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A Study on New Rural Residential Community in the Influence of the New Rural Policies in China

An example of New Shangzhuang village in Queshan Country, China

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Abstract

In 2006, the Chinese government declared the construction of the “new socialist countryside” as one of its important policies. In the Chinese government’s first policy document for 2006, it stated that constructing a new socialist countryside was the foremost task facing China in the 2006-2010 five-year period. To achieve this goal, China must step up efforts in coordinating the development of urban and rural areas, developing modern agriculture, boosting farmers’ incomes, enhancing rural infrastructure, promoting social causes in rural areas and deepening rural reforms. This paper concentrates on New Shangzhuang Village (Hereinafter referred to as S village) as an example, of a new rural residential community built from 2009. Study on the implementation of the New Rural Policies, and the improvement in quality of the farmers’ life, provides a brief but systematic introduction to the respects of rural investigation’s principles, characteristics and obstacles, and help describe the process of industrialization and urbanization in China.

Introduction

Since China’s “Opening and Reform” policy in 1978, and especially from the early 1990s, years of rapid GDP growth have made the national economy ever-more powerful. But balanced development, which is advocated by the central leadership and in the fundamental interests of the people, requires more than a sound and fast-growing economy. Indeed, China faces many problems such as unemployment, corruption and a widening financial gap between rural and urban areas. All these problems ring alarm bells for those steering the country’s long-term development. Among these problems, the wide wealth gap between urban and rural residents is a “serious threat to social stability”. In 1985, the disposable income of each urban resident was almost double that of a farming family’s total income. By 2002, it had more than tripled (Table 1.1). In order to bridge the gap, the Chinese government has implemented a series of policies called “New Rural Policies”.

About “New Rural Policies”, the Premier of State Council, Wen Jiabao (2005) said, “The issues concerning agriculture, rural areas and farmers are fundamental ones that have a bearing on the overall modernization drive. Constructing a new socialist countryside refers to putting agriculture and rural initiatives more prominently on the agenda of China’s modernization drive... We will implement a policy of getting industry to support agriculture and cities to support the countryside, strengthen support for agriculture, rural areas and farmers, continue making reforms in rural systems and innovations in rural institutions to bring about a rapid and significant change in the overall appearance of the countryside.” On Feb. 21, 2006, the Chinese government promulgated its first policy document of 2006, taking “constructing a new countryside” as its theme. The document stressed the importance of rural issues, mentioning that the resolution to rural issues was of great significance and difficulty in the process of China’s industrialization and urbanization. The document said that constructing a new socialist countryside was the foremost task facing China in the 2006-2010 five-year period. However, to achieve the stated goals,

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China must step up efforts in coordinating the development of urban and rural areas, developing modern agriculture, boosting farmers' incomes, enhancing rural infrastructure, promoting social causes in rural areas, and deepening rural reforms.

RURAN-URBAN INCOME GAP IN CHINA
¥/person

YEAR	RURAL	URBAN	U/R
1985	397.6	739.1	1.86
1986	423.8	899.6	2.12
1987	462.6	1002.2	2.17
1988	544.9	1181.4	2.17
1989	601.5	1375.7	2.29
1990	686.3	1510.2	2.20
1991	708.6	1700.6	2.40
1992	784.0	2026.6	2.58
1993	921.6	2577.4	2.80
1994	1221.0	3496.2	2.86
1995	1577.7	4283.0	2.71
1996	1926.1	4838.9	2.51
1997	2090.1	5160.3	2.47
1998	2162.0	5425.1	2.51
1999	2210.3	5854.0	2.65
2000	2253.4	6280.0	2.79
2001	2366.4	6859.6	2.90
2002	2475.6	7702.2	3.11
2003	2622.2	8472.2	3.23
2004	2936.4	9421.6	3.21
2005	3255.0	10493.0	3.22

SOURCE: Data from National Statistics of P.R.C.

