



The Experience and Inspiration of Rural Construction in Developed Countries: The Case of “New Village Movement” in South Korea

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Abstract

Rural construction is a key topic of discussion because it is related to the integrated development of urban and rural areas and national macro-control. With the economic and social development, the disparity between urban and rural areas has caused a large number of rural people to flow into the cities to earn a living, and the problems of hollowing out, aging and low vitality have emerged in rural areas in different degrees in China. This is a matter of survival in rural areas, and rural construction is facing multiple tests and challenges. Therefore, we choose to refer to the rural construction experience of South Korea, which is also located in East Asia and analyze the accumulated practical experience and inspiration of its “New Village Movement” in order to provide a reference for rural construction in China.

Subject Areas

Rural Planning

Keywords

Rural Construction, South Korea’s New Village Movement, Experience and Inspiration

1. Introduction

Rural areas are an important part of a country. Only by coordinating urban and rural development can we promote social progress and development as a whole. However, with the rapid economic development and urbanization, rural and urban areas have been in an unbalanced state of development for a long time, and rural areas are faced with difficult problems such as resource scarcity, back-

ward infrastructure, population loss and aging. Neighboring South Korea, which is also conflicted, started the Saemaeul Movement as early as 1970 to build its countryside and promote its high-level development. Therefore, the successful measure of the new village movement has important reference significance to our rural construction and development.

2. Introduction of Korea New Village Movement

2.1. Overview of Korea

Korea is located in East Asia and is one of the “Four Little Dragons of Asia”, which is known as the “Five-Year Plan” for economic development in the 1960s. However, the imbalance in the proportion of industrial and agricultural development brought the rural and agricultural problems to the fore. In the 1970s, the Korean government decided to carry out a large-scale rural renovation campaign and the “New Village Movement” was born.

2.2. Evolution of the New Village Movement in Korea

The first phase of the New Village Movement was from 1971 to 1973, which was called the infrastructure construction phase, and in the 1970s, when the New Village Movement gradually emerged, the state gave priority to “balanced industrial and agricultural development” and adopted a strategy of rural development and In the 1970s, the “New Village Movement” emerged and the state gave priority to “balanced industrial and agricultural development” and adopted a rural development strategy and a spiritual development strategy combined with a civic movement [1]. During this period, rural infrastructure development was the main focus of the Korean government, and the goal was to improve rural public infrastructure and enrich the functional value of rural areas.

The proliferation phase was from 1974 to 1976, when the entire population was lifted out of poverty [1], which not only provided reliable support for the subsequent development of the New Village Movement but also served as an effective way to consolidate the results of poverty eradication. The second phase of construction focused on further improving the quality of life of the masses, production utilities and restructuring of plantations as well as strengthening education for farmers.

The period from 1977 to 1980 was a period of enrichment and improvement. 1977 saw the improvement of rural housing conditions, with 2.5 million peasants nationwide living in tiled or iron houses. This phase focused on narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas, and the government encouraged villagers to develop a variety of industries, such as animal husbandry and specialty agriculture, to enhance the spirit of cooperation among farmers, and to implement the new village spirit.

From 1981 to 1988, it was the stage of national spontaneous movement. From the initial government-led, “government-run” rural movement, the new village movement has developed into a civil society movement with full popular partic-

ipation [2]. During this phase, the government participated in policy formulation and financial support to encourage farmers to diversify their businesses and improve their economic income.

The last stage is from 1989 to the present, which is called the self-development stage. This stage emphasizes the government's construction of moral and ethical education for the public, paying attention to the spiritual needs of the people and continuously promoting the construction of civilization. Through the New Village Movement, the gap between urban and rural areas in Korea has been significantly reduced, the level of rural economic development has increased, and the economic income of farmers has improved, which in turn has contributed to the overall development of society as a whole.

3. Measures to Promote the New Village Movement in Korea

3.1. The Government Distributed Free Materials to Improve the Rural Living Environment

The Korean government played a leading role in the infrastructure construction phase of the New Village Movement as the caller and initiator of the movement. The Korean government distributed 335 packs of cement to every village in the country for free, repaired rural roads, and improved villagers' housing so that they could move from thatched roofs to tiled roofs or iron roofs. The free materials have greatly improved the living environment of villagers and raised their living standards, while this move has also laid a solid foundation for the cooperation between the government and villagers in the later stage.

3.2. The Government and Villagers Cooperated to Promote the Development of Rural Industries

During the proliferation and enrichment phase of the New Village Movement, the government paid more attention to the villagers' wishes and formed an interactive model of government-led villagers' participation. In addition, during this stage, the Korean government implemented a categorization strategy, classifying rural areas into basic, self-help, and self-sustaining categories and providing different guidance strategies according to different levels of development [1]. The government encouraged villagers to upgrade the structure of their farming industry and advocated for them to develop new types of agriculture such as tourism agriculture. The government provides villagers with low-interest loans to solve the problem of difficult financing for villagers and helps industrial development through financial support.

