the land condition. Such poor land condition reduced the crop yields.

Furthermore, the choices of livelihood strategies were restricted by the location and poor transportation network of Pin village, and subsistence agriculture was the primary livelihood strategy of Pin villagers in this stage. Pin village is far from the township and county markets. The transportation between the village and the markets was in poor condition. Peasants were therefore hindered from selling cash crops and domestic livestock frequently (see Chapter 4). Agricultural production was primarily for household consumption instead of sale in the 1980s. Thus, given the low crop yields and the dependence on subsistence agriculture, villagers sought to access additional land for more crops rather than leasing household land out. Moreover, the rise of rural-urban migration since the late 1980s had gradually stimulated minor land rental markets in Pin village even though the land for lease was too scarce to meet the requests for land transfer. As the provision of land for lease could not satisfy the needs for tobacco leaf cultivation, a question raised here is who was able to access land by rent.

Linking to the conceptual framework in Chapter 3, research findings from Pin village demonstrated that access to the land rental market was influenced by who had privileges to access valuable information in relation to tobacco leaf cultivation and who had the financial capital to rent land. With regard to access to information, the officials in the local county and

township governments controlled this information and influenced people's access to the information. Besides, class and gender were intersected with this local power and the land rental markets to mediate access to land. The political capital determined villagers' contacts with officials and therefore influenced their access to valuable information. Financial capital was essential to rent land from land rental markets. Thus, both financial and political capital made a difference in land transfer.

Rich men and women with political capital were more likely to rent land. As demonstrated above, rich men and women were able to access land by utilising their financial capital. In terms of access to land from land rental markets, it required not only financial capital but also political capital. Only the rich men and women with political capital could access land by land transfer. The poor men and women could not lease land due to their lack of political and financial capital. They turned to reclaim arable land from forestland to cultivate more tobacco leaves. This is illustrated by Manzhi's case; she and her husband could only use reclaimed land for tobacco leaves. This analysis addresses my three research questions: what are the institutional processes that have mediated women's access to assets over time? How do gender and class intersect to shape access to assets? How and why have women's access to resources and livelihoods changed historically? This finding not only contributes to the intersectional analysis on access to assets, but also draws attention to power and politics.

Rich men and women with both political and financial capital were able to use their political connections to access the valuable information of the state projects of modernised agriculture provided by officials, and also use their financial capital to rent land in Pin village. In regard to access to information, similar to the analysis of the land readjustment in the 1980s, the gender disparities in political participation constrained rich women's access to land. The difference here was that only the cadres with the greatest key governance powers were able to access the information, rather than ordinary cadres and village team leaders in general. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the village party secretary and village director were usually in the leading roles. These two men were more likely to gain access to information from government officials. After receiving information, they used their financial capital to rent land. Compared with these men, rich women usually had no vital political positions and could not access information by themselves. But a few rich women, who were these two men's family members, learned the information from them and then started to rent land. As a result, these rich men and women

with essential political capital rented the majority of the available land and excluded others from land transfer.

Two women in my sample accessed land for tobacco cultivation by land transfer. Huiru's story in the late 1980s can demonstrate this point. Huiru was a member of the Baizhu team. Huiru's family was rich due to a small grocery business. Huiru also had political capital in Pin village because her husband Chen was the village party secretary, being in office from 1986 to 1995. As he was in the key political position, Chen was the representative of Pin village who kept in contact with officials from higher levels of government. As Chen said: 'the village director and I were the top leaders of our village. We managed key village issues and were primarily responsible for the connections with local governments'. Being the village party secretary enabled Chen to have frequent social contacts with government officials for public affairs. Thus, officials first informed Chen about the potential profits of, and government support for, tobacco leaf cultivation. Officials also advocated for Chen to cultivate tobacco on a large scale, in order to promote and encourage the cultivation of tobacco leaves in Pin village. When Huiru learned this information from Chen, she leased additional land for tobacco leaf cultivation. Huiru's financial capital was interweaved with the privilege of gaining valuable information through her husband. It enabled her to access the land rental market. As Huiru said:

'When I was told about the high profits of tobacco leaves from my husband, I shortly cultivated the tobacco leaves. Because my household land that was allocated in the first-round land allocation was extremely scarce, I managed to access additional land by land transfer to expand the cultivation area for tobacco leaves. Given the high profits from tobacco leaves, I was willing to spend a higher rent for land in Baizhu and Gehe teams for tobacco leaves than the price for grain crops. The original rent for land in Baizhu team was only 40 kilograms per mu per year, but I paid 45 kilograms of grains and leased eight mu land in total' (Interview with Huiru).

At the introduction of this new type of tobacco in the late 1980s, most villagers were doubtful because they were lacking skills and were uncertain about market risks. To stimulate the cultivation of tobacco leaves, a series of practices were adopted by local organisations. Yong County Tobacco Company provided villagers with free seeds and fertilizer, and taught them cultivation skills. Wang Town Government and Pin Village Committee held several village meetings to organise the cultivation. These practices created very low entry costs for villagers,

and therefore more than 200 households in Pin village gradually participated in tobacco leaf cultivation from the late 1980s. Afterwards, tobacco leaf cultivation became a substantial part of rural household livelihoods, particularly in some poor regions (Hu and Mao, 2002). The records of the Wang Town Government and the Pin Village Committee indicated that tobacco leaf cultivation per *mu* boosted household annual income with the size of this boost increasing from 20% to 105% throughout the 1990s. My interviewees confirmed that tobacco leaves were the main source of villagers' household incomes. Thus, cultivating tobacco leaves became a primary strategy adopted by most households to sustain their livelihoods.

Lacking adequate land to expand the cultivation area for tobacco leaves became a problem for many households. As illustrated above, the land available for lease was limited and most leased land had been rented by a few male village cadres. In this case, reclaiming new land from the household contracted forestland became a principle choice for many households, even though the fertility of forestland was poor. As mentioned previously, forestland was allocated to households in the same way as the allocation of arable land in the 1981 first-round land allocation⁷. The area of forestland was large since Pin village was located in a mountainous area. The forestland that was allocated to individual households in different village teams varied from 25 *mu* to 120 *mu*, which enabled them to reclaim farmland from forestland. Strictly speaking, reclaiming forestland was prohibited by the 1984 Forest Law of the PRC, which regulated that 'land reclamation at the expense of deforestation shall be forbidden' (Article 23) (NPCSC, 1984). In practice, however, villagers were permitted to reclaim farmland from their forestland by local governments and the Pin Village Committee for the purpose of improving the tobacco industry and the local economy. From the late 1980s to the late 1990s, about 100 *mu* farmland was reclaimed from forestland in Pin village.

Reclaiming land was primarily done by poor men and women. The amount of land reclaimed was usually less than six *mu* per household. The amount was generally proportional to the number of household labourers available. Minghao and her husband Rong reclaimed four *mu* for tobacco leaf cultivation. Gender disparities in social networks further differentiated poor men from women in the process of reclaiming land. Men were able to ask for help from their kinship networks to reclaim land. The reclamation process was physically demanding and required intensive manual labour. These poor men usually worked interdependently with their

⁷ The lease of the contract rights of forestland was 70 years from 1981 in Pin village.

male relatives to reclaim forestland into farmland. In contrast to men, through the pattern of patrilocal marriage which is most common in Pin village, the poor women's connections with male relatives were built upon their marriage relationships (see Chapter 2 and 4). Poor women's access to land by reclamation was therefore reliant on their marital networks.

Three poor women in my sample demonstrated their dependence on their marital kinship networks for reclaiming land. For instance, the story of Zhengxia, a poor village woman, was typical to illustrate this point. Zhengxia's family, which consisted of Zhengxia, her husband, and two daughters, were allocated 3.7 *mu* land in 1981. To increase the cultivation area for tobacco leaves, Zhengxia intended to reclaim land from their household forestland. At the beginning, Zhengxia and her husband worked on the reclamation. They searched an area in the hillside of their household forestland, cut down the trees there, dug out the tree roots, and fertilized the soil. As reclaiming farmland required heavy manual labour, Zhengxia was too exhausted to get up in the morning. As she described, 'it was extremely hard and most exhausting work'. Later, Zhengxia's husband asked for help from relatives, and Zhengxia's parents-in-law and brother-in-law lent a hand to them. Zhengxia said, 'without our relatives' assistance, we just cannot reclaim adequate land'. Finally, they reclaimed an additional five *mu* land. Herein, the lack of political and financial capital restricted the poor women from land transfer. But these poor women were able to access land by reclaiming forestland. Their marital status further enabled them to use their marital kinship networks for land reclamation. The intersection of class status and gender roles influenced these poor women's access to land. Compared to the rich women, the way these poor women accessed land was much more frustrating and manually exhausting. Poor women's reclaimed land was of poorer quality than the rich women's rented land.

Overall, local power and land rental markets influenced women's access to land in the late 1980s. The local power was the village cadres in the 1980s, and government officials in the late 1980s. Local power and markets, class, and gender intersected with each other to influence land access. The class dynamics of the political capital held by the principle village cadres and financial capital were intermeshed to influence land transfer. These class dynamics were intersected with the gender disparities of political participation, gender-biased social norms, and the pattern of patrilocal marriage. Rich women were able to rent land while poor women had to reclaim land. In the next stage, the late 1990s, the declining benefits of tobacco

cultivation and deepening rural-urban migration shifted the institutional processes and the intersectional nature of class and gender.

5.5 Intersectionality and land transfer

Much attention has been paid to Chinese village women's land inheritance rights in the 1996 second-round land allocation (Cohen, 1998; Judd, 2007; Zhang, 2003). Most research pointed out that the patrilineal system disadvantaged women's land inheritance rights in comparison to men's. But previous studies paid little attention to the effects of class dynamics on access to land. Besides, the existing studies focus on land inheritance rights but few of them have considered access to land in land transfer. Drawing on this literature, this research offers nuanced insights into the intersectional gender and class dynamics in access to land, and historically examines land transfer in the second-round land allocation. Based on my fieldwork data, women's access to land by land transfer included two stages. In the first stage, from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, the cultivation of tobacco leaves was reduced and rural-to-urban migration increased. Land was transferred on a small scale under the mediation of land rental markets. In the second stage, from the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s, the commercialisation of agriculture developed rapidly and the state issued state-funded projects of modernised agriculture. Land was transferred on a large scale under the influences of enlarged land rental markets and state projects. Linking to my research questions, this inspires me to consider the effects of land transfer on women's lives and livelihoods. Based on my life history interviews, the next sections will offer historical perspectives on how these changes took place.

5.5.1 Access to land by small-scale land transfer in the late 1990s–late 2000s

In the 1996 second-round land allocation, the Pin Village Committee and village teams equally distributed land to villagers regardless of age and gender. In this round, landless women in the 1981 land allocation were entitled to land tenure rights. Minghao received a piece of land in this allocation. Per capita land was about 1.5 *mu* on average, which was equal to the land size of 1.5 *mu* which was allocated in 1981. This land was very limited for livelihoods and more land was anticipated by many households. Besides, as mentioned above, land readjustment was terminated regardless of the demographic changes in this second round. All newly-arrived members in Pin village were excluded from access to land afterwards. Most married couples lived in patrilocal marital residences (see Chapter 4). As such, a woman who married into Pin village after 1996 became landless. In Minghao's family, her daughter-in-law Tianzhao has no

land in this second-round land allocation because she married in 2001. These landless women required a piece of land for farming and therefore tended to rent land from land rental markets.

The land rental markets in Pin village since the late 1990s have shifted. In the 1980s and the early 1990s, land was fully cultivated with multiple types of crop. However, with the ongoing and deepening trend of rural-to-urban migration and non-farm livelihood diversification, land started to be abandoned (Li, 2018). A small portion of uncultivated land appeared in Pin village in the late 1990s, mostly dry land located in the hills. During the mid-2000s, the amount of uncultivated land continued to increase with the growth of non-farm livelihood diversification (Li, 2018). An increasing amount of dry land was abandoned. Also, a small amount of well-irrigated, highly fertile paddy land in the flat areas became uncultivated.

Additionally, land rental markets were reshaped by the reduction of tobacco leaf cultivation since the late 1990s. The reduction of tobacco leaf cultivation in Pin village was caused by changes in the tobacco market, the decline of soil fertility and tobacco plant disease. The State Tobacco Monopoly Administration launched the strategic goal of producing high-quality cigarettes with great brands in the late 1990s to control the oversupply of cigarettes but increase the market competition. Cigarette industrial enterprises therefore only gathered high-quality tobacco leaves and refused the low-quality leaves (Yang and Dong, 2013). The quality of tobacco leaves in some provinces such as Guizhou and Yunnan was defined as the highest grade, while the quality in Hunan province was defined as secondary grade. As a result, the number of rural households who produced tobacco leaves dropped dramatically (Tobacco Market, 2014). Along with the depressed sale markets for secondary-quality tobacco leaves, the Yong County Tobacco Company reduced the subsidies for tobacco leaf cultivation in the early 2000s and ended the subsidies for Pin village in 2011.

The decline of soil fertility and tobacco plant disease were also contributors to the rise of uncultivated land. As indicated by my research participants, tobacco leaves in Pin village were prone to get ill due to improper fertilization over several years. Along with the illness, the quality and yields of tobacco leaves went down. The profits of tobacco cultivation declined, leading to a reduction in the amount of land used for tobacco. Consequently, as indicated by the village accountant, more than 50% of households reduced the cultivation area of tobacco leaves and about 20% households totally withdrew from tobacco leaf cultivation by 2002. In Minghao's family, she and her husband Rong reduced half of the cultivation area of tobacco

leaves. Thus, the tobacco leaves that were cultivated on dry and reclaimed land were greatly reduced because of the poorer yields. The amount of tobacco plants in paddy land was also reduced, but this reclaimed only a small amount of paddy land suitable for renting. The land that was previously rented by the principle village leaders specifically for tobacco leaves in the late 1980s was not rented any more. In such circumstances, the uncultivated land kept rising and it increased the land available for lease in the early 2000s, although the paddy land available for lease remained limited.

The state-funded agricultural subsidies were incentives to stimulate the transfer of uncultivated land. The state has issued a series of subsidies in agriculture to support grain production and increase peasants' income since the mid-2000s (Wang and Xiao, 2007) (see Chapter 1). The subsidies primarily included subsidies for purchasing superior crop varieties, direct subsidies for grain producers, and general subsidies for purchasing agricultural supplies (Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Agriculture, 2016). A prerequisite for receiving the subsidies was an agreement to keep the land cultivated (Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Agriculture, 2016). For some land contractors with uncultivated land, they rented out the uncultivated land and kept it cultivated by others. In this way, they were able to receive the state subsidies. Many contracted households lacking agricultural labour agreed to lease out land to relatives and neighbours for free or at a low rent, because the subsidies they received could make up their loss from the low rent. Minghao leased some paddy land from her nephew-in-law for free.

Land rental markets continued to be a means of access to land in Pin village in the late 1990s. In the land rental markets in the late 1980s, land was transferred by financial capital. However, the land rental markets in the late 1990s not only included the finance-based rental markets, but also the social network-based land rental markets. Herein, the questions of who was able to rent land, and in what types of land rental markets in the late 1990s, are raised. In Chapter 3, the IDS's livelihoods framework and access theory indicated that access to social relationships and financial capital can influence the priorities of access to assets. In relation to the concept of intersectionality, priorities for land rental markets were determined by the intersection of gender and class, which were intersected with the market forces of land rental markets. This point addresses my three research questions (see Chapter 1). My study contributes to the current understanding of livelihoods and gender by providing an analysis of power relations and an intersectional analysis of gender and class in a historical way.

Poor men and women primarily rented land from social network-based land rental markets rather than finance-based markets. As mentioned before, contracted households preferred to transfer the uncultivated land to their left-behind relatives and neighbours for free or merely a small amount of grain in kind. This manner of land transfer was built upon trust, reciprocity, patronage, and dependence (Ribot and Peluso, 2003). Besides, the poor population were less likely to pay a higher rent from the finance-based land rental markets because the rent would increase their financial burden. In contrast, rich men and women were able to rent land from both the social network-based markets and finance-based markets. They preferred to rent land from the social network-based markets due to the low rent. When the land transferred for free was not of high enough quality, rich people were able to use their financial capital to lease good-quality land.

Poor men and women usually rented land from kinship networks for free. Land transfer was essential to their livelihoods because they heavily depended on cash income and subsistence from agriculture. Agricultural products contributed an important share of household incomes and could remedy low wages in rural areas (Razavi, 2003; Walker, 1994). In Pin village, although the profits from tobacco leaves fell in the late 1990s and early 2000s, tobacco leaves were still more profitable than grain crops, and were still the primary cash crop for some households. In particular, tobacco leaves remained an essential source of income for poor households. Instead of fully withdrawing from the production of tobacco leaves, most poor people like Minghao and Rong cut down only a portion of their tobacco plants to balance the land used for grain crops and cash crops.

Moreover, the gendered division of labour differentiated men's and women's attitudes to land and their labour inputs in agriculture. Non-farm activities rewarded higher remuneration and contributed more to the finances of rural households (Hare et al., 2007). Some poor men were engaged in local non-farm sectors, or migrated. Rather than being entirely attached to farming, these men occasionally worked in agriculture. This echoes the gendered division of labour between Minghao and Rong. Compared to poor men, poor women concentrated more on farming because they had fewer chances to diversify their livelihoods in non-agricultural sectors (Rao, 2006) (see Chapter 2). In this way, land and agriculture had different meanings to men's and women's livelihoods. Poor women had a greater dependence on agriculture than poor men. Thus, poor women were more likely to rent land from social network-based markets. This was similar to women's dependence on the social networks for land reclamation. Such

social networks were built upon women's marriages due to the pattern of patrilocal marriage and male-centred residence. In my sample, four poor women had leased paddy land within their social networks. Minghao rented land from one of her marital relatives, her nephew-in-law. Women's access to land was shaped by their marital kinship networks (Jackson, 2003) (see Chapter 2).

A brief case of a village woman Chuan serves to illustrate the intersection of class and gender dynamics in access to land. Chuan's husband migrated and worked in a factory in Yong county. He only returned in busy harvest seasons. Chuan was tied to agriculture and looked after two children in Pin village. Chuan's family was poor because her husband's income was mainly used for his medical fees. Chuan leased 3.2 *mu* land from her uncle-in-law for free in 2007 to sustain the household's livelihood. The land that Chuan rented reduced her daily expenditure on food and improved her livelihood to some extent. Thanks to the land, 'I cultivate corn, peanuts, soybean, vegetables and so forth by myself, and raise pigs and chickens. What I need to buy from the market is only salt and oil', Chuan said. However, a rich woman, Juan, intended to rent land for subsistence crops in the next year. Juan was interested in a piece of 1.5 *mu* land which was contracted by Chuan's uncle-in-law and cultivated by Chuan for free. Nonetheless, Juan insisted on renting it because the land was fertile, well-irrigated, and near to Juan's house. Finally, Juan paid 100 *yuan/mu* to Chuan's uncle-in-law and then leased that 1.5 *mu* land. Unlike Juan, Chuan was unwilling to spend a higher rent to keep that land. Instead, Chuan spent more effort to cultivate her family's two *mu* dry land to compensate the loss of the 1.5 *mu* paddy land. Thus far, the class status and the gendered division of labour determined Chuan's experiences in access to land and had an influence on her livelihood.

Rich men and women rented land not only from social network-based markets but also from finance-based markets. The gendered division of labour also differentiated access to land between rich men and women. Rich men mostly worked in non-farm sectors, while rich women primarily worked in agriculture. This echoes the phenomenon of the feminization of agriculture (Gao, 1994) (see Chapter 2). However, the gendered division of labour in access to land between these rich men and women was different from that between poor men and women. Rich men did not participate in agriculture. This was different from poor men who occasionally worked in farming. Thus, rich women managed almost all agricultural issues and rented land, without occasional assistance from rich men.

Three of my female interviewees used high rent to access well-irrigated paddy land. As revealed by them, the land they rented was not used to sustain survival, but to pursue good-quality food to improve their quality of life. A female returnee Juan's case was typical to illustrate these points. Juan and her husband migrated to Wenzhou city in 1999. Juan worked in a toy-making factory and her husband worked as a petroleum worker. In 2007, when their son, son-in-law, daughter and daughter-in-law started to manage the timber trade in Pin village, Juan and her husband returned to lend a hand in the household business. Juan's husband participated in this timber business while Juan worked in agriculture and undertook all household chores to take care of the family members. Juan rented four *mu* well-irrigated paddy land from two of her neighbours at the price of 100 *yuan/mu* per year. According to Juan's narratives, the land she rented was used to produce good-quality crops and vegetables for household consumption. As previously noted in Chuan's case, Juan paid a higher rent and rented a piece of land that had already been rented by Chuan for free. The financial capital empowered Juan to have the privilege to access land. As Juan narrated:

'When we returned back from Wenzhou, the 3.5 mu land that was allocated to our household in 1996 could not meet our food needs. We had to buy rice, vegetables and meat from markets. Food in the village market was imported from outside and it was always poorer-quality than the food produced by myself. To improve my family members' quality of life, I leased four mu land to produce more grains and vegetables, and raise more chickens and pigs. The contractors of the land I rented were migrated and the land was transferred to their neighbours and relatives for free. The land was fertile and near to the irrigation canal. I asked the contractor for land transfer and confirmed that I could pay a higher rent. They were happy with my rent and transferred that land to me in the following year' (Interview with Juan).

Through these life histories of village women, the class dynamic of financial capital was intersected with the gendered division of labour, and their intersection influenced women's access to land under market forces since the late 1990s. Rich women were advantaged while poor women were disadvantaged in access to land under finance-based land rental markets. This section answers my three research questions: what institutional processes influenced women's access to assets over time; how the intersectional gender and class dynamics influenced women's access to assets; and how women's access to assets and their livelihoods varied historically. In so doing, this study contributes a historical political economy perspective

and intersectional analysis to the existing research on livelihood resources and gender. In the late 2000s, access to land was mediated by the enlarged land rental markets, and this shifted the intersectional nature of class and gender.

5.5.2 Access to land by large-scale land transfer in the late 2000s–mid-2010s

As mentioned above, the Central Government advocated the modernisation of agriculture. In line with the state policies for the modernisation of agriculture, the 2010-2015 Economic Development Report of Yong County Government demonstrated a plan to develop the modernisation of agriculture in Yong county. Promoted by the Central Government and Yong Government, a series of state-funded projects for the modernisation of agriculture have been issued to Pin village since the late 2000s. These projects aimed to support commercialised agriculture in the forms of peasants' cooperatives and family farms. In particular, benefiting from the Farmers' Specialized Cooperatives Law that was issued in 2006, the subsidies specifically for peasants' cooperatives were boosted (Zhang, 2015). These projects of commercialised agriculture can provide a large amount of financial capital for beneficiaries to rent land. In this way, the projects can determine access to land by land transfer. As the state-funded projects were issued by local government officials, the local power held by officials became the main institution influencing access to land.

As mentioned previously, the development of commercialised agriculture required large scale accumulation of land. Large scale land transfer became the primary manner of access to land in the late 2000s. Thus, the land rental markets continued to mediate land transfer. With the growth of non-farm livelihood diversification, the amount of land available for rent has been increasing dramatically since the late 2000s. The land rental markets were profoundly enlarged compared to the 1980s and 1990s. As such, the institutions that mediated land transfer were local power and market forces. The institutions in this stage were similar to the institutions of land transfer in the late 1990s. Although local officials and land rental markets continued to be key mediators of access to land in this stage, the difference from the late 1990s was that the land rental markets were enlarged and the officials were in higher political positions in Yong County Government. Herein, this point answered my first research question, what institutional processes have influenced women's access to assets over time. In so doing, this study addresses the ignorance of power and politics in livelihoods research.

According to the IDS's livelihoods framework with extended access theory, access to financial and political capital determined who had the privilege to access the enlarged land rental markets and government officials. Linking to the concept of intersectionality, the intersection of class and gender mediated access to land through land rental markets. As revealed by my research findings, rich men and women had privileges in access to officials and state-funded projects, and also had the financial capital to rent land on a large scale. Poor men and women were less likely to rent land in that way. Men and women with different class statuses were further differentiated by multiple gender dynamics.