Table 1.1 1985-2005 Income gap between rural-urban residents, China

The first policy document is issued by the central committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, the Cabinet, is the No.1 central document. The Chinese No.1 central documents have consecutively focused on rural problems in seven years, from 2004 to 2010. Promoting rural community development is an important component of constructing a new socialist countryside. Moreover, they are revolution in the history of China's rural development. It has an important impact on Chinese rural development as well as the household contract responsibility system.

Generally speaking, in the new rural policies, the Chinese government has proposed constructing a new socialist countryside according to the requirement of advanced production, improved livelihood, a civilized social atmosphere, clean and tidy villages and democratic administration. It proposes to focus on developing agricultural productivity as the primary task of constructing a new socialist countryside. It also proposes to extend the agricultural industrial chain to let farmers benefit more from the expansion of agricultural functions and develop farm produce processing, freshness preservation, storage, transportation and other services. The new rural residential community is one of the measures which can integrate the land resource, improve infrastructure and enhance the industrialization of the agriculture.

This paper is organized as follows: First, section 1 outlines the new rural policies from 2005 in China, presents the important role of New socialist countryside construction in recent years.

Second, section 2 describes the research methods. Section 3 introduces the example of S village's investigation in Queshan Country of China. Finally, further research is discussed in conclusions.

Research methods

This paper takes a particular village as an individual case. This village is S village, Queshan Country, Henan Province, China. Since this study is based on the research about the new rural policies, it is an attempt to explore how the policies of new socialist countryside construction in the rural areas are specifically implemented, in addition, it seeks to study how the production and living standards in a typical Chinese village is changing under the influence of the new rural policies. We have collected the original villages and New Rural Residential Community related construction materials from September 2010. In addition, in September 2010, March 2011 and April 2011,

one of the authors has been to S village three times, to carry out the fieldwork.

S Village's construction began in March 2010. In September 2010, one of the authors went to S village to carry out the fieldwork. The construction of S Village has two stages. The



Figure 2.1 Construction site of S village

first phase of fieldwork, was constructed during the first stage of construction (Figure 2.1&2.2). We have reviewed the master plan of S village and the related documents from the local government, and had a preliminary understanding on the building proceeding of S village. The paper is based on the first fieldwork's information to be completed. Since the first stage of construction is scheduled to be completed before the end of 2011, in order to be able to grasp the information about the famers' present living conditions and the original rural villages' housing before relocation, to compare the famers' living conditions before and after relocation in the follow-up study, in March 2011 and April 2011, additional fieldwork in S village was conducted twice again, to do surveying and mapping of the housing in the original villages. At present, this part of study is still in progress.



Figure 2.2 One house of new S village

Based on the Data Collection and Fieldwork, according to arrange the documents of construction, the master plan of S village, land-use plan and so on, we have an understanding of the S village's development situation and the characteristics of investigation and construction.

S village's Master Plan

S Village is located in Queshan Country, Henan province in China (Figure3.1), currently covering about 520 acres, with plans to integrate 9 villages that are in the West of the original S village, totalling 440 families, more than 2,000 people. After the completion of the new village, it could sort out 890 acres of the original homestead, saving 390 acres of farmland.



Figure 3.1 Location of new S village (left)

Figure 3.2 Post of New S village's image (right)

New Socialist Countryside Construction and the outline of S village

S village is a provincial-level new rural model village, and also the first village in the period of constructing the new rural residential community in Queshan Country. It is a practical application of the policy of new socialist countryside construction.

Correctly handling the relations between workers and famers, urban and rural areas have always been a major problem in the period of Chinese Revolution and Construction. On the Chinese No.1 central document for 2010, the Chinese government calls for greater efforts to coordinate development between urban and rural areas, which was, the document said, a fundamental requirement of building a prosperous society. The document states that, expanding rural demand should be the key measure in boosting domestic demand, and developing modern agriculture should be considered a major task in transforming China's economic growth pattern. In other words, constructing new socialist countryside must break through the restrictions of the urban-rural structure, and advance the full rural developments by "industry's financing agriculture and city's leading countryside". In November 2009, Henan the provincial government issued a special document, "Views on constructing new rural model village by the Henan Province

Committee of Henan Province Communist Party” (Yu [2009] No.28), putting forward the specific and explicit requirement for constructing new rural residential community. In 2010, Queshan County Committee issued a document, “Views on the implementation of new rural residential community”, publishing a series of preferential policies for the new socialist countryside construction. On March 3rd, 2010, S village Groundbreaking ceremony was held.