3.3. Villagers' Independent Participation in Development and Continuous Promotion of Comprehensive Rural Development

After the accumulation of results in the previous three stages, the rural infrastructure has been improved and industrial development has been put on the right track. The awareness and initiative of villagers' autonomous participation have been significantly enhanced, and villagers actively participate in the devel-

opment process and figure out the development path that suits them. At the stage of national spontaneous movement and self-development, the Korean government attaches importance to developing multiple businesses in rural areas through financial and technical support to further increase villagers' income and strengthen urban-rural integration. In addition, the government is committed to promoting the development of culture, legal system, morality, and education in rural areas to promote all-around development.

3.4. Improvement of Material Conditions and Ethical and Moral Education Go Hand in Hand

The Korean government's initial investment focused on infrastructure renovation and industrial restructuring in rural areas. Even though the initial investment received a good response and public reaction, the Korean government did not let go of or continue to focus on the development of material construction in rural areas, but shifted its attention to the construction of spiritual civilization. The series of initiatives emphasizing the popular education of social morality and social ethics to enhance the public's awareness of social responsibility and social morality vividly highlight the important relationship between the "economic base" and the "superstructure".

4. Overview of China's Rural Areas and the Problems of Their Construction

4.1. Overview of China's Rural Areas

China's rural areas are widely distributed and numerous, and the rural population occupies about half of the total population of the country. 2020, the household population of villages in the country is about 777 million, the number of administrative villages is 690,000, and the number of natural villages is about 2,633,000. The results of the seventh census show that the population living in rural areas is 509.79 million, accounting for 36.11% of the total population of the country. Compared with 2010, the urban population increased by 236.42 million and the rural population decreased by 164.36 million [3]. The perennial inflow of the rural population to the towns accelerates the population loss in rural areas. The long-term urban-rural development asymmetry leads to a low level of economic development, backward infrastructure conditions, scarce employment resources in rural areas, and a wide gap with urban development.

4.2. Problems of Rural Construction in China

4.2.1. Single Industrial Structure

At present, some areas of rural areas lack industrial support due to the limitations of natural conditions. There are large differences in resource endowments between regions in China, and the scale of agricultural production and production units is relatively single, which is not conducive to maximizing economic benefits [4]. Some scholars believe that the unclear industrial division of new rural construction leads to the uncoordinated economic development of new rural

areas. New rural construction is influenced by geographical location, local characteristics, development direction and other factors, thus forming different development patterns, leading to the phenomenon of unclear industrial division in some new rural construction [5]. Industrial development is an important support for rural development and construction, and the lack of industrial foundation and support will accelerate the decay of rural areas; unclear industrial division is not conducive to highlighting its development orientation and competitive advantages, and it is difficult to realize the optimized development of an industrial structure; the single industrial structure is not conducive to the transformation and development in the bottleneck period, and restricts the development potential.

4.2.2. Neglect of Local Cultural Heritage and Spiritual Cultivation

China is vast, and different topography and climate have created different regional cultures. Regional culture lays down the cultural heritage and injects development momentum for both urban and rural areas, and is an indispensable and important element for the integrated development of urban and rural areas. Rural space is a spiritual and cultural space shared by villagers, carrying and transmitting humanistic spirit, but the regional characteristics are not fully reflected in the current rural construction, and rural areas are facing the embarrassing situation of “a thousand villages” to different degrees.

Rural spatial planning should pay attention to the development of rural culture, strengthen the protection of rural culture, and promote the inheritance and development of rural culture [6]. However, in practice, there is an imbalance between material transformation and spiritual satisfaction, and the focus of attention is more on how to improve rural economic development, often neglecting the needs of rural spiritual and cultural development, which is not conducive to the inheritance and development of Chinese vernacular culture and spirit. Some places ignore local culture and characteristics in village construction and farmhouse design, fail to incorporate local traditional habits and customs into the planning and design, change the distinctive national characteristics and lose the excellent cultural traditions [7].

4.2.3. Insufficient Participation of Farmers

Villagers are the main body of rural areas, and the construction and development of rural areas should be oriented by the needs of the masses and implement the concept of coming from the masses to the masses. To meet the villagers' real life and design the corresponding blueprint of rural construction and development, we can meet the villagers' real demands with half the effort and enhance their sense of achievement. In reality, however, villagers have long relied on government support, forming a strong dependency and inertia and lacking the awareness of independent participation. Therefore, in most of the rural construction processes, villagers show a passive, indifferent and irrelevant attitude and lack a sense of responsibility and commitment. In the villagers' consciousness, government-led means that everything is taken care of by the gov-

ernment. This perception makes them not fully aware of the importance of new rural construction, and they are not consciously aware of relying on their own strength and efforts to fight for the realization of their own rights and interests [8].