Rich men and women with political capital were able to access state-funded projects or use their own financial capital to rent land. The gender disparity in political participation differentiated the ways in which rich men and women accessed the state-funded projects. As mentioned previously, the gender disparities in political participation favoured men to be village cadres and occupy vital political positions. Male cadres in key positions were able to communicate with government officials in Yong County Government. Particularly, when the state-funded projects of commercialised agriculture dramatically increased in the early 2010s (see Chapter 1), village cadres needed to frequently contact government officials. This enabled village cadres to extend their political networks from the village to the county government. Thus, these village cadres were able to build good social relationships with officials and apply for these projects. Compared with these rich men in key positions, rich women with political capital made use of their husbands' political positions to access the projects. This is similar to the way in which women accessed land in the 1980s and 1990s.

After receiving the state-funded projects, the gender disparity in political participation further differentiated the process of land rental between rich men and women. They usually rented paddy land that was located in the flat and central areas of Pin village, but the amount of paddy land available for leasing was very limited. Very few studies have considered a gender dimension in large scale land transfer. My data in Pin village suggests a gender differentiation in land transfer between rich men and women. The rich men who were village cadres were more easily and smoothly able to lease land than rich women. The political position granted cadres the power to influence the lives and livelihoods of land contractors. As revealed by an interviewee, if the land contractors refused the male cadre's request to rent land, the cadres might bear a grudge against them. Their political power could enable cadres to have negative impacts on the contractors. If the land contractors agreed to lease out land to the cadres, they

could keep good relationships with them. These good relationships might bring potential benefits to the contractors in the future. For this reason, the male cadres were easily able to lease land. In contrast, rich women were more frustrated than their male counterparts in leasing land, because these rich women had neither vital political positions nor political power which could influence the lives and livelihoods of villagers. Thus, these women were unable to influence the decisions of land contractors. Some land contractors refused to lease land out to rich women. Herein, the political power of rich men enabled them to access state-funded projects and also smoothed the process of leasing land.

A brief example may illustrate rich women's access to land. A rural woman, Yulan, rented 100 *mu* land for large-scale vegetable cultivation. Her husband Zhou was the party secretary of Pin village. Being the village head, Zhou was primarily responsible for implementing state policies and government assignments. Zhou's political position provided him with chances to frequently contact Yong government officials, especially since the rise of the projects. It allowed him to successfully access one project supporting commercialised vegetable cultivation in 2012. Supported by the project funding, Yulan and Zhou rented land and established a peasant cooperative organisation for large-scale cultivation of red chili. Yulan told me some details about this project and the process of land transfer in our interview:

'The subsidy for this project was 300 yuan/mu. As the project required the cultivation area to be at least 100 mu, I leased 100 mu land and received 30,000 yuan. The subsidies were mainly used to pay for land rent, wages of agricultural workers and agricultural inputs. I paid a rent of 160 yuan/mu for paddy land in the village centre, including both uncultivated land and cultivated land. It was easy to rent the uncultivated land. But it was much harder to rent cultivated land because some people prefer to cultivate land by themselves for food subsistence. My husband rented this type of land much easier than me because he was the leader of our village' (Interview with Yulan).

Rich men and women without political capital tended to use their financial capital to access officials and projects, and then leased land on a large scale. The deepening marketisation and diversified non-farm livelihoods process since the early 2010s contributed to the stratification of rural society and enlarged income gaps (Wang et al., 2018) (see Chapter 1). A few men and women who were migrants, individual petty business people, and village entrepreneurs became

richer (Wang et al., 2018). But the gender dynamics of social norms continued to differentiate men and women in access to the projects. Men were able to use their financial capital to build social connections with officials and access project subsidies. This has been mentioned already regarding access to land in the land readjustment in the 1980s. In this stage, bribery became a common way to cultivate personal relationships with officials to access projects. The amount of financial capital used for cultivating relationships was greater than the financial capital used in the 1980s. Rich women continued to be prevented from establishing private contacts with officials by social norms. Hence, these women depended on their husbands' practical efforts to access the projects.

For example, a rich woman Xin and her husband Bangman had already accumulated a sum of money through their diversified non-farm livelihoods, such as migration, a noodle restaurant, pig farm, pork shop, and coach transport. As indicated by Xin, an official in Yong County Government was responsible for a large-scale agricultural project of tobacco leaf cultivation. Despite the profits from tobacco leaves declining, they were still the main cash crop in Pin village in the 2000s. To obtain the project, Bangman gave a 'red envelope' to the official. The 'red envelope' worked as a 'chip' to 'bargain' with the official. In return, the official issued the tobacco project to Bangman. The project subsidies included 40,000 *yuan* for tobacco leaf cultivation and more than 200,000 *yuan* for constructing drying sheds. Afterwards, Xin established the family tobacco farm and constructed the drying sheds. Xin worked as the farm manager and employed casual agricultural workers.

Despite women being restricted from access to the projects by themselves, they were able to utilise their savings to rent land and invest in commercialised agriculture without the support of the projects. Rural-to-urban migration enabled some village women to save a certain amount of money. Jianyun's story illustrates how village women used their savings to lease land and develop commercialised agriculture. Jianyun and her husband migrated to Fuzhou city in the late 1990s. Jianyun returned to Pin village in 2012 to take care of her elderly parents, while her husband remained in Fuzhou. Without the support of any state-funded project, Jianyun invested her savings to rent 30 *mu* land and cultivate tomatoes. As a woman, Jianyun was prevented by social norms from accessing officials and state-funded projects. But she had advantages in financial capital and did not depend on those projects. The financial capital enabled Jianyun to access land and become the manager of her commercialised farm. Herein, Jianyun's story indicates that the increasing migration empowered some female returnees to access land, and

this made a contribution to their livelihoods. With these cases, this study contributes to the analysis of power and politics, and the intersectionality of gender and class in access to land. It fills a current gap in the livelihoods literature concerning power, politics, and class from a gender dimension.

Poor men and women were unable to rent large-scale land for commercialised agriculture due to their lack of financial and political capital. Some of them leased out their land and worked as casual labours for commercialised agriculture. Moreover, the gendered division of labour differentiated poor men's and poor women's engagement in commercialised agriculture. Poor men were less likely to work as casual workers in commercialised agriculture but they usually engaged in non-farm sectors, such as construction and timber. Poor women, particularly old women, were the most likely to be employed as casual agricultural labourers in commercialised agriculture. Some of these female workers leased out all of their household land and mainly depended on the wages from their casual work. Other women kept their household land and continued to work on it. Minghao worked on her household land and was also employed as an agricultural worker on Bangman's family farm. As Minghao said, 'the land I cultivated was used for household food consumption. The wage I earned as an agricultural worker was used to cover my daily consumption'. Herein, poor women were further marginalised in terms of access to land by large-scale land transfer.

Overall, the institutions of local power and market forces mediated access to land in the late 2000s. The local power was held by government officials who controlled the distribution of state-funded projects. The land rental markets have been gradually enlarged since the late 2000s. The intersectional class and gender dynamics, such as the class factors of political and financial capital, and the gender disparities of political participation, social norms, and the gendered division of labour, were intersected with the local power and market forces to shape women's access to land. Rich women were able to lease land on a large scale while poor women were further marginalised. This section responds to my three research questions, emphasises power and political relations, and provides intersectional analysis in livelihoods research. In the next section, I will summarize and conclude the findings of this chapter.

5.6 Summary

Guided by the integrated framework of the IDS's livelihoods framework emphasizing access and the concept of intersectionality, this chapter responds to my three research questions: what institutional processes influenced women's access to assets over the past near to four decades? How have the intersectional gender and class dynamics mediated women's access to assets? How and why have women's access to livelihood resources and their livelihoods changed under the effects of market reforms and wider dynamics in the context of rural China? This chapter has the following three main findings. Firstly, the institutions of access to land were primarily local power and market forces. These institutions have been changing under the marketisation processes in China. From the early 1980s to the late 1990s, these institutional processes consisted of village cadres mediating land readjustment, and officials and finance-based land rental markets mediating land transfer. From the late 1990s to the mid-2010s, the social network-based rental markets, enlarged finance-based rental markets and government officials influenced land transfer. The finance-based rental markets were predominant in mediating land transfer and this predominance has been strengthened since the late 1990s.

Secondly, class and gender were intersected with these institutions and the result was that men and women across different classes had different agency and took diverse means to access land. Financial and political capital advantaged rich men and women over their poor counterparts under the institutions of local power and markets. When the local power mediated women's access to land, the rich men and women used their financial and political capital to cultivate good relationships with cadres and officials, which influenced the decisions of cadres and officials in the distribution of land, information, and project funding. There was a trend that these men and women increasingly needed to use larger amounts of financial capital and greater political capital to access cadres and officials in order to access land. Only the richest people and the people with greater political capital were able to access land by these means after the 2000s.

Gender dynamics were intersected with class status and further mediated rich women's access to land under the mediation of local power. Rich women were prevented by the gender disparities of political participation and gender-biased social norms from accessing land, but they were able to use their male relatives' political capital to access the local power and land. Rich women, particularly the richest women with greater political capital, had more chances to

access state-funded projects and land. With the marketisation processes, the diversified non-farm livelihoods and increased state-funded projects granted these rich women more chances to access land even though they remained constrained by their lack of political participation and the prevailing social norms.

In contrast, poor people were disadvantaged due to their lack of financial and political capital. They were unable to make use of capital to cultivate good relationships with cadres and officials. However, they could negotiate with cadres to attempt to obtain access to land in the 1980s. The gender-based institutions further restricted poor women from access to land under local power. The poor women were not only constrained by their lack of political and financial capital, but also the gendered nature of negotiations. They tended to negotiate with cadres in a moderate way rather than a radical way, unlike their male counterparts. This modest negotiation tended to be ineffective and did not enable these women to access land.

When market forces were the main mediators of access to land, the rich men and women used their financial capital to pay a higher rental price to rent land. As the markets played an increasing role in the distribution of land since the early 2000s, rich men and women continued to use their financial capital to rent land, but the rent gradually increased over time. Moreover, rich women accumulated more financial capital and had more chances to rent land from markets with the deepening marketisation and diversified non-farm employment. Rich women utilised their financial capital to overcome the gender barriers that constrained them from access to land. In contrast, poor men and women were marginalized from land rental markets, instead heavily depending on social networks for land since the late 1980s. With the growing significance of market forces in the mediation of access to land, poor men and women were further marginalized in the early 2000s.

Thirdly, the intersectional class and gender dynamics shaped women's livelihoods in a historical way. The class status was intersected with the gendered division of labour and differentially influenced the livelihoods of rich women and poor women. Both rich and poor women were the main agricultural labour, but their class status differentiates the meaning of land and agriculture to them. The poor women relied on land and agriculture for survival and income, while rich women relied on agriculture primarily for high-quality food and were less concerned about their income from agriculture. Moreover, with the rise of commercialised

agriculture since the late 2000s, the richer women became managers of family farms and employed agricultural workers, while poor women were employed as the workers.

Based on these findings, I argue that access to land is not only mediated by the single dimension of gender, but is influenced by the intersection of gender and class. The institutional constraints of gender inequalities on women cannot fully explain how women were divided in access to land. The intersection of gender and class can explain the differentiation among women of different class status in access to land under the marketisation processes. Rich women gradually accumulated financial capital, and also used men's political capital to access more land, which enabled them to relieve these patriarchal constraints. Poor women continued to be constrained by gender inequalities and their lack of political and financial capital. When the markets and state projects became significant for land distribution, poor women were further marginalised in access to land. This enlarged the gap in access to land between rich and poor women.

This chapter makes four contributions to the existing research on access to land, gender, and rural livelihoods. Firstly, this chapter analyses 'access' by revealing institutional processes in women's access to land. It contributes an analysis of power and politics to current livelihoods research. Secondly, this chapter adds the dimension of class to analyse the intersection of gender and class in access to land. It uncovers the intermeshed contributions of gender and class inequalities rather than the unidimensional gender inequality in access to land. Thirdly, this chapter reveals the changing power relations important for access to land in the context of marketisation processes in China. In this regard, it contributes a historical perspective to the analysis of rural livelihoods and gender. Finally, this chapter reveals the agency of women in different classes. Through the narratives of women's life stories, this chapter discovers the different opportunities and constraints that different women faced, and also the means they adopted to access land. In the next chapter, I will examine village women's access to water.

Chapter 6 Women's Access to Water and Intersectionality

6.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, plenty of attention has been paid to gendered differences in access to water (Crow and Sultana, 2002; Ivens, 2008; Sorenson et al., 2011), but few of these studies have examined the intersection of gender and class (Crow and Sultana, 2002). Drawing on the existing literature, this chapter examines what power and political relations have influenced women's access to water and livelihoods in rural China, and how these are influenced by the intersection of gender and class. Additionally, given the transformation of rural society under the marketisation processes in China, this chapter examines the influences of market reforms on women's access to water from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s.

Water in this chapter includes water for domestic use and water for irrigation. Domestic uses include cooking, drinking, washing, raising livestock and watering house gardens⁸. Access to water refers to water for both purposes (domestic and irrigation), and also access to water infrastructures and the facilities for water fetching. This chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, Section 6.2 presents the background of water problems and water management in China. Section 6.3 tells the life story of a rural woman, Chan. Chan's story illustrates how women's access to water was influenced by political power, household wealth status, the gender division in political participation, the broader social trends of livelihood diversification, and increased state-funded projects. Section 6.4 illustrates women's access to water for domestic use over the past four decades. Section 6.5 examines women's access to water for irrigation. Section 6.6 summarizes and concludes this chapter.

6.2 Water problems and water management

In rural areas, the primary water problems are unsafe drinking water (Qin et al., 2010), out-of-date water infrastructure (Chen et al., 2003), and water scarcity (Jiang, 2009; Yang et al., 2003). Water safety is not guaranteed in either urban or rural areas in China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and United Nations system in China, 2005). The inaccessibility of water facilities contribute to the lack of safe water for domestic use (Jiang, 2009). The facilities for safe drinking water are inaccessible for many rural residents due to low population densities over

⁸ Plots of land located in the homestead were small. They were usually watered by the water for domestic use rather than watered by irrigation canals.

wide areas (Jiang, 2009). Many still depend on rainwater, groundwater, and surface water for drinking by fetching water from rivers, streams and ponds (Yu et al., 2015). To improve water quality, the 11th five-year plan (2006-2010) addressed the significance of water safety and set the target of ensuring water safety and water sufficiency (Geng et al., 2010).

Agriculture consumes the largest portion of water in all sectors in China, accounting for over 60% of all water use (Ministry of Water Resources, 2013). However, water for irrigation is scarce and is used inefficiently (Yu et al., 2015), which is mainly due to the poor quality and shortage of irrigation infrastructure (Ministry of Environmental Protection, 2014). The irrigation infrastructures are out-of-date and have not been well repaired and maintained (Yu et al., 2015). One consequence of this is the serious water leakage from reservoirs and canals (Yu et al., 2015). More than half of China's arable land is not covered by irrigation facilities and the irrigation of this land relies on rainfall (Ke, 2010). A coefficient of utilisation of the water for irrigation is a measure of the efficiency of water utilisation in irrigation. The coefficient of utilisation in China ranges from 0.50 to 0.53, whereas the coefficient ranges from 0.7 to 0.8 in developed countries (Ministry of Environmental Protection, 2014). Therefore, the state has taken measures to construct and enhance water infrastructure to save water and improve the efficiency of irrigation. For instance, the Central Government invested 426.4 billion *yuan* in irrigation and water conservation projects during the period of the 12th five-year plan (2011-2015) to promote water conservation (Ma et al., 2016).

Chinese governments at the national and regional levels designed water laws and regulations to improve water use (Gleick, 2009). The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) of the People's Republic of China issued a series of laws to protect water resources, including the Water Law of the PRC (NPCSC, 2002), Water and Soil Conservation Law (NPCSC, 2010), Water Pollution Prevention and Control Law (NPCSC, 2008), and Flood Control Law (NPCSC, 1997). Besides these, provincial and municipal governments were also allowed to design regional regulations to protect local water resources. Protection of water resources by the governments at multiple regional levels was officially approved by the Water Law. Article 15 in this law regulates that 'people's governments at all levels shall promote water-conserving irrigation methods and water-conserving technologies, and shall take necessary measures to prevent seepage in agricultural projects for storing and transmitting water, in order to increase the efficiency of water use in agriculture' (Water Law of the PRC, 2002).

The water administrative management system is inefficient (Yu et al., 2015). Water management is administratively governed by nine administrative agencies. One agency is the Ministry of Water Resources in the Central Government and water resources bureaus in regional governments at all levels. To improve the efficiency of water use and protect water from pollution, eight other administrative agencies cooperatively manage water, such as the department of environmental protection, the department of electric power, the department of agriculture, the department of urban construction, and the department of geology and mineral resources at national and regional levels. However, the water-related jurisdictions among these agencies are unclear (Rogers and Hall, 2003). Fragmentally managed by these multi-level agencies, water management is ineffective and inefficient (Gleick, 2013; Yu et al., 2015). I will now describe a woman's life story, focusing on access to water and livelihood changes.

6.3 Women's access to water and livelihood changes

Chan's story reflects the changes of water distribution in Pin village. Chan was born in 1961 in Cai village, which neighbours Pin village. When Chan was aged 21 in 1982, she married a Pin villager, Sheng, and moved into Sheng's family home, that was located in Xiaping team in Pin village. Sheng had two elder brothers and he was the youngest son. Sheng's parents had a large wooden house with four suites. Sheng's two brothers had already got married before 1982. Each of them was allocated a suite by their parents. When Chan and Sheng got married, Sheng's parents allocated a suite and 1.4 *mu* land to Sheng. Sheng was a well-known carpenter in Pin village and the surrounding area. He made furniture for villagers and worked in house construction. He only worked in agriculture occasionally. Chan was primarily engaged in farming. Chan was also responsible for cooking, washing clothes, and raising livestock. Chan gave birth to a daughter a year later and gave birth to a boy in the second year. Because Chan's mother-in-law was busy taking care of the children of her two elder sons, Chan had to feed her children by herself, even though she had to laboriously work in the field.

As Chan was responsible for household chores, she fetched water for domestic use. The public well in Xiaping Team was the nearest water site to Chan's house, about one kilometre away. This journey took Chan about 15 minutes since the uneven dirt road slowed down her walking speed. Since there was an upward slope on the return journey, Chan spent more than 20 minutes returning, shouldering water in two wooden barrels. Chan fetched water two to three times each

day, at the cost of one to two hours. The emergence of pumps and plastic pipes in the market of Wang town since the early 1990s helped to save the labour expended on carrying water. The prerequisite for using these water facilities was to widen the well in Pin village. The village team leader of Xiaping, and some male team members who intended to convey water, enlarged the well to improve its water capacity and convey water by pumps and plastic pipes. These participants were required to contribute physical labour for the well construction. Sheng and his brothers participated in the well construction since they were household male heads. Moreover, Sheng's brothers and their parents contributed financially to the materials for well construction. They also cooperatively purchased and shared a pump and pipes to save costs. Then, they dug a water channel along their field and buried pipes. Thus, water could be directly conveyed to their houses and stored in a water tank, relieving Chan from shouldering water. Because the pipes were easily damaged and sometimes leaked, Sheng and his brothers had to maintain them frequently.



Figure 6.1 Water Tank

(Source: Photo by author)

As mentioned before, there was only 1.4 *mu* land in Chan's family when she married Sheng. In addition to that 1.4 *mu* land, Chan's family was allocated an additional 2.9 *mu* land which was entitled to Chan and her children in the 1996 second-round land allocation. Chan's family had a total of 4.3 *mu* land at this point. Chan's parents-in-law leased three *mu* land from their migrated neighbours for tobacco leaf cultivation in 1997. Irrigation water was important for

both Chan's and her parents-in-law's family livelihoods. Their land was in the tail of the main irrigation canal that was irrigated by Yanwan pond. The irrigation water from this pond was heavily dependent on rainfall, with the result that water supply for irrigation was unstable and limited. The irrigation canal walls were made of uncoated soil and so leaked a significant amount of water. There was extremely limited water at the tail of the canal, and it was always dry during droughts. Thus, access to irrigation water was a problem for Chan's household.

In 1995, Pin village received funding from Wang Town Government and purchased an irrigation pump for the village. The pump was publicly-owned and shared by many villagers to draw groundwater. It was used in rotations according to a schedule among village teams and households. Given that there was a long queue for the pump, Chan and her parents-in-law preferred to purchase an irrigation pump by themselves to draw groundwater, rather than spend a lot of time waiting for the public pump. Chan's family, her parents-in-law and her brothers-in-law, decided to cooperatively buy a pump, as it was too expensive for them to buy individually. As the irrigation pump was cumbersome to carry and use, Sheng mainly carried and operated this pump and Chan assisted Sheng when he needed help. Herein, Chan's experiences with water from the early 1980s to the late 1990s demonstrate that her access to water and water facilities has primarily been influenced by the gendered division of labour within households, the water facilities market, household material status, and kinship networks.

Chan's family became richer in the early 2000s when her family diversified livelihoods. Sheng made use of his skills and started a construction team to build houses in Pin village, Wang town, and nearby areas. Sheng earned a lot of money from his construction work. Sheng used the money to invest in a café for his son and daughter in Yong county. With the referral of Sheng's friend who was a teacher in the Pin village primary school, Chan managed a small grocery shop in the school and therefore became rich.

Yong County Government issued several state-funded water projects in Pin village in the mid-2000s. These projects aimed to improve water facilities for domestic use and water infrastructure for irrigation. Two major water projects were implemented in the central area of Pin village. They were the Rural Drinking Water Safety Project for piped water and the Miniature Irrigation and Drainage Engineering for irrigation. The Rural Drinking Water Safety Project was implemented in Pin village in 2005 with the construction of the main conduit pipes and secondary pipes. The main conduit pipes were constructed in the village centre where

Chan's house was located. However, the initial plan for the construction of secondary pipes did not cover Chan's family home because it was too far from the main conduit pipes, even though their house was in the village centre. When Chan heard about this plan from a cadre, she contacted the party secretary and asked him to readjust that plan. Given that Chan and her family members were very rich, the cadres agreed to guarantee her house with piped water to avoid annoying them. Finally, her family benefited from piped water, installed a washing machine and solar-heated shower, and constructed a flush toilet.

In 2012, Chan leased out her four *mu* land to Jianyun for large-scale agriculture. When the Irrigation and Drainage Engineering was implemented in the centre of Pin village in 2013, the previous soil canal was reconstructed with bricks and a concrete lining, which prevented irrigation water from leaking. However, this project did not cover the tail of the canal due to a shortage of funding. In this case, the funding from another water project specifically for Tianwan team was available to complete the construction of the canal tail in Xiaping. To access a reliable source of irrigation water, Jianyun advised the village cadres to use the funding for Tianwan to complete the canal tail. Finally, the village committee did so and the land that Jianyun rented from Chan was well-watered. Overall, Chan's experiences around water from the early 2000s to the mid-2010s indicate that her access to water was mediated by the gendered division of labour, social networks, household wealth status, geographical and hydrological conditions, the broader social trends of livelihood diversification, and the increased state-funded projects. In the next section, I will link Chan's life story with livelihood diversification and marketisation to explore the ongoing changes to women's access to water.

6.4 Intersectionality and water for domestic use

Built on the unverified premise that women's water use was in the domestic area while men's water use was primarily in more 'productive' areas, the gendered division of labour has been considered a key factor in determining gendered access to water (Caizhen, 2009; Lu, 2009; Van Houweling, 2015), however the power relations of access to water from a class perspective remain largely unexplored. Based on the existing literature, this section provides a nuanced historical political economy perspective and an intersectional analysis of gender and class to examine women's access to water for domestic use over two periods. In the first period, from the early 1980s to the mid-2000s, the primary means of access to water has shifted from shouldering/lifting water to conveying water by means of pumps and pipes. Markets primarily

mediated who could access the conveyed water. In the second period from the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s, the arrival of state-funded projects stimulated the emergence of piped water. Access to water was influenced by the distribution of these projects. In revisiting my research questions, this inspires me to consider its influences on livelihoods. What did the changes of water distribution mean for women's livelihoods? Based on my life history interviews, the next sections will examine these historical changes that occurred in Pin village.

6.4.1 Access to well water in the early 1980s–mid-2000s

There were multiple scattered main water sources in Pin village, including two ponds, one tank with spring water, public and private wells and ditches, and two reservoirs that were shared with neighbouring villages. Water for domestic use mainly came from the tank, wells, ponds and reservoirs. Over half of the villagers depended on the wells in their village teams for domestic use. Other villagers, lacking wells in their teams, fetched water from the tank and ponds. Because the water came from rainfalls, water was limited and the supply varied according to the seasonal fluctuations in rainfall. These water sources could be very limited in dry seasons and some villagers had to temporarily seek new water sources for domestic use in nearby hills. When those water sources were almost dried up, water in reservoirs would be utilised. Overall, the supply of water resources for domestic use was far short of demand in Pin village.