The original S village is located in the northern of Queshan country, totalling 17 villages. The investigation of New S village is planned to integrate the 9 villages including Xizhang

Village, Li Village, Yang Village, Mi Village, Xiaohan Village, Shanpo Village, Sunlao Village, Sanli Village and Linzi Village that were in the West of the original S village, totalling 440 families, more than 2,000 people. New S Village is located between the Xizhang Village and Li Village. It is 600 meters from east to west, 500 meters from north to south. This new rural residential community is according to the design standards for urban residential community, which has complete infrastructures as roads, gas, telecommunications, water supply and sewerage and so on. Moreover, new S village is equipped with sports arenas, health centre, kindergarten, cultural plaza, supermarket and waste transfer station. Meanwhile, new S village is promoting the construction, while focusing on gathering small original rural villages into a new one based on a procedure called “Hop Village and Point”, cultivating the major

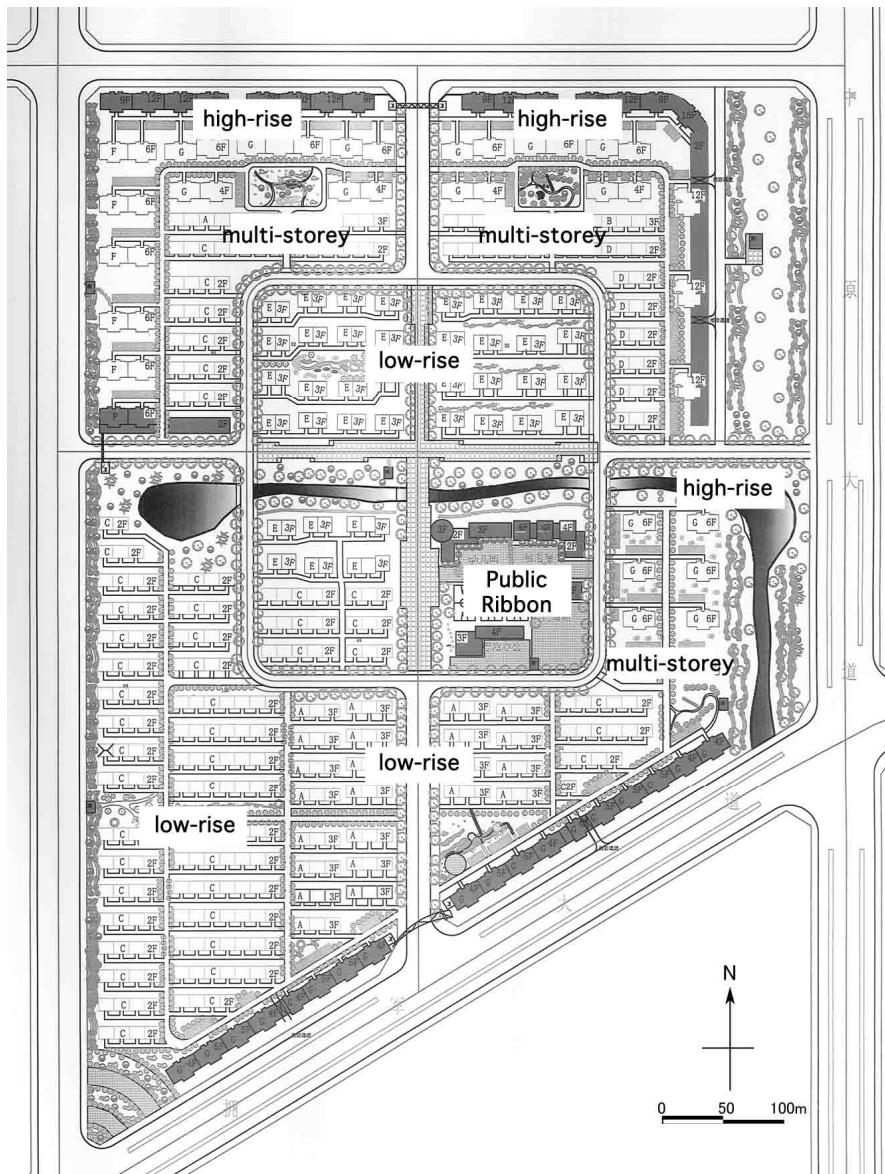


Figure 3.3
Layout Plan

SOURCE:
Master Plan of S
village

industries at the same time. The construction area of S Village is nearly 24 million m². This project has two stages. It is scheduled to be completed before the end of 2012. (Figure 3.2)

The Characteristics of S village's investigation

According to the master plan of S village, there are many characteristics in the progress of investigation as follows:

(1) S Village Central Planning is planned in accordance with the principle of “integrated resources, integrated urban and rural environment, moderately advancement and function

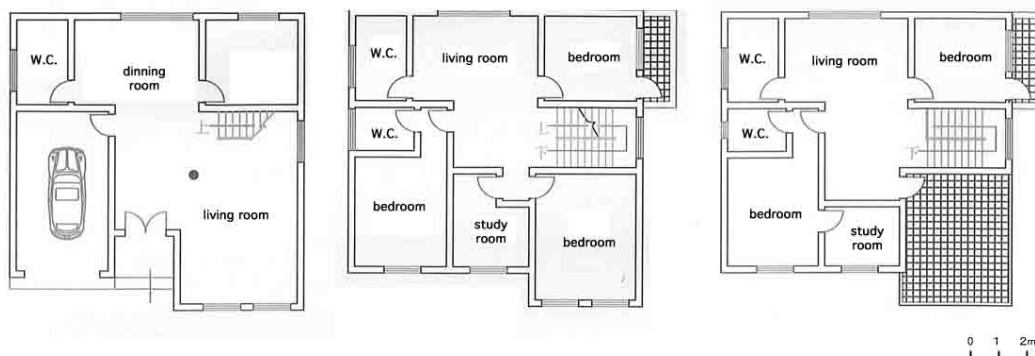
optimization”(Figure 3.3). Its overall planning based on the village infrastructure, residential patterns, public utilities, business services, green landscape and industrial development.

