

Study on Rural Transformation and Planning During the Period of Institutional Transition in Southern Jiangsu

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Abstract: *With the process of urbanization and the globalization and on the basis of the creation of Southern Jiangsu mode miracle, Southern Jiangsu constantly seeks deeper development and its rural development has entered a critical period of transition beginning reconstruction. This paper firstly analyzes the problems and characteristics of rural development in Southern Jiangsu such as the continuously perishing of neighborhood, the disappearance of territorial identity, the unstability in the development of towns and villages, as well as a series of other challenges with the background of city expanding and the overall development of both urban and rural areas. Focusing on these issues, this paper proposes strategic plan for the development of rural areas in southern Jiangsu, including following aspects: 1) re-examining the value of the rural areas, zoning and proposing plans for long-term development; 2) building a diversified rural industries, and gradually promoting the "characteristic village"; 3) establishing "rural cultural greenway" in rural areas and integrating rural areas into the Regional Leisure networks; 4) establishing an integrated planning and construction mechanism that encompassing the upper and lower planning hierarchies, and improving the villagers' self-awareness.*

Keywords: *rural transition, rural planning, Southern Jiangsu.*

1. Introduction

Southern Jiangsu is the rich land since ancient times. Early in the planned economy period, the development of traditional rural areas in southern Jiangsu and collective economic foundation for the later development of township enterprises provided seed money and accumulate valuable experience in the business, thus created a remarkable "Southern Jiangsu mode". Since the implementation of reform and opening up policy, especially during the 1990s, the rapid development of globalization and urbanization led to the continuous evolution and innovation of "Southern Jiangsu mode". Meanwhile, under the wave of globalization and urbanization, rural development in Southern Jiangsu has entered an important stage of development and transition, witnessing the gradual degradation of traditional rural features, the economic transition from agricultural to non-agricultural, the transition from settlements at countryside to urban residence, and the transition of typology from separated spaces to gather spaces, etc. Therefore, the rural space is also facing a new pattern of differentiation restructuring.

2. Changes in Rural Development in Southern Jiangsu

2.1. Rural Economic Development in Southern Jiangsu

The rapid development of globalization and industrialization promoted regional industrial structure adjustment and employment division. Industrial development in rural areas led to fundamental changes in the rural industrial structure, which further promoted an entire conversion of the territorial nature of rural areas in southern Jiangsu. The traditional structure of employment of farmers in Southern Jiangsu changed rapidly. A large number of labor was attracted by non-agricultural industries, and the absolute number and relative number

of agricultural labor force continued to decline. Thus, the non-agricultural employment characteristics become more evident (fig. 1).

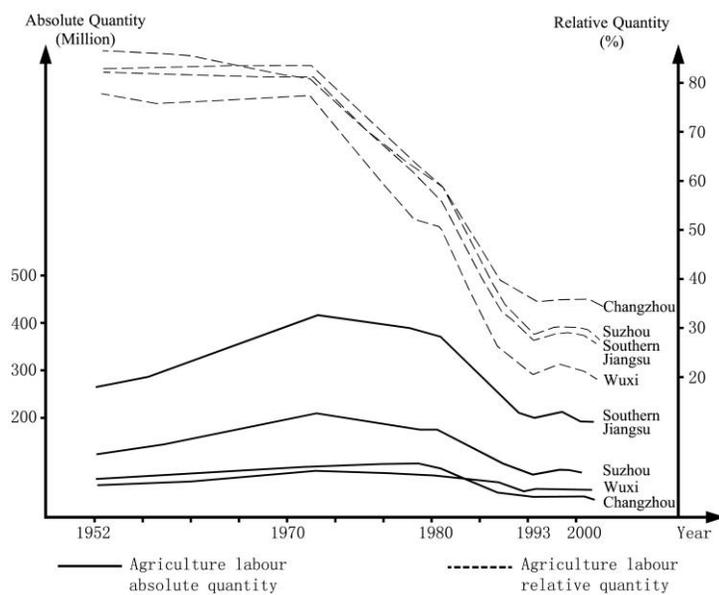


Fig. 1: Agriculture force variation in Southern Jiangsu.

At the same time, the development of rural economy in southern Jiangsu gradually diversified from single economic bodies to multiple economic entities. Township enterprises attracted all manner of funds by diversification of the ownership, and the private capital and foreign investment has become the main funding sources for rural economic development in southern Jiangsu. In the wave of globalization and industrialization, the collective economy, originally dominated by township, weakened gradually, while the private economy, foreign economy become the mainstream of the rural economy in southern Jiangsu, significantly improving the rural market economy and the level of internationalization (fig. 2). With the development of export-oriented economy, southern Jiangsu rural economy will gradually get rid of the constraints by traditional concept of Local Complex. And a new economic configuration will be established by connecting the rural economy to the urban or even international economy. The development of export-oriented economy will gradually introduce the rural economy in southern Jiangsu to the national and international market.