In Pin village, the most common way to fetch water for domestic use was from public wells. Public wells were scattered in some village teams. They were publicly owned and used by their team members. In the 1980s and 1990s, shouldering and lifting were the main means of fetching well water. From the early 1980s, men and women had different responsibilities in fetching water in Pin village. The gender differentiation in fetching water was related to the gendered division of labour within a household. As discussed before, domestic water was used for cooking, drinking, washing, raising livestock and watering homestead plots. Women were primarily responsible for such activities. Therefore, women tended to have the responsibility for fetching water from public sites for domestic use (Makoni et al., 2004; Sultana, 2009). This is illustrated by Chan's story: she was primarily responsible for fetching water due to her domestic work.

As explained by six of my female respondents, shouldering and lifting well water was time-consuming and arduous work. The time and labour spent on water collection by women were significant (Crow and Sultana, 2002). Access to water was more burdensome to women on dry and rainy days. On dry days, the water capacity of wells were heavily reduced. In heavy rain, soil and impurities polluted some wells at a lower altitude. Women had to fetch water from more distant water sources at a higher altitude. Compared with women, men were reluctant to fetch water because they considered fetching water to be a woman's responsibility. Four of my female participants tried to persuade their husbands to fetch more water but often failed. Only when women were exhausted or extremely busy, would their husbands fetch water (Sultana, 2009). These findings from Pin village echo current research on the gendered differences in water fetching responsibilities (see Chapter 2).

Some households started to end shouldering and lifting water from the early 1990s, purchasing pumps and pipes to convey water. Pumps and pipes were sold in the markets of Wang town and they were expensive for most villagers. The market was the institution that mediated who was able to access the conveyed water. The altitude of public water sites also determined how these water facilities were used to convey water. For the water sites that were located at a higher altitude, people excavated sites in the hills around their houses. They built a small tank close to the site to store water, and then conveyed the water using pipes. For the water sites with public wells at a lower altitude, people managed to enlarge the wells and then convey water using pumps and pipes. Four village teams of Xiaping, Shangping, Rangshui and Yanwan had water sites at a lower altitude. These village teams expanded the size of their wells and utilised electric pumps to draw water. As these teams took similar means to convey water, I took Xiaping team as an example to examine access to water. The access to conveyed water in Xiaping team included three steps: decisions on enlarging wells at the team level; purchase of well materials and well reconstruction at the team level; purchase, operation and maintenance of pumps and pipes at the household level.

Linking to the IDS's livelihoods framework with access theory and intersectionality, access to transferred water was determined by the privilege of access to the water facilities market. The institutional dynamics of patrilocal marriage overlapped with the markets and mediated women's access to water, which was further intersected with the class-based dynamics of financial capital. Rich men and women were able to use their financial capital to purchase pumps and pipes from markets and also contribute finances to the reconstruction of wells. This

financial capital enabled them to access water facilities and well materials. Poor men and women were unable to afford those water facilities and well materials. Most of the poor population continued to manually fetch water. This finding provides an understanding of the institutional power relations and the intersection of gender and class in access to water.

For the rich men and women there were three stages of access to the transferred water. Firstly, team members who intended to have transferred water participated in the meetings of village teams and discussed well reconstruction. Secondly, these participants contributed physical labour to reconstruct wells in order to enlarge their water capacity. Finally, participants purchased, installed, operated, and maintained pumps and pipes for water conveyance. Chan and her husband implemented these three steps and accessed the transferred water. There were gender differences between rich men and women in the following three aspects. Firstly, the team leader held several meetings to discuss the project of water transfer. A major issue that was discussed in the meetings was to enlarge wells and increase water capacity. The gendered division of labour determined that men were primarily responsible for the public spheres while women focused on the intra-household domain (Ye et al., 2014). Because men were household heads and household representatives in the public space, they were more likely to participate in the team meetings and discuss water transfer. As a rich man, Zhiwen said, 'men are household heads and always manage public issues outside, so men participating in team meetings is very common'. In this case, participation in these meetings allowed the rich men to express opinions and make decisions on well reconstruction. Rich women were less likely to participate in such meetings. Women who participated in public meetings were regarded as being opposed to the traditional gendered division of labour (Zwarteveen and Meinzen-Dick, 2001). In Chan's family, her husband Sheng joined the team meetings.

Secondly, participants agreed to double the size of a well in Xiaping after several team meetings. Enlarging the well would increase the water storage capacity and increase the efficiency of transporting water from the well to houses. Each family intending to access the transferred water was required to contribute one labourer for well reconstruction. The gendered division of labour and traditional social norms favoured men to participate in the well reconstruction. As Chan said, 'the outside construction is men's work, and women just do minor things inside'. Male labourers made up 95% of the workforce engaged in enlarging this well. In Chan's family, her husband Sheng worked on the well reconstruction. The concentration of male workers in this construction work generated a male-specific space. In contrast, women in Pin village were

less likely to engage in the well construction. This point echoes the finding that women were kept far away from the male space of construction (Zwarteveen, 1997). Otherwise, women who were involved in this male space would be treated as being opposed to traditional social norms. Only in the absence of male labour in a household would female labour be considered. In my sample of 40 female interviewees, there was only one woman who worked on the well construction because her husband had migrated far away.

Thirdly, rich men and women purchased and installed pumps and pipes to convey water from the enlarged wells. Since these facilities were expensive for most households, people preferred to share the costs of facilities with their neighbours or relatives living nearby to save money. They also cooperatively invested labour in facility installation. Moreover, rich men and women had different access to these water facilities. This was due to the pattern of patrilocal marriage and the gender disparities in facility installation. With the patrilocal marriage and the pattern of male-centred residence, most male relatives were neighbours. Rich men were therefore able to make use of their male kinship networks to share water facilities. Rich women could also use these kinship networks, but their networks were built upon their marriage relationships. This gendered difference in social networks was similar to the networks that influenced women's access to land in Chapter 5. In Chan's case, Chan and Sheng cooperatively shared water facilities with Sheng's brothers and parents.

Gender disparities in the ability to manage facilities differentiated rich men from rich women with regard to installing facilities. The rich men were more skilled than their female counterparts. These rich men cooperated with their male relatives to install pumps in the enlarged wells, dig channels alongside fields, and bury plastic pipes. Rather than treating the installation of water facilities as 'outside' work like the well construction, rich women considered digging channels and burying pipes with male relatives as 'inside' work. Rich women were involved in these 'inside' jobs and were assistants to the rich men. Chan worked on these jobs with her brothers-in-law and parents-in-law. Another woman, Juan, had very similar experiences to Chan. Thus far, these analyses of access to transferred water respond to my three research questions. The analyses demonstrate that although rich women were constrained by their lack of political participation, social norms, and the gendered division of labour in engaging in public activities, they could use their financial capital and kinship networks to access the transferred water with the rise of markets for water facilities. This

finding contributes an intersectional analysis of gender and class and reveals power relationships in understanding access to water, rural livelihoods, and gender.

The arrival of transferred water improved the livelihood wellbeing of rich women. Benefiting from the transferred water, rich women saved a large amount of labour and time that was previously spent on fetching water. Before the arrival of transferred water, women woke up earlier in the morning or made use of leisure time to fetch water. In a focus group I conducted, four women recalled shouldering water and complained about it. Juan said, ‘when I came back from farming, if there was no water in the vat, I had to shoulder water even though I was extremely exhausted’. The arrival of transferred water saved the labour of female beneficiaries. Moreover, time saved from fetching water was used for women’s livelihood activities. Three women increased their number of livestock. Juan raised one pig for household consumption when she needed to fetch water. With the arrival of transferred water, Juan drew water from an enlarged well and stored the water in a water tank. Thus, as the water for domestic use was reliable and sustainable, Juan and her husband rebuilt their piggery and raised another two pigs for sale. The pig sale increased Juan’s income. Thus, the transferred water improved women’s household livelihood contributions.

Poor men and women did not benefit from the transferred water. They continued shouldering and lifting water as before. In fact, the arrival of transferred water increased the amount of labour they expended on fetching water. As mentioned before, some rich men and women enlarged the public well and increased its water capacity. As a result, the overall water consumption from the enlarged wells increased dramatically, diminishing the supplies of well water and lowering the water level. Consequently, the poor men and women could not fetch as much water as before. In some cases, these poor people were forced to fetch water very early in the day before the well water was drained by others, or they had to fetch water from the spring tank, far away from Xiaping team. The transferred water that was controlled by the rich people therefore worsened poor people’s access to water, and increased their labour demands.

The arrival of transferred water reshaped the gender differentiation in water fetching between poor men and poor women. Despite poor women still taking on the main responsibility for fetching water, their male family members began to fetch water more often than before. According to two poor husbands’ interviews, they indicated that as they were unable to afford the materials and facilities for transferred water, they instead physically shouldered water more

often to relieve their wives' burden. Thus, the gendered differentiation in the responsibility for fetching water described in the literature was reproduced in my data. Poor men started to take on more responsibility for fetching water. For instance, the woman Faju's experiences can illustrate this point:

'My husband always considered fetching water as my task because I did the cooking, watered the homestead garden and so forth. He helped me to fetch water only when I was unavailable. On one occasion, I became ill for a period time and so he fetched water. In the 1990s, we could not afford transferred water and continued to fetch water. When the well water in our team was used by other team members' pumps, the water level went down. Thus, we needed to go to the spring tank to fetch water. It was far from my house and it cost me much more time and energy. Then, my husband began to do more water fetching to relieve the pressure on me' (Interview with Faju).

In summary, this section examines the power and politics that determined women's access to water under the mediation of market forces, which were intersected with financial capital and multiple gender dynamics such as the gendered division of labour. In this regard, this study goes beyond the understanding of current literature that only focuses on the gender differences, to examine the intersectional class and gender dynamics in access to water. When the state-funded project for piped water arrived in Pin village in the mid-2000s, women's access to water was reshaped. This will be elaborated on in the next section.

6.4.2 Access to piped water in the mid-2000s–mid-2010s

The Rural Drinking Water Safety Project was aimed at improving the safety of water for domestic use in rural areas by constructing water pipes. This project was funded by the Central Government and performed by local county and township governments (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2007). According to the hydrogeologic and geographic characteristics in Pin village, this project adopted the pattern of 'scattered water supplies' (*fensan gongshui*). The scattered water supplies were based on a certain small water site, purified water sources and filterable piped water. The infrastructure of this project included a tank in the water site, disinfection equipment, a pump station, the main conduit pipes and the webs of secondary water pipes. In this pattern of scattered water supplies, because the project funding was inadequate to cover all areas of Pin village, only a small area could benefit from

the piped water. Since few studies have concentrated on the role of infrastructure (Tiwale et al., 2018), this study examines access to water infrastructure in order to develop a broader understanding of access to water.

The 11th five-year plan of the national rural drinking water safety project that was issued by the Central Government encouraged the participation and supervision of water users. However, in practice, the processes of design, operation, and maintenance of this project were dominated by the Yong County Water Bureau, Water Management Station in Wang Town Government, and the Pin Village Committee, excluding the participation and supervision of water users. In such circumstances, access to piped water was determined by the institution of local power. In Pin village, local government officials and village cadres were the main mediators of water distribution, as they were for land distribution (see Chapter 5). These findings respond to my first research question: What are the institutional processes that have mediated Chinese village women's access to livelihood resources over the past four decades?

Village cadres and government officials arranged the layout of the water site, water pump, and conduit pipes. They decided to place this water infrastructure in the central area of Pin village. The central area was located on the sides of the village main road, consisting of parts of four different village teams: Shangping Team, Xiaping Team, Yanwan Team and Rangshui Team. This central area occupied less than one-tenth of the entire area of Pin village but functioned as the political, cultural, and economic centre. The village committee, schools, clinic, shops, and small restaurants were all located here. Why did this central area gain priority for the water project? According to my interviews with officials and cadres, they believed that using the project funding for the central area rather than marginal areas would create the most benefits for the village overall. As an official explained, 'in my view, because the finance of this project was too limited to cover every corner, it would be better to prioritize the central area'. Thus, village cadres and officials arranged this water project around the central area of the village.

People living in the village centre gained the advantage of access to the main conduit pipes. It was noteworthy that most people living in the centre were from better-off households, particularly the people living around the village main road. Given that the central area was advantageous in terms of transportation, education, business, and politics, richer villagers and village cadres had been gradually moving into this area by buying homesteads and building houses since the late 1990s. Thus, rich men and women were more likely to benefit from the

project. Nonetheless, this does not mean that this project in the central area completely excluded all poor people. Some poor people who had originally been living in the centre before the wealthy started to move in, were also able to benefit from the main conduits.

However, the layout of the secondary pipes advantaged the rich whilst disadvantaging most poor people in the central area. Cadres decided the arrangement of the secondary pipes. The secondary pipes were connected with conduit pipes and conveyed water to each house. Cadres planned the layout of the secondary pipes, with the goal of covering as many households as possible. But practical political economy factors altered the original plan in some cases. Herein, concerning the livelihoods approach with access theory which emphasises power and politics in the distribution of assets (see Chapter 3), access to the authorities influenced people's access to assets since the authorities had decision-making rights. Relationships with village cadres and government officials were able to influence women's access to the secondary pipes. Linking to the concept of intersectionality, access to these pipes was determined by income status and gender roles. According to my findings, political and financial capital made a difference here. The rich men and women made use of their capital to guarantee their access to the secondary pipes. In marked contrast, poor men and women without financial and political capital were less likely to be granted secondary pipes.

The rich men and women were divided into two main groups. The first group was village cadres who decided on the distribution of secondary pipes. They took into account their own needs ensured their own access to the secondary pipes first. Within this group, the gender disparities in political participation favoured men to access secondary pipes. Male cadres utilised their political positions to guarantee their own and other cadres' access to secondary pipes. The rich women with political connections made use of their male relatives' political positions to access the pipes. This way was similar to the way in which rich women accessed land (see Chapter 5). The second group were the richer economic elites of Pin village. As the deepening marketisation amplified the social stratification in rural society since the early 2000s (see Chapter 1), an economic elite emerged, consisting of individual business people, local enterprise founders, and managers (Wang et al., 2018) (see Chapter 4). In Pin village, these richer people did not need to 'do something' in a particular way to actively cultivate good relationships with the cadres to struggle for piped water. Instead, all they needed to do was to ask the cadres for piped water. To maintain good relationships with these richer elites or at

least to avoid creating any conflicts with them, cadres usually gave priority to these people. This point has been illustrated by Chan's story.

Rich men and women were different in the ways in which they could access male cadres and influence their decisions on the distribution of piped water. Richer men were able to contact cadres privately and then express their request for piped water. Richer women tended to discuss with cadres in public spaces, and directly asked for the piped water. Women did not cultivate private relationships with cadres since this could result in rumours and damage to their reputations, such as the rumour of extramarital affairs. Moreover, the gender disparities in market participation and income gaps were narrowed between the rich men and women in Pin village. More individual women became rich by migration or managing petty businesses in the process of marketisation. In Pin village, there were several women managing local businesses, such as grocery shops, small restaurants, and hairdressers, which enabled them to accumulate financial capital. Their businesses also facilitated villagers' lives and granted these women high social status. Their financial capital and high social status empowered them to access the pipes. Chan's story exemplifies this: her shop in the primary school enriched her and enabled her to access the secondary pipes.

Similarly to Chan, the rich woman Hongfu's case may serve to illustrate the priority of female economic elites in access to piped water. Hongfu worked in petty trades for more than two decades. Hongfu accumulated an amount of money by repairing shoes and producing and selling tofu in the early 1990s. Until the late 1990s, she rented a room next to the office of the Pin Village Committee and opened a grocery shop. As Hongfu's shop was the largest in Pin village with a wide range of goods, villagers and village cadres frequently visited her shop to purchase tobacco, wine and beer, daily necessities, and office supplies. In this regard, Hongfu's shop was significant to facilitate villagers' lives. Hongfu's house was in Rangshui team which was in the centre of Pin village, but her house was not very close to the village main road and the main conduits. Nonetheless, cadres paid particular attention to Hongfu's request for piped water and guaranteed that the secondary pipes would reach Hongfu's house. Hongfu's wealth and her petty business provided her with bargaining chips to persuade village cadres to grant Hongfu access to the piped water, as Hongfu narrated:

'When I heard about the project of piped water, I asked a cadre whether my house can get that water when the cadre visited my shop. He said he was not very sure about

that because my house was not in the most central area of our village. If they provided me the piped water, they needed to use more of the funding to lengthen the secondary pipes. But considering that I often gave a discount to them when they purchased tobaccos, wines and office supplies from my shop, the cadre promised me that the committee would specifically consider me. My house finally got the piped water' (Interview with Hongfu).

The piped water provided women with livelihood wellbeing in both domestic and productive domains. Women's water-carrying labour was heavily reduced; according to the investigation of the National Audit Office of China, households that were covered by the safe drinking water project saved on average 53 water-carrying days per year (National audit office, 2010). The saved time was mainly used to develop the cultivation of vegetable gardens for household food consumption, which increased the agricultural income by 3.56 billion *yuan* per year nationwide (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2012). Four elderly women in my sample started to cultivate some vegetables in their homestead gardens with the arrival of piped water. Additionally, two women increased the amount of livestock they kept due to the reliable piped water. The piped water also improved the standard of living, allowing some households in Pin village to install washing machines, solar-heated showers, and flush toilets; Chan's family was an example of this.

Poor men and women were less likely to be guaranteed secondary pipes despite some of them living in the central area of Pin village. Some poor people regarded their lack of access as unfair treatment. They turned to negotiate with the cadres. The gender differences in the means of negotiation were different in this case from those described for access to land in the 1980s (see Chapter 5). Unlike the modest negotiations for land in the 1980s, the poor women argued for piped water in a relatively radical way. These women tended to argue with cadres by themselves, or in collaboration with their male relatives. The monopoly of authority and power held by village cadres over collectivist production was broken under the market reforms (Yan, 1992). Under the marketisation processes from the Household Responsibility System in the late 1970s, cadres became equal competitors with common villagers who were formerly their subordinates (Yan, 1992). As the former party secretary Chen illustrated, 'village cadres held absolute power in the People's Commune, but their power was gradually lost in HRS. Currently, cadres are not easily able to manage villagers, and more villagers start conflicts with cadres'. Three of my female interviewees had negotiated with cadres for piped water.

For instance, a poor woman, Xinchu, lived in the central area of Pin village in Rangshui Team. Xinchu worked in farming and her husband was a blacksmith in the 1980s. Her husband's income made their family rich at the beginning of HRS in the 1980s. However, the crafts of the blacksmith gradually became unnecessary during the marketisation process. People tended to purchase iron goods produced cheaply in factories rather than by blacksmiths. Thus, Xinchu's husband earned less from forging iron and turned to farming and casual non-farm work. Xinchu's family became relatively poor in Pin village afterwards. In 2005, Xinchu anticipated that she would get piped water when she learnt that the project would be conducted in the village centre. Xinchu was from the same village team as Hongfu and her house was not very far from Hongfu's house. But Xinchu's family was not covered by the secondary pipes due to the 'long' distance from her house to the conduit pipes. Xinchu was extremely angry and argued with the village cadres, who responded with the excuse of funding shortages. Xinchu said, 'it is unfair to my family because we are poorer than Hongfu. The cadres relied on Hongfu's business but they do not need us. I knew it would be useless to argue with them but I had to do so to let them know that I am not a coward'. Family poverty constrained Xinchu from access to piped water, even though she used a relatively radical manner of negotiation with the cadres.

In revisiting my research questions, these analyses have already answered my three research questions. These findings revealed the influences of the institutional processes on women's access to water, namely, the local power operated by cadres and state-funded projects, and the intersectional dynamics of financial capital and the gender differentiation in political participation and labour markets. These institutional processes reflected and intersected with wider societal changes of marketisation to influence women's access to water. In the next section, women's access to water for irrigation will be examined.

6.5 Intersectionality and water for irrigation

Most researchers assume that men and women have separate ownership of land and they separately work on this land. Since water for irrigation is attached to land, the advantages of men's access to land ownership determines their advantages in access to water (Yoder, 1994; Zwarteveen and Meinzen-Dick, 2001). But this assumption does not hold in the context of China. In rural China, men and women cooperatively contract land tenure rights and

interdependently work on their household farmland (Lu, 2009) (also see Chapter 5). Thus, the needs for irrigation water between women and men are similar (Lu, 2009). Moreover, in the scholarship of China and worldwide, few studies have drawn attention to a class dimension in the understanding of gender and water. To fill this gap, this section examined the power and political relations by examining access to irrigation and applying an intersectional analysis of gender and class. In the first stage, from the early 1980s to the mid-2000s, women's access to irrigation was influenced by the government-funded pumps and private household pumps in dry seasons. Village cadres and markets were the primary mediators of access to irrigation. In the second stage, from the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s, access to water for irrigation was influenced by cadres, officials and state-funded irrigation projects. Based on women's life history narratives, the next sections examine women's access to water and the implications for their livelihoods.

6.5.1 Access to irrigation with pumps in the early 1980s–mid-2000s

As mentioned previously, water for irrigation was scarce in Pin village due to the limited water resources and outdated water infrastructure. Water for irrigation mainly came from four water sites: two ponds and two reservoirs. One was Yanwan pond and the other was Baizhu pond. Each pond or reservoir was responsible for the irrigation of four to six village teams. As the water was distributed among several teams, the amount of water available to each village team for irrigation was very limited. Moreover, the outdated infrastructure exacerbated this water shortage. Water was transferred through main canals in village teams and then diverted onto several pieces of household land. Most of the irrigation canals in Pin village were collectively-constructed with soil by villagers in the 1960s and 1970s. The soil materials were not leakproof and the leakages got worse over time. The transferred water leaked from the canals and was almost completely lost by the tails of the canal. Particularly in dry seasons, access to irrigation was a problem for many households.

When ponds and reservoirs were inadequate to irrigate in dry seasons, irrigation pumps were needed to draw groundwater for irrigation. Wang Town Government funded Pin village to purchase the irrigation pumps. Individuals and households could also purchase the pumps from markets. In terms of the government-funded pumps, cadres had the authority to decide the order of pump use. In terms of the private pumps, households made use of social networks to share the costs of pumps, which were used cooperatively. In this regard, the mediators that

determined access to irrigation included the market forces and the local power wielded by cadres and officials through state-funded projects.

In Chapter 3, the IDS's livelihoods framework with access theory was used to address the fact that access to markets and social relations influences the access to other resources. Access to pumps and irrigation water was determined by who had priority of access to township officials and markets. Linking to the concept of intersectionality, the intersectional gender and class dynamics made a difference here. Financial and political capital shaped people's access to officials and markets. Gender dynamics were intermeshed with class and differentiated men from women across different classes. Rich men and women were able to use their political capital to gain priority use of government-funded pumps, or use their financial capital to purchase pumps from markets. Poor men and women were less likely to gain the priority use of government-funded pumps, or purchase pumps by themselves. This research examines power relations and contributes an intersectional analysis of gender and class in access to water.

The Wang Town Government distributed the funding for irrigation pumps to villages in dry seasons in the 1980s and 1990s. The Wang Town Government governed 19 villages in total. The funding issued by this town government was too limited to benefit each village every year, but Pin village was a beneficiary of this funding in 1993. An official, Yueyan, from Wang Town Government contributed to the decision to issue this funding to Pin village. Yueyan was originally from Pin village. He lived in Shangping team before he worked in the Wang Town Government. In 1989, Yueyan began to work in the Wang Town Government and was responsible for the distribution of agricultural projects and funding. In the face of funding shortages, Yueyan was prone to issue the funding specifically for pumps to Pin village, in order to guarantee Pin villagers' access to irrigation during droughts. Thus, Pin village successfully accessed the pump funding.

Pin village received the funding and purchased a pump. Each village team with an accessible water source was allowed to use the publicly-funded pump. To ensure efficient use of this pump, village cadres and village team leaders organised a meeting to produce a schedule for the use of this pump. This schedule regulated the frequency and duration of irrigation. Then, village team leaders and household heads scheduled the use of pumps among households within a village team. Theoretically, the teams with the driest land needed to have priority to use this pump. However, in fact, political economy dynamics influenced the scheduling decisions of

village cadres and team leaders. There was a trend that cadres and village leaders prioritized the rich villagers with political connections to higher level governments to use this pump. In this way, Yueyan's family members in Pin village were given the first place in the schedules to use this public pump because Yueyan issued the pump funding. For instance, Xiulan, Yueyan's wife, made use of Yueyan's political position and gained priority use of the pump.

