

Village Construction under China's Rapid Urbanization: The Role and Strategy of Planning in the Rural Areas

Chen Zhang, and Jiwu Wang

Abstract—With China's urbanization continuing to accelerate, a amount of rural people flood into China's cities in recent years, and the issue of agriculture, rural areas and farmers is getting more and more serious. In 2005, the Chinese government put forward a plan for "the construction of new rural village", in order to coordinate the development of both urban and rural areas. The planning method of rural region differs sharply from that of urban areas, as same as village social structure and habits of farmer's life, so the studies which can consider the special needs of village construction in China are absolutely essential. This paper expresses explore current situation and problems existing in the construction of China's new rural village, such as bigger gap between urban and rural areas, excessive new construction projects, extinct traditional village style and so on. It tries to analyze the deep reason of the present situation of the village from law system, industrial structure, financial sources and planning method. Then it also provides a guide for developing policies and procedures promoting the development of china's rural areas.

Keywords—Rural areas; village construction; physical planning; law system; financial sources; Public participation; China.

I. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

RAPID urbanization upsets the original equilibrium of urban and rural areas. The decline of traditional agriculture and the deterioration of rural environmental become the common problems faced by countries which are experiencing urbanization. After entering the 21st century, the marginalization of rural areas is becoming more and more serious in developing countries. Therefore, many countries are placing village construction as the keystone of government work to face the future challenge of rural development.

A. Decline of village under China's rapid urbanization

China has been through the rapid urbanization process in the past thirty years. Demand for laborer with urban secondary and tertiary industries has continued to rapidly rise, lead to the rapid influx of rural surplus laborer into the cities. The china's rural population has dropped from 795.6 million (80.61 percent of the total population) to 674.1 million (50.32 percent of the total population) between 1980-2010, and the

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proportion of rural population was reduced by more than a third. Apart from the reasons of statistical discrepancy and administrative divisions adjustment during this time, peasants entering towns is the principal reason for the decline of rural population. In the last three decades, the average annual growth of rural population has stayed below that of china's total population (Fig. 1) and the rural population change can be characterized as a continual decrease from migration or net outmigration. With the decline of rural population and agricultural status, the traditional village style is irretrievably on the decline, which arousing a series of rural sociological problems, such as rural depopulation and hollowization.

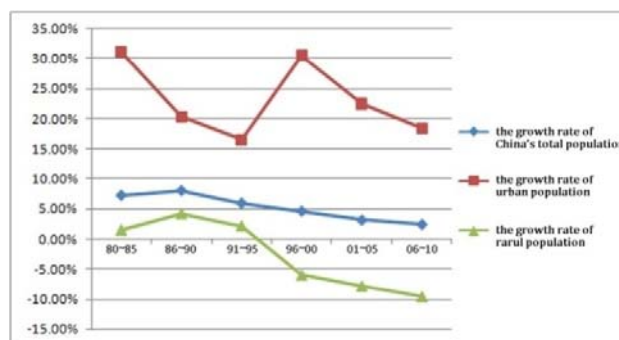


Fig 1 The average annual growth of china's urban and rural population between 1980~2010 (Data were collected in Statistical Yearbook of Chinese Population)

B. Village Construction in China

Because of village development lagging, the Chinese government put forward a plan for "the construction of new rural village" in 2005, which increases investment for developing rural areas. According to the statistics of the Treasury, the development assistance for agriculture from the central finance is increasing year by year, and has been more than one trillion Yuan in 2011. This policy accelerated the infrastructure construction of rural areas, and improved the living standards of farmers.

C. Research Boom of Village Construction in China

With the increasing emphasis on rural construction, the development of rural areas and village planning has been a hot topic of studying in the china's academia. Based on widely collected papers of village construction in journals in 10 years recently (Fig. 2), the research focus of village construction has been transferred from summarization of village constructing

practice [1-3] to methods of village planning [4-5] and technical regulations and standards [6-7]. Standardizing the methods of village planning, which can adapt to the characteristics of china's rural areas, is the main purpose and highlights of the study in the future.

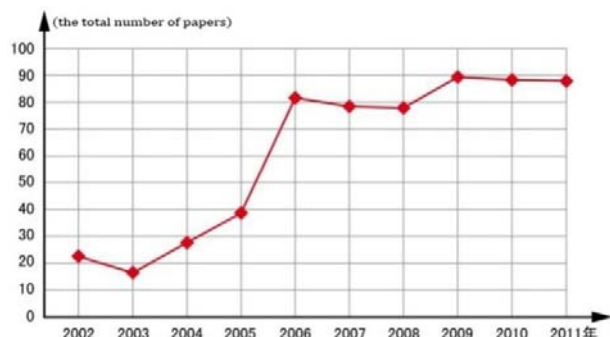


Fig 2 Change of the papers number between 2002~2011
(China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database', 'China Doctoral Dissertations Full-text Database' were sources of papers. 527 academic articles relevant to this research was published between 2002~2011)

II. ANALYSIS: STATUS AND PROBLEMS

Since 2005, China has carried out the construction of new rural village, and the living environment of rural areas has been greatly improved. However, due to think less about social structure, economic development and cultural traditions in rural areas, China's new rural construction has some drawbacks.