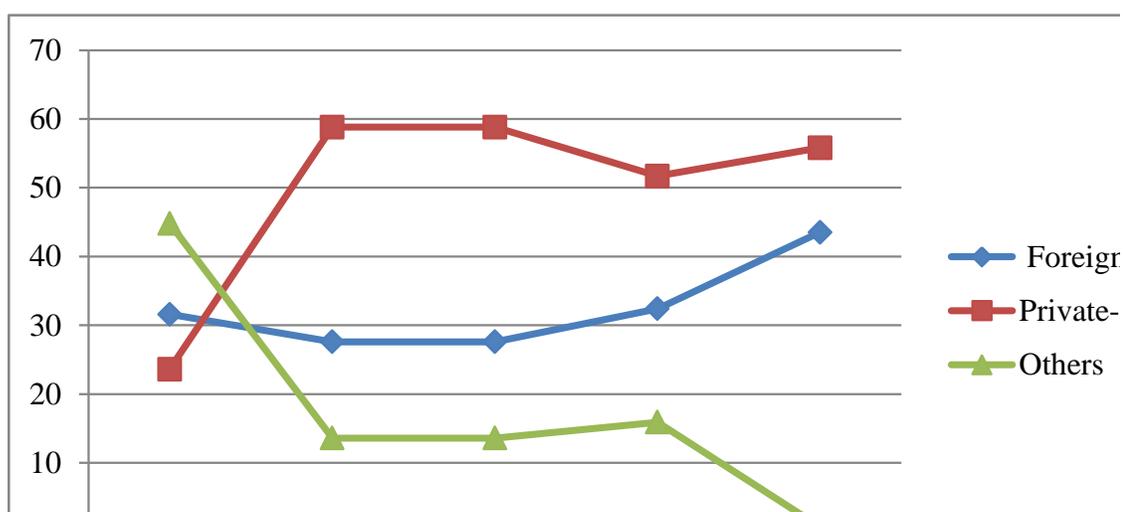


Fig. 2: The gross value of industrial output among foreign capital, private-owned capital and others in Changshu.

2.2. The Living Conditions of Rural Farmers in Southern Jiangsu

As a result of globalization and urbanization, the economy developed rapidly, and productivity continuously increased. The urban and rural development in Southern Jiangsu has entered an important stage of development and transformation. Rural areas are experiencing a major change from the mode of production to lifestyle (TABLE I), rural "Invisible Urbanization"(based on the rural urbanization of township enterprises and temporary population migration) is widespread. According to a research by the author on Changshu rural areas, the eighty percent of rural population is no longer associated with agricultural production. Most of the villagers work locally for township enterprises, whilst those involved in agricultural production are mainly rural aging population. "Invisible Urbanization" in southern Jiangsu is mainly reflected in two aspects: on the one hand, there are many rural population in this area but they are long-term residents and work in the city, and this section of the population are mainly young people from rural areas; On the other hand, there are a lot of residents who live in rural areas but show no interests in agricultural production other than the secondary and tertiary industries. The former is caused by the urban and rural household registration management system. However, the latter is influenced not only by the household registration system, but also the traditional concept of "Go into the plant but not into the city, and leave the farmland but not leave the hometown". Although this "local complex" will continue to exist in short term, the concept of "Countryside" will be re-defined, regarding the trend of economic development in Southern Jiangsu, and the gap between urban and rural areas will gradually disappear in the future.

TABLE I: The portion of important year for national economy in Changshu.

<i>Index</i>		1978	1990	2000	2005	2010
Practitioners (Proportion of identity)	Agricultural labour	87.4	82.1	70.2	63.8	48.8
	The private and individual	—	0.3	14.9	22.0	37.5
Practitioners (Proportion or three industries)	Primary industry	72.41	29.69	23.42	9.1	5.2
	Secondary industry	21.61	55.51	45.95	60.7	63.6
	Tertiary industry	5.98	14.80	30.63	30.2	31.2

