Rural revitalization under the background of balancing urban and rural development:

A case study of Batang village, Guangdong province, China

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Abstract

Since reform and opening up, the development of Chinese urban and rural areas has shown an evolution of integration from isolation. The government promulgated national policies and related planning strategies, aiming at realizing the goal of rural revitalization through the system reform and planning adjustment of balancing urban and rural development. In the complex process of social development, there are many problems with rural areas, such as lack of infrastructure, unbalanced economic development, dilapidated living environment and insufficient sharing between urban and rural areas. On the premise of meeting the requirements of national laws and policies, this paper takes the planning of Batang village in Yunfu city of Guangdong province as an example. Combine with ReBAM theory to make sure Batang village is suit for developing tourism. And based on field survey made a Batang plan by planning knowledge. Through literature review and field survey to explore how to realize the revitalization of the rural areas under the development mode of balancing urban and rural development. The conclusion of the research took rural tourism as the breakthrough point, and formed complementary and dislocation development mode with the city. In living aspect, the research optimized infrastructure and improved people's living environment as well as summarized cultural elements to inherit rural civilization. In production aspect, it exploited rural commercial potential and income-generating path, and completed the transformation from passive development to active revitalization to achieve prosperity industry and life. In ecology aspect, it combined with sustainable development model to create an ecological and livable rural landscape. At last, the research established urban and rural co-management system and shared rural information platform to achieve effective governance, to ensure that tourism mode as a starting point for rural revitalization planning can be sustainable development. The research of this paper practiced the national experience of rural revitalization as a pilot project, facilitated the implementation of relevant policies and supported planning for rural revitalization, and explored the methods of rural revitalization under the background of balancing urban and rural development. Based on the acceptance of the plan by local villagers, the approval of Guangdong Postgraduate Education Innovation Project in 2018 and got the third prize of National Competition for Ecological Wisdom Inspired Urban and Rural Practice in 2019, it is hoped that the research will contribute to the rural revitalization under the background of balancing urban and rural development.

Keywords

Rural revitalization, plan, tourism, balance urban and rural development

1. Introduction

Since reform and opening up in 1978, China has taken a series of strategies to balance urban and rural development. In 1980s, Shenzhen firstly took into an economic zone for achieve the urban development in Pearl River Delta. In 1990s, Pudong area in Shanghai of Yangtze River Delta developed rapidly (Suh, 2007). In the early 2000s, Binhai New District started to establish in the area around Bohai Sea Area. In 2017, the country sets the development strategy of Xiongan new district (Li et al., 2017). With the fast development of urban areas in China. More and more rural people have moved to big cities for living. Thus the urbanization level is rapidly catching up from 10.6% in 1949 to 56.1% in 2015 (Gu et al., 2017). Villagers abandoned their houses and lands and turned their villages into ghost towns (Gao and Wu, 2017). The development of urban and rural is unbalanced.

In fact, since the founding of the PRC in 1949, rural revitalization has been the important step for national development (Zhu, 1999; Zhang, LeGates, & Zhao, 2016). In recent years, with the vigorous development of industry in China's cities, it is time for industry nurturing agriculture (Zacharias and Tang, 2010; Wang et al., 2019). Rural revitalization has been more focused of people's attention in China now. It aimed to break through the urban and rural binary system and reduced the disparity between cities and countrysides to realize the urban-rural integration (Li, 2015).

In 2017, the party's report on the Nineteenth Congress placed the issue of rural revitalization (Sun, 2018). Rural revitalization is a theoretical system and strategic guidance aimed at achieving comprehensive rural development with strong agriculture, beautiful countryside and rich farmers, aiming to accelerate the modernization of agriculture and rural areas, narrow the development gap between urban and rural areas and realize the construction of a well-off society in an all-round way (Zhou et al., 2018). As for rural planning strategies, Chinese focus extended from the function and economy to the cultural, aesthetic perspectives and other relative aspects (Chen, 2011).

But up to now, with the unbalanced development of urban and rural development in past few decades, there are lots of problems took into rural in China. Here takes the Batang village as an example to analyze.

2. Problems

2.1. Lack of infrastructure

In living aspect, lack the infrastructure of sewage system, public transportation system, public restroom, garbage disposal and relative service facilities are common problems in the rural of China. Even more and more villages have been established sewage system but imperfect infrastructures for using caused the problem of living environment. And the public transportation system hasn't established perfect in most of the villages. Incomplete traffic system will take harmful influence on rural revitalization (ChengBo, 2018; Zheng and Iop, 2018).

