

Comparative Research on Human Settlements in Asian Rural Areas Based on Collaborative Construction Mechanism

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Abstract. Rural planning is perceived as a spatial planning centered on the human settlements and there are many activities for rural reconstruction and researches conducted from the perspective of active intervention, with fewer studies regarding the village as the main body for the establishment of self-built system. And the other-organization built by the rural areas is strongly oriented. In Asian countries like China, South Korea and Japan, there are farming traditions, in which the familial and small-scale farmland holding and agricultural production mode are deep-rooted. Traditional agriculture and rural areas are not fundamentally changed by industrialization and modernization process. And the small-scale peasant in the East is marked by the decentralized possession of farmland and management in the rural areas and a large number of farmers to be remained. But the rural population keeps decreasing. After analyzing the status quo of human settlements in China, Korea and Japan, the paper makes an analysis from the different ways of thinking and professional perspective and focuses on putting forward the solutions to the problems on macro level, with the feasibility of the practical significance and the landing researches still staying in the testing stage. In the context of increasingly missing regional and contextual features, the launching and researches of “co-constructed community” as the folk protection way to emerging rural heritage are just started, and the researches on rural construction in Northeast China from the perspective of catalyst are absent. The contact agent with the catalytic action mechanism of seeing big things through small ones fits the rural areas marked by vast territory and diversified aspect, which is applicable to the bottom-up operation mechanism autonomously built by the villagers.

1. Concept of Rural Human Settlements

Generally speaking, the human settlements refer to the region where human beings are involved in organized activities, with mankind as the principal part to be highlighted. The environment for habitation is a surface space closely related to the activities for human survival and also one multi-layered spatial system. It is the material base, means of production and objects of labor for the existence and development of the mankind, with the various factors directly affected by human social activities. And it is regarded as the main place for human beings to utilize and transform nature in their living behavior. For Mr. Wu Liangyong, the human settlement environment shall be defined as “The place where human beings live in family groups and the surface space tightly related to human



survival. It is the base of human existence in nature and the primary site for human to utilize nature and transform nature.” He is of the view that human settlements science is a comprehensive disciplinary cluster to study all human settlements, including villages, towns and cities, and five systems consisting of residential system, support system, human system, social system and natural system will be researched.

Evidently, rural human settlements as parts of concept for human settlement environment means the residential area where people live and is restricted by the rural area, and it is the region in which human beings are mainly engaged in agricultural labor. Those living there are primarily involved in the agricultural labor. In accordance with the scale and different functions, the residential environment in the rural districts is separately categorized into two levels, namely central village and the primary-level village. Central village, the center for the management, service and residence of the village, is the place where the Village Committee is and the perfect public welfare service facilities and infrastructure are equipped. But it does not rule out that a small quantity of natural villages are in possession of strong function of serving the surrounding countryside but play a role of central village. Among them, the town as a category of central village is perceived as the economic center and a service center outside the township resident in the township, and it has more abundant public service function than the general central village. To some extent, it works to push forward the regional economy of villages and towns, but it has no administrative function itself. In terms of the primary-level village as the natural village mainly engaged in agricultural production, it is the smallest unit of rural production and life, in which there are few population and land in the village and the living services and infrastructure services are absent, without functions of serving to the outside. No matter the grass-roots village, central village or town, they fall into the category of rural human settlement concepts and possess the economic, social culture and regional ecological characteristics of rural connotation. In the macro background that China’s urbanization is developing rapidly, the swift changes of rural human settlements in all districts are also under way, so it is distinguished by systematicness and dynamics.

2. The Status Quo of Rural Human Settlements and Co-constructed Mechanism in China

In the thirty years since the founding of the people's Republic of China, the dualistic structure of agriculture assisting industry and countryside boosting city triggers the expanding gap between urban and rural areas although that “the goal of building a new socialist countryside” was clearly proposed in The Third Session of the National People's Congress in 1956. And both strict household registration system and the restrictive urban and rural products circulation are enlarging the gap and increasingly worsening the three agriculture-related issues, which is the distinct feature of this phase. From the household contract responsibility system at the initial stage of reform and opening up to the later construction of a well-off society, the overall income has also increased accordingly and their spiritual life is also gradually enriched while the enthusiasm of farmers has been fully mobilized. However, in the middle and late 90s when the market economy kept heating up, the rural-urban disparities have expanded further. The important “twenty character missions” namely “developed production, better-off life, cultivated countryside, clean environment and democratic system of management” proposed in Outline Recommendation for 11th Five-Year adopted in The Fifth Plenary Session of The 16th CPC Central Committee has marked the approaching new stage for new socialist countryside construction, that’s why 2005 was a representative year. As the guiding ideology of the new rural construction, the five requirements has reflected the organically unified society, economy, culture and the rural scenery to be built, and they are countermeasures for the issues of agriculture in the harmonious society.