Additionally, some rich households preferred to have private pumps to irrigate flexibly and in time. Rich men and women were able to use their financial capital to purchase an irrigation pump from markets. As discussed before, Chan's family had already purchased a private irrigation pump. It was common for several households to cooperatively purchase a pump due to the high price. These households were usually in kinship networks and lived in close proximity to each other. This was similar to the way in which water facilities for access to the domestic water supply were shared in the 1990s. From my interview samples, three women indicated that the sharing of irrigation pumps was built upon male kinship-based networks. Chan's family cooperated with her brothers-in-law and parents-in-law to purchase and use an irrigation pump. Moreover, patrilocal marriage continued to be the determinant to differentiate men from women in the use of such kinship networks. Rich men were able to make use of their patrilineal kinship networks to share a pump. For rich women, their access to such kinship networks was built upon their marital relationships, similarly to women's access to transferred water. This analysis answers my first two research questions, what institutional processes have mediated women's access to livelihood resources over the past four decades? And how have gender and class dynamics intersected with each other to shape village women's access to livelihood assets? This finding also provides a nuanced insight into access to water by examining the power relations behind access and the intersectional gender and class dynamics.

Chunchan's story can demonstrate rich women's access to private pumps. Chunchan and her husband Zhuang managed a coach business and transported passengers between Pin village and Yong county, which enriched them. To have more time to manage their transport business, Chunchan and Zhuang preferred to have a private irrigation pump to irrigate flexibly, rather than to wait for the public pump. To save the cost of an irrigation pump, they shared the cost of the pump and cooperatively used it with their two uncles. As Chunchan said:

'My husband and I transported passengers almost every day in the daytime. We were too busy to follow the schedule of using that public pump in dry seasons. So my

husband and I decided to purchase a pump by ourselves. Constrained by the high price of an irrigation pump, we preferred to cooperate with others to purchase one. Considering that my uncles-in-law lived nearby to us and their household land was adjacent to mine, it was convenient for our three families to cooperatively use a pump. Also, because we are relatives, we trust each other and neither of us would claim the pump for our own. In this regard, each of our family shared one-third proportion to purchase the pump and we used it in turn' (Interview with Chunchan).

Poor men and women did not have priority access to government-funded pumps and they were also unable to purchase pumps privately. When they had to wait for the public pump for a long time in dry seasons, some poor villagers would rent available private pumps instead. Moreover, as illustrated by my respondents, the gendered division of labour determined that the poor men were more likely to rent a pump by themselves than their female counterparts. The poor men rather than poor women were usually responsible for public affairs, and thus these men rented the pumps from other families who had already purchased one. Besides, the pump was cumbersome in operation, and thus men were better able to carry and operate it independently. Poor women worked to assist their male family members in using the irrigation pump, but they were unable to irrigate independently. For example, the village woman Minghao's family rented the pump from Chunchan's family several times. Minghao recalled the pump rental:

'It was rainless in the late Spring and early Summer of 1995. The water capacity in the ponds and reservoirs were inadequate to water all of the land in Pin village. Then, the Wang Town Government issued the funding for pumps again. The village committee purchased another irrigation pump to draw groundwater. Villagers used that pump in turn and many households were waiting for that pump. By the time the pump would have arrived to my family, our paddy would already have been dead due to the drought. I wanted to buy a pump but it was too expensive to afford. Then, my husband Rong asked Chunchan's husband Zhuang to rent their pump when it was available. We just paid them a very low rent in kind. Then, I helped my husband to carry it and watered our field' (Interview with Minghao).

This section examined the power and politics that influenced women's access to water by applying the intersectional analysis of gender and class. Financial and political capital were intersected with the gendered division of labour and gender differentiation in political

participation to influence access to water. This fills a gap in current rural livelihoods research which does not consider power, politics, and class dimensions in understanding access to water, gender and rural livelihoods. In the next section, I will examine the distribution of irrigation water with the arrival of state-funded irrigation projects in the mid-2010s.

6.5.2 Access to irrigation under projects in the mid-2000s–mid-2010s

As mentioned in Chapter 1, governments at multiple levels issued specific projects to fund village public infrastructures under the Financial Transfer Payment System. A number of these specific projects aimed to improve irrigation infrastructure in villages. In 2013, two major public projects were issued by Yong County Government to Pin village. One project was 60,000 *yuan* that the Yong National Development and Reform Commission granted to Pin village to repair the public water infrastructure in Tianwan team. The other was the project of Miniature Irrigation and Drainage Engineering (*Xiaonongshui*), issued by the Yong Water Resources Bureau. The Miniature Irrigation and Drainage Engineering project aimed to reconstruct the outdated soil canals into cement canals, in order to reduce water leakage and improve the efficiency of irrigation. Before the implementation of this project, village cadres needed to apply for this project from the Yong Water Resources Bureau. The village cadres submitted a project application for the reconstruction of almost all canals in Pin village. The funding requested for these canals was about three million *yuan*.

However, the project funding that was issued to Pin village was much less than three million *yuan* and was inadequate to cover all canals. Before issuing the project, officials in the Yong Water Resources Bureau met with village cadres to identify which canals should be reconstructed in Pin village. Similarly to the drinking water project, the Irrigation and Drainage Engineering project favoured the canals that were located in the central area of Pin village. Two cadres indicated that the project would be appraised by Hunan Provincial Government when it was completed. The cadres suggested that implementing the project in the central area of Pin village would be more impressive than that in the peripheral areas. Thus, it would be easier to pass the project appraisal. As a cadre said, ‘because the central area of our village functioned as a political, economic, and cultural centre, spending the limited project funding here will maximize its value’. As mentioned before, Yanwan, Shangping, Xiaping and Rangshui teams were located in the village centre. Yong County Government finally approved

funding to reconstruct two of the main canals that irrigated these four teams in the village centre. Pin village was granted 400,000 *yuan* for this project in 2013.

Benefiting from the Irrigation and Drainage Engineering funding in 2013, these two canals were reconstructed and accomplished about 90% of the planned reconstruction, leaving the tail of a canal in Xiaping team unreconstructed. In regard to the appraisal of this project, the quality of this canal project reached the standards regulated by Hunan Provincial Government, and successfully passed the appraisal. The officials from Hunan Provincial Government did not consider the unreconstructed canal tail as a problem in this appraisal because it was caused by a funding shortage rather than a problem with project quality *per se*. An official pointed out that it was common that the pre-issued funding is not enough to entirely complete the construction of infrastructure. The tails of the canals could be left until Pin village was able to receive more funding in the future. However, some practical political economy dynamics led to this unfinished canal being reconstructed at the end of 2013. In the face of the funding shortage, one solution to reconstruct this tail was to use funding from other water projects. As mentioned earlier, one small project provided 60,000 *yuan* to repair the public water infrastructure in Tianwan team. Whether to use this funding to instead finish the canal in Xiaping team in the central area of the village was discussed by the village committee. Since the village cadres governed the project funding and could decide how to use it, they became the mediators of the distribution of this project funding and water infrastructure.



Figure 6.2 Concrete Canals

(Source: Photo by author)

As discussed in Chapter 3, access to authorities and social relationships with authorities can influence people's ability to access assets (Ribot and Peluso, 2003). Linking to this conceptual framework, social relationships with cadres can influence their decisions on how to use funding. This was essential to determine people's access to funding and water infrastructure. Linking to the concept of intersectionality, political and financial status and gender dynamics were intermeshed. Their intersection made a difference in women's access to project funding. Rich men and women in the central area were able to use their financial capital to influence the cadres' decision and persuaded them to use this 60,000 *yuan* funding to finish the canal in Xiaping. As a result, a large amount of the funding that was supposed to be used for the infrastructure construction in Tianwan was used for the central area instead. The poor men and women in Tianwan were unable to use political or financial capital to influence the cadres' decision.

A few richer men and women who were living in the village centre and who had rented land in the centre tried to persuade the cadres to spend the small funding on the unfinished canal tail in Xiaping. Their wealth formulated the social power that influenced the cadres' decision on the distribution of this funding. Given that these rich men and women were economic elites in Pin village, the cadres intended to keep good relationships with them. The village cadre Zhou said, 'several rich people from the village centre asked our village committee to take measures to finish the canal in Xiaping. If we did not do as they suggested, we may not keep good relationships with them'. In this case, the advice provided by these economic elites was given priority by the cadres. This was similar to the power relations that mediated the distribution of the secondary pipes discussed above. Finally, the village committee spent about 45,000 *yuan* of this small funding to finish the canal tail. Afterwards, the two soil canals in the village centre were reconstructed to concrete canals and they guaranteed the reliability of the water supply to the land located in the central area. The cement canals had greater leakproof function and efficiently protected against water leakage. Also, the soil water outlets were replaced by a small gate and tubes on the cement walls of the canals, which reduced the irrigation time and improved the efficiency of irrigation.

Rich men and women applied different means to advise male cadres in regard to the distribution of water. Rich men were able to advise cadres in formal village meetings or in private. Rich women tended to have discussions with cadres on informal occasions and in a 'public' manner.

Because women were disadvantaged in political participation, they had few channels to express their voices in formal meetings. They were more likely to discuss with and advise male cadres on informal occasions. Rich women avoided giving suggestions to male cadres in private, instead opting for a 'public' manner, to maintain their social reputation and avoid the rumours like extramarital affairs. This was similar to the means adopted by rich women to gain access to piped water. Moreover, the narrowed gender income gaps highlighted rich women's agency in access to the irrigation water, similarly to their access to piped water. The marketisation process created more non-farm employment opportunities and enriched some village women. Their wealth status empowered them to express their voices in village public affairs and to be heard by cadres. A few richer women advised the village cadres to use the small funding of the other project to reconstruct the canal tail.

For instance, the woman Jianyun had rented land on a large scale in Xiaping for commercialised agriculture. She advised village cadres to use the funding to complete the canal tail in order to ensure a reliable water supply to her rented land. As indicated by Jianyun, her financial capital enabled her to break the constraints of gender-biased social norms, allowing her to participate in village public affairs, and allowed her to give suggestions to cadres by herself. In our interviews, Jianyun informed me of how she had advised the cadres:

'When I came across village cadres in front of the village committee office, I reminded them that the reconstructed canals irrigated most of the centre of our village. The land in this area was more fertile and produced greater yields. Many people like me rented land on a large scale for commercialised agriculture in the canal tail of this central area. So the tails need to be reconstructed to make sure the land we leased in Xiaping can be well irrigated. I told them that using the funding to finish the canal tails would contribute more benefits than using it to repair the infrastructure of Tianwan'
(Interview with Jianyun).

Tianwan team was located in a hilly and marginal area of Pin village. Land in this team was barren and water for irrigation was scarce. Due to such natural settings, the primary livelihood strategies in Tianwan were rural-to-urban migration, charcoal production, and forestry. Farming was a secondary strategy and only about ten team members were still in agriculture in the 2010s, and those team members, who were the poorest. Irrigation water and water infrastructure were significant to the livelihoods of these poorer people. In 2013, a long part of

the canal in Tianwan was destroyed by heavy rains. Yong County Government issued funding of 60,000 *yuan* to repair this broken canal and strengthen the whole soil canal to avoid potential future damage in heavy rains. However, since 45,000 *yuan* was used for the canal tail in Xiaping, only the remaining 15,000 *yuan* was used for the repair of the broken canal, and nothing has been done to strengthen the canal. In so doing, the funding that was supposed to be Tianwan's was not fully used for this team. The poor men and women in Tianwan negotiated with the village committee to claim more funding for their canal. The poor men tended to negotiate with cadres in a very radical way, like arguing and physical violence. The poor women negotiated in a relatively radical way compared to the more modest approach they took in the 1980s. These women also joined forces with the poor men to argue with the cadres. The cadres tried to calm them down and explained that there would be more state-funded projects allocated to Pin village in the following years, and then Tianwan team would be given priority.

For instance, a village woman, Fang, was from Tianwan team. Fang and her husband worked on farming and produced charcoal. Fang cultivated paddy, tobacco leaves, and some vegetables on her household land. When the canal was destroyed by heavy rains in the summer in 2013, Fang was worried about the irrigation of her land. Therefore, Fang was very pleased when she heard about the funding specifically issued for the canal repair. However, when the decision was taken to divert the funding to the central area, Fang and her husband, as well as other team members, were unsatisfied with the village committee and negotiated with cadres to access more funding. In Fang's case, her poverty restricted her options to only negotiation. Although her gender constrained Fang from negotiating in a very radical way like men, Fang was able to actively participate in an alliance with men to carry out a negotiation. As she said:

'We told the cadres that we depended on land and water for survival. It was unfair to us that the cadres just thought about the central area but ignored us poor people in the margin. We are poor and have no political contacts, so the cadres bullied us. Although they promised that they would give priority to Tianwan team in future projects, I do not trust them very much. I suspect that when there is a new project in the future, they will continue to ignore us for any new excuse' (Interview with Fang).

This section examines women's access to water infrastructure projects and answers my three research questions. It addresses the gap in the literature regarding access to water infrastructure and broadens the understanding of gender and water. By adopting village women's life history

narratives, this section provides a historical political economy perspective and an intersectional class and gender analysis, which contributes to the topics of access to water, gender, and rural livelihoods. In the next section, I will summarize and conclude these findings.

6.6 Summary

Guided by the integrated framework of the IDS's livelihoods framework focusing on access equality and the concept of intersectionality, this chapter answers my three research questions: what are the institutional processes that have mediated Chinese village women's access to livelihood resources over the past four decades? How have intersectional gender and class dynamics shaped village women's access to livelihood assets? How and why have women's access to livelihood resources and their livelihoods varied under the effects of marketisation? This chapter has the following two main findings.

Firstly, the institutional processes were the market forces in access to water facilities and the local power operated by cadres and officials under the government funding and state-funded water projects, which was intersected with gender and class dynamics. From the early 1980s to the mid-2000s, access to water meant access to water facilities. Access to the transferred water for domestic use was related to the access to pumps and pipes; access to irrigation water was related to the access to irrigation pumps. In this stage, women's access to water facilities was mediated by cadres, and by the market for water facilities. From the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s, access to water meant access to state-funded water projects and funding, mainly the Rural Drinking Water Safety project and Miniature Irrigation and Drainage Engineering project. In this stage, government officials and village cadres were the primary mediators of women's access to water.

Secondly, class and gender dynamics were intersected with these above institutions and resulted in men and women across different class statuses having different opportunities and constraints in access to water. Financial and political capital advantaged the rich men and women over than their poor counterparts in access to water under the institutions of local power and market forces. When local power played an important role in the distribution of water resources in Pin village, the political and financial capital of some rich men and women allowed them to influence cadres' decisions on the use of water facilities. From the early 1980s to the mid-2000s, a few rich people made use of their political positions in the Wang Town

Government to influence village cadres' decisions on water facilities. Considering these people's political positions could bring some benefits to cadres, the cadres intended to maintain their relationships with them or at least avoid conflict with them; cadres therefore gave these people and their family members priority access to the government-funded pump.

Similarly, from the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s, the marketisation processes and diversified livelihoods stimulated the rise of a wealthy village elite. Their wealth status could bring benefits to the cadres, thus cadres gave such people priority access to secondary pipes and infrastructure funding. Richer women made use of their financial capital to request secondary pipes and public funding from cadres, which allowed them to overcome gender-based constraints on their access to water. In contrast, poor men and women negotiated with cadres for secondary pipes and fair distribution of the project funding. Poor women did not negotiate with cadres in a modest way, but rather argued with cadres in a radical way, either independently or in alliance with men.

The markets played an important role in women's access to water from the early 1980s to the mid-2000s, when rich men and women made use of their financial capital to purchase water facilities (pumps for domestic water, irrigation pumps and pipes). Also, social kinship networks allowed them to share the costs of water facilities and cooperatively install and use facilities. Rich women suffered from some gender-based constraints in access to water: these women were politically marginalized at the team level, the gendered division of labour meant that it was more socially acceptable for women to engage in domestic work rather than in well construction, men had facility installation skills whereas women did not, and the social networks assisting access to water were built upon male kinship networks. In spite of these social constraints, rich women were able to use their financial capital and the social networks built upon their marital relations to access water facilities.

Poor men and women were less likely to use financial capital to purchase water facilities. They were unable to pay for pumps and pipes to convey water for domestic use, and thus they continued to fetch water manually. In some cases, they had to fetch water from distant sites due to the reduced water availability in nearby wells caused by rich people's pumps. Moreover, despite poor women being primarily responsible for fetching water, their husbands started to take on more responsibility for fetching water in the face of the disrupted supply from the well. Poor men and women were not able to afford private pumps for irrigation. They waited for the

public pump or rented private pumps to access groundwater for irrigation in dry seasons. The gendered division of labour placed the poor women as the assistants of their male family members in the use of irrigation pumps.

In this chapter I argue that access to water is mediated by the intersectional gender and class dynamics rather than gender dynamics alone. The restrictions of gender inequalities on women cannot entirely explain the differences in village women regarding access to water. The intersection of gender and class can explain how women were divided in access to water under the marketisation processes. For the rich women, particularly the richest, their greater financial capital enabled them to access water by influencing cadres or by buying items such as pumps or pipes directly. The gender constraints on their access to water were therefore relieved by their financial capital. For the poor women, the shortage of financial and political capital meant that they became more disadvantaged and excluded from access to water. The deepening marketisation processes inflated the importance of financial and political capital in access to water. It enlarged the class-based inequalities between rich women and poor women, but narrowed the patriarchal inequalities between men and women within the group of rich people and within the group of poor people.

This chapter has four implications for the issue of access to water, gender, and rural livelihoods. Firstly, it examines the political economy dynamics that mediated access to water, which contributes to the understanding of the roles of power and politics in access to water, gender and rural livelihoods. Secondly, this chapter examines the intersection of gender and class in the mediation of access to water. It reveals the effects of the intermeshed inequalities of gender and class on access to water, which broadens the understanding of access to water from a single dimension of gender. Thirdly, this chapter uncovers how the contributions of power and politics to access to water have changed in rural China under marketisation processes. Thus, it contributes a historical perspective to the understanding of water access and gender. Fourthly and finally, by examining women's life stories, this chapter discovers the different methods adopted by women across different classes in order to gain access to water. This highlights women's agency in rural livelihoods research. In the next chapter, I will examine women's access to healthcare services and social security.

Chapter 7 Women's Access to Public Services, Social Security and Intersectionality

7.1 Introduction

Existing studies have provided insights into the allocation of rural public services and social security schemes by emphasising social justice, such as healthcare services, ageing support programmes, and medical insurance (Hu et al., 2011; Shen and Williamson, 2010; Yi et al., 2009). However, few of these studies have shed light on gender dynamics or class dynamics. Drawing on these existing studies, this chapter will examine women's access to public services and social security in rural China from the perspectives of gender and class from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s.

Access to public services and social security in this chapter is identified as access to healthcare and Targeted Poverty Alleviation (TPA). Physical health was essential to keep rural livelihoods sustainable (Zhang, 2007). As revealed by my fieldwork data, diseases, especially critical diseases with catastrophic medical costs, not only damaged physical labour, but also impoverished rural households and left livelihoods in vulnerable positions. In light of this, access to healthcare services and medical insurance are major concerns. In this chapter, the term access to healthcare services refers to access to the grassroots supply system of healthcare and government compensation for medical malpractice. Medical insurance means the New Cooperative Medical Scheme (NCMS). The state-funded project of Targeted Poverty Alleviation (TPA) has been implemented in poor villages nationwide since 2014. TPA alleviated poverty by providing assistance in the fields of healthcare, education, special industries development, infrastructure, amenities, rural tourism, house conditions and so forth (Li et al., 2016; Lo et al., 2016). My fieldwork data indicated that TPA has made a profound difference to villagers' livelihoods. Thereby TPA will be taken into consideration in this chapter.

This chapter is structured as follows: Section 7.2 traces the policy changes regarding the healthcare system, family planning, and TPA. Section 7.3 introduces a rural woman, Manzhi's life story. Her life story illustrates how village women's access to healthcare services, NCMS, and TPA has been shaped by the state policies of social security, the supply system of the healthcare services, local political and social relations, class status, and gender disparities in

financial rights under wider societal changes. Section 7.4 examines women's access to medical treatment from hospitals, government compensation for medical malpractice, and medical insurance from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s. Section 7.5 explores the distribution of TPA beneficiary quotas, access to TPA special industry funding, and unplanned TPA assistance measures since the mid-2010s. Finally, Section 7.6 summarizes the major findings and contributions of this chapter.

7.2 Rural healthcare system and Targeted Poverty Alleviation

This section describes the rural healthcare system, family planning policy and the Targeted Poverty Alleviation (TPA) scheme from the mid-1950s to the mid-2010s. In the collectivist era from the mid-1950s to the late 1970s, the rural healthcare system consisted of health centres in the People's Communes and Production Brigades, Cooperative Medical Scheme (CMS) and barefoot doctors (Cao, 2006). Rural health centres (*baojian zhan*) were first opened in 1955. The financial support for these health centres came from public welfare funds, health care fees (*baojian fei*) paid by peasants, and medical profits (Cao, 2006). In 1958, the People's Commune established a Cooperative Medical Scheme (CMS) to guarantee access to healthcare (Duan, 2001). Until 1976, 90% of Production Brigades and 85% of rural residents were covered by CMS (Cao, 2006). The CMS members enjoyed lower or free medical costs and rural residents were able to afford healthcare. Meanwhile, the establishment of rural CMS stimulated the growth of health centres in the People's Communes and the Production Brigades, providing sufficient healthcare for rural residents (Cao, 2006). In these health centres, rural healthcare workers were named barefoot doctors (*chijiao yisheng*). There was one barefoot doctor for every 500 peasants (Cao, 2006). This system guaranteed the provision of healthcare services in the People's Communes (Cao, 2006).

When the market reform took place after the 1978 Reform and Opening-up, the commune system collapsed and the Household Responsibility System (HRS) was set up in 1981 instead (see Chapter 1). With the dismantling of the People's Communes, CMS collapsed because it could not be funded by the collective economy (Lei and Lin, 2009). As a result, most rural people were not covered by the insurance system between 1985 and 2003 (Lei and Lin, 2009). The out-of-pocket medical costs increased from 20% to over 50% from the early 1980s to the mid-2000s (Ministry of Health, 2007). Meanwhile, hospitals and medical personnel charged excessive medical fees to pursue expanding medical profits, resulting in an increase in

healthcare expenses (Zhang, 2010). Consequently, some poor peasants could not afford health services or access to the most basic medical necessities (Guan, 2005). In such circumstances, governments redesigned rural public healthcare schemes in the mid-2000s (Guan, 2005).

In 2003, the Central Government launched the rural New Cooperative Medical Scheme (NCMS). NCMS was tested in some pilot villages in 2003 (Cao, 2006). The number of pilot villages was gradually increased in the following years and NCMS was applied nationwide in 2008 (Lei and Lin, 2009). NCMS was funded by the Central Government, local governments at multiple levels, and individual participants (Lei and Lin, 2009). NCMS was mainly aimed at relieving the financial pressures on rural residents who suffer from catastrophic diseases (Cao, 2006). The specific design and implementation of NCMS varied according to different counties over time (Lei and Lin, 2009). Regional county governments determined the reimbursement levels for critical diseases on the basis of the annual income of rural residents per capita in a county (Lei and Lin, 2009; Wagstaff et al., 2007).

A fact that cannot be ignored is that women had specific healthcare needs in some cases. Family planning policy in China has made a great difference to women's healthcare needs. By the 1970s, China's population had increased by about 250 million since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 (Basten and Jiang, 2014). As the demographic expansion had already challenged resources (Tian, 1991), the slogans of *wan* (late marriage), *xi* (long space between births) and *shao* (fewer births) were advocated in the programme of family planning in the early 1970s (Basten and Jiang, 2014). This programme turned out to be effective in decreasing the birthrate and increasing the age of first marriage (Basten and Jiang, 2014). In 1979, China's family planning policy was launched nationwide to control birth rate and slow down the growth of the population. So far, family planning policy was considered part of healthcare (Hemminki et al., 2005).

