

## **Study on the Construction of New Rural Communities in China**

**Zhao Na**

*School of Marxism, Jiangsu University,  
Zhenjiang 212013, Jiangsu, China.*

### **Abstract**

The new rural community is the product of China's new urbanization, and is a pivotal measure taken by the Chinese government to break the urban-rural dual structure. Chinese academics consider that the "new" part in the new rural community lies in the newness of the concept of reform. Realizing the interests of farmers and enabling the farmers to participate in the modernization process on an equal footing are the starting points of the construction of new rural community. Since the Central Government put forward the idea of building rural communities, the local governments have made active exploration, especially in Henan, Shandong, etc., and the production and living standards of farmers have significantly improved. This paper focuses on ideas and models of the building of China's new rural community.

**Keywords:** urbanization, new rural communities, farmers' rights and interests

Social development relies on urbanization development. China must solve the "Three Rural Issues" (agriculture, rural areas and farmers) and achieve urban and rural integration to achieve the goal of new urbanization. Therefore, the new rural community has come into being. As a historical exploration in China, the construction of new rural community encountered many problems in reform due to China's special national conditions and the far-reaching impact of the "Three Rural Issues", although people can learn from the development experience of Western countries. In the promotion and implementation of national policies, institutional or human factors

violate the basic rights and interests of farmers. The Chinese government has made it clear that the core of building a new rural community lies in safeguarding farmers' rights and interests, and the reform that infringes farmers' rights and interests is not a successful one. Only by fully safeguarding the rights and interests of farmers and enabling farmers to enjoy the fruits of reform, while giving play to the initiative of farmers in building new rural community can China realize the ideas of building new rural community and new urbanization.

## **I. RESEARCH AND PRACTICE OF RURAL COMMUNITY THEORY IN WESTERN COUNTRIES**

As early as the mid-nineteenth century, there was research on community in the world. The famous German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies regarded the "community" as the same as "society". Tonnies believes that the community is formed by the combination of people's consciousness, while the society is a combination promoted by the system. Society is mechanical and is evolved from the community.

Following Tonnies, the community theory continues to develop alongside the western urbanization. From the early to the middle of the twentieth century, the U.S. scholars have made research into different types of communities, including slums and ethnic communities, and put forward the concentric zone theory, multi-core theory and so on. In the *Social Progress through Community Development* report published by the United Nations in 1955, the significance of community development was combined with the development of the whole society, and the community residents and the government were encouraged to work together to promote economic and social development. In the late twentieth century, the world economy has been developing at a fast clip, and community-related research has shifted from promoting economic development to enhancing the level of community management.

As regards the study and practice of rural communities, Seidel Foundation proposed the "equivalent" concept, and won the support of the government and made experiments in Bavaria when Germany needed to address the increasing gap between urban and rural areas after World War II and the plight of farmers thronging into the city. Through the land reform, village merger and other measures, the Bavarian rural communities developed rapidly, and ultimately achieved the objective of equivalent living standards of urban and rural residents. Since the 1970s, South Korea launched the "New Village Movement" to address the problems of rural areas, agriculture and farmers. The whole movement was divided into several stages, whereby the government offered guidance and the farmers independently carried out the construction of rural communities. It started with the improvement of the living

environment and then the economic level, and on this basis gradually carried out the construction of community civilization.

## **II. STUDY OF CHINESE ACADEMIA ON THE PROBLEMS ABOUT THE BUILDING OF NEW RURAL COMMUNITY**

In recent years, China has witnessed rapid development, and the people become more affluent and happier. These are inseparable from higher urbanization. The development trend of China's rural communities is similar to that of the world, namely overcoming the dual structure of urban and rural areas and promoting industrialization and urbanization. The Chinese concept such as common prosperity and sharing reform achievements are similar to German "equivalent" concept. The "New Village Movement" in South Korea lays emphasis on giving play to the initiative of farmers in the development of rural communities, also similar to China's "people-oriented" thinking.

Regarding the core thinking of the building of new rural community, Chinese scholars have formed a unified view, namely the "people-oriented" thinking. The new urbanization must adhere to the core of people-oriented development, and reflect the mainstay role of farmers, namely emphasizing the backbone status of general farmers in building a new rural community, respecting the farmers and their pioneering spirit, and relying on farmers to promote rural development. Some other scholars propose that the theory of dominant role of farmers, theory of rights of farmers, harmony and sharing theory, economic development stage theory and more should act as the theoretical basis for safeguarding the rights and interests of farmers, and guide the three parties of farmers, governments at all levels, and non-governmental organizations to forge cooperation, in a bid to together protect the interests of farmers through internal and external mechanisms.

On how to well build new rural communities and protect the rights and interests of farmers, scholars advocate that China shall not only solve the institutional problem, but also address the problem of administrative ideas; China shall not only make farmers live a better life, but also learn the foreign experience to achieve "equivalence" of urban and rural areas. The government should proceed from a realistic perspective, stick to the people-oriented principle, and make continuous efforts in financial input, public service, acceleration of land transfer, industrial development, employment guarantee, innovation and better community management. At the same time, achieve the objective of urban and rural areas of "different types but same quality" through the "equivalence of urban and rural areas" measures such as land consolidation, agricultural mechanization, and development of education.