People in rural society have been living for generations together in the land where they live, grow and die, and the mode of production dominated by agriculture determines their strong dependence on objective conditions like weather, climate and geography. Before they are able to compete with nature, they adopt a natural way which seemed to be helplessness in the historical context at that time but was

a wise choice to reflect a hands-off construction concept. To some extent, the development of the idea has stakes in the life style or cultural form of Chinese farming in the ancient times.

There are obvious cognitive differences between villagers and architects playing the different roles. When working together in the construction of rural area, they have the separate rights to control the resources, in which the villagers rebuilt and built up their homes while the architects comb it in the manner of renovation and renewal. From the perspective of subject and the others, the both sides are mutually confirmed and referential, and an intrinsic self-cognition of both parties will be produced in the course of constant interaction between the subject and the others. In the relationship, there may be no others on an absolute level, and they will change accompanying with the different subject positions in different historical context and the value standard of the times. Therefore, the others are merely the one in the subjective imagination actually. For the architects, the intrinsic pattern of participation in construction is based on this imagination and the self-experience, and the difference with logic of the villagers' lives cannot be ignored. Even on the basis of the fieldwork in quantity, the others' way of viewing cannot be changed. The behavior and cognition are extremely complicated attributed to time, space and the mental experience of the viewer. In this regard, the distinction of the imagination on the identity of the others or the cognition cannot be completely dissolved and there is no need to eliminate it absolutely.

As one of the areas in which Chinese regional culture is conserved most completely, the rural settlement has not merely aroused the extensive attention from the research field but also gradually developed into the thinking prototype of the design field. The shaping of the concern dwells in both cultural value of rural settlement itself and the frugal living forms which are disappearing and changing in an uncontrollable manner. The traditional means of construction, the pattern of cultural transmission and the external environmental factors speed up the development of countryside culture spontaneously. But the sweeping globalization, accelerating urbanization and mushrooming economy inevitably trigger the changing original residential morphology and the cognitive structure of dwellers, and the permeation of foreign culture stimulates the emergence of the alienated form of rural settlement in a sense. The generation of the phenomena has long deviated from the cultural attributes of survival limits at first and it is more of a reveal of the conceptual and cognitive dimensions. But it does reflect the special geographical phenomenon at the present. Thus, it is obviously incomplete to judge the phenomenon merely from the form. Instead, it shall explain the rural construction in the new era. After analyzing the relation between cognitive level and social culture from the perspective of the subjects who construct and live in the rural settlements, it is likely to awaken the changes that have taken place and are about to happen in the vast rural areas.

3. The State of Rural Human Settlements and Co-constructed Mechanism in Japan and Korea

The demographic urbanization of South Korea was 41% in 70s, 77% in 1994 and nearly 90% at present. Starting at the low starting point of urban development and urbanization, they launched the new village movement at the earlier times and began to pay attention to the rural areas, which had improved the agricultural production and people's living environment as well as enhanced the enthusiasm of the peasants. Under the circumstance of low urbanization and large proportion of rural areas and agriculture, the government had been heavily burdened and taken the rural development into consideration many years ago. But the even more interesting thing was the new village movement. Along with the improving urbanization, they had embarked on changing ways because the government failed to afford it. Therefore, it was more about farmers' dominance and governments' supporting, with completely external forces and bad effect. After 2005, more applications were submitted by the rural areas, screened by the governments and then supported. In this way, the rural construction was promoted.