2.3. Rural Spatial Condition in Southern Jiangsu

Spatial agglomeration and economies of scale are inevitable orientation of industrial which develops to a certain stage. Since the mid-1990s, with the reform and innovation of township enterprises property right system, domestic and foreign markets continued expanding. Industry investors paid attention to the combined effect of the rural increasingly. In order to pursuit the agglomeration economies effects and the most favourable business conditions in a market-oriented circumstance, companies tended to focus on the cities and towns which have advantages in location, especially some central city and towns. In the 21st century, the new strategy of urbanization and the restructuring and upgrading of the urban industrial further promoted the rural space cluster development in Southern Jiangsu. The functions of central cities and key towns has been further strengthened. In contrast, further differentiation can be seen in rural areas. Urbanization in rural areas in Southern Jiangsu once emphasized on "self-accumulation and development" which envisaged the rural urbanization as a urban-rural split issue. However, with the reform of the household registration system, zoning system, public service system and other policies, it is no longer confined internally to the rural agricultural areas. With the improvement of urban traffic, industrial structure adjustment and upgrade, the radiation effect of urban functions has become the major driving force in rural modernization in Southern Jiangsu.

3. Rural Transformation Crisis in Southern Jiangsu

3.1. Urban Sprawl Lead to the Extinction of Traditional Rural Space

When space becomes a value-added commodity, it must lead to a large-scale space production. Local governments, interest groups and financial institutions form a "Grow Coalition" in the space redevelopment. In the name of "blueprint of the urban development ", the Grow Coalition occupied, controled the lands of

countryside, and shaped new spaces of rural areas. Under the guidance of the capital, urban space is increasingly expanding, gradually leading to the demise of the traditional rural space. Take Changshu as an example. Driven by the urbanization and industrialization process, traditional village spaces in this region have undergone unprecedented threat. Part of the traditional village faces demolition, replaced by less inhabited, modern residential communities. The traditional village landscape will be eliminated, and traditional rural way of life of farmers is under threat, thus traditional neighbourhood relations quickly collapse (Fig3, Fig4).



Fig. 3: Traditional village before demolition.

Fig. 4: The newly built modern rural community

3.2. Standardized "Production of Space" Lead to Identity Crisis of Rural Regions

From the perspective of new Marxism, space is the same to other commodities. Production of Space directly triggered a "homogenization" and "instability". The former showed to the loss of "spatial awareness" diversity at the expense, which led to space "homogenization" and features crisis; latter showed growth of new space is just repeated destruction of space, and profoundly undermined the people's own living environment. For the countryside in southern Jiangsu, on the one hand, the physical spaces was threatened by the missing traditional rural architectural symbols, as well as destructed traditional rural culture and landscape. On the other hand, the social space was also challenged by the disappearance of traditional lifestyles and customs, the collapse of the traditional neighbourhood and others. Large-scale standardized space production in southern Jiangsu resulted in the disappearance of rural cultural symbols, such as Jiangnan water net configuration, Jiangnan residential and folk custom. In traditional villages, public spaces are gradually being broken. The newly built concentrated residential communities were labelled with "European Style" and other exotic cultural symbols. Traditional style is falling, and regional identity of village facing the danger of extinction.

3.3. "Urbanized" Villagers Lead to Instability

Famous British social theorist and sociologist Anthony Giddens (1986) claimed that "Modern society is a man-made society of high-risk". He believes that knowledge is essentially uncertainty so that any social scientific knowledge built on experience is uncertain. Any "intervention" and "control" to society and nature of human beings would bring uncertainties and risk. The current urbanization mode in southern Jiangsu is a top-down mechanism and passive process participating with involuntary farmers. It forces this vulnerable group to influx into the cities and join the modernization market economy, The past mode relying on traditional agriculture and property rentals to gain economic benefit is broken. A large number of villagers were forced to change their status from the peasants to citizens. However, their lack of skills and entrepreneurial capital brought them with uncertainties and high risk in employment, as the cities will never guarantee them with suitable jobs.

4. Transformation of Rural Planning in the Background of Transition

4.1. Re-Examine the Value of the Countryside, Designate a Permanent Rural Development Area And Preparation of Rural Development Plan

Starting from Howard's "garden city" theory, western countries increasingly emphasized on the coordinated development of urban and rural, and tried to protect the beautiful rural landscape. Now we should rethink this

issue: what is the value of rural areas? Merely does it provide agricultural products and labour for urban development? We should reverse the traditional concept of urban-centric development, but establish a concept that urban and rural developments are equally important and interactive. Base on this, the original value of villages in southern Jiangsu needs to be rediscovered and restored. The countryside is not only the resource-provider for urban areas, but with more values on ecology, culture, place and psychological aspects. Rural areas and urbanized areas are complementary and indispensable regional landscape. In urbanization process in southern Jiangsu Province, protection of traditional water village is particularly necessary. Experience in Xiamen can be a good reference to southern Jiangsu region. Delineation of permanent rural development zones in the region, including agricultural production zones and residential zones, enables a dual function of agricultural production land and urban green wedge. And this can be considered as the city boundaries for any further expansions.

