

# Construction of Rural Public Space Based on the Concept of Community Building

Liu Lin<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> College of Design and Art, Henan University of Technology

\*Corresponding author: [lion121403@hotmail.com](mailto:lion121403@hotmail.com)

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on a series of difficult problems, such as unreasonable layout, improper maintenance, weakening of rural public organization ability and low participation of villagers in the construction of rural public space. Taking Community building as the method and entry point, this paper puts forward the framework including collusion, co-construction, co-management and sharing strategy for the construction of rural public space within the concept of Community building. And it also comes up with the spatial construction path in four levels: government service, village committee leading, social force and residents' spontaneous participation. Finally, the relevant theoretical results are verified by the case of Haili Village Community in Shitang Town, Wenling County, Taizhou City. The related results of this paper are of great significance to guide the practice of public space construction in rural areas of China, to help the rural human settlements environment and industrial revitalization.

**Key words:** Community building; Rural areas; Public space construction

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In the report of the 19th CPC National Congress, General Secretary Xi pointed out that the problem of agriculture, rural areas and farmers is a fundamental issue which related to the national economy and the people's livelihood. So, we must always take solving the "three agricultural problems" issues as the top priority of the whole party's work and implement the strategy of rural revitalization. The construction of rural public space is an important part of the implementation of rural revitalization strategy. The unique value of rural public space can basically guarantee the prosperity of rural industry, inject cultural connotation into living environment, provide space carrier for rural style civilization, and offer organizational ownership to social governance. So as to solve the problem of unbalanced demand of rich farmers, then finally provide spiritual impetus for rural revitalization and stimulate rural development vitality.

However, in the process of building rural public space, there has a blind pursuit of

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### Construction of Rural Public Space Based on the Concept of Community Building

modernization, where the urban public space is directly copied to the countryside, ignoring the sense of human scale, villagers' living habits, local culture and other problems, which would result in the reduction of spatial vitality, single function, and weakened the villagers' sense of belonging and identity to the rural community.

Due to the problems mentioned above, an effective solution is to plant the concept of Community building into the construction of rural public space. It can fully infect villagers with positivity to participate, strengthen the consciousness of villagers' main responsibility, to make villagers really understand the connotation