When it was launched, the family planning policy regulated that each couple was allowed to have only one child (Croll et al., 1985). However, because this one-child policy was extremely draconian, it was rejected by many people. In the mid-1980s, the state preferred to 'loosen' this draconian childbirth policy. In the rural areas, due to rural parents' dependence on children, especially sons, for labour-force participation and support of the elderly, the family planning policy was flexibly modified. Rural couples were permitted to have a second child if the first child was a girl or if the couple suffered from financial hardship (Attane, 2002). Provincial

governments drafted and enacted particular province-specific regulations (Short and Zhai, 1998). The implementation of family planning policy varied widely among different villages in different provinces (Baochang et al., 2007; Gu et al., 2007; Scharping, 2013). In Hunan province, regardless of the sex of the first child, a second child with at least a three-year interval of the first child was allowed in rural areas (Hemminki et al., 2005). Herein, the rural healthcare system and healthcare needs have dramatically changed from the 1950s to the mid-2010s.

Additionally, the Chinese Central Government launched the Targeted Poverty Alleviation (TPA) scheme in 2014. TPA was aimed at lifting the poorest rural residents out of poverty. About 128,000 poor villages, 30 million impoverished households, and 70 million poor rural people were identified as the targeted poor in rural China at the end of 2013 (Liu et al., 2016). The Chinese Central Government intended to lift all of these impoverished people out of poverty to achieve the goal of establishing a prosperous society by 2020 (Li et al., 2016). TPA highlighted the precise identification of poverty-stricken individuals and households, appropriately targeted poverty alleviation measures, efficient use of funding, the accurate arrangement of assistance, and anti-poverty effectiveness (Guo et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2016).

Four vital steps were adopted to ensure the efficient implementation of TPA. Firstly, lists of targeted-poor households were created by the county poverty-alleviation bureaus. Each targeted-poor household received a card to record their income and the designated cadre assistors for poverty alleviation. Secondly, the working system of cadres' stationing in villages (*zhucun bangfu*) was established. The working system of cadres' stationing in villages was created to ensure efficient and accurate TPA implementation at the grassroots level (Li et al., 2016, p.446). The cadres from higher level governments were appointed. These cadres provided targeted assistance to impoverished households. Thirdly, based on village contexts and household conditions, specific aid measures to the targeted-poor households were implemented in the fields of employment, education, healthcare, road construction, water and electricity, rural tourism, information and so forth. Fourthly, the performance of cadre assistors was evaluated (Li et al., 2016). In the next section, I will present a woman Manzhi's life story to illustrate how village women's access to healthcare and TPA has taken place under these above healthcare services, social security schemes, and policies.

7.3 Women's access to healthcare, Targeted Poverty Alleviation and livelihood implications

This section presents a village woman Manzhi's life story. Her story provides historical insights into gender and class power relations in access to the healthcare system and TPA. Manzhi was born in 1956 in Pin village. Manzhi married a Pin villager, Yang, in 1975, and they have an elder daughter and a younger son. After marriage, Manzhi and Yang primarily worked on diverse agriculture-based livelihoods. Yang also occasionally worked as a local casual worker to get extra income. Since there was a very limited household income, Yang rather than Manzhi kept and controlled the money to protect it from being stolen or lost. In 1979, China's family planning policy was launched in Pin village. Since this policy forbade the birth of a third child, a couple who had two children were required to accept contraception. Considering that Yang was the primary family breadwinner, Manzhi accepted the contraception by installing a steel vaginal ring in 1987 to protect Yang from contraception risks such as infection.

Due to the malfunction of the contraception ring, Manzhi got pregnant with a third child in 1988, and she had to have an abortion in Wang Town Hospital. The healthcare resources in the town hospital were limited. There was a shortage of rooms, beds, and medical technicians. Manzhi was therefore arranged in a delivery room shared with a pregnant woman who was about to give birth. All of the doctors paid attention to this woman when she started to bleed and was in danger. In the meantime, Manzhi started to abort but there was no doctor assigned to her, the result being that Manzhi did not receive timely treatment. In 1990, Manzhi experienced her second abortion in Wang Town Hospital, when she was already seven months pregnant. Manzhi was left alone by the doctors again and bled excessively after the medical injection for abortion. Eventually, due to the limited medical resources and medical malpractice in the town hospital, Manzhi suffered from abortion complications.

After the second abortion, Manzhi did not receive appropriate post-abortion treatment from the hospital. Manzhi suffered from abdominal pain when she overworked in agriculture. Nonetheless, the abdominal pain was acceptable and not fatal. Yang was unwilling to pay for Manzhi's post-abortion treatment which would not be cheap as they lacked medical insurance. Manzhi therefore turned to ask for caregiving from her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. After recovering somewhat, Manzhi claimed compensation for medical malpractice from the Wang Town Government. Lacking evidence to demonstrate that her abortion complications were

caused by malpractice at Wang Town Hospital, the Wang Town Government refused to compensate Manzhi. Then, Manzhi asked for proof of her abortion from Wang Town Hospital and the Pin Village Committee, but this was refused. Manzhi said, 'illegally pregnant women against the family planning policy were looked down upon by doctors and cadres, so I was ignored and rejected by them'.

Until 1991, Manzhi was in severe pain and almost could not walk upright. In the same year, Yang was selected as the village team leader of Rangshui team and also found a part-time job in a factory which exploited minerals. Benefiting from his political position, Yang asked for help from a village cadre and the cadre contacted a doctor in Yong County Hospital. This doctor permitted Manzhi to receive a diagnosis in Yong County Hospital. The diagnosis showed that medical malpractice during her abortion had caused a serious intestinal adhesion. The diagnostic report from Yong County Hospital provided authoritative evidence that the medical malpractice of Wang Town Hospital caused Manzhi's intestinal adhesion. Afterward, Manzhi received proof issued by the county hospital and finally received her deserved compensation of 400 *yuan* from the Wang Town Government. Meanwhile, Yong County Hospital performed surgery on Manzhi's intestinal adhesion. Nevertheless, the compensation was not enough to compensate for Manzhi's permanent loss of physical strength. Herein, the abortion complications damaged Manzhi's health and threatened her livelihood security in the long term. Manzhi's access to post-abortion healthcare was shaped by her family wealth situation, gender inequality in household financial rights, and kinship social networks. Manzhi's struggle for government compensation was constrained by gender biases and lack of accountability of the hospital and the village committee, but stimulated by her husband's political position.

When Manzhi was in her late 40s in 2003, her son got married and had a daughter in the following year. Manzhi's daughter got married in Liaoning Province in 2005. Manzhi and Yang lived with their son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter. In 2006, Yang embezzled public relief grain, hence he was fired from the position of village team leader and also lost his job as a mine worker. Their family situation got worse following this. Manzhi's son and daughter-in-law had to migrate to improve their household situation, leaving their granddaughter, Manzhi and Yang in Pin village. Manzhi worked in agriculture and worked as a casual labourer, carrying sand on her horse for the construction of a channel in a neighbouring village.

In 2008, the social security programme NCMS was implemented in Pin village. Participants of NCMS were required to make individual contributions to NCMS funding. While the individual contributions were not cheap, both Manzhi and Yang participated in the NCMS so as to get reimbursements when they got ill. The NCMS increased the rate at which people visited the township hospitals for minor illnesses, and relieved the financial pressures associated with minor illnesses. The reimbursement ratio reached 80% in Wang Town Hospital and the hospitalization charge for minor illnesses was only 200 *yuan*. When Manzhi had a toothache, she spent 200 *yuan* and received dental treatment in the town hospital. However, NCMS could not cover the catastrophic expenses of critical diseases. In 2013, Manzhi had a myocardial infarction and spent about 12,000 *yuan* in Yong County Hospital. Since the reimbursement of NCMS only covered half of the expenditure, the rest was paid for by Manzhi and Yang themselves. Their son and daughter were unable to pay for her healthcare due to their limited incomes. Yang had to borrow money from his nephew to cover the medical costs. Manzhi and Yang finally sold their horse to repay their debts and lost the livelihood strategy of carrying sand on the horse.

TPA was launched in Pin village in 2014 when Manzhi was in her late 50s. A committee consisting of village cadres, team leaders, representatives of the communist party, and village representatives, identified poverty-stricken TPA beneficiaries. Despite Manzhi's family being poor, Manzhi and Yang received very few votes due to Yang's previous corruption, and thus her family was excluded from the TPA. Manzhi and Yang were unsatisfied with the vote result, as Manzhi said, 'my family become poorer because of my illness. Many people who are richer than me gained TPA quotas and they benefited from that a lot... It was so unfair'. Manzhi took a petition to Wang Town Government to struggle for a TPA quota, but it was not effective. Manzhi and Yang then turned to argue with an official, Tian, who was responsible for TPA in Pin village, and finally they received 300 *yuan* as a TPA subsidy from Tian for Manzhi's medical expenditures. Overall, Manzhi's story revealed that her access to healthcare services, government compensation, and TPA were mediated by state policies and state projects of social welfare (e.g. family planning policy, NCMS, TPA), village political and social relationships, household economic status, as well as gender disparities in household financial rights under the changes of wider socioeconomic structures and livelihood diversification. In the next section, I will connect Manzhi's life story with the provision of healthcare services and the distribution of TPA resources to reveal how women's access to public services and social security proceeded under the marketisation processes.

7.4 Intersectionality and healthcare services

Existing literature has drawn attention to gender inequalities in healthcare in China (Chen and Standing, 2007; Gu et al., 2009), but the inequalities associated with the intersection of gender and class were not considered. This study is going to fill this gap by examining the influence of the intersection of gender and class dynamics on women's access to healthcare in two periods. From the early 1980s to the mid-2000s, the family planning policy resulted in specific healthcare needs for village women. In the absence of rural medical insurance, women's access to post-abortion healthcare was mediated by healthcare markets. Women's access to government compensation for abortion complications was influenced by village cadres. From the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s, with the launch of NCMS in rural areas, women's access to NCMS and healthcare for critical diseases under NCMS were reshaped by the deepening market reform of healthcare services. In revisiting my three research questions, this leads me to think about the influences on livelihoods. What did these historical changes of healthcare and social security mean for the livelihoods of village women? Based on my life history interviews, the next sections will reveal how the changes in healthcare and TPA proceeded in Pin village.

7.4.1 Access to healthcare without medical insurance in the early 1980s–mid-2000s

Most studies of family planning policy have focused on its consequences for gender, such as the imbalance caused in the ratio of boys to girls, infant mortality amongst girls, gender discrimination, and the stresses it places on marriage (Jiang et al., 2011; Poston and Glover, 2005). However, my literature review found no studies on the influences of the family planning policy on fertile women's reproductive health and their access to healthcare in China. This section will fill this gap. Women need more healthcare services than men due to their reproductive needs (Iyer et al., 2008). Driven by the family planning policy, women faced more contraceptive risks and abortion complications in Pin village. When it came to contraception, one set of parents, who already had two children, were required to take contraception involving sterilization (female and male) or the installation of a steel ring (female) in order to avoid the birth of a third child. Even though it was easier to perform male sterilization (and even though men would recover more quickly), female contraception was used much more often in Pin village.

The greater female participation in contraception was determined by the gendered division of labour and the gender asymmetry in household economic contributions. Regarding women's natural role as birth givers, women were more informed about contraceptive measures and asked to take contraception by village cadres and the Wang town hospital. The female cadre, Xinxiu, said 'it is a women's job to take contraception because women are responsible for giving birth'. This echoes Karanja and Were's findings in Kenya, that is, men and women agreed that women should be responsible for contraception (1994). Moreover, some women were active agents and they actively chose to accept contraception, despite knowing that there were side effects to doing so. Like Manzhi, three of my female informants took the initiative to accept contraception. As indicated by these four interviewees, men were assigned to income-earning activities, whereas women were secondary income-earners and primary domestic workers. The negative effects on men's health might hamper them from income-earning activities and reduce incomes, which would pose a threat to their livelihood. In contrast, due to women's lower economic contribution, damage to women's health may pose less of a risk to livelihoods. Therefore, to sustain the livelihood security of a household, health was deemed more essential to men than women, and so women were more likely to accept contraception, in spite of the potential health risks. In Manzhi's case, Yang contributed more to the household finances. To protect Yang from the potential side effects of sterilization, Manzhi accepted contraception.

If contraceptive methods failed, the woman faced the risk of becoming pregnant with a third child. In this case, they would be required to have an abortion in Wang Town Hospital to terminate the pregnancy. The number of induced abortions increased quickly in the 1980s due to national birth-control policies (Berer, 2000; Hemminki et al., 2005). Among my 40 female respondents, seven women had undergone an abortion under the family planning policy. The abortions were paid for by the Wang Town Government and these women were not charged. However, the healthcare supply system was lagging far behind the increasing needs for abortion at the township level. In particular, the healthcare resources in central and western rural China were of 'insufficient quantity, low quality and unreasonable structure' (Fang et al., 2010), and also in shortage of resources for the specific healthcare needs of women, such as the delivery of babies (Berer, 2000). Wang Town Hospital was the primary approved site for Pin villagers to have abortions. There were about 18-22 beds and 15-20 technicians in the hospital in the late 1980s. Five gynecologists in the obstetrics-gynecology department were responsible for delivery, abortion and gynopathy. But the healthcare provision remained

inadequate for the increasing abortion needs. Therefore, three unlicensed abortion providers with temporary training were recruited by Wang Town Hospital. They received inadequate professional training and had less knowledge of safe abortion procedures than their trained colleagues (Berer, 2000). The cadre Xinxu expressed her worries, namely that abortions carried out by unlicensed providers may exacerbate the risks of abortion mortality and the morbidity of abortion complications. Consequently, three of the seven women in my sample who had abortions, have suffered from medical malpractice and abortion complications. As discussed before, Manzhi's experience illustrates this point.

To deal with the abortion complications, women had to seek out post-abortion healthcare. However, due to the shortage of healthcare resources, Wang Town Hospital made minimal effort to provide post-abortion healthcare, and none of this healthcare was free. The seven participants who had abortions did not receive useful suggestions or proper publicly-funded post-abortion healthcare from the town hospital. Facing the lack of post-abortion healthcare, women turned to purchase it at Yong County Hospital. In such circumstances, the markets of healthcare were the institution to mediate women's access to post-abortion healthcare. Linking to the IDS's livelihoods framework with access theory and the application of the concept of intersectionality, access to post-abortion healthcare was determined by access to financial capital. My fieldwork data reveals that access to financial capital for post-abortion healthcare was influenced by household wealth condition and the gendered financial decision-making rights within households. Class inequality in healthcare access stemmed from people's different levels of wealth (Iyer et al., 2008). In countries without a national health system, ability to access healthcare is crucially related to household economic status (Gao et al., 2001).

Fewer efforts were carried out by poor women to access post-abortion care and immediate treatment because they were unable to pay for this. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the shortage of medical insurance further challenged these poor women. In the 1990s, less than 10% of the rural population was covered by social security programmes in China (Lei and Lin, 2009). The low coverage of medical insurance required women and their families to pay more medical costs by themselves, exposing them to severe financial and psychological pressure. Thus, the shortage of financial capital primarily impeded village women from access to post-abortion healthcare. Restricted by the healthcare market, some poor women tended to seek care from their kinship networks. In Manzhi's case, her mother-in-law and sister-in-law took care of her in turn.

Moreover, gender inequalities in financial decision-making rights within households exacerbated poor women's access to post-abortion healthcare. Men, as household heads and primary income-earners, usually held household financial decision-making rights (Kim et al., 2017) (see Chapter 2). In Pin village, when households were in financial hardship, men held stronger financial decision-making rights. As Manzhi said, 'since my family mainly depends on my husband to earn income and has very little money overall, it would be safer and more reasonable to let my husband decide how to use the money'. In so doing, as abortion complications were usually chronic and not fatal, husbands were seldom concerned about, or committed any household income to, women's post-abortion healthcare. Thus, the weak financial rights of poor women further exacerbated their lack of access to post-abortion healthcare.

In contrast, rich women had financial capital to pay for post-abortion healthcare at the county hospital or municipal hospital, as well as travel and accommodation expenses. In my sample, there were two rich women who had purchased post-abortion care in Yong County Hospital and Zhang Municipal Hospital. For instance, Tao was rich because of a household restaurant business. Tao suffered from endometriosis after her abortion in 1995. Instead of worrying about medical consumption, Tao made her reproductive health a priority. When she realized that she had endometriosis, Tao sought proper treatment in Yong County Hospital. Moreover, unlike the women from poor households, the gendered differentiation in financial decision-making rights did not play a role in rich women's access to healthcare. As Tao said in our interview: 'my husband controls our family restaurant business and overall income. He gives me living expenses and pocket money, and never minds how I will use that money. He encouraged me to visit the best doctor in Yong county when he knew I got ill'. In this way, rich women's access to healthcare was not constrained by gender differentiation in financial rights. Rich women's financial capital enabled them to purchase high-quality healthcare to remedy the shortage of proper post-abortion healthcare in Wang Town Hospital. By comparing the access to healthcare between the rich and poor women, research questions one and two are answered. This comparison also provides a political economy perspective and an intersectional analysis of class and gender in women's access to healthcare.

Additionally, there was a government compensation for abortion complications. Before gaining the government compensation, evidence was required to demonstrate that the medical malpractice of Wang Town Hospital resulted in abortion complications. This could be issued by local hospitals under the control of medical service providers, or by the Pin Village Committee under the control of village cadres. In relation to the livelihoods framework, medical service providers and village cadres worked as authority mediators to control women's access to medical evidence and compensation. Besides, linking to the access theory demonstrated in Chapter 3, women's access to proof and healthcare was influenced by the social relationships with the authority institutions. As revealed by my female participants, the process of getting the proof was difficult because the township hospital and the village committee were often unwilling to issue it. The family planning policy was implemented by village cadres and hospital technicians; cadres and technicians therefore had to take responsibility for negative policy-related consequences, such as abortion complications. By issuing proof, the organisations acknowledged their malpractice. To avoid any trouble, these two organisations were therefore reluctant or outright refused to issue it. In Manzhi's case, she was refused proof from these two organisations.

My research findings yielded a new insight into men's and women's access to medical evidence across different classes from the perspective of political economy and the intersection of gender and political class status. Poor men and women preferred to argue with the village committee and the hospital to access the proof, but the negotiations were usually unsuccessful. Furthermore, the two organisations had different attitudes towards men and women in the process of negotiation. Compared with men, poor women were more likely to be treated impolitely. As indicated by three of my female informants who suffered from abortion complications, since their pregnancy was against the national family planning policy, the unplanned pregnancy was socially unacceptable. Hospitals and health service providers discriminated against them due to their 'illegal' pregnancy. Manzhi's story has illustrated this point.

Similarly, Faju's case can also illustrate this point. Faju accepted an abortion in 1988 in Wang Town Hospital. She suffered from abortion complications due to medical malpractice. Faju was too poor to purchase post-abortion healthcare from higher level hospitals. She intended to apply for government compensation for the medical malpractice and then use the compensation to purchase appropriate healthcare. Unfortunately, she did not receive proof from the hospital

and the village committee, and thereby she was restricted from access to government compensation. Faju described her experiences of trying to access that proof:

'When I asked for the proof from Wang Town Hospital to prove my abortion complications, the doctors in the hospital looked down upon me and refused to provide me any proof. Then when I turned to Pin Village Committee, likewise, I felt that the village cadres looked down upon me and they refused my request too. They said the proof was none of their business and advised me to ask for help from the township hospital' (Interview with Faju).

Rich men and women used their political connections to access proof to gain government compensation. Similar to the role of political participation in the distribution of land and water (see Chapter 5 and 6), women could make use of their male relatives' political positions to access proof. Manzhi used her husband Yang's political position and successfully gained proof from Yong County Hospital. Manzhi's experience and Tao's story echo each other. Tao's brother-in-law Hua was a village cadre and he issued proof on behalf of the village committee for Tao straightforwardly, proving that Tao's abortion complications were caused by the malpractice of Wang Town Hospital under the family planning policy. The Pin Village Committee gave permission for Tao to apply for government compensation from the Family Planning Office in the Wang Town Government. Finally, Tao successfully obtained a regular monthly stipend as a long-term compensation from the Wang Town Government. In Tao's case, her political connections erased the gender bias against women and empowered her to access government compensation.

This section answers research question one of what institutional processes influenced women's access to assets, and research question two of how have intersectional gender and class dynamics shaped women's access to livelihood assets. The market forces and local power have mediated women's access to healthcare, which was intersected with financial and political capital, and the gender differentiation in political participation and division of labour. Rich women were advantaged while poor women were disadvantaged in access to healthcare. This analysis fills the gap in the existing livelihoods literature concerning class, power, politics, and gender. This section also fills the gap concerning the influences of the family planning policy on women's access to healthcare in rural China. In the next section, I will examine women's access to healthcare under medical insurance in the mid-2000s–mid-2010s.

7.4.2 Access to healthcare under medical insurance in the mid-2000s–mid-2010s

Healthcare has undergone deepening marketisation processes since the early 2000s and the expenditure by sick individuals and households on healthcare has increased as a result (Hu et al., 2011). As discussed before, NCMS was launched in Pin village in 2008 to deal with increasing medical expenditures. In Pin village, the funding of NCMS consisted of government funding at multiple levels (i.e. the Central Government, Hunan Government and Yong County Government) and an individual contribution from participants. The individual contribution increased from 10 *yuan* in 2008, 20 *yuan* in 2009 to 150 *yuan* in 2016. The participation rate of NCMS increased from 39% in 2008 to 85% in 2016. Nevertheless, the non-participation rate was 15% in 2016, resulting from the unaffordability of the individual contribution for some Pin villagers. A question raised here is who was able to participate in NCMS while others cannot? Based on my fieldwork data, the intersection of gender and class dynamics made a difference in access to NCMS. Rich men and women were more likely to participate in NCMS than their poor counterparts due to their financial capital. The financial capital was intersected with multiple gender dynamics and further differentiated male and female participation.

The rich men and women were able to pay the NCMS contribution regardless of its increasing price. The intersection of household wealth status and the gendered division of labour differentiates the rich men and women in the sorts of medical insurance they had. As discussed before, a few richer households in Pin village managed household businesses, such as timber. Men from such households were engaged in the demanding timber work by themselves. Only in the busiest times would they employ casual workers to help. Compared with these men, women were mostly engaged in less physically-demanding and less-risky jobs in the household business, such as accounting. Therefore men were more likely to get physical injuries than women. These men preferred to purchase both commercial medical insurance and NCMS, because the reimbursement ratio of the commercial insurance was very high even though the insurance was expensive. The richer women were less likely to purchase commercial insurance and they only participated in NCMS. As discussed in Chapter 5, Juan's family managed a timber business and was richer than other families. Juan's husband, son, and son-in-law were engaged in risky physical work, such as cutting down trees, processing timber, and conveying timber. All three of them had both NCMS and commercial medical insurance. In 2013, Juan's son-in-law broke his hand when he was processing timber piles. He visited doctors and received

an operation in Zhang Municipal Hospital. Thanks to the two medical insurances, he received a considerable reimbursement and this saved him a lot of medical expenditure.

For the poor men and women, the increasing individual contributions to NCMS brought increasing financial burden. As Manzhi said: ‘the individual contributions have been increased yearly and we have to contribute more and more money, but we have no better choices. If we do not participate in NCMS, we have to pay much more for healthcare when we get ill’. In some cases, the individual contributions amounted to approximately one-fifth of their household income at most. It resulted in the dilemma that the limited household financial capital was inadequate to allow all family members to participate in NCMS. Most poor households adopted a strategy whereby some family members participated in NCMS while others were excluded. Moreover, which family members participated in NCMS within poor households was determined by the gendered division of labour and gender disparities in household income contribution. The gender dynamics was similar to those in contraception use. Poor men were more likely to access NCMS because they held primary responsibilities for cash earnings and made larger financial contribution towards household livelihoods. Poor women were more likely to never participate in or withdraw from NCMS in the face of the increasing individual contributions (Wang, 2008), because poor women mainly concentrated on domestic chores and made a lesser contribution to the household finances. Thus far, women’s access to NCMS was not only determined by gender dynamics, but the intersectional gender and class dynamics. The intersection of household impoverishment and the gendered division of labour led to the exclusion of some poor women from NCMS.