For permanent rural development area plan, attentions need to be paid to maintain the village public life network to protect rustic features and help establish villagers' territorial identity by applying proper space organization methods to meet the social characteristics. At the same time, considerations are also needed on how to maintain the traditional spatial texture when building a new village. In the space design, the original ecological characteristics, topography, natural vegetation, river system and other environmental factors needs to be respected in order to maintain the village's original spatial structure and style.

4.2. Build Diversified Rural Industries, and Promote the Rustic Characteristics

Southern Jiangsu has entered the phase of leisure and consuming economy. Consuming demands for urban residents are getting increasingly healthy and "green" and the tendency of desire and pursuit on the natural landscape becomes more apparent. Under this background, it is necessary to change the pattern of industrial structure at rural areas in southern Jiangsu from the "extensive rural industry + self-sufficient agriculture" to the urban-rural integration mode. According to location, resources and market demand, rural development in southern Jiangsu needs to be redirected to the path of eco-agriculture, high-tech agriculture, agricultural services, eco-tourism. Thus, a featured countryside could be created with leisure tourism, sightseeing agriculture, cultural tourism, natural ecosystems, agricultural service and other types. In this case, "rural tertiary" will be promoted step by step to establish green and healthy rural services.

4.3. Establish the "Rural Cultural Greenway", and Integrate the Rural Areas into the Regional Leisure Network

To deal with the fragmentation of ecological spaces and the rural cultural crisis, "rural culture greenway" needs to be setup to form continuous and diverse recreational spaces to display rural cultural and ecological characteristics. Protecting the nodes and corridors of ecological in rural areas in southern Jiangsu is quite important, including reserving sankey and fish ponds, river systems, and other natural mountain. It is also necessary to rediscover and preserve of cultural resources by making rural cultural showcase and linking the ecological nodes and cultural platforms through these greenways. Hence, rural cultural greenways will be the supplement of the corridors within southern Jiangsu or even the whole Jiangsu Province. By displaying the rural eco-cultural characteristics, the rural areas can be integrated into the regional leisure network so as to enhance the ecological value and status of the region in southern Jiangsu. The rural areas can be integrated into regional development by developing agri-tourism, green agricultural production, water village tourism and other functions to fulfil the aim of sustainable development. The Government should guide the market forces and villagers to participate in the construction of rural cultural greenways by providing special funds, policy priorities, constructing demonstration projects and other related approaches.

4.4. Establish an Integrated Planning and Construction System, Improving the Villagers' Self-awareness

In Southern Jiangsu, the past government-led mode on rural planning needs to change. An integrated planning and construction system should be built, including two aspects: the upper part is from the government

level. The government makes the overall framework of the development in rural areas by leading the planning system including town and village settlements, rural public facilities and infrastructure planning; the lower part is the level of involvement of the villagers and local independent organizations. These independent organizations and villagers will be the main power to lead construction plan, implement the division of labor, and cooperate with each other so as to evoke the self-awareness of the villagers during construction process and facilitate the maintenance work after construction.

During the process of practicing the integrated planning and construction system, the views of the villagers and their self-motivation should be fully respected. Labels like "low quality", "lack of knowledge in planning" must not be tagged to the villagers' self-motivated behaviors. These behaviors should not be rudely obstructed or even prohibited in the name of "all for rural economic development" or "for the majority of people". The reasonable demands of the villagers should be adopted, whilst some unrealistic demands could be negotiated with explanations.

5. In Conclusion

After the implement of reform and opening up policy, the rural areas in Southern Jiangsu have experienced industrialization, de-industrialization and diversification process. During this process, some problems can be found, such as the perish of rural space, the fading of identity of place, the uncertainties of village development. Faced with a new period for the urbanization and urban-rural integration development, the development of Southern Jiangsu rural areas should not be confined to residential construction projects, but also need to pay more attention to preserve, inherit, and continue the spatial and cultural texture of the villages. On the basis of upholding the excellence tradition in rural development and the accumulating of modern rural development experience, the development of rural areas in Southern Jiangsu needs to adhere to the route of development that "inherit the tradition when encourage innovations". Only in this way, can the rural areas maintain vitality in southern Jiangsu and a new chapter of rural development in southern Jiangsu will be written in the history!

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