

## Discussion on the path of constructing neo-rural communities

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### Abstract

*The neo-rural communities mainly refers to those communities which break the original boundaries, put some natural villages or administrative ones all together under overall planning in certain period, and build new residential & service facilities, and new lives of residents. It's only restricted within life communities (not productive ones) for the peasants have no lands in this procedure carrying agricultural production no more, and the community organizations don't have the potential of developing the economy, like the urban communities which lie their duty on service and management.*

**Key words:** rural communities; farmers' interests; democratic governance

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### **1. The Basis of Building Neo-rural Community: Defense of Farmer's Interests**

The establishment of neo-rural communities has to obey national will and farmer's interest, but the main target is to enhance peasants' welfare. One proverb goes, "High buildings rise from the ground". And farmers' interest is just like the basis. Only if the basis is firm, peasants can benefit from it. Once the government takes benefits from citizens, blindly applying the centralized residence, the establishment of neo-rural community will become the evil way to ruin farmers' interest, bringing in hatred.

In the establishment process of neo-rural communities, the government should respect the humanism developing model based on citizens' will. However, under the force of urbanization, some local governments are driven by their own interests, and usually go against national regulations, misusing land requisition power, regardless of the livelihood of peasants. The compelling land requisition has severely invaded farmers' economic benefits and legal rights, causing lots of suburban land resources missing. Under the circumstances which the urban-rural dualism has not yet been broken and the urban-rural social security has not been accomplished, the land has continued the basic function to defend the lives of peasants. Unrealistic "one-cut", making peasants "moving to buildings due to forced relocation", in that case, will disobey farmers' will and harm their interests.

So many neo-rural communities construction is forced by government's benefits undoubtedly, and is for the purpose of creating official achievements to some extent. Ostentatious CBD, skyrocketing, piles of wastelands, empty industrial zones and falling popularity, all of them can imply the "Great Leap Forward" due to governments' developments. But this process is closely combined with residents' interest. Governments' logic is to remove your house, and you go out to rent. After the resettlement houses are done, and then you can move in. In this process, farmers make great sacrifice, and the local governments aim for official achievement, holding debts to construct large projects. Then the best way is selling land to pay debts. Once governments sell lands, it means overhaul and the consequences is simple---farmers buy the bills. The variability of public policies can have different influence on peasants. There will be always farmers whose interests get deprived, or even the majority. So, the scales of governments' main research points should incline more to farmers' interests.

## **2. The Guarantee of Building Neo-rural Community: Powers of Institutional Regulation**

Institution, one game rule, is a kind of criteria to restrain mankind's behavior. From the theories of neo-institutional economics, the function of institution is to control the relationship between mankind, reducing the info costs and uncertainty, and decreasing the barricades of cooperation to the lowest extent. That means, the institution can not only offers behavior standard, but also bring efficiency for us. Therefore, in rural community governance, both macro-institutions from national level and micro-ones from local level can provide solid institutional guarantee for the construction of neo-rural community.

From macro-level, the complete legal institution has to be established. Laws can be the forcibly regular system, to provide criteria for activity, making rural community lives following the right principles and developing normally, so it offers the solid guarantee for social harmony. Law is the powerful weapon to protect legal rights of citizens. Though China has established relatively perfect constitution and legislation systems, but the constitution and laws, in many aspects, has no operability and can't be effectively implemented. At present, in China's rural developing policies & institutions, there are so many unfitted points against developing requirements, especially land acquisition policies and property rights which ignore the issue on the protection of farmers' rights to a large extent. Currently, in order to restrict local governments land finance and rampant behaviors which harm peasants' rights, we should perfect the laws of compensation on land acquisitions, resettlement of house demolition and land property etc., punishing illegal activities that invade citizens' legal rights, to make every acts following the laws.

From micro-level, the complete local mechanism on democratic governance has to be established, such as the "one project on discussion" cooperation mechanism, public products' supplying mechanism and democratic auto-management mechanism etc. Through democratic governance, we need to enhance the restriction on powers and put it into the cage. These specific mechanisms are obeying national macro-legal institution and following local knowledge's logical establishment, to both ensure the operability of system running and legalization of public acceptance making efficiency and legalization all together.

### **3. The Key of Building Neo-rural Community: Culture of Community**

Publicity is the basis of community, or even the society. Traditional community is the geographic combination of land and population related to blood, but exist no more in current society. For nowadays peasants, the personal interests overtake the public interests, and then the public affairs are in the trap of self-serving economics which means “the more collective, the less people care”. Farmers’ recognition of their own community, public cultural lives in villages, rural public opinions, the spirits of co-operations between farmers or even the community of villages which was once the home of peasants are fading away. Not only does rural community rely on the community of cultures, but also on territorial community with variable mutual bond. So, the realistic objective requirement needs to integrate rural community through the culture of community, forming common recognition and public spirits.