Among my 40 female respondents, four women from poorer households did not participate in NCMS. Gonghan’s case may serve to explain the non-participation in NCMS. In her family, Gonghan worked in subsistence agriculture while her husband Qiu weaved handcrafted bamboo brooms and winnowing fans. Qiu’s craft was the main source of household income, but his income decreased with the marketization processes because people favoured brooms and winnowing fans produced in factories and sold for a cheaper price. When the sum of individual contributions increased to 100 *yuan* per year in 2014, Gonghan’s family was unable to pay for the individual contributions of both Gonghan and her husband. Given Qiu’s greater financial importance to the household livelihood, Gonghan extended her husband’s membership in NCMS but terminated her own membership. As such, household poverty, the gendered division of labour, and gender asymmetries in household financial contributions

hindered Gonghan from NCMS participation but allowed her husband's participation. This point echoes the finding that women's consumption was positively related to their contribution to household income (Bernasek and Bajtelsmit, 2002; Browning et al., 1994) (see Chapter 2). Moreover, rather than bargaining with men or competing for NCMS, Gonghan was willing and had the initiative to give the priority of NCMS to her husband. As Gonghan explained:

'Considering there was limited overall income in my family, I let my husband participate in NCMS since our family depends on him to earn income. Any severe disease that happens to him might damage his health, and thus our family may lose its main income and face survival risks. His participation in NCMS could enable him to receive appropriate treatment if he is ill. Otherwise, without my husband, as a woman, I am unable to feed the whole family. I am just responsible for agriculture and household chores. If any illness happens to me and prevents me from making a living, my husband can support me instead' (Interview with Gonghan).

NCMS reimbursed a proportion of medical costs to participants. The reimbursement ratio depended on the hospital administrative level, with the highest ratio at the township level, and decreasing ratios at the county, municipality, and capital city levels (Hu et al., 2011). Specifically, the ratio reached 80% in Wang Town Hospital, 50%-60% in Yong County Hospital and Zhang Municipal Hospital, and about 30%-40% in the hospitals located in the capital city of Changsha. Wang Town Hospital was mainly responsible for treatment of minor illnesses, such as hypertension and gallstones. Benefiting from NCMS, it cost only 200 *yuan* to receive a one-week hospitalization treatment for minor diseases in the township hospital. The highest reimbursement ratio at the township level reduced the financial burden on villagers and promoted their access to healthcare. The accessibility of healthcare for minor diseases was illustrated by Manzhi's story, namely, her dental treatment in the town hospital. In such circumstances, healthcare insurance functioned as a shock absorber, alleviating the financial pressure of medical costs, and reducing livelihood vulnerabilities (Zhang, 2010). As a result of this, villagers thought highly of NCMS.

NCMS aimed to reimburse the catastrophic medical costs of critical diseases (Cao, 2006). In Hunan province, NCMS covered more than 20 sorts of critical diseases, such as cervical cancer, lung cancer, cleft lip and palate, and type I diabetes. Nonetheless, NCMS played a minor role in critical diseases because of its insufficient reimbursement funding (Yi et al., 2009). The

township hospitals were unable to provide high-quality facilities and medical skills to deal with critical diseases. It was necessary to access the county or municipal hospitals for critical diseases. But the treatments in these hospitals were much more expensive than in the township hospitals. As mentioned previously, the reimbursement ratio decreased with the elevation of administration level of health centres. Accordingly, the ratio of medical costs paid out of pocket by sick individuals in county and municipal hospitals would be much higher than in township hospitals. In this regard, NCMS could not provide adequate insurance and protection in the face of critical diseases (Yi et al., 2009). Access to healthcare still relied on the markets of healthcare. Market forces remained the major institutions for access to healthcare. Moreover, the medical costs dramatically went up after NCMS, particularly in the case of critical diseases (Hu et al., 2011). Despite healthcare markets continuing to mediate access to healthcare, the healthcare markets from the mid-2000s played a greater role than before the mid-2000s. Much higher prices for healthcare have been charged since the mid-2000s. Thus far, research question one, what are the institutional processes that have mediated and influenced village women's access to livelihood resources over the past four decades, has been answered.

Linking to the conceptual framework in Chapter 3, the intersection of financial capital and gender dynamics continued to make a difference here. Similarly to the access to post-abortion healthcare and NCMS, the price of healthcare determined access to the treatment of critical diseases, even though NCMS contributed a proportion of reimbursement. The inequalities in access to healthcare for critical diseases between the rich and poor people were enlarged with the growing marketisation of healthcare. Rich men and women could use their financial capital to pay for healthcare for critical diseases. There was no distinct gender inequalities between rich men and rich women because their financial capital guaranteed their ability to afford healthcare and all of them were able to access treatments for critical diseases.

In sharp contrast, poor men and women were more likely to be restricted by the high costs. Current research has indicated that the poor population were worse off in access to healthcare resources and health outcomes than those who were economically better off (Iyer et al., 2008). Yet, this research did not investigate how inequality is differentiated by gender among those worse-off people. In Pin village, the class-based financial barriers were further differentiated by gender. Gender inequalities in access to healthcare for critical diseases within households were distinct in poor households. The gender differentiation in employment and household financial contributions advantaged poor men's healthcare while disadvantaging poor women's

healthcare. This point was similar to their access to NCMS. But since the payment for critical diseases was much more than the individual contributions in participation in NCMS, these gender dynamics played a greater role in differentiating men from women in poor households for the treatment of critical diseases.

Poor men were more likely to access appropriate treatment for critical diseases than poor women. The gendered division of labour and the gender inequalities of labour markets commonly assigned poor men relatively higher paid non-agricultural jobs than their female counterparts. According to my interview data, poor men usually made greater financial contributions to households than poor women, and their financial contribution was treated as the most important to household livelihoods. This was similar to the gender dynamics in contraception use and access to NCMS discussed above. Moreover, the prominent financial contribution of poor men in worse off households was further enhanced by the trend of non-agricultural livelihood diversification and greater marketisation processes since the early 2000s. Because of their greater contribution, men had the priority to use household financial capital to pay for treatments for critical diseases.

Poor women were disadvantaged in access to financial capital for critical diseases. These women, particularly old women were, assigned to lower paid farming jobs and household chores, making lower financial contributions than men. In the case of critical disease, some of them had to heavily rely on their family members' incomes to pay for medical costs. They were more likely to see themselves as a financial burden in relation to health access as compared to their male counterparts. To reduce medical costs, poor women tended to spend less on healthcare to avoid incurring economic and social burdens for other household members (Iyer et al., 2008). Four poor women in my research negatively considered themselves as 'unworkable', 'I cannot do anything for my family' and 'huge medical costs spent on me would not be worthwhile'. They preferred to choose sub-optimal treatment or non-treatment. In this regard, this study confirms the influences of affordability on access to healthcare, but further contributes an intersectional analysis of gender and class on access to healthcare in rural China.

An extreme case regarding access to healthcare was that of the village woman Congzhi. Congzhi's youngest sister-in-law Zhimin told me Congzhi's story. Congzhi was a widow from Pin village. Congzhi's son Xiao and daughter-in-law Yue managed a transport business in Wang town from the late 2000s. They had a traffic accident and hurt many passengers in 2009.

Thus, they compensated a great deal of money and suffered heavy losses. This accident impoverished and indebted their family. In 2013, Xiao and Yue migrated to Zhuhai city to earn money to repay the debts. Xiao was a construction worker and he was the main family breadwinner, whilst Yue worked as a waitress. Xiao and Yue had a son aged five years old and their son studied in Zhuhai. Congzhi migrated with them to take care of her grandson. In 2015, Xiao was diagnosed with appendicitis and had an operation in Zhuhai, which cost thousands of *yuan*. In 2016, Congzhi was diagnosed with cancer. Her estimated medical expenses were almost twice as much as the household annual income after the NCMS reimbursement. As such, Congzhi discounted her life and jumped into a fish pond in Zhuhai and committed suicide. Due to household poverty and her low financial contribution, Congzhi was unable to pay her medical costs and was excluded from access to healthcare for critical diseases. Zhimin reported what Congzhi had told her:

'Congzhi called me when she was diagnosed with cancer. She said, she did not intend to have treatment since her son had already cost a lot of money for appendicitis. She thought of herself as 'useless' to earn money or pay for medical costs. She worried that her medical expenses would bring great burden to her son and daughter-in-law; her treatment would further impoverish her poor family; and her family members would be in a worse situation. But I did not expect that she would commit suicide a few days later...' (Interview with Zhiming).

For those lacking financial capital, access to healthcare was associated with indebtedness (Iyer et al., 2008). Some poor men and women borrowed money to pay their huge medical bills. They usually borrowed money from relatives and friends (Yi et al., 2009). As revealed by three poor women's cases in my data, the gendered division of labour led to differences between men and women in their borrowing practices. Poor men, as mentioned before, tended to have higher incomes than poor women. Thus, men were considered more likely to repay their debts than women. As there were few doubts about men's repayment, it was much easier for men to borrow. Poor women were less able to borrow money for medical expenses (Iyer et al., 2008). Some of them depended on their husbands' borrowing for medical care. This point has been illustrated by Manzhi's story.

In the case of inadequate NCMS reimbursement, the large medical expenses disproportionately influenced household livelihoods. It has drawn wide attention that large medical expenditures

have impoverished non-poor households and exacerbated the vulnerabilities of poor households in economically transitional Asia and Africa (Krishna et al., 2004; Wagstaff and Doorslaer, 2003). My research in Pin village confirmed these findings. Serious illness indeed brought stresses and shocks to rural household livelihoods. To repay a debt, the final choice of the poor people was the distress sale of productive resources to cover the huge medical expenses (Iyer et al, 2008; Yi et al., 2009). Like Manzhi, she had a horse which was used to earn money by carrying sand and firewood, but she had to sell the horse to repay medical debts. In the face of critical illness, poor women were more easily trapped by healthcare poverty, regardless of whether they participated in NCMS or not.

This section answers my three research questions: what institutional processes have mediated women's access to livelihood resources in the past four decades? How have gender and class intersected with each other and shaped women's access to assets? How and why have women's access to assets and their livelihoods varied under the effects of marketisation and livelihood diversification? This section addresses the increasing influence of market forces in women's access to NCMS and treatment for critical illnesses, which was intersected with financial capital and the gendered division of labour. The market forces advantaged rich women while disadvantaging poor women in access to healthcare. The marketisation processes further enlarged the inequalities in access to healthcare between rich and poor women. The poor women were mostly marginalised in access to healthcare. In the next section, I will examine women's access to TPA under the mediation of village cadres and government officials in the mid-2010s.

7.5 Intersectionality and Targeted Poverty Alleviation

The rise of academic studies on the Targeted Poverty Alleviation (TPA) has emphasised the challenges of identifying the targeted TPA beneficiaries and the problem of returning to poverty (Li et al., 2016). But most of these studies are gender-blind. This section uses a gender lens to fill this gap and also examines the influences of the intersectional gender and class dynamics on women's access to TPA. This section will focus on the identification of TPA beneficiaries and the targeted aid measures of poverty alleviation.

7.5.1 Access to the Targeted Poverty Alleviation quotas in the mid-2010s

TPA beneficiaries were theoretically identified by their household income levels. A household would typically be eligible for TPA if its annual income was below a poverty line. In 2013, the national poverty line was an annual income of 2736 *yuan* per capita. Living below this line, the impoverished population reached 82.49 million nationwide and 6.4 million in Hunan province, 8.5% and 11.2% of the respective populations (Wang, 2018). Hunan Province Government set and distributed the quotas of TPA beneficiaries to its administratively governed cities and counties, according to the size of their impoverished populations. County governments distributed the quotas to towns and villages under their governance. In 2014, Pin village received an overall quota of 95 poverty-stricken households with 277 poverty-stricken individuals. The Yong County Government regulated that the rural population supported by the Minimum Living Insurance (*dibao*) and Five Guarantees (*wubao*) would be automatically covered by TPA because their incomes were lower than the poverty line of Yong county. Twenty-three households with 65 individuals were covered by the Minimum Living Insurance and the Five Guarantees. All of these people were identified as TPA beneficiaries straightforwardly. As such, 72 households with 212 individuals remained to be assigned.

The first step in the distribution of these quotas was to define the eligibility of villagers for TPA. As discussed previously, TPA provided important livelihood resources. A TPA beneficiary was allowed to access a set of livelihood assets and opportunities through TPA aid measures. Given the potential benefits from TPA, eligibility was strictly and officially restricted. The eligible beneficiaries in a village must be in line with the No.15 Document issued by Zhangjiajie Municipal Government in 2014: benefiting individuals should be poverty-stricken, aged below 60, hard-working, permanent village residents, and have a strong desire and the capability to overcome poverty. People were ineligible if they met any of the following criteria: car ownership, two-layer well-polished house ownership, any family member holding public office or being a village cadre. Here, even though the identification of eligibility was based on individuals, beneficiaries were identified as households. Theoretically, once a person was identified as a TPA beneficiary, his or her entire family were TPA beneficiaries.

According to these eligibility regulations, the identification of TPA beneficiaries included two steps: village team leaders produced a preliminary TPA list of beneficiaries; the vote team of

Pin village voted for the candidates on this preliminary TPA list and then drew up the final list. Because village team leaders were fairly well-informed about who was poor in their teams, a preliminary TPA list of beneficiaries was produced by 20 team leaders. However, lacking the official annual income records of each household, team leaders indicated the challenge of accurate identification of the poorest households (Li et al., 2016). In most cases, the preliminary selection was built upon team leaders' subjective experiences and knowledge in terms of the income levels of households. On this basis, a preliminary list was produced. This list included 112 households with 340 individuals who were eligible for TPA, which exceeded the remaining TPA quota of 72 households with 212 individuals.

To reduce the number of beneficiary candidates on this preliminary list, a democratic vote was held by Pin Village Committee to produce a final list. The vote was always upheld as the fairest way to make decisions at the grassroots level (Manion, 2006). The vote team consisted of village cadres, village team leaders, representatives of the communist party, and village representatives. Specifically, there were five village cadres, 20 village team leaders, 30 representatives of the communist party⁹, and 32 village representatives¹⁰. These political elites were assumed by villagers to be trustworthy and fair in a secret ballot for the selection of TPA beneficiaries. Before the vote, voters discussed the causes of poverty among the candidates. Primary causes included illness, disability, shortage of financial capital, and education expenses. This echoes a previous finding that primary poverty factors were healthcare purchase and education expenses (Li et al., 2016). According to an investigation carried out by the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development, 42% of nationwide poverty resulted from illnesses in 2015 (Liu et al., 2015). Based on these causes, each voter was encouraged to vote for the most poverty-stricken 50 households among the 112 household candidates. The top-ranked 72 households with 217 individuals would be selected as TPA beneficiaries. According to the vote results, it turned out that the vote did not entirely favour and select the most poor population because the finally identified 72 households were not all poverty-stricken. Six higher-ranked households among these 72 households were not poverty-stricken at all but were relatively rich. Four of these six households were not only rich but also had political connections. Their inclusion on the preliminary list was influenced by the village

⁹ There were a total of 53 representatives of the communist party in Pin village. About half of them were migrants and they did not participate in the vote.

¹⁰ Overall 32 village representatives in Pin village were selected in 2016. The selection rules were that a larger village team with more than 100 population usually has two village representatives, while a smaller village team with less than 100 population usually has one village representatives.

politics that were embedded in the vote process, which will be further elaborated on below. In such circumstances, selection of TPA beneficiaries did not entirely follow the government eligibility regulations.

After the identification of these 72 TPA beneficial households, the subsequent issue was how to fairly distribute the quota of 212 individuals into these 72 households. Notably, there were overall 217 rather than 212 household members in these households, and thus, five individuals would not be covered by TPA despite their household being a beneficiary. To deal with this problem, village cadres determined that the all household members among the top 68 households, 200 people in total, were covered by the TPA individual quotas. The remaining 12 individual quotas were allocated to the bottom four households. However, the 12 quotas were inadequate to cover all 17 members in those four households. Each of those four households was therefore allocated a quota smaller than the number of household members. Among those four households, the numbers of household members were four, six, five and two. Correspondingly, the number of distributed quotas were three, four, four and one. Overall, in these processes of identification of TPA individual and household beneficiaries, village cadres and the other political voters were the mediators of women's access to TPA.

Analysis of this vote needs to consider the informal institutional dynamics of the specific community context (Manion, 2006). Linking to the IDS's livelihoods framework with access theory, social relationships with authorities can influence access (see Chapter 3). As revealed by my fieldwork data, complex social relationships with voters influenced the voting process. Having good relationships with voters or being voters shaped access to TPA. As such, the formal rule governing how beneficiaries should be decided was mediated or altered by the informal institutions of local power. In the voting process, rather than fairly voting for those who were poor, some voters preferred to vote for themselves, their relatives, and the candidates who had good relationships with them or had good social reputations. On this point, my study revealed the role of complex political economy power in access to TPA. It fills the gap of the lack of consideration of power and politics in rural livelihoods research (see Chapter 2).

Access to TPA between men and women across different classes was influenced by the intersection of class and gender. The intersectional class and gender dynamics were related to political positions and income-generating activities. Some rich men and women were able to use their political positions or income-generating activities to earn good social reputations and

build harmonious social relationships with voters and villagers. As illustrated by those six household beneficiaries who were not poverty-stricken, their good social reputation in Pin village enabled them to be elected. The vote was closely shaped by the informal institutions of social relationships. Despite the vote being upheld as the best and fairest way for grassroots-level decision making in TPA, the institution of local power weakened its fairness by altering the voting process. In contrast, bad social reputations and social relationships could prevent people from being voted as TPA beneficiaries. In Manzhi's case, her family was not identified as a TPA beneficiary because her husband Yang's corruption had given them a bad social reputation.

Moreover, gender disparities in political participation and the gendered division of labour differentiated men from women in access to TPA in a few rich households. For the rich men, their outstanding political contribution to villagers and fantastic economic performance allowed them to develop good social reputations and social relationships. As mentioned previously, four of the six non-poverty-stricken TPA beneficiary households had political connections. Each of these four households had a man who was or had been a village cadre/village team leader. Their outstanding political contributions granted them good reputations and harmonious social relationships, which permitted them greater access to TPA. Rich women gained good social reputations and harmonious social relationships from their economic activities or their male relatives' political contributions. Although the gendered division of labour granted men more chances to engage in outside income-generating activities, a few village women gradually had more opportunities to access diversified and lucrative economic activities with the marketisation processes since the early 2000s. These income-generating activities stimulated these women to have good social relationships with voters and enabled them to have priority in access to TPA.

For instance, Aizhen's story was typical to illustrate this; she was identified as a TPA beneficiary through her husband's political contribution. Aizhen and her husband Lianbo managed a petty grocery store in Pin village. The business allowed them to be better-off in Pin village. Aizhen's husband Lianbo was the team leader of Yanwan team. Lianbo's father was the former leader of Yanwan and had continually worked for the team for 12 years. When his father became ill in 2010, Lianbo inherited his father's position. Lianbo worked hard to bring benefits to Yanwan team members. His political efforts were highly thought of by the villagers. Lianbo and Aizhen had two daughters in junior school in 2014. The tuition fees for their two

daughters brought the family financial pressures. For this reason, Lianbo recommended his family as a TPA candidate. As Lianbo's political contributions fertilized the soil for building good social relationships with voters and villagers, his family was voted as a TPA beneficiary and ranked in the top fifth out of 72 households. In this case, Lianbo's political position enabled him to recommend his own family as a TPA candidate. His political efforts earned him a good social reputation, which led to good social relationships with the voters. These social relationships worked as informal institutions and improved Lianbo's access to TPA through the vote. As a member of Lianbo's family, Aizhen was also granted access to TPA, as Aizhen said:

'People in Yanwan and Pin village thought highly of my husband because he was a good team leader. In 2012, my husband negotiated with village cadres for a road construction project for Yanwan team. As a result of his efforts, the project was distributed to Yanwan and widened the main road in Yanwan. When a team member's land was given over to the reconstructed road, my husband helped him to get another piece of land... So when our family faced financial pressures, villagers were willing to vote for us to be a TPA beneficiary' (Interview with Aizhen).

Some poor men and women were selected as TPA beneficiaries because of their poverty. As discussed before, because the TPA individual quotas were inadequate to cover each member in all 72 selected households, the four households ranked at the bottom were distributed with individual quotas that were less than their number of household members. How were the individual quotas distributed within these households? Who would be covered by the inadequate quotas within such a family? The distribution of quotas was related to TPA aid measures. People aged below 50 have a strong desire for industry development, occupational training, and loans in TPA (Li et al., 2016). In line with this desire, one of the TPA aid measures was industrial development and skill training in Pin village. The inadequate quotas were more likely to be distributed to household members who were anticipated to improve their skills and also were eligible to engage in highly-paid industrial sectors.

The gendered division of labour was a determinant of the quota distribution in poor households. As discussed above, rich women started to engage in more remunerative activities following marketisation. However, the gendered division of labour in poor households was different from that in rich households. In the poverty-stricken households, men were more likely to engage in

skilled non-farm activities, while women were mainly responsible for farming and domestic chores (see Chapter 5 and 6). Given these facts, village cadres assumed that quotas allocated to men would create more benefits for the entire households. As the cadre Xinxiu said, ‘we primarily allocated the quotas to men because they were the backbone of household income earners’. This allocation logic was aimed at making the best use of industrial development and training opportunities to maximize the benefits for rural household livelihoods. Thus, poor men from the bottom four households accessed TPA individual quotas while several poor women were excluded.

As mentioned before, the village woman Gonghan’s husband Qiu wove handcrafted bamboo brooms and winnowing fans, which was the main source of her family income. Due to their impoverishment, Gonghan’s family was selected as a TPA beneficiary and ranked last among the identified 72 household beneficiaries. But Gonghan and Qiu could not both be covered by TPA because of the shortage of TPA individual quotas. Given that Qiu held a traditional craft which could be developed to make more money, village cadres decided to distribute the TPA quota to Qiu rather than Gonghan. When Qiu accessed the TPA quota, he received the support funding of 1,000 *yuan*. He used the funding to increase the scale of production and enlarged his sale markets from nearby villages to Wang town. In this case, the intersectional class and gender dynamics excluded Gonghan from access to TPA. Despite household poverty enabling Gonghan’s family to be a TPA beneficiary, the gendered division of labour hindered her personally from access to the quota.

In summary, this section responds to my two research questions: what institutions have mediated women's access to livelihood resources in the past four decades? How have gender and class intersected with each other and shaped women's access to assets? Analysis revealed the local social and political power relations in the mediation of women’s access to TPA. Household wealth status was intersected with the gendered division of labour and influenced access to TPA. A few rich women were able to be TPA beneficiaries due to their economic activities and male family members’ political contributions. Poor women were more likely to be excluded from TPA individual quotas due to their lower-paid activities. This analysis contributes an understanding of class, power and politics to the current literature on livelihoods and gender. In the next section, I will examine the access to TPA aid measures.

7.5.2 Access to the aid measures of Targeted Poverty Alleviation in the mid-2010s

After the identification of TPA beneficiaries, poverty reduction aid measures were adopted in Pin village. According to the working system of cadres' stationing in villages, officials were selected from higher level governments to guide the implementation of aid measures in appointed villages. Tian, from the Yong County Government, was appointed to implement TPA targeted assistance projects and aid measures in Pin village. He was also primarily responsible for governing and distributing TPA funds. Several other officials from the Yong County Government and the Wang Town Government cooperatively worked with Tian. These officials designed targeted aid measures and decided how to use the funds based on local village conditions and household livelihood needs. Under the guidance of officials, a series of measures were implemented in Pin village in three major areas: infrastructure improvements, such as road construction, repair or reconstruction of run-down houses, resettlement, and water and power supply; social security support, such as education and healthcare; and industrial development projects, such as cultivation, livestock, and tourism. The industrial projects fell into two categories: small-scale livelihood industries managed by individual households, and larger capital-intensive industries, mainly managed by rich households or by Pin village as a whole.

Most existing studies in this area have already examined the targeted TPA aid measures that only adopted to assist the identified TPA beneficiaries. These measures were usually small-scale livelihood industries managed by individual households (Guo et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2018). However, the power and political relations that facilitated access to larger capital-intensive industries and unplanned social security aid measures granted to non-TPA beneficiaries have been given little attention. To fill this gap, this section examines access to capital-intensive industries and TPA aid measures for non-TPA beneficiaries by emphasising local power and the intersectional analysis of gender and class.

As mentioned above, the larger capital-intensive TPA industries included village-owned industries and individual household-owned TPA industries. The village-owned larger capital-intensive industries were contracted to villagers, and were aimed at improving the collective economy of Pin village. The household-owned larger capital-intensive industries were aimed at setting a good example to other villagers in poverty alleviation. Encouraged by these household-owned industries, other villagers may start to develop industries afterwards so as to

overcome poverty. Herein, because these industries were not specific measures to lift the poverty-stricken households out of poverty, they were not specifically targeted to TPA beneficiaries. Instead, any Pin villager was allowed to access these capital-intensive industries. Besides, since these industries were capital-intensive, their establishment, management, and contracts relied heavily on people's financial capital and the support of TPA funds. As the official, Tian governed the TPA funds. He therefore held the power to determine the distribution of the funds to develop household-owned and village-owned industries. Additionally, Tian intervened in the establishment of some village-owned industries and decided on the distribution of the contract rights in these industries. In this regard, the official Tian was the institutional authority mediating people's access to TPA capital-intensive industries.