### **III. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW RURAL COMMUNITIES**

According to the western contract theory, the state is the product of the social contract, and the people take the initiative to transfer part of their rights to the designated person in order to obtain freedom under the protection of the law. Therefore, the government is obliged to protect the basic rights and interests of citizens through legislation and the establishment of systems. Such obligations are not caused by the aspirations of the people in the running of the state, but by the content of the contract entered into by the people and the government at the inception of the establishment of the state. The contract is fixed in the form of the constitution as the basic legal system to regulate the running of the state. Its core value is to safeguard the basic rights and interests of citizens by regulating the state power. The constitutional protection of the basic rights and interests of citizens progresses from the political rights to the economy, culture, education and other aspects, and the government must also adjust the policy system to support the implementation of the constitution. In this sense, it is the responsibility and obligation of the government to safeguard the farmers' rights and interests, and the government must adopt various necessary administrative measures to safeguard the rights and interests of farmers.

China has a large population base, and a myriad of complex social problems. The government plays a leading role in the state governance, and this is inseparable from the people's confidence in the Communist Party of China. Especially in the vast rural areas, farmers still maintain certain traditional thinking due to being backward politically, economically and culturally, etc., and pin their hopes of a happy life on the government's correct leadership and decision-making; under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, there is a seismic change to the rural landscape and life of farmers, and the farmers trust the government under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. Therefore, in the construction of new rural communities, the government must take more responsibility to show more concern to farmers, and protect the basic rights and interests of farmers in terms of policy, law, and system, thereby ensuring the success of building of new rural communities.

### **IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINA'S NEW RURAL COMMUNITIES**

The new rural community is different from the traditional natural village, and also different from urban community. It is the middle or transitional form between village and city, and its basic characteristics include the following aspects:

1. Unique historical positioning. The new rural community is a forward-looking and feasible idea put forward by the Chinese government to successfully promote the new urbanization. It not only conforms to the basic national

conditions of China, but also provides a wealth of exploratory experience to break the urban-rural dual structure. It is in line with the views of Marxist historical materialism, playing a role in promoting the historical process and achieving human development.

2. Innovative community governance model. The new rural community is committed to fully protecting the rights and interests of farmers during the profound changes of new urbanization. In the community management, consideration is given to the multi-participation and farmer-oriented principle, in order to stimulate the enthusiasm and creativity of farmers in participation in community construction and management, boost the capability of farmers in building new rural community, and highlight the voice and dominant status of farmers in the building of new rural communities.
3. Comprehensive supporting infrastructure. In the construction of new rural community, attention is paid to the completed and sound infrastructure, covering community services, culture, sports, health, medical care, and education, so that farmers can enjoy better resources, enhance economic and cultural level of the communities, and lay a solid foundation for the urbanization-based development of new rural communities.
4. New mode of production and lifestyle. New rural communities direct to the intensive, mechanized development of agricultural production, maximizing the efficiency of agricultural production and added value. At the same time, the establishment of agricultural enterprises, the development of tourism industry and the invitation to social enterprises to settle at new rural communities change the backward production mode of self-sufficiency of farmers, enable farmers to better realize their own value and improve their living standards.
5. Integration of rural community culture. The new rural community gives rise to the collision and fusion of the rural culture and the urban culture. Under the direct influence of the urban culture, farmers change their backward ideas and consciousness of narrow-minded farmers to a certain extent, improve their overall quality and make their neighborhood relationships more harmonious. With the improvement of economic level, their spiritual needs become more similar to those of urban citizens. A wealth of recreational activities offer key ways for community farmers to understand cities and enjoy life.

## **V. MAIN MODEL OF BUILDING CHINA'S NEW RURAL COMMUNITY**

According to the different economic development and actual situations in various administrative regions, the Chinese government allows local governments to independently explore the models of building new rural community.

1. Town coordination model. Under this model, some densely populated cities with

rapid economic development demolish and transform the surrounding rural areas and incorporate them into the scope of city management due to the needs of city development and expansion. This kind of construction mode is led by the government, and the resulting new rural communities have more characteristics of urban communities. The communities develop supporting infrastructure and life service facilities through the market-oriented operation of relevant construction project, and the community farmers are more easily integrated into cities and become real city citizens as a result of long-term sharing urban resources.

2. Industry-driven model. The industry-driven mode mainly relies on the construction of enterprises and industrial parks around villages and towns. The purpose is to promote the shared progress of industrial development and farmers' life, drive the farmers to get rich through employment via the industrial development, absorb the rural surplus labor force and improve the farmers' quality of life. This construction mode is rather common in the coastal developed areas. Through land transfer, it integrates administrative villages to form a good situation where new rural communities and industrial parks are driving each other forward, and solve the severe and lingering issues of low production efficiency and rural backwardness.
3. Multi-village merging building model. The model is characterized by the integration of villages for the goal of shared development. The economically developed village integrate the surrounding economically underdeveloped natural village(s), or one or several economically underdeveloped villages are relocated as a whole to build new rural community with centralized population and unified management and services. This model is conducive to improving administrative efficiency, solving the development difficulty and "hollowing-out" problem of remote mountain villages. It is also conducive to breaking the geographical isolation, developing agriculture and education, and building new modern rural communities. However, this mode requires great investment by the government, and necessitates scientific and detailed pre-research, demonstration and planning. It also requires financial support of enterprises and financial institutions to avoid mistaken administrative decision-making, the rupture of funding and other issues.

In summary, the Chinese government takes the solution of "Three Rural Issues" as a breakthrough point in the development of the state, and actively explores the construction of new rural community. At the same time, the building of new rural community and the protection of farmers' rights and interests are unified to reflect the "people-oriented" concept of development, in a bid to consolidate the ruling position of the CPC, enhance the sense of recognition to the CPC from and win the support of the general public.

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