

Research on the Effectiveness of the People's City Concept in the Pilot Program of "Shanghai style Jiangnan" Characteristic Traditional Villages

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ABSTRACT

The pilot project of "Shanghai style Jiangnan" characteristic traditional villages is an important exploration of Shanghai's practice of the people's city concept, which aims to realize the sustainable development of villages through the protection and development of traditional villages. In the whole process of rural construction planning, creating a rural environment suitable for living and working, protecting and inheriting Jiangnan culture and the construction of the rule of law, Shanghai adheres to the principle of taking villagers as the center, respecting the wishes of villagers and protecting the rights and interests of villagers, and deeply practices and expands the profound connotation of the people's city concept.

KEYWORDS

"Shanghai style Jiangnan" Characteristic traditional villages; People's city concept; Jiangnan culture; Rural revitalization; Legal construction

1 Introduction

The concept of "People's cities are built by the people, and people's cities are for the people", abbreviated as the "People's City Concept", has become an important guiding ideology for the construction and development of cities by the Chinese government since 2019. This concept fully embodies the people's dominant position in urban construction and development, and is a concrete manifestation of the people-centered philosophy. The concept of people's cities, as an important guideline for urban development in the new era, has a practical scope far beyond cities. It is linked by the people's nature and radiates and runs through various regions and levels of urban and rural development throughout the country. The essence of this concept lies in "people's cities for the people", which concerns how the government can strengthen and optimize governance within cities, extend people's needs and well-being to rural areas, and achieve common prosperity through urban-rural integration. As the largest international city in China, Shanghai aims to inherit the urban context, actively inherit rural historical and cultural heritage, highlight the unique features of Shanghai's rural areas, better coordinate urban and rural spaces, build a high-quality integrated urban-rural landscape pattern, promote urban-rural integration and comprehensive rural revitalization.

2 Background of the Pilot for "Shanghai-Style Jiangnan" Characteristic Traditional Villages

In March 2024, the Shanghai Municipal Government issued the "Special Plan for the Protection and Inheritance of Characteristic Village Styles in Shanghai", which plans to complete the first round of pilot construction by the end of 2027 and form about 20 demonstration samples for the protection and inheritance of characteristic village styles. The 'Shanghai style Jiangnan' is committed to strengthening the genes rooted in the local context and geography of Shanghai, exploring the vivid and innovative interpretation of beautiful China and the 'Ten Thousand Project' in Shanghai, from value exploration and conceptual recognition to planning and pilot construction.

First of all, protecting the traditional culture and customs in the south of the Yangtze River is the primary task of the pilot project of Shanghai style traditional villages with Jiangnan characteristics. Since the opening of Shanghai as a port, its rural areas have embodied the characteristics of Jiangnan culture. These carriers and products of Jiangnan culture and Jiangnan civilization can be seen everywhere in the suburbs of Shanghai, from the pattern of natural paddy fields, the form of village settlements, to the architectural style of folk houses and various intangible cultural heritages. These beautiful villages also retain a lot of intangible cultural heritage such as folk art, folk customs and traditional food, handicrafts and so on. However, in the process of rapid urbanization, the characteristics of rural natural space have a trend of gradual assimilation, traditional folk culture and technology are declining, and many traditional villages are facing the risk of industrialization and disappearance. Protecting and inheriting these traditional villages carrying the cultural gene of the south of the Yangtze River has become an urgent task for Shanghai to continue its urban context and enhance its cultural confidence.

Secondly, with the promotion of the policies of the Chinese government to "meet the needs of the people for a better life", the people's material living standards and requirements have been continuously improved, and the desire for a

better life has become more urgent. In addition to the prosperity of the city, urban residents are also eager to experience the quiet and beautiful environment and cultural heritage of the countryside in Jiangnan villages. The fresh air, beautiful natural scenery and rich traditional culture in rural areas are indispensable supplements to urban life. Therefore, the Shanghai municipal government timely launched the "rural version" of a better life. Taking the opportunity of urban renewal and rural culture and tourism as the starting point, it promoted the pilot reform of the "Shanghai style Jiangnan" characteristic traditional villages, with the intention of creating an urban village suitable for living and working.

3 The Path of the Shanghai-style Jiangnan Village Pilot Project in Practicing the Concept of a People's City

3.1 To Implement the Mechanism of People's Participation and the Concept of People First in Rural Planning

In the pilot planning process of the "Shanghai style Jiangnan" characteristic traditional villages, we have always adhered to the development concept of putting the people at the center. From planning to implementation, fully respect the wishes of villagers, and ensure their right to know, to participate, and to make decisions. For example, before the pilot implementation of the Shanghai style Jiangnan characteristic village in Xinyuan Village, Jinshan District, the planning team distributed 600 questionnaires to the villages and collected 580, with an effective rate of 96.7%. The questionnaire covers villagers' expectations for infrastructure, public services, cultural heritage, and other aspects. The planning team also organized 12 village symposiums in Xinyuan Village, inviting 25-35 village representatives to participate each time to discuss the village's development positioning and specific plans. Based on the villagers' expectations and needs for village development, regular village meetings were held to specifically discuss important issues such as village development planning and project implementation, ensuring that every villager can fully express their opinions. Based on the demands of the villagers, the planning team has positioned Xinyuan Village as a "chessboard style area". While protecting the original natural village form, the infrastructure such as road transportation, water and electricity communication has been improved, and public service facilities such as cultural activity centers and health service stations have been built. The focus is on exploring the long history and profound cultural heritage of the countryside, allowing villagers to experience the beauty of life in traditional culture and modern civilization.