A. Land Use Characteristics

Because of urban-rural dual system of land policy in china, land use characteristics in urban and rural area showed significant differences. In China's rural areas, the homestead system is basic system of land, which protect village collective for land ownership and farmers for land use rights. Due to it, the most important land use characteristics in China's rural is privatization of land use rights with individual residences, which immensely different with urban. But many rural areas choose to unified construction and identical residences in China today. It will destroy the land use characteristics and farmers' autonomy demand.

B. Agricultural Development

China's rural planning pay more attention to residential construction in the short term, because of the importance placed on rural physical environment from the government. [8] However, it lack the profound thought for agricultural development and social structure in rural areas.

The purpose of rural construction should be the revitalization of agriculture and rural areas. Only when establishing a long-term mechanism for the development of rural industries, we can protect the sustainable development of rural areas. If deviating from this fundamental objective, rural construction may be superficial and short-term.

C. Rural Legislation

Rural legislation lags far behind city legislation in China at

the moment. By scattering in other laws and regulations, laws which refer to rural construction didn't form a complete system. Legal and technical standards are still far from completion, which makes the lack of binding in rural construction. [9] Meanwhile, local policies and national laws has also not been integrated, which caused a lot of management blind spots in actual construction process.

D. Fund Sources

Village construction is a systems engineering requiring a large amount investment. It needs to raise funds from a variety of sources, such as government, financial market and farmers. However, most of village construction currently depends on government financial funding in China without establishing an efficient country financial system. These make construction projects with a greater risk and lack of sustainable development mechanism.

III. CONCLUSION: THE NEW MEASURES

A. New Planning System Based on the Land Use

The planning of villages, in its present form, is lacking of flexibility space. Due to less consideration with farmer's need on houses and environment, these plans would frequently encounter many difficulties in the actual process. Characteristics of land determine the core of planning techniques. Village planning should follow characteristics of the rural land which decided by the homestead system, and propose a detailed planning components control system, combining the restrictive and directional planning method together organically. Village planning should be a regulatory planning based on small block control, and protect the autonomy of the villagers. It should provide a scientific guidance for village construction, and create a more beautiful rural ecological landscape.

B. The Development of 1.5-Industry

The ultimate goal of rural construction can't be using urban areas and industrial instead of traditional agricultural and rural areas, which should revitalize agriculture and promote balanced development among different regions.

Therefore, China's rural construction would not only emphasis on upgrading of the rural physical space, but also stress optimization of rural industry structure simultaneously. Villages should be based on its own resources to develop featured products. It should develop new industries which unlike traditional agriculture, such as 1.5 industry and Eco-tourism. This will make the economy of rural areas revitalize.

C. The Improvement of Management Policies

Law is the cornerstone of rural construction. Due to the lack of laws and technology standard about rural construction, there are a lot of problems in the village management, such as Lower utilization of land, building outside of Permitted, ignoring the environment and so on.

Therefore, it has great realistic significance for us to strengthen legislation in rural areas. China should establish a complete legal system of rural construction, which should

consist of core law, comprehensive regulations and technical standards related to village construction[10]. This can clarify the object, objectives, significance and forced content of the Rural Construction, in order to protect rural construction in accordance with the law within the framework of specification management.

D. The Completion of Financial System

According to Norman-Uphoff' research about successful experience of rural development in third world countries, government , non-governmental and private sector(for profit) are all existing limitation in promoting rural development. This means that rural construction cannot rely too much upon a kind of financial support. The leader of village need to set up the financial management institutions, and propose ways of rural financial investment mechanism innovations. It can develop a variety of financing forms, such as public finance, loans and private funds, which be used to strengthen the public infrastructure in rural areas[11]. Meanwhile, the village can set up internal accumulation mechanism. By receiving a certain percentage of income from the non-agricultural operators (such as accommodations, tourism), it can create community fund for public spending. The measures will enable the village to more balanced development.

E. Public Participation in Planning

Villagers are the mainstay of rural construction. The villager autonomy is the effective way of rural management. Rural managers should focus on cultivating planning awareness of villagers, and disseminate planning knowledge. Villagers should be introduced the entire process of planning design, planning decision-making, building management and maintenance in popular language and form. Based on this, they can express their needs and opinions for rural construction, and participate in the formulation of village planning. Through the measures above, more public participation will appear in the village construction. Thereby, we can build a diversified style of lovely countryside.

At the same time, village management department need to mobilize the enthusiasm of the farmers by material compensation or rewards, and encourage the development of villagers ' self-government organizations.

In the recognition and support of the government, rural environment and the living standard of the peasants had a great development in China in recent years, but there are still a lot of issues that need to be addressed. This paper further shows that status and problems of the current rural construction in China, and it puts forward improved optimization strategies which based on previous study. Meanwhile, this paper want to provide help for further investigation of rural construction, and promote the sound development of rural areas.

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