Building neo-rural community, from culture, is comparatively easier, and the effect will be better too. The farmers who join in the neo-rural communities are so longing for the culture, but the rural areas can’t afford them now. Authors hold that, the key of building neo-rural community is on the community’s culture, through different kinds of local culture activities to promote citizens’ life-qualities and make them feel better off. The establishment of culture is significant content for building neo-rural communities. Without it, community building will be shallow and meaningless. Culture will function on both sides to village. On the one side, peasants rely on this way to reach self-education and spirit-proliferation which means to forge one rural public space to start public opinions and lives; On the other, peasant need the local culture, such as yangko, a popular rural folk dance in China, to make them satisfied for that’s what Chinese farmers’ spirits need. In the building of community culture, it needs to satisfy different groups’ characters and requirements. The old taking to dancing doesn’t mean the young will follow. To the folks in community, they all used to be peasants without any special talents so they are not able to play square dance. During the early days of culture building, it needs to foster those citizens, and the process has to be patient and considerate. The early build can draw social organization or be led by cadres. Then self-organization and self-management is required. Under this procedure, it demands cadres from residents’ committee or celebrates to coordinate communal public affairs, and persuade those who behave badly to act normal. Geographic communities formed by different villages need communal recognition and cohesiveness reconstruction

for the traditional acquaintance-living community is long-gone. Recognition and cohesiveness from community is fostered gradually. The popular culture activities need to be held more. And let citizens truly joined in, cooperate and then build the cohesiveness step by step. For rural community building, it can go through the contents of abundant culture establishment like moral lecturing, election of exemplary persons to cultivate citizens' publicity actively and promote their accomplishment.

#### **4. The Sustenance of Building Neo-rural Community: Cooperation of Multiple Powers**

The way that multiple powers join into the community building respectively can't reach the effect of good governance. This requires multiple powers to form effective cooperation, carrying collaborative governance. To government, it needs to release spaces for self-organization and NGO in community, and accomplishes high effective resource supply. One way is to leave the nature resources' usage rights to the citizen-will-represented self-organization, to accomplish one project one discussion; another way is to purchase services to form PPP, Public Private Partnership, letting more professional social organization offer services directly. To self-organization, autonomy needs governments' resources & space, citizens' voluntary participation and coordination from social organization. To social organization, not only does it need governments' supports and spaces, but also support form communal self-organization. To citizens, to foster public spirits doesn't complete in one day. It requires the participation from governments, self-organization and social organization to persuade them through education. Certainly, governments, self-organization and NGO's work carrying needs opening participation from citizens. Otherwise, it will only end in formality.

Simultaneously, in the process of cooperation, every single side has to enhance communication, to solve issues in time. Compare to traditional villages, neo-rural community has large scales and more complicated membership. It means there will be more contradiction and conflicts in the process of community building, so it need multiple sides to interact and communicate well, avoiding misunderstanding to consume the strength of community building.

#### **5. The Proliferation of Building Neo-rural Community: Democratic Autonomy**

To consider building neo-rural community further, you will notice the community without promotion of democratic politics can't fulfill so many "thoughts". The pattern of strong government chained

“hands” of grass-root society, causing society itself to lose the function of hemopoiesis and overwhelming social territory. And this constraint, like cells, infiltrates every side of rural community. So does the culture territory. When citizens have no rights to participate or no public opinions once encountering social resources, communal affairs and appointment of community cadres, their interest will be invaded inevitably.

Autonomy signifies man-kinds self-consciousness, self-introspection and self-determination; democratic autonomy implies people have the capability to choose possible action route in public lives when considering, judging, choosing and operating according to different situations. Democratic Autonomy means all citizens have right to participate in public affairs. Grass-root democratic autonomy in China is supported by national laws. Law of the People's Republic of China on the Organization of Villagers' Committee is carried out in Nov. 1998. Farmers' committee is residents' self-organization, to authorize farmers the rights to manage themselves by law. The idea of basic level's autonomy is also expanded. The mechanism of farmers' autonomy under the leading of village's communist party is further established. All of these suggest China has completed the institution of public election by village organizations on very side.

However, it was not seen the effect of democratic autonomy that the institution carried. Democratic election, democratic decision, democratic management and democratic supervision are not truly applied. In that case, villagers' autonomy has been questioned quit a lot. The current research has adequately explained that basic level society is the old administration management mode which is not directing into the real autonomy. But to neo-rural community, public administration can undoubtedly produce different kinds of questions, like communal cadres' formalism, public resources supply unbalanced and low motivation for public participation etc. Meanwhile, be aware of grid-management avoiding it turns into citizen-control. Neo-rural community has comparatively conquered dilemma in public services and intelligence resources which emerge in traditional villages and rural communities through urbanism. So, in the process of rural community governance, we have to turn the law into real behavior from administrative management to democratic autonomy, endowing citizen rights of election, decision, management and supervision, and making them the owner of community, not the subject being managed.