5. The Experience and Inspiration of Korea's New Village Movement

5.1. To Promote Rural Construction, We Must Promote the Development of Industrial Integration

Based on the results of the previous infrastructure construction, the Korean government divided the rural areas into basic, self-help, and self-sustaining types, implemented differentiated development strategies, called on the general public to promote the development of agricultural industries, and actively promoted industrial restructuring, renewal, and innovation. Specific measures include the development and planting of new and productive varieties, demonstration businesses for regional specialty products, sightseeing agriculture, and environment-friendly organic agriculture, etc. In-depth integration of agriculture and tourism is achieved while animal husbandry and planting are also promoted at the same time.

Industrial planning is an important element of rural construction, and rural development must rely on industrial support. At present, the industrial planning of Chinese rural areas is mostly based on traditional farming, breeding and animal husbandry, with a single industrial structure and development form, which is not conducive to improving villagers' economic income. In Korea, the combination of agriculture and tourism was promoted as early as 1990, and the combination of planting and tourism has not only adjusted the development form of the industry but also broadened the income source of villagers and improved the level of rural economic development. At the present stage, China is promoting rural revitalization, and the experience of Korea can provide case support for some of the rural areas in China based on the innovative development of agrotourism.

5.2. To Promote Rural Construction, We Should Pay Attention to the Construction of Rural Culture and Civilization

The success of the "New Village Movement" cannot be separated from the Korean government's guarantee of both the material life and spiritual needs of the rural people. The gap between urban and rural areas is not only reflected in the abundance of material resources, but also in whether the spiritual needs of the people are paid attention to and satisfied, not only limited to the improvement of material conditions. Improving the moral level of farmers improves rural civilization, and the spiritual civilization of rural areas is driven by the already abundant material civilization [9].

In Korea, the "new village culture" has been formed through a series of measures such as strengthening social ethics and moral education, which has created

a strong social restraint and a sense of collective honor, fostered the rural spirit of the peasant community, and promoted the spiritual civilization of rural peasants. Consciously observing the social rules, social ethics and social morals generated by the “new village culture” is the inheritance of the “new village culture”.

As a complex social project, rural construction relies on the comprehensive support of ethics, education and culture. The local culture and spirit can provide inspiration and reference for rural construction ideas and design plans, making them more recognizable; the binding of local spirit can help strengthen the villagers’ collective consciousness, promote social moral construction, become a carrier to connect people’s emotions and enhance the function of emotional connection and spiritual cultivation in rural construction.

5.3. To Promote Rural Construction, We Must Actively Guide Villagers to Participate

The support and response of the public is an important support for the government to implement policies. The Korean government’s guidance and encouragement have increased the villagers’ enthusiasm and initiative in rural development, which has laid the foundation and support for the effective implementation of the “New Village Movement”. Rural construction and development is based on the concept of “for the people, for the people, for the benefit of the people, and for the gathering of the people”, and through the two-way interaction between the government and the villagers, rural agriculture is modernized, rural economic growth is stimulated and urban and rural development is coordinated. The Korean government cultivates community self-reliance and farmer autonomy under the consensus of development with the goal of realizing the modernization leap in rural areas [10]. The effective linkage between government support and villagers’ voluntary participation makes the “New Village Movement” a win-win situation for both sides. In China’s rural revitalization, we can also learn from the experience of the New Village Movement, which is farmer-oriented [11], and cultivate their awareness of active struggle. Otherwise, they will easily become inert and dependent on the government and may return to poverty.

In the current environment of rural China, villagers are not yet mature enough to participate on their own, and a combination of top-down and bottom-up participation should be emphasized. It is necessary to strengthen the local government’s propaganda efforts to call on the villagers to actively participate in rural construction, and at the same time, to play the role of village cadres and wise people to guide the villagers to continuously enhance their sense of ownership, enthusiastically participate in the construction of rural areas to suggest ideas, and jointly build a better rural home to which the villagers aspire.

6. Conclusion

The “New Village Movement” in Korea has achieved the revitalization of the

countryside by improving the infrastructure, optimizing the industrial structure, guiding the public to participate, and promoting social education. It is believed that learning from the experiences of the New Village Movement, such as industrial integration development, cultivating the spirit of local civilization, and actively guiding farmers' participation, can help promote the high-level development of rural areas in China.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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