As the Figure 1 shows, the sewage system in Batang village doesn't wonderful for local villagers use. The restroom on the lake not only polluted the local living environment, but also affected the mood of the view. And Figure 2 shows the only public station in this village. There is no identification to show this is a bus station. The public transportation system doesn't perfect.

Figure 1 Restroom without sewage system

Figure 2 Unrecognized bus station

2.2. Unbalanced economic development

In production aspect, the economic gap between urban and rural areas is widening. The urban-rural income ratio had increased from 1.86:1 in 1986 to 3.33:1 in 2009, even though it's reduced to 2.7:1 nowadays (Chen et al., 2019). But the unbalanced economic development had been led to widening the gap between rich and poor people, for the harmonious development of the overall society had a negative impact (Chen et al., 2018). As Figure 3 and Figure 4 show, rural production mainly rely on primary industry in Batang village. And the articles for daily use made by old people of hand weaving.

Figure 3 Primary industry

Figure 4 Hand weaving

2.3. Dilapidated living environment

In ecology aspect, China's cities have attracted more and more people from rural to urban for living. By contrast, less and less people living in rural (Li et al., 2017). As the Figure 5 shows, Batang village is one of the villages in Xinxing county. And the population of Xinxing county is gradually decreasing.

Figure 5 Population trends of Xinxing county

Less population means less people for living and producing in rural areas (Li et al., 2014). With the time goes, the rural left dilapidated living environment. And the left people for agricultural production, they had to use more pesticides for high levels of agricultural output. This took the problem of soil pollution, food safety issue and other environmental problems (Fan et al., 2009; Chen and Zhang, 2019). All of these makes the ecology environment decadent.

2.4. Insufficient sharing between urban and rural areas

In governance aspect, insufficient sharing between urban and rural areas is a historical issue. In order to develop the national economy from 1949, China had implemented a series of policies to support industry priority development. As the Introduction mentioned, the big city rapidly development is under this historical background. Since the 21st century, rural governance recognized and reformed to establish long-term mechanism of industry nurturing agriculture and cities supporting countrysides (Wang and Jin, 2014; Fang, 2017). With the process of rural revitalization in recent years, rural tourism became the main way to implement (Li et al., 2018). But just with the support of government is not enough, insufficient sharing between urban and rural areas needs bottom-up initiatives of local people to achieve rural revitalization (Li et al., 2016).

3. Methods

3.1. ReBAM theory

With the development of rural revitalization of tourism model, this paper focus on ReBAM (Recreational Belt Around Metropolis) theory try to find a reasonable way for revitalizing Batang village in Xinxing county. ReBAM theory firstly offered by Prof Bihu WU in 1998. This theory has been applied and developed in Xiamen (Dong, 2010), Chongqing (Zhou et al., 2013), Kunming (Baohong et al., 2011), Shanghai (Wu and Cai, 2006), Wuhan (Li et al., 2016), and Beijing city (Guo et al., 2010). It's an effective method for rural revitalization which includes three determinants, they are the growth of domestic demand, transportation networks, and policy-driven supply.

As the Figure 6 shows, the travelling population more than sevenfold increased in Xinxing county form 2005 to 2017. The demand of tourism is rapidly developing. This is one of the three determinants underlying the formation of ReBAM theory.

Figure 6 Travelling population trends of Xinxing county

3.2. Field survey

Through field survey we can see Batang village is located in Xinxing county, Yufun city, Guangdong province (Fig. 7). The traffic system of Batang village is convenient that include

Figure 7 Batang village location

No.534 county highway to connect surrounding cities (Fig. 8). There are 5 cities can be arrived within 2 hours transit time (Fig. 9). And the total population of these cities are around 12.4 million that provide great potential tourists. The convenience traffic network support the ReBAM theory of rural revitalization for rural tourism.

Figure 8 Traffic network of Batang

Figure 9 Transit time of Batang

3.3. Literature review

Besides reference ReBAM theory to analyze the demand of tourism for Batang village is sufficient, and through field survey to verify the transportation network is convenience for travelling, this research also took literature review to find the policy-driven supply to further support the rural revitalization of Batang village is suitable for tourism model.

Chinese Central Rural Work Leading Group published *Strategic Planning for Rural Revitalization (2018-2022)* in 2018. It aimed to develop rural revitalization in national macro level. This policy document mentioned rural revitalization ways based on balancing of urban and rural development. And it emphasized tourism development way should combine with rural in living, production, ecology and governance aspect.

Department of Natural Resources of Guangdong Province and Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of Guangdong Province joint released *Land Use Policies and Measures to Implement the Strategy of Rural Revitalization* in 2019. The Chapter 10 clearly stated that to increase land use support for rural tourism.

