

From Government-Led to Collective Action: A Case Study of the Transformation of Urban Renewal Governance in Nanjing, China

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Abstract : With the decline of "growthism", China's urbanization process has shifted from the stage of spatial expansion to the stage of optimization of built-up spaces, and urban renewal has gradually become a new wave of China's urban movement in recent years. The ongoing urban renewal movement in China not only needs to generate new motivation for urban development but also solve the backlog of social problems caused by rapid urbanization, which provides an opportunity for the transformation of China's urban governance model. Unlike previous approaches that focused on physical space and functional renewal, such as urban reconstruction, redevelopment, and reuse, the key challenge of urban renewal in the post-growth era lies in coordinating the complex interest relationships between multiple stakeholders. The traditional theoretical frameworks that focus on the structural relations between social groups are insufficient to explain the behavior logic and mutual cooperation mechanism of various groups and individuals in the current urban renewal practices. Therefore, based on the long-term tracking of the urban renewal practices in the Old City of Nanjing (OCN), this paper introduces the "collective action" theory to deeply analyze changes in the urban renewal governance model in OCN and tries to summarize the governance strategies that promote the formation of collective action within recent practices from a micro-scale. The study found that the practice in OCN experienced three different stages "government-led", "growth coalition" and "asymmetric game". With the transformation of government governance concepts, the rise of residents' consciousness of rights, and the wider participation of social organizations in recent years, the urban renewal in OCN is entering a new stage of "collective renewal action". Through the establishment of the renewal organization model, incentive policies, and dynamic negotiation mechanism, urban renewal in OCN not only achieves a relative balance between individual interests and collective interests but also makes the willingness of residents the dominant factor in formulating urban renewal policies. However, the presentation of "collective renewal action" in OCN is still mainly based on typical cases. Although the government is no longer the dominant role, a large number of resident-led collective actions have not yet emerged, which puts forward new research needs for a sustainable governance policy innovation in this action.

Keywords : urban renewal, collective action theory, governance, cooperation mechanism, China

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