The whole area is divided into four groups by roads and river. It arranged hospital, kindergarten, playground and other public buildings in the central region. Along the river, it has a wide central green space. Meanwhile, the district is divided into two functional areas: Residential Ribbon and Public Buildings Ribbon. The overall layout of the buildings is that the building height limit decreases from south part of district to northern area. There



*Figure 3.4
Low-rise buildings in
new S village*

*SOURCE: Master Plan
of S village*



*Figure 3.5
One type of plan in
new S village*

*SOURCE: Master
Plan of S village*

are low-rise buildings (buildings less than three stories), multi-storied buildings, and high-rise buildings (buildings more than six stories). Through this arrangement, it can not only enrich the landscape along the street, but also use the land efficiently. In order to keep with the living habits of farmers, the main buildings in this district are low-rise, and the low-rise buildings are almost townhouses. Five to seven buildings are in a group, the distance between each group is almost 11 to 12.8 meters (Figure 3.4). In this district, there are 459 low-rise buildings, 676 multi-storied buildings and 286 high-rise buildings, for a total of 1421 buildings (Figure 3.5). This supply is more than sufficient to meet the housing needs of relocated farmers, with the remaining part of houses units to be sold to other people.

(2) S Village is built on a new location completely different from the original rural village, which known as "Overall Relocation". It covers 520 acres of village planning. About the market mechanism, S Village attracted investment from Hengyiyifeng Investment Co., Ltd in Shenzhen, China, based on the principle of "who invests, who build, who benefits". This project is planned to cost 2.4 billion yuan. As of now, the developer has invested 80 million yuan.