In the pilot project of "Shanghai style Jiangnan" characteristic traditional villages, Shanghai has attempted to explore a relatively complete resident participation mechanism. Build a platform for residents to deeply participate in village planning and decision-making through village meetings, hearings, and other forms. The village council refers to the regular meetings held to discuss important issues such as village development planning and project implementation, bringing together the actual demands of villagers, the historical and current conditions of the village, and ensuring that the majority of villagers can fully express their opinions. Eventually, an elderly activity room was added to the design. In the pilot planning process of the "Shanghai style Jiangnan" characteristic traditional villages, Shanghai has always adhered to the people-centered development concept, fully respected the wishes of villagers, and guaranteed their right to know, participate, and make decisions.

3.2 The Practice of the People-Centered Orientation in the Environmental Transformation of Rural Areas Suitable for Living and Working

Ecological environment protection is an important part of the pilot project of "Shanghai style Jiangnan" characteristic traditional villages. Firstly, the pilot villages actively promote water environment treatment, waste sorting, greening and beautification, and are committed to creating a beautiful rural ecological environment. Through the implementation of river dredging, ecological revetment construction and other projects, the water quality of the river in the village has been improved, and the ecological function of the rural river has been restored. At the same time, vigorously carrying out the village greening action, planting all kinds of flowers and trees on both sides of the village road and around the villagers' courtyard, significantly improve the village greening coverage, and make the traditional villages in the south of the Yangtze River of Shanghai style take on a new look. In addition, by increasing the investment in rural road network infrastructure construction, the village roads have become flat and wide, the water and electricity supply is stable, the sewage treatment facilities are perfect, and the telecommunications network is fast and convenient. Each village has new cultural squares, fitness facilities and even shopping centers. At the same time, a building repair subsidy system will be established to provide certain financial subsidies for villagers' independent repair of traditional buildings that meet the protection requirements. The function of villagers' houses has been upgraded, the spatial layout has been improved, and the water, electricity and gas facilities have been supplemented, which has greatly improved the comfort and modernization level of residential buildings.

Secondly, the "Shanghai style Jiangnan" characteristic traditional village pilot actively explores the local industrial development mode to promote the employment and income of farmers. In addition to the traditional agricultural income, agricultural tourism projects, handicraft factories, e-commerce warehouses, so that villagers can find employment or start a business without leaving their homes, which greatly increasing the source of income and enhancing the villagers' sense of gain. Most villages in the suburbs of Shanghai have developed water systems. Relying on their own natural and cultural resources, they vigorously develop rural tourism, leisure agriculture, sightseeing agriculture and other industries. For example, jinglingqiao village, Yexie Town, Songjiang District, has made full use of local rice field resources to create a rural tourism project integrating rice field sightseeing, farming experience and agricultural product picking. The rice planting and harvesting season every year attracts a large number of tourists to come for sightseeing experience, which not only drives the sales of local agricultural products, but also provides villagers with jobs such as tour guides, catering services and agricultural product processing. These measures have helped traditional villages achieve a balance between protection and development, tradition and modernity, and greatly enhanced the attractiveness of Shanghai style Jiangnan villages. The livable and employable index of villages has greatly improved, and even attracted many urban residents to return home and start businesses. They have also provided valuable experience for Rural Revitalization and construction across the country.

3.3 To Stimulate People's Initiative and Creativity in the Process of Inheriting and Protecting Jiangnan Culture

In the pilot process of Shanghai style Jiangnan traditional villages, the Shanghai municipal government attaches great importance to the inheritance and protection of traditional Jiangnan village culture and intangible cultural heritage. On the one hand, during the pilot process, they will focus on strengthening the excavation and protection of the cultural heritage of traditional buildings, folk customs, handicrafts, and make traditional culture shine in modern villages by holding various cultural activities, such as folk activities, festival celebrations, traditional handicrafts exhibitions. Each pilot village comprehensively combs the material cultural heritage such as ancient buildings, ancient bridges, ancient trees and famous trees in the village, finds and cultivates inheritors of intangible cultural heritage such as traditional handicrafts and folk activities, and gives full play to the villagers' subjective initiative and creativity to learn and spread these skills. For example, Gelong village in Jiading District has a village history of more than 600 years. The village committee took the initiative to compile the book "Gelong impression", and prepared to build the Gelong village history and culture exhibition hall. It recorded the history, culture, development and changes of Gelong village in the form of words, pictures and objects, so that villagers and tourists could better understand and feel the details of Jiangnan culture. On the other hand, various pilot villages of Shanghai school in the south of the Yangtze River spontaneously organized various cultural activities to enrich the spiritual and cultural life of the villagers. Many villages have built cultural auditoriums, rural bookstores and other places for cultural activities, and regularly hold art performances, calligraphy and painting exhibitions, reading sharing meetings and other activities. These activities not only inherit and carry forward the traditional culture, but also enhance the villagers' community cohesion and cultural identity.