On the other hand, extra efforts are made by the governments to invest and support the rural area. Korean Farming and Fishing Villages Comprehensive Development Support Association, as the permanent government bodies at the government level, affiliates with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Aquatic Food of Central Government, and it was established in 2000 after merging Water

Conservancy Association, Land Development Association and Farmland Development Association originally subordinate to different government departments. It serves to promote the development in the rural areas other than metropolis, with the mission of “taking the advantage of rural resources and strengthening the value and economic capabilities in the rural areas in a better and efficient way.”

Nowadays, some new positive trends are appearing. Firstly, the trend of aging is declining while there is rural depopulation. Secondly, the tides of “returning to agriculture” and “backing to village” have begun to appear. In terms of “returning to agriculture”, it means to the backflow of rural migration or the urban population flowing into the countryside to engage in agricultural labor. The people living in the cities are allowed to go to the countryside, those with productive capacity are allowed to buy land in accordance with the law and the original white-collar workers can farm. But we are one-way. The “backing to village” means that city dwellers live in the rural areas or that the senior citizens back to the rural pension. The changes are taken place in people’s thinking. In the past, it was merely grain production base when it came to the rural areas but it is all about life, employment and leisure space at present. And it is believed that the countryside shall be preserved, not just for food security.

In Japan’s rural conditions, it is much better than that in South Korea, which is related to local cultural traditions instead of the problems about economic phase. The urbanization in Japan in early 60s was 63%, 86% in 2001 and more than 90% in 2015. From 1945 to 1970, the villages were reduced to the original 8% and it was the large-scale removal and merger. After 40 years, it was decreased to the original 2%. Actually, it was triggered by the administration organization system, with the village, town and city of Japan as first-level administrative subdivisions to be merged. Previously, we misunderstood “one village and one industry” which was the large area of the village actually. And Japan is emphasizing six industries now, namely “primary industry + secondary industry + tertiary industry”. To a great extent, the modernization of agriculture and the scale of farmland are closing to large households through leasing. And there are evident rural industry diversification and rural leisure. The aging population in the rural areas is increasingly prominent, but there is scarce off-cultivation. The farmland is used for intensive cultivation, with some cultivated by families themselves and some concentrated in large. It is also even treated as the heritage and the so-called museum. In fact, it is the terraced fields which are far from that in Guizhou. But it is developed and utilized as the cultural landscape.

There are small differences between modern civilization degree and the public management in Japan, but the economic density is highly different from population density. The former public service level cannot be divorced from the public policy intervention like financial budget or transfer payments of central government, so that the urban and rural residents nationwide can enjoy fair national treatment. Taking the case for Hokkaido, it has been developed for many years but there is still small population of more than 5 million mostly living in the capital at present. In the context of fewer territories in Japan, higher population density, booming economy, no big difference in the regional public services and the large financial resources and efforts made for the inter-regional balanced development by the governments and non-governmental organizations, the declines in the northern regions and traditional agricultural areas are irreversible and it seems to be a regular trend in modern society.

Japanese government and social organizations have invested giant financial resources and energy in implementing various plans for revitalization, playing a crucial role in maintaining rural operation and agricultural production. There are many successful cases, but the decreasing rural population and ageing are not changed fundamentally as a whole. In spite of various efforts to be made, the population is still decreasing.

4. Conclusion

Three agriculture-related issues center on “people” as the human settlement as well as the new urbanization construction and all of the problems derive from one fact, with the rural construction focusing on this. Since the reform and opening up, the rural construction of China has gone through

more than 30 years and the relevant principles and strategies have been widely explored in various disciplines and fields. However, it shall make great preparation for how to further deepen and implement it and transform it into scientific operation methods and measures. Especially on the aspect of rural cooperative construction, it is of great importance on how to exceed the existing surface scenic setting movement so as to better the rural landscape in the round and substantially improve the villagers' lives. Looking back to China's rural construction in the long term, the process is not deepened linearly and it is increasingly promoted when comprehensively combing different professional disciplines. For the discipline of architectural planning, a qualitative improvement is necessary in the course of generalizing the accumulation. Based on architecture, landscape and planning discipline, it is integrated with the related theories like cognitive development theory, synergetics, communication sciences and psychology, and elaborates the natural environment, social environment and villagers' cognitive style and evolution characteristics in the built environment after combing structure hierarchy and development process of subject cognition. With the combination with the typical practice cases, it is to demonstrate in the hope of authentically guiding the current rural settlements to be built.

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