Yunfu City Master Plan (2012-2020) and *Xinxing County Master Plan (2013-2035)* show Batang village in Promote Development Zone (Fig. 9 and Fig. 10). It means the urban planning of this area is supported by relative urban planning departments and policies.

Thus tourism model can be concluded as a method that rural revitalization in Batang village is suitable whatever from ReBAM theory, filed survey and literature review.

Figure 9 Yunfu city function plan

Figure 10 Xinxing county function plan

4. Results

4.1. Living aspect

Based on tourism model of rural revitalization, the research combined with planning knowledge to plan Batang village from four aspects.

In living aspect, as above analyzed there are lack of infrastructure such as garbage disposal, public restroom and public transportation system. So the plan designed facilities system and traffic system. As Figure 11 shows, the facilities system include public service facility, plaza and park, public restroom and garbage collection point according to the current situation of Batang village. And Figure 12 shows the traffic system include county high way, main village road, secondary village road and car parking. Even though the transportation network is convenience to Batang village, but the original traffic system needs to be optimizing inside of

Figure 11 Facilities system

Figure 12 Traffic system

the village. These will give local residents a better living condition. Then more and more local people will be willing to live in here. It's also better for servicing tourists and inheriting rural civilization.

4.2. Production aspect

In production aspect, this plan classified land use nature firstly. The land use of Batang village divided into 6 categories. They are water land, agroforestry land, residential land, public service land, industrial land and transportation facility land. These land use coordinated with the design of living aspect (Fig. 13). According to unbalanced economic development problem analyzed above, the plan tried to mix some new industries in Batang village. Based on field survey, on both sides of the county highway has been existed some workshops. So it will be better to plan industrial development zone in these areas. The plan considered the local hand waving industries to plan handicraft development zone. And it complement business development zone for people trading in here (Fig. 14). The land use and industrial layout will

Figure 13 Land use

Figure 14 Industrial layout

offer more opportunities for improving local economy, and this will support the tourism development of Batang village.

4.3. Ecology aspect

In ecology aspect, the design planed landscape structure and landscape conservation areas based on field survey (Fig. 15 and Fig. 16). Not only considered the tourism model for rural

Figure 15 Landscape structure

Figure 16 Landscape conservation areas

revitalization, but it also attended to balance the relationship of natural landscape and cultural landscape. From different kinds of landscape levels, such as landscape nodes, landscape lines and different areas, the plan tried to integrate ecological landscape as a whole and to achieve harmony between man and nature. Even though existing population of Batang village is decreasing, but the better ecological environment will support rural revitalization.

4.4. Governance aspect

In governance aspect, even though a series of national policies has been inclined to rural areas since the 21st century. But just rely on the strategies conducted by country is not enough. It should be also taken an action from bottom to up. Especially for rural revitalization is based on tourism model. The support by government is limited, the better life need local villagers strive for that. So on the basis of government support, the plan also emphasized to found local organizations for rural revitalization. National governance coordinate with local autonomy will form a co-management system for rural revitalization. Even if the governance consist of government and local villagers can not be drawing as a blueprint, but this governance system is almost the most important link of rural revitalization chain.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The research focused on rural problems of China, found four main problems such as lack of infrastructure, unbalanced economic development, dilapidated living environment and insufficient sharing between urban and rural areas. Combined with ReBAM theory, field survey and literature review analyzed tourism model for rural revitalization is a good way especially for Batang village. Based on planning knowledge from living, production, ecology and governance aspects designed a new way for rural revitalization as well as try to solve the existing problems.

Based on the guide of School of Architecture, South China University of Technology, PB Design and relative organizations support, the research started from August, 2018 through field survey (Fig. 17), workshop study (Fig. 18), finally got the acceptance by local villagers and approval of Guangdong Postgraduate Education Innovation Project (Fig. 19). And recently, this research got the third prize of National Competition for Ecological Wisdom Inspired Urban and Rural Practice in July, 2019.

Figure 17 Field survey

Figure 18 Workshop study

Figure 19 Awarding ceremony

Up to now almost one year past, Batang village is developing well. The problem of restroom on the lake to pollute the living environment has been solved (Fig. 20). New plaza and excellent sewage system is gradually constructing (Fig. 21).

The ReBAM method based on three determinants of the growth of domestic demand, transportation networks, and policy-driven supply. It's also need to explored diversely for different villages (Van et al., 2008). Even though Batang village meets the requirements of these. This research creatively found the rural revitalization way combine with the existing theory and current problems. Not only is it just for tourism model of ReBAM, but it solves current problems too.

Figure 20 One year ago before research

Figure 21 Present view after plan

Under the background of balancing urban and rural development, the research found a feasible way based on tourism model for rural revitalization. Hope this research will be useful whatever in practice or academic field.

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