3.4 To Safeguard People's Economic and Social Rights and Interests through the Construction of Law

The pilot villages of Shanghai school in the south of the Yangtze River attach great importance to the dominant position of villagers in the construction of the rule of law, and establish diversified ways for villagers to participate in the construction of the rule of law. In the process of formulating village rules and regulations, the pilot villages fully launched villagers' discussions, allowing them to formulate legal and reasonable village rules and regulations in line with the interests of most people according to their own needs and the actual situation of the village. At the same time, through the establishment of the villagers' legal supervisor system, villagers with a sense of responsibility and understanding of the law are employed as legal supervisors to supervise the whole process of the work of the village. The villagers' legal supervisor should also regularly collect the villagers' opinions and suggestions and timely feed them back to the village committees and relevant departments to ensure that the construction of the rule of law can truly reflect the wishes of the villagers. In addition, some pilot villages also use modern information technology to build online platforms to facilitate villagers' participation in the construction of the rule of law. Villagers can keep abreast of developments in the construction of the rule of law through mobile app, wechat official account and other platforms, or participate in publicity activities of the rule of law, or put forward opinions and suggestions. In terms of industrial development, in order to effectively protect the legitimate rights and interests of villagers, the "Shanghai style Jiangnan" characteristic traditional villages have been incorporated into the rule of law from the introduction of industrial projects to the standardization of operation, from the rights and interests of villagers' land to the rights and interests of income distribution. In the process of rural tourism industry, by signing legal and compliant land transfer contracts with villagers, the villagers' rental income

and the rights and interests of participating in tourism management are clarified, and the villagers' rights and interests are protected in a reasonable and legal way, so as to realize the revitalization of rural industry and the sharing of villagers' interests.

In order to carry out the pilot work of Shanghai style Jiangnan villages smoothly, the Shanghai municipal government formulated relevant local laws and regulations to refine them. For example, in 2024, the special plan for the protection and inheritance of the features of characteristic villages in Shanghai was issued, which focused on the protection scope, protection requirements and development direction of characteristic villages. The plan puts forward specific control requirements for the natural features, village features, environmental landscape and context inheritance of villages, laying a legal foundation for the long-term development of characteristic villages. At the same time, Shanghai has also formulated a series of supporting policies and measures to support the protection and development of traditional villages, such as fiscal subsidy policies, industrial support policies, etc. Whether it is land use, building renovation or cultural heritage protection, they are carried out in accordance with laws and regulations to achieve the organic unity of protection and development. These policies and measures provide strong support and guarantee for the protection and development of traditional villages in Shanghai, and help to promote the sustainable development of traditional villages.

4 Conclusion

From the current implementation effect, the pilot villages have achieved certain results in implementing the comprehensive rural revitalization strategy, promoting urban-rural integration development, inheriting and promoting Jiangnan culture, laying the foundation for the smooth completion of the first round of pilot work for Shanghai style Jiangnan villages. Since the launch of the pilot program for Shanghai style Jiangnan villages, guided by the national rural revitalization strategy, China have been creating modern rural areas with prosperous industries, livable ecology, civilized rural customs, effective governance, and affluent living. Taking Jinshan District as an example, the Xinyuan Village unit in Fengjing Town, as the first batch of pilot projects, adheres to the basic principles of ecological priority, cultural inheritance, people-oriented, and planning guidance. After more than two years of construction, the unique cultural resources of Xinyuan Village have been better protected and inherited, such as the continuation and inheritance of folk activities such as "horse lanterns", and the protection of historical relics such as ancient trees, bridges, and century old houses. The rural style of Xinyuan Village has also been greatly improved, and the pilot work focuses on ecological priority and low disturbance, near nature methods, effectively protecting and enhancing the original appearance of Xinyuan Village as a water town.

However, there are also many challenges in the pilot work. The first is industrial sustainability. Although the pilot work has achieved some results, there are still many difficulties in ensuring the sustainable development of rural industry, so it is necessary to further explore the sustainable industrial development model. The second is the participation of villagers. At present, it is also urgent to further improve the participation of villagers through measures including land ownership and interest distribution, so that they can truly become the main body of Rural Revitalization. The last but not least, the continuous investment of capital and technology. How to ensure the continuous investment of capital and technology is the key issue to be solved in the future.

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