TPA aid measures were occasionally granted to non-TPA beneficiaries. After the final list of TPA beneficiaries was voted on, it was shared amongst the villagers for one week via public notices. As mentioned before, some TPA beneficiaries were not identified by their poverty, but by their social reputations and complex social relationships. As such, strong dissatisfaction and mass complaints rapidly emerged in Pin village against the votes for non-poverty-stricken beneficiaries. The village committee explained that the result was just, because it was produced by a transparent voting process. Disregarding this explanation, some non-beneficiaries had the initiative to contact officials and village cadres for TPA aid measures which were beyond the official quotas. Their primary purpose was to access TPA funds for beyond-quota medical assistance. Such funding was not planned for but was occasionally issued by officials in specific contexts. In this case, officials were the mediators of TPA and controlled people's access to beyond-quota subsidies.

Guided by the conceptual framework integrating the IDS's sustainable livelihoods framework and the concept of intersectionality, social relationships with officials can influence access to TPA capital-intensive industries and TPA beyond-quota assistance, which were intersected with gender and class. As revealed by my interview data, rich men and women were more likely to access the TPA capital-intensive industries. They could use their financial capital to invest in the capital-intensive industries, and they used their political and financial capital to cultivate good relationships with officials and influence officials' decisions on the distribution of TPA fund and TPA projects. This was similar to the way in which rich men and women gained access to land and water (see Chapter 5 and 6). Poor men and women were less likely

to access the TPA large-scale industries, but they were sometimes able to argue with officials to gain access to TPA beyond-quota assistance. This was similar to the way in which poor men and women sought access to land and water (see Chapter 5 and 6). What was different from their access to land and water was that they negotiated not only with village cadres, but also with government officials.

Rich men and women, due to their political and financial advantages, had more chances to contact Tian to access the TPA large-scale industries. However, the gender-biased social norms created gender inequalities in relationships with officials. As mentioned in chapter 5 and 6, social norms prevented women from accessing village cadres and government officials in private. Rich women were therefore hindered from building relationships with the official head, but they were able to use their husbands' practical efforts to gain TPA funding for capital-intensive industries instead. Compared with these women, rich men were more able to utilise their financial or political capital to build good social relationships with officials, and gathered the TPA fund by the means of bribery. This was similar to the way in which rich men accessed the project of modernised agriculture from officials, described in Chapter 5. In this manner, TPA resources were mostly distributed to rural male elites while excluding vulnerable poverty-stricken populations (Zuo et al., 2015).

For example, to stimulate the azalea tourism in Luofeng mountain in Pin village (see Chapter 4), one TPA aid measure was to rebuild the biggest guest house and restaurant near to the office of the Pin Village Committee in the village centre. Tian distributed the TPA fund and guided the construction of the guest house and restaurant. The guest house and restaurant were owned by Pin village, but they were planned to be leased out to and managed by individual Pin villagers. Nonetheless Tian, rather than village cadres, held the contract rights. The contract fee was 100,000 *yuan* for ten years. The potential contractor would receive an additional 5,000 *yuan* as a TPA subsidy for large-scale industries. Only rich villagers were able to afford this high fee. Three rich men intended to contract the guest house and restaurant in Pin village. But Xin's husband Bangman cultivated a good relationship with the official head Tian. With the permission of Tian, Bangman successfully contracted this guest house and restaurant. As Bangman's wife, Xin accessed the contract rights and managed this business. In our interview, Xin recalled the contract process:

'When the guest house and restaurant were completely reconstructed in 2015, my husband and I intended to contract them because they were located in the village centre and the contract fee was not expensive. Considering the rapid development of azalea tourism, the profits from this contract business would probably be very high. Then, my husband contacted Tian to ask for the contract. By celebrating a birthday for Tian, sending pork in private, and giving new year's greetings to Tian in Spring Festival, my husband developed a closer relationship with him. Tian finally agreed to contract the guest house and restaurant to my husband' (Interview with Xin).

Poor men and women who were not identified as TPA beneficiaries struggled for TPA beyond-quota subsidies when they realized the unfair vote result. Lacking financial and political capital, the poor people threw themselves into negotiation with officials because they had little to lose even if they annoyed the officials. The primary means of negotiation included petition, negotiation, quarrelling, and destroying public infrastructure. Poor men and women tended to adopt different negotiation strategies. Men were more likely to adopt the most radical means such as arguing and destroying infrastructure such as village roads. Such strategies threatened the security of the village administrative management, and thus, it worked effectively to draw public attention and obtain TPA subsidies. In order to access TPA subsidies for medical costs, several women adopted a relatively radical strategy. In Manzhi's case, she argued with Tian and received a small subsidy for her medical costs. There were two other women who had similar experiences to Manzhi. Nevertheless, the subsidies to the poor women were far less than the TPA benefits earned by some rich women, including the TPA female beneficiaries and the women who managed TPA capital-intensive industries.

One example may serve to illustrate poor women's access to TPA subsidies. Lu had an operation for breast cancer in 2012 at a cost of about 40,000 *yuan*. This huge medical cost impoverished her family. Despite this, Lu's family was not selected as a TPA beneficiary in 2014. To pursue some medical compensation from TPA, Lu had argued with the village cadres, but this did not work. When the village committee could not provide a solution to Lu, more radical measures were adopted by Lu and her husband. In a TPA village meeting with more than 80 participants, Lu yelled at village cadres and officials, 'you passed the quotas to people who are not poor, but excluded seriously ill people like me. I will present a petition to Zhangjiajie Municipal Government until I receive the TPA assistance'. Meanwhile, when Lu was still refused TPA assistance, her husband adopted the most radical strategy of destroying

the rural road of Yanwan team. He demonstrated to the village committee that if they would not provide the assistance, he would destroy more.



Figure 7.1 Destroying Village Road

(Source: Photo by author)

As indicated by Tian's interview, one way in which governments were evaluated was related to petitions, therefore the officials worried that they might be blamed by the municipal government if Lu took a petition. To prevent Lu from petitioning and also to stop her husband destroying the road, Tian permitted the village cadres to issue 500 *yuan* to Lu in private as TPA medical assistance. In this case, Lu and her husband posed a threat to the cadres and officials. As Lu concluded, 'if you do not fight with cadres and officials, you would never receive any deserved benefits'. The petition functioned as bargaining chips to negotiate with the cadres and officials. The negotiation posed threats and reshaped the social relationships between village women and officials. When the cadres/officials were at risk of being considered incompetent by their superiors, they changed their decisions on the distribution of TPA subsidies and improved women's access to the subsidies. In other words, poor women were forced to use radical means to negotiate with government decision makers. But it was noteworthy that the subsidies that they eventually received were still much less than some rich women.

This section highlights the mediation of complex local power relations in access to TPA capital-intensive industries and TPA beyond-quota subsidies, which was intersected with

political and financial capital, gender norms and gendered negotiation methods. These findings contribute to the analysis of power and politics, and intersectional gender and class dynamics in existing literature about access to social security, gender, and rural livelihoods. By examining access to TPA capital-intensive industries and TPA beyond-quota subsidies, this section widens knowledge of TPA aid measures. In the next section, I will summarize and conclude these findings.

7.6 Summary

Guided by the integrated framework of the IDS's livelihoods framework emphasising access equality and the concept of intersectionality, this chapter answers the three research questions: what are the institutional processes that have mediated Chinese village women's access to livelihood resources in the early 1980s - mid-2010s? How have intersectional gender and class dynamics shaped village women's access to livelihood assets? How and why have women's access to livelihood resources and their livelihoods historically varied under the effects of marketisation? There were two main findings in this chapter.

Firstly, the institutional processes governing access to healthcare and TPA were market forces and local power, which have changed over the past four decades. From the early 1980s to the early 2000s, the markets for healthcare mediated women's access to post-abortion healthcare; village cadres influenced access to government compensation for abortion complications. From the early 2000s to the mid-2010s, with livelihood diversification and rural society stratification, access to medical insurance and treatment for critical illnesses were mediated by the deepening marketisation for healthcare. In the mid-2010s, officials and village cadres played a greater role in mediating access to TPA.

Secondly, intersecting with these institutional processes, class and gender dynamics differentiated men and women across different class statuses to take different means to face their different barriers in access to healthcare and TPA. Rich men and women had an advantage in access to healthcare and TPA based on their financial and political capital, while poor men and women faced more constraints due to their lack of financial and political capital. This trend has been exacerbated during the process of marketisation over the past four decades under the institutions of markets and local power. When markets were primary mediators and became increasingly significant in access to healthcare, rich men and women were able to use their

financial capital to pay for medical insurance and healthcare resources despite medical costs for critical illnesses increasing over time. Rich women utilised their financial capital to purchase post-abortion healthcare, NCMS, and treatment for critical illnesses. Their financial capital enabled them to avoid being constrained by any gender-based restriction in access to healthcare.

In contrast, poor men and women were restricted from purchasing medical insurance and healthcare services due to their shortage of financial capital. Compared with poor men, poor women's access to healthcare from markets was further limited by the gendered division of labour, social norms, the gendered disparities in household economic contribution and financial decision-making rights. Rather than competing with men for healthcare resources, these poor women took the initiative to forgo NCMS participation and treatment for critical illnesses in favour of men. In some cases, some women turned to seek post-abortion care from kinship networks, and they relied on men to borrow money for the treatment of critical illnesses. Under the trend of deepening marketisation, these poor women experienced increasing constraints from both financial shortage and gender-based dynamics. Some of them had to choose sub-optimal treatment or no treatment at all.

When local power worked as an institution to mediate healthcare access, rich men and women benefited from their good social reputations and were selected as TPA beneficiaries; they cultivated good social relationships with cadres and officials to influence their decisions on the distribution of TPA resources. The gender dynamics were intersected with class and differentiated men and women in this access. Rich women were constrained by the gender differentiation in political participation and gender-biased social norms, but they took measures to overcome these constraints. Specifically, they made use of their male relatives' political positions to access government compensation for abortion complications, they used their economic achievements and male family members' political contributions to be designated as TPA beneficiaries, and they utilised their male family members to access TPA capital-intensive industries. Despite rich women being constrained by gender dynamics, their financial and political capital enabled them to break the gender-based constraints and gain access to healthcare and TPA.

Poor men and women were granted TPA beneficiary status due to their poverty. They also negotiated with village cadres and officials for government compensation for abortion

complications and TPA beyond-quota subsidies. Intersecting with the class dimension, gender dynamics, such as the gendered division of labour and gendered negotiation strategies, disadvantaged poor women in access to social security. Poor women were more likely to be excluded from access to government compensation, the TPA individual quotas and TPA beyond-quota subsidies than their male counterparts. Although some poor women successfully accessed the TPA beyond-quota subsidies, what they gained from TPA was much less than that gained by some rich women.

Based on these above two findings, this chapter argues that women's access to public services and social security was not mediated solely along gender lines, but cut across gender and class. The constraints of patriarchal relationships such as the gendered division of labour were not adequate to explain women's access to social security. Women's class status and their differential association with a male-dominated power structure complicated the ways in which they accessed healthcare and TPA. Rich women had an advantage in access to healthcare and TPA compared to poor men and women. Rich women possessed greater financial and political capital that facilitated their access to healthcare and TPA, which enabled them to overcome some patriarchal constraints. Poor women were disadvantaged and marginalised in terms of healthcare and TPA, because they were constrained by the intersection of patriarchal inequalities and their shortage of political and financial capital. This chapter also argues that the increasing rural marketisation has further widened the disparity between the rich and poor population, leading to greater intersectional inequalities among village women.

This chapter makes four contributions to our understanding of access to social security, gender and rural livelihoods. Firstly, this chapter uncovers the power relations and political economy dynamics that mediate access to social security. It addresses power relationships and contributes to the existing livelihoods literature which has ignored power and politics. Secondly, this chapter adds the dimension of class and then analyses the intersection of gender and class in access to social security. Since utilising gender as a single analytical category cannot fully explain how and why women were divided in their access to social security, this chapter uncovers the intermeshed inequalities of gender and class, and widens the understanding of patrilocal inequalities. Thirdly, this chapter reveals the changes of power and political relations in access to social security in the context of the increasing marketisation processes and national social security programmes in China. Fourthly, through village women's life story narratives, this chapter uncovers the differences in agency among women across different class statuses

regarding access to social security. In this regard, this chapter provided a historical political economy perspective of women's access to social security. In the final chapter, I will summarise the key findings, arguments and scholarly contributions of this thesis.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

China has been increasingly integrated into the global economic system since the initiation of market reform in the late 1970s. This process has brought rapid and differential livelihood changes between men and women in rural China. A growing body of gender and rural livelihood studies are primarily focused on the influences of gender dynamics on livelihoods in other parts of the developing world, but fail to investigate related issues in the Chinese rural development context, and the complex intersection between gender, class, power, and politics. My research has dealt with these lacunae in the existing literature by examining village women's access to livelihood resources mediated by the intersection of gender and class (defined as in possession of power and wealth) in rural South China from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s. It addresses the following research questions:

- 1) What are the institutional processes that have mediated Chinese village women's access to livelihood resources over the past four decades?
- 2) How has the intersection of gender and class dynamics shaped village women's access to livelihood assets?
- 3) How and why have village women's access to livelihood resources and their livelihoods changed in the wider historical context of China's market reforms, and the tremendous societal change and transformations?

These questions were answered using an integrated conceptual framework combining a livelihoods approach emphasising access to livelihood assets along with the concept of intersectionality. Data was collected through fieldwork in Pin village in South China between October 2016 and April 2017, using life history narratives, focus group interviews, observations, and documentary analysis. The research examines the dynamics in village women's access to land, water, public services, and social welfare, which were mediated by institutional change and local politics over a period of four decades. It also explores how women's access to these livelihood assets was intersected with social divisions and inequalities, especially along the lines of gender and class.

This study revealed that access to livelihood resources is primarily mediated by the institutional processes of local power and market forces, which were intersected with gender and class in a

dynamic way. The financial and political capital intermeshed with multiple gender inequalities to mediate men's and women's access to assets in different ways. Village women's access to assets and their livelihoods have been changed in the processes of livelihood diversification, deepening marketisation and increasing rural social stratification in China. Below I further elaborate on these findings in Section 8.2. Section 8.3 highlights the study's unique contributions to scholarly and policy debates in the field. Section 8.4 points to future research directions.

8.2 Key findings and arguments

8.2.1 Institutional processes, power and politics

Chinese village women's access to livelihood assets was mediated by the changing institutional processes over the past four decades. My study confirms the finding from O'Laughlin (2004) and Scoones (2009), who point out the significant impact of power and politics on rural people's pursuit of livelihoods in other countries of the developing world. My study also confirms findings from Ellis (2000), who argues that access is modified by markets, local administration, social association and so forth (see Chapter 3). My study reveals that the primary institutions in mediating women's access to assets were local power and market forces. The local power was mainly in the form of political capital and connections with village cadres and government officials, and the distribution of resources through government development projects. However, unlike most researchers who treat these institutions in a static way (Ellis, 2000; Zhang, 2007), this study treats them in a dynamic way and addresses their changes over time with the changes of marketisation processes in rural China. This finding answers research questions one and three.

Village cadres and local government officials governed the distribution of resources. They had the power to make decisions on how to distribute vital livelihood assets, such as land, water, and social security. In this way, village cadres and government officials mediated people's access to these livelihood assets. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, 6 and 7, throughout the past four decades, village cadres controlled the rules of the distribution of public resources and state-funded projects at the village level. The resources they distributed included land readjustments, the arrangement of pipes for piped water, irrigation canals, public pumps for irrigation and the irrigation funding, medical proof and medical compensation, and the identification of TPA beneficiaries.

Government officials governed and decided the distribution of various state-funded projects and government funding to villages, such as subsidies for commercialised agriculture, projects for piped water and irrigation, and the TPA project. The increase in state-funded projects since the early 2010s meant that the officials in Yong County Government were increasingly important in the distribution of resources in Pin village. For instance, by being stationed in villages, officials participated in the distribution of poverty alleviation resources at the village level through TPA.

Cultivating relationships with cadres and officials, or being a cadre oneself, can influence the decisions of cadres and officials on the distribution of resources, such as land, water, and social security. People usually cultivated good social relationships or negotiated with cadres and officials to access resources. Because village cadres themselves competed for assets with other villagers, some cadres used their political positions to cultivate good relationships with other cadres or government officials to access assets. Only the cadres in the leading positions of the village committee, such as the party secretary and village director, had chance to contact with officials and access valuable information and state-funded projects from higher level governments. Being in a position of governance allowed some cadres to make self-interested decisions on resource distribution. Cadres tended to prioritize the distribution of livelihood resources to themselves and their relatives.

In addition to local power, market forces determined women's access to assets. Markets in this study referred to land rental markets, water facility markets (pumps and pipes), and healthcare markets. Financial capital determined who was able to access the markets and thereby access land, water, and healthcare. Financial capital primarily refers to payment capability and financial decision-making rights. People who held more finances and greater financial decision-making rights were more likely to access assets from markets. Moreover, the markets have had an increasing importance in asset distribution during the development of marketisation over the past four decades. The rural markets emerged at the beginning of HRS in the early 1980s and enlarged with the deepening of marketisation processes in the early 2000s.

8.2.2 The intersection of gender and class

Guided by the conceptual framework, this study finds that the above institutional processes were interested with class and gender dynamics in the mediation of access to assets. My study findings agree with Scoones' (1998) opinion that access to assets is mediated by social identities such as class and gender (see Chapter 3). Moreover, my study demonstrates that class and gender did not work separately to mediate access to assets, but class and gender were intermeshed with each other and their intersection mediated access. The intersection of class and gender generated a relationship of inequalities in asset distribution, which worked through the above institutions. Class-based inequality referred to differences in financial and political capital. This was intersected with multiple gender inequalities and formulated the webs of power in access to assets, which was changing over time with marketisation. Thus, these findings answer research questions two and three.

Men and women across different class statuses were placed in different power webs and took different means to access assets. Rich men and women had an advantage in access to assets compared to their poor counterparts. Rich women can use financial and political capital to resist multiple gender-based constraints on access to assets. With the marketisation processes and increasing accumulation of financial capital, rich women had growing power to break gender-based constraints. Poor women were mostly disadvantaged in access to assets. They were not only constrained by their shortage of financial and political capital but also by gender-based constraints. The intertwined gender and class oppression excluded poor women from access to assets. Next, I will present the political economy dynamics in access to assets under the institutions of local power and market forces by comparing men and women in different classes.

Cadres and officials in mediating access to assets

Political and financial capital differentiated between rich and poor people in access to assets under the mediation of cadres and officials. Rich men and women were advantaged in access to assets. With the increasing state-funded projects and deepening marketisation, rich people were more likely to use their financial and political capital to access more assets. As discussed in Chapter 5, 6 and 7, the rich men and women used their financial and political capital to cultivate good relationships with cadres and officials to access assets. Cadres themselves also had the power to prioritise their own access to assets.

Rich men and women with political connections used their political positions to contact cadres or officials and build good relationships with them. The principal village cadres in the leading positions were more likely to access government officials than the ordinary cadres. These principal cadres received valuable information, state-funded projects and livelihood resources. Benefiting from their higher political positions in the local government, a few male officials originally from Pin village and their family members left in Pin village had priorities in access to resources allocated in Pin village.

Rich men and women without political capital utilised their financial capital to send gifts or 'red envelopes' to gain access to cadres or officials. They had to use a greater amount of financial capital to access officials for state-funded projects in the 2000s and 2010s, in order to access more livelihood resources. In some cases, economic elites in Pin village with outstanding financial capital were primarily considered by cadres in the distribution of livelihood resources, because the cadres intended to keep good relationships with these economic elites. Thus, these economic elites did not need to 'do something' like bribery to have priorities in access to assets.

Gender dynamics were intersected with these class dynamics and their intersection mediated rich women's access to assets. Gender disparities in grassroots political participation and gender-biased social norms constrained rich women from access to assets under the mediation of cadres and officials. Gender disparities in political participation meant that men took a large proportion of grassroots political positions such as village cadres and village team leaders. These men were able to design, operate, and manage the rules of assets distribution. Compared with rich men, rich women's political connections were established by their male relatives' political positions. Women were less likely to take a political position and participate in public political activities. For this reason, rich women usually depended on their male relatives' political capital to access assets.

The gendered division of labour and gender-biased social norms differentiated the participation in public affairs between men and women. Men played the role of household head and they were primarily responsible for external affairs, while women concentrated on domestic chores. As household heads, men were more likely to be household representatives in public meetings. Social norms led to the gender inequalities in relationships with cadres and officials. According to the social norms, a good woman with moral virtues was expected to keep distance from male

political space. These social norms prevented rich women from cultivating relationships with cadres and officials in private. Rich women therefore had to depend on their male relatives to build relationships with cadres and officials, and then access assets. However, the deepening marketisation and increased financial capital since the 2000s relieved the constraints of these social norms on rich women to some extent. This change empowered some richer women to express their voices in village public affairs and advise cadres in the distribution of resources in public.

Poor men and women were disadvantaged in access to assets. The poor people usually negotiated with cadres or officials for access to assets. Their negotiations took the forms of complaints, arguments or quarrels with village cadres and officials. They also conducted a petition to higher level governments or destroyed public infrastructure in the village. Moreover, poor men and poor women adopted different negotiation manners. Poor men were more likely to adopt radical means such as argument and destroying infrastructure. The radical means tended to make a greater difference in assets access because these means can pose risks to cadres and officials in the administrative management. Women adopted relatively modest ways such as negotiating harmoniously in the 1980s, but these modest means tended not to work. Afterwards, poor women gradually shifted from their previous modest approach to relatively radical negotiations. Poor women argued with cadres independently or in cooperation with their husbands to access resources. These women also quarrelled with officials and took petition to higher level governments for resource access. The shifts in women's negotiation methods were precipitated by the decline in the cadres' authority in village management.

Markets in mediating access to assets

Financial capital differentiated the rich and poor people in access to assets under the mediation of markets. With the broadening and deepening marketisation, the enlarged income disparities between the rich and poor people expanded the gap between them in access to assets. Rich men and women were advantaged to use their financial capital to rent land, purchase water facilities and purchase healthcare from markets. Market reforms enabled these rich people to accumulate more financial capital and access more and higher-quality assets from markets over time. Moreover, gender-based dynamics did not differentiate rich men and rich women very much in access to assets. Both rich men and women were able to use financial capital to purchase assets from markets. Particularly, the marketisation processes and non-farm livelihood diversification enabled more village women to participate in more higher-paid income-

generating activities. A growing number of village women began to migrate or engage in local village business since the early 1990s. The gender gaps in employment markets between rich men and rich women were narrowed. Village women were able to accumulate more financial capital and access more assets from markets.

In sharp contrast, poor men and poor women were constrained from access to assets, such as access to land rental markets, water facilities, and healthcare due to their shortage of financial capital. Unlike the people from wealthier households, men and women from worse-off households were distinctly different in access to livelihood resources from markets. The gendered division of labour and gender asymmetry in labour markets differentiated poor women and poor men in livelihood strategies. Poor men have been in the leading role in labour markets and engaged in relatively high-paid non-farm work, whereas poor women's primary responsibilities were unpaid agricultural and domestic work. Despite the marketisation creating more non-farm activities, some poor women were unlikely to participate in high-paid activities due to being excluded from labour markets. Thus, poor men and poor women made different contributions to household incomes. Generally, men made greater financial contributions to household livelihoods than women. As a result, the limited financial capital in poor households were controlled and was more likely to be consumed by poor men to purchase livelihood resources from markets.

8.2.3 Social networks and village women's access to livelihood assets

Social networks contributed to village women's access to key livelihood assets, including land, water and social security. The social networks in this research were primarily kinship-based networks and neighbour-based networks, which were built upon patronage, trust, reciprocity, and interdependence. These social networks enabled relatives or neighbours to have mutual assistance and cooperation in access to assets. They helped each other in land reclamation, caregiving for patients and borrowing money for healthcare; they also cooperatively shared water facilities. With the broadening and deepening marketisation, the social networks gradually became less important for access to assets over the course of the past four decades.