According to the compensation agreement signed with the relocated farmers, when they move to the new village, they can receive 40m² housing area for free per each person, while those farmers who want to have more than 40m² just pay 600 yuan/m² for the part of area exceeds free area. However, others who want to buy housing here must pay 1200 yuan/m².

(3) S village is constructed according to the principle of "Hop Village and Point". Hop Village and Point is a rural planning idea of gathering small original rural villages into new one, a procedure widely used in Chinese rural area in recent years. It is being developing with land consolidation, and Industry training at the same time. Before the planning, since the distribution of original 9 villages was scattered, the waste such as low utilization rate of land, and overlapping construction was quite serious. After the completion of the new village, it can be sorted out 890 acres homestead of the original villages, 390 acres farmland could be saved.

(4) The construction of S Village has two stages. It is scheduled to be completed before the end of 2012. The progress of relocation is embodying the principle of farmers' voluntary participation. First, those farmers who wish to relocate have to submit applications to the village committee. After qualification is passed, farmers must sign an agreement of "building the new one by demolishing the old one". Still now, over 80% of the relocation of farmers have signed the agreement.

(5) Sustainable developments of the new village depend on providing industry support, constructing the New Village and developing industry simultaneously, which are important goals of the construction of new rural residential community. To achieve these goals, S village is promoting the construction, while focusing on cultivating the three major industries at the same time. First is the vegetable oil industry that will create 500 employment opportunities for farmers. Second is the tertiary industry. Relying on the advantages of the industry park in Queshan country, which help famers develop logistics, catering services, community services and other tertiary industries. Third is the modernity of agriculture. In contrast to the land consolidation of original villages, farmers are guided to make full use of the value of the land.

Because of these changes, the farmers' source of income would be changed. Among the 9 original villages, most part of the farmland of 2 villages will be changed to homestead of new village. Therefore, farmers' income from land would be greatly reduced. In order to ensure the normal livelihood of farmers, the elderly aged over 60 can enjoy the pension insurance, young people can go to town to work or enter the vegetable oil factory the above mentioned.

The main obstacles of S village's investigation

Constructing the new rural residential community attempts to ensure a better living environment and future for farmers, and could mobilize farmers to make them more active and creative. However, it is undeniable that there are still many obstacles to the progress of the new S village's construction as follows:

(1) The legal system is imperfect. In practice, many local development ideas are often replaced when the local government changes after their term of office. Although S village's master plan has been defined by the Queshan country's document, the local document is only backed by the local government, whose lack of legislative power, which means the new rural residential community is faced with substantial problems of system guarantee. However, without a stable system guarantee by legal protection in time, the new rural work would be stagnated, reducing the enthusiasm of farmers, and hence undermining the implementation of policy. This is the most serious challenge.

(2) Farmers typically take a long time to change traditional mindsets and behavioral patterns. Since the new residential model breaks the old model of "each village represents

a group of people related by blood or marriage", the new model represents a significant change of farmers' living habits which was formed through centuries of customs. Simply signing an agreement does not mean that farmers have got accustomed to the new lifestyle suggested by the new residential model. Constructing a new socialist countryside is long-term strategy. As such, we are not so anxious, over speed-up will not only make the work easier, but make the farmers disappointed. This is also a challenge of community management in future. (Figure 3.6)

(3) The social enterprise is unsatisfactory. At present, actual construction of the new S

village has simply resulted in a great deal of investment in building structure. However, given their background and education level, most farmers lack the sophistication and experience to fully appreciate the full returns to human and physical capital investment.



Figure 3.6 The yard of one house in original village

As such, their investment in the child education, agricultural technology and cultural consumption is frequently at sub-optimal levels. Furthermore, the imperfect systems of pension insurance, basic medical insurance and minimum living standard security can not meet the needs of the farmers of new S village.

Conclusions

This study is mainly focused on the policy of new socialist countryside construction and the example of new rural residential community. Through the above, I am aiming to provide an outline of new rural residential community. In the future, based on the existing research, we plan to analyze the materials of the second and third fieldwork, to compare the farmers' living conditions before and after relocation.

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