Social networks provided reciprocal opportunities for both rich and poor people to access assets. Rich men and women relied on social network-based markets to rent land for free or at a very low price in kind; they also relied on social networks to cooperate and share water facilities.

However, with the marketisation since the 2000s, as these rich people turned to primarily access assets via markets and cadres/officials, their dependence on social networks was reduced. Rich men and women were different in their dependence on such social networks. Because of the pattern of patrilocal marriage, male-centred residence, and the patrilineal system, men were central in the kinship-based and neighbour-based social networks, whilst women's access to such networks was usually based on their marriage.

Poor men and women had a greater reliance on the social networks for access to assets than rich people. Because the poor people were constrained by their lack of financial and political capital to access assets, they were less likely to access assets from markets or under the mediation of cadres and officials. Thus, they had a greater dependence on kinship and neighbour networks to access assets. For instance, they reclaimed land and rented land for free or at a low price from the social networks. They also relied on kinship networks for post-abortion care, and borrowed money to cover expensive healthcare costs. However, as the social networks played a declining role in access to assets under market reforms, the poor men and women became more marginalised in access to assets. Similarly to rich men and women, patrilocal marriage, male-centred residence and the patrilineal system also differentiated poor men from women in the access to such social networks. Based on these findings, I will describe the contributions of this study to scholarly and policy debates.

8.3 Contributions to scholarly and policy debates

The research findings and arguments indicate that power relations and the intersection of gender and class impact village women's access to livelihood assets. Rich women were advantaged while poor women were disadvantaged in access to assets. The deepening marketisation enlarged such inequalities of asset access between rich women and poor women. These findings in this study carry theoretical and practical contributions in relation to the themes of livelihoods, intersectionality, gender, and class/power.

Theoretically, this research has four implications for our understanding of the intersection of rural livelihoods, gender and class. Firstly, by uncovering the institutions mediating village women's access to assets, this study deals with an understudied area in rural livelihoods research, which overlooks power and politics. Most studies concerning livelihoods do not consider power and politics (see Chapter 2). Although a few pioneering studies have intended

to bring power and politics back into livelihoods analysis by addressing ‘access’, they understood access in a rather descriptive way (Nawrotzki et al., 2012). This study fills this gap by applying a livelihoods approach which emphasises access, and addresses how political economy dynamics mediated women’s access to livelihood assets. It reveals the power relations embedded in institutional processes in the mediation of access. The power relations lead to different constraints and opportunities for differently-positioned village women to access livelihood assets. By revealing such constraints and opportunities, it enables me to take into account the relationships of inequalities in terms of the inclusion or exclusion, and advantages or disadvantages in assets access.

Secondly, by examining the intersection of gender and class in access to assets, this study contributes to the understanding of gender and livelihoods by incorporating a class dimension. Current research concerning livelihoods and gender mostly focuses on feminist approaches and provides a unidimensional conceptualization of gender (see Chapter 2). They overly emphasise the patrilocal inequalities between men and women whilst ignoring other dimensions like class. This research deals with the lacunae in existing literature by involving a class dimension and examines the intersection of gender and class in the mediation of access to land, water, healthcare and social security. This study reveals the intermeshed inequalities of gender and class, which broadens the understanding of patrilocal inequalities in the issue of livelihoods and gender. It also allows me to reveal how the intersectional gender and class dynamics generated the unequal power relationships which were embedded in, exercised through, and influenced, the institutional processes in the mediation of access to assets. As such, these processes have reflected who is empowered or disempowered, and who is included or excluded from assets access.

Thirdly, a historical lens has been applied in this study to unveil the influences of the wider societal changes on access to assets. Some livelihoods research has examined the dynamics of livelihoods, resources, and gender (Dankelman, 2012; Elmhirst, 2008), but most fail to pay attention to the rural agrarian changes and wider socioeconomic transformation of livelihoods over time. Given this gap, this research placed livelihoods along with wider historical social and economic changes in the specific context of rural China. This study adopts a historical view to examine the changes in access to land, water, and social security at local household and village levels, but also goes beyond this micro-level analysis to emphasise wider, macro-level social changes in the shaping and reshaping of rural household livelihoods. This study

situates women's experiences of assets access against the backdrop of the tremendous marketisation changes and livelihood diversification witnessed in rural China over the past four decades. By discovering the wider social changes in a historical way, this research considers power and politics in a dynamic way rather than in a static way, and utilises a historical political economy perspective to reveal how the power relations embedded in mediation processes took place and proceeded. Such lenses have been particularly valuable to understand how wider socioeconomic dynamics influenced the shifts of contextualized elements and rural household livelihoods across time and space.

Fourthly, this study highlights women's agency in utilising opportunities of and dealing with constraints on their access to livelihood assets. This study applies a people-centred perspective and focuses on women's daily experiences and life histories of assets access. Unlike most research that documents village women as wretched and passive receivers or victims in the distribution of livelihood resources (Ye et al., 2014), this study adopted life history narratives and considers the village women of different class positions as active agents and allows their voices, perspectives, and experiences to be heard and represented. Through examining the process of women's access to livelihood assets, this research not only reveals the institutional opportunities and constraints that mediate women's assets access, but also examines what measures women adopted to make use of the opportunities and deal with the constraints. This contributes to the understanding of access in livelihoods by emphasising people's perspectives and agency.

Moreover, while there are some livelihood studies on rural livelihood and gender, they mainly concern non-China contexts (Dankelman, 2012; Francis, 2000). Chinese village women's livelihood experiences in access to assets, how their access was promoted or constrained in the specific local and national contexts, and the influences of the wider historical and societal changes on village women's access to assets are therefore poorly understood. This study particularly deals with this lacuna, and thus makes a unique contribution to the current research on rural livelihoods and gender dynamics.

This research has important practical and policy implications for gender and class analysis for grassroots-level practices and policy design. This research identifies experiences and lessons in looking at village women's access to livelihood resources, so as to inform policy and practice in respect of promoting and improving gender/class equity, and livelihood security and

sustainability. Village women and their male family members, local institutions, particularly village cadres and government officials involved in asset allocation, and policymakers, can benefit from this research. Village women and their family male members can benefit from this study by acknowledging the dynamics that influence their access to assets, such as local power, market forces, and social networks, in order to utilise the opportunities for access to assets or to adopt alternative measures against constraints. Given the constraints on women's access to assets, this research indicates that it is essential for women to be representatives of their households and to participate in village public affairs, express their voices in public spaces, and build their social networks. It is also important for women to participate in labour employment markets and improve their share of household financial contributions and financial decision-making rights. These measures will be helpful to stimulate the achievement of livelihood assets for individual women.

With regard to local institutions in the implementation of asset distribution, both village cadres and government officials can benefit from this research by being aware of the experiences of village women in assets access and acknowledging the influences of gender and class on public affairs, so as to provide supportive strategies to improve women's access to assets and the equality of public asset distribution. Given men's domination in political positions, this research encourages improvements in village women's grassroots political participation in local administrative institutions and encourages women to take up positions as government officials, village cadres, village team leaders, representatives of the communist party, and village representatives. This political participation could allow women's resource needs to be heard by formal institutions and even empower them to make decisions on public affairs and the distribution of resources by themselves.

This study advises local institutions and organisations to shed light on the heterogeneity of village women in different classes and to know their specific needs and abilities in access to assets. This research finds that the poor population are the most unable to access assets. Based on this finding, it is necessary and important for the local institutions and organisations to pay great attention to the inclination of administrative practices towards the poor population, particularly the women from the poorest households without political resources. Considering priority distribution of assets to poor women may be useful to improve the equity of asset distribution. Finally, petitions, arguments, and conflicts are useful methods for some poor women to access assets, therefore the suggestion is to make sure of the availability,

accessibility, and effectiveness of villagers' channels for complaining to village committees and higher-level governments. But there needs to be awareness that a petition in some cases is distorted as a 'bargaining chip' for villagers to ask for more assets from cadres.

For policymakers, in terms of policy design in the distribution of land, water, healthcare and TPA, they can benefit from this study by acknowledging the practical informal institutions in women's assets access, and being aware of the intention and conflicts between the policies and local informal institutions. In line with local practices, this study inspires policymakers to consider gender and class perspectives in policy design, to ensure the assets access of poor women. It is also necessary for policymakers to account for practical political economy dynamics when designing policies, and to consider designing relevant regulations during the implementation of these policies, in order to ensure that the implementation of assets distribution is consistent with the policies.

8.4 Future research

This research provides a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics involving multiple layers of inequalities surrounding gender relations and social stratification concerning village women's access to key livelihood resources in post-reform rural China by incorporating a power dimension in a broader livelihood approach and by applying an intersectionality concept. However, my research mostly draws attention to village women's assets access under the pattern of patrilocal marriage and the associated post-nuptial residence arrangement. With increasing livelihood diversification, urbanization, population mobility and socio-economic change, such patterns, underpinned by related formal and informal institutions, presented here as rather rigid, have become increasingly fluid and prone to profound change, e.g. through the promotion and increase in matrilocal and/or neolocal marriage. Future research can examine such fluidity and dynamics, and consider how these may reshape village women's access to livelihood resources. Additionally, given the resource and time constraints, this study mainly focuses on women's access to a set of livelihood resources, including land, water, healthcare services, and social security. While these are part of the vital livelihood resources, they do not comprise a full range. Future research could examine women's access to a broader range of livelihood assets, e.g. education, and other social security schemes such as pensions, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics shaping and reshaping gender and class relations in Chinese villages.

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Appendix A Profiles of Research Participants

A.1 Research participants: women in Pin village

Groups of participants	Code name	Age	Marital status	Primary household livelihoods	Household income level	Comments	Focus group or in-depth interviews
Rich village women	Zhenmin	51	Married	Migration	Relatively high	Her father-in-law was a former team leader	In-depth individual interviews
	Guizhi	51	Married	Migration and farming	High	Her uncle-in-law was a former village cadre	
	Chanxi	53	Married	Petty Tofu business and farming	High	Her husband sent gifts to village cadres	
	Qing	50	Married	Transport business and agriculture	High	Her husband sent gifts to village cadres	
	Huiru	64	Married	Small grocery business, tobacco leaf cultivation and salary as a cadre	Higher	Her husband Chen was a former party secretary	
	Juan	53	Married	Timber trade	Highest	She and her husband were migrant returnees	
	Yulan	42	Married	Large-scale red chili and salary as a cadre	Higher	Her husband was the village party secretary	
	Xin	44	Married	Multiple business, large-scale tobacco leaf cultivation	Highest	Her husband has close contacts with government officials	

	Jianyun	48	Married	Large-scale tomatoes and migration	Higher	A migration returnee	
	Chan	55	Married	Incomes from as a carpenter and a grocery shop	Higher		
	Hongfu	58	Married	Multiple business and a grocery shop	Higher		
	Xiulan	49	Married	Food processing, farming, salary as an official	Higher	Her husband was a township government official	
	Chunchan	41	Married	Coach business	Higher		
	Tao	49	Married	Restaurant business	Highest		
	Xinxiu	47	Married	Salary as a cadre and small pig farm	High	The head of women's union	
	Pan	38	Married	Income from a haircut shop and remittance	Relatively high	Her husband was a migrant	In-depth individual interviews and focus groups
	Zhimin	62	Widow	Farming, remittance from children	Relatively high	She primarily took care of grandchildren	
	Aizhen	36	Married	A grocery shop, allowance as a team leader	Relatively high	Her husband Lianbo was a team leader; pressures for education fees	
	Lian	42	Married	A shop for the sale of seeds and fertilizers, remittance	High	Her husband was a migrant	
	Xinnong	32	Married	Salary as a primary teacher, remittance	High	Her husband was a taxi driver	

	Zhixia	32	Married	A breakfast store, income from construction work	High	Her husband was a construction worker	
Poor village women	Minghao	56	Married	Farming and village casual work	Low	She and her husband have reclaimed land for tobacco leaf cultivation	In-depth individual interviews
	Manzhi	60	Married	Farming, wages as a mine worker, casual work	Low	Her husband has been a team leader but was fired due to corruption	
	Faju	52	Married	Farming, casual work	Lower	Her husband suffered from tuberculosis	
	Chanzi	51	Married	Farming and some livestock	Low		
	Chuan	41	Married	Farming and salary as a timber worker	Lower	Her husband was ill and his salary was almost used for his medical costs	
	Xinchu	58	Widow	Farming, wage as an agricultural worker and Five Guarantees	Lowest	Her husband has died from liver cancer; her son was disabled	
	Gonghan	67	Married	Farming, income from being a craft	Lower	Her husband weaved hand- crafted bamboo brooms and winnowing fans	

	Qiong	67	Widow	Farming and remittance	Lower	Her husband was a smith previously
	Mingshan	68	Married	Wage as an agricultural worker	Lowest	Her husband was disabled
	Anzi	48	Widow	A barber shop	Lowest	The catastrophic medical costs for her husband's lung cancer and she was in great debts
	Yongwen	42	Married	Farming, gathering wild plants and casual work	Low	She was unhealthy and unable to migrate
	Hua	72	Married	Domestic work, remittance from children	Lower	She had experienced abortion complications
	Lian'ou	32	Married	Farming	Lower	She wanted to migrate but she had to take care of her children
	Fang	69	Married	Farming and charcoals	Low	
	Chunyu	65	Widow	Remittance	Low	She has experienced abortion complications
	Xiumu	66	Widow	Farming and livestock	Low	
	Lu	47	Married	Remittance from her husband	Low	She had huge medical costs for her breast cancer and is in debt

	Lai	38	Married	Farming, casual work	Low	Her husband worked as a local casual worker	
	Binong	67	Married	Farming, casual work and very few remittance	Low	Her sons were migrants	Individual interviews and focus groups
	Can	43	Married	Remittance from her husband	Lowest	Her daughter was in primary school and her son was disabled	
	Zhengxia	62	Married	Farming, casual work and remittance	Low	Her two daughters were migrants	
	Yuntao	62	Married	Farming, allowance as a team leader	Low	She had heavy pressures for her sons' marriage costs	Focus groups
	Yue'e	71	Widow	Little pension as a former head of women's union	Low	She had large medical expenses for chronic diseases	

Note: since the levels of household income have been changing over time, the household income level I listed in this table was identified in the period when village women's stories were analysed in relation to certain topics in empirical chapters.

A.2 Research participants: husbands in Pin village

Group of participants	Code name	Age	Wife	Primary interview topics
Husbands	Sheng	56	Chan	Gender differentiation in labour market participation; family business; household financial decision-making rights.
	Zhiwen	52	Qing	Participation in well construction; participation in public meetings; water issues.
	Bangman	43	Xin	Contacts with officials; decision-making rights within households; family business.
	Rong	56	Minghao	The gendered division of labour; land and agriculture.

	Jiayi	55	Faju	Negotiation with cadres; fetching water.
	Yang	62	Manzhi	Financial decision-making within households; borrowing money for healthcare; village political issues.

A.3 Research participants: village cadres, village team leaders and government officials

Groups of participants	Code name	Gender	Age	Political positions	Primary interview topics
Village cadres	Zhou	Male	47	Village party secretary	History of Pin village; decisions and challenges on the distribution of land, water and social security, etc.
	Xinxiu	Female	47	Head of the Women's Union	The family planning policy, contraception, healthcare resources and medical insurance.
	Yueguo	Male	51	Village director	The implementation of state policies and government assignments, such as land distribution, water projects and TPA.
	Jinhua	Male	42	Bookkeeper	Detailed information such as meeting reports, population, endowments, income and expenditures of Pin Village Committee.
	Chen	Male	67	Former party secretary	The distribution of land, water and other resources since the early 1980s to the mid-2010s.
Government officials	Yuan	Male	54	An official from Yong government	Decisions on the launch of commercialised agriculture projects, water projects and TPA to villages.
	Tian	Male	56	An official from Yong government	The implementation of TPA in Pin village through the working system of station in villages.
Village team leaders	Yuntao	Female	62	Shangping team	The distribution of land and water projects; the identification of TPA beneficiaries in Shangping.
	Gang	Male	55	Xiaping team	Constructions on wells and canals; the distribution of land; the use of public water pump; the identification of TPA beneficiaries in Xiaping.

	Lianbo	Male	39	Yanwan team	The distribution of land and water; the funding for road construction in Yanwan, etc.
	Shimin	Male	41	Tianwan team	The distribution of land and water projects; the identification of TPA beneficiaries; the funding for water canals in Tianwan.

Appendix B Interview Guides

B.1 Interview guide for life history interviews with village women

I Standard information

1. Name
2. Age
3. Marital status
4. Date of marriage
5. Family size
6. Household income
7. Village team

II Individual and household livelihoods

8. What income-generating activities (farm and non-farm) are your family members engaged in?
9. How many crops, livestock, forestry and trees in your family?
10. What resources do you think are the most important to your household livelihoods? Arable land, forestry, water or others?
11. What are main promoters and constraints for you to get these livelihood resources? Please give examples.
12. What are main promoters and constraints for your household livelihood development in the past few decades? Please give examples.
13. How did you deal with those constraints? Has anyone helped you?
14. Could you please tell me about your family incomes and main consumption?
15. Who controls the household finances in your family and who makes decisions on household consumption?
16. Who does domestic work in your family?
17. What were key events in your family and how have they affected your livelihoods?
18. What state policies do you think have affected your household livelihoods?
19. Further questions that were produced after I had gathered the 'main narrative' of participants in these above-mentioned aspects.

B.2 Interview guide for husbands

1. Name
2. Age
3. What are your income-generating activities? Do you do domestic work?
4. What resources are the most important to your livelihoods and how did you get them?
Is there any difference between you and your wife in access to these resources?
5. Who controls household finance in your family?
6. Who makes decisions on household consumption? Is there any conflict between you and your wife in decision making? Please give examples.
7. Who participated in political meetings and public affairs in your family? Please give examples.
8. Further questions were produced based on the completed interviews of their wives.

B.3 Interview guide for village cadres and village team leaders

I Standard information

1. Name
2. Age
3. Political positions

II Geographical characteristics, population and the distribution of resources

1. The location of Pin village and its distance from Wang Town Government and Yong county.
2. The three-tier system in Pin People's Commune from the mid-1950s to the late 1970s.
3. Population, demographic features and village teams.
4. The endowments of village natural resources and natural setting.
5. The distribution processes of the most important livelihood resources in HRS, such as land, water, forestry, fuel and electricity.
6. What were the challenges in the distribution of these resources? How did you deal with these challenges?

III Economy and village markets

7. What types of crops and trees are cultivated in Pin village? What are the yields of crops?
8. What types of livestock are raised? How many are they?

9. What are the primary businesses in Pin village and how have they changed?
10. The development of industry and tourism.
11. How did village markets develop and how have they changed? What goods do they sell?
12. What are the changes in rural-urban migration?

IV Income levels, rural social division and household expenditures

13. The annual per capita income in Pin village in 2016.
14. The financial ranks of households based on their household income levels.
15. What are the per capita incomes and primary livelihood strategies in rich (i.e. richest and richer), middle-income and poor (i.e. poorest and poorer) households?
16. What are the ratios of the rich, middle-income and poor households in Pin village?
17. What are villagers' major expenditures?

V Village political institutions

18. What are the political institutions in Pin village?
19. What are the composition of these political institutions and their administrative functions?
20. Village financial incomes and expenditures for office and public affairs.
21. How did Financial Transfer Payment System influence village finances?

VI Public services and social welfare

22. What hospitals can provide healthcare services for Pin villagers? What medical insurance has been provided to villagers from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s?
23. How many people and who have been covered by pension projects, Five Guarantees and Minimum Living Allowance?
24. What schools are in Pin village and how many students are there?
25. What types of state-funded projects have been issued to Pin village?
26. How were the public funds for social security gathered?
27. Changes of village infrastructure (e.g. road, canals) and transportation.
28. How were the beneficiaries of Targeted Poverty Alleviation identified in Pin village? How many were there and who were they?
29. What measures of Targeted Poverty Alleviation have been adopted?
30. How was the family planning policy carried out? What contraceptive measures have been adopted in Pin village?

VII Social relations and cultural activities

31. Is there any religion and cultural organisation in Pin village? If yes, what are their activities?
32. What are village public entertainment activities?

B.4 Interview guide for government officials

I Standard information

1. Name
2. Age
3. Occupation

II State-funded projects and their implementation

4. What types of commercialised agriculture projects have been issued to villages? What policies are related to them?
5. What was the amount of funding for each project and how was it allocated?
6. How did your government decide to launch state-funded projects to villages? Such as commercialised large-scale agriculture, Rural Drinking Water Safety Project and Miniature Irrigation and Drainage Engineering.
7. What specific strategies of Targeted Poverty Alleviation have been carried out in Pin village?
8. How did you allocate the funding of TPA?
9. What challenges have you faced in the implementation of TPA in Pin village?

B.5 Topic guide for focus group interviews with village women

I Standard information

1. Name
2. Age
3. Date of marriage
4. Family financial situation
5. Village team

II Access to assets and livelihoods

6. How did you fetch basic livelihood resources, like firewood and water?
7. How was your family allocated land?
8. What barriers did you have in access to land, water and healthcare services? How did you deal with them?
9. Are you a TPA beneficiary? If yes, how were you selected? What TPA aid measures have you gotten?
10. Do you participate in NCMS, and why? If yes, what do you think of the insurance?
11. What types of healthcare services can you get, and why? What do you think of them?

Appendix C Main Documents Gathered During Fieldwork

Record 1- the file of population in Pin village

Record 2- the file of village teams in Pin village

Record 3- the participants of NCMS in Pin village

Record 4- the financial incomes and expenditures in Pin village

Record 5- the status of per income in Pin village

Notice 1- the indexes of identifying the poverty-stricken TPA beneficiaries that produced by Yong County Government

Notice 2- A notice of agricultural subsidies that regulated by Zhangjiajie Municipal Government

Notice 3- the No.15 Document issued by Zhangjiajie Municipal Government in 2014

Meeting record 1- the vote result of the identification of TPA beneficiaries in Pin village in 2014

Meeting record 2- the 2013 Miniature Irrigation and Drainage Engineering written by the bookkeeper

Plan 1- 2016-2020 economic development in Wang town

Plan 2- 2016-2020 economic development in Pin village

Report 1- 2015 annual economy development written by Wang Town Government

Report 2- 2016 annual economy development written by Wang Town Government

Regulation 1 – the identification of TPA beneficiaries regulated by Hunan Provincial Government

Appendix D Information Sheet for Participants

I am Shiping Yu, a Ph.D. Candidate in East Asian Studies, University of Leeds, UK. I am conducting the fieldwork research for my thesis in this village.

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Please spend some time reading the following information carefully and decide whether you would like to be a participant in this research or not. Please feel free to ask if anything is unclear or if you would like any further details.

Purpose of the research

This study aims to understand the changes of access to livelihood resources and livelihood implications. This study explores power relations, gender and class dynamics, and how they influence village women's access to assets, as well as how these processes are influenced by the wider changes of rural stratification, livelihood diversification and increasing marketisation.

Procedures

You are invited to be a participant in this research since you meet our recruitment criteria. You have the right to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to be a participant, you will attend individual interviews or focus group interviews. You will be requested to retain this information sheet, sign a consent form and keep a copy. You are free to withdraw before the full anonymization, write-up and publication of the research data. The expected deadline for withdrawal is 30th June 2017.

Each individual interview will last about two hours and each focus group about one hour. You will be encouraged to recount your lives, livelihood experiences and express your own views and perspectives on the topics of livelihood resource changes, livelihoods strategies and outcomes, land reform policies, the gendered division of labour, and so forth.

Data anonymity and confidentiality

All the information collected will be anonymous. The interviews are to be recorded, but if you don't wish them to be, please let me know and I'll turn off the audio recorder. All audio-recordings and paper materials collected from you will be kept confidential. The electronic data will be safely kept in a password encrypted laptop and on my University disk. The paper data

will be stored in a safe place. Except for me as the researcher, others are prohibited from accessing the data.

Any question

If there is any further question, you could call me +(86)15210922091 or send an email to Shiping Yu mlsy@leeds.ac.uk.

Appendix E Consent Form

Consent to take part in rural livelihoods, gender dynamics and intersectional inequalities in South China

	Add your initials next to the statement if you agree
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw before 30th June 2017 without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.	
I give permission for the researcher to have access to my anonymized responses. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential only if true.	
I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research in an anonymized form.	
I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by the researcher from the University of Leeds where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for this researcher to have access to my records.	
I agree that this interview can be recorded.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the researcher if my contact details change.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of lead researcher	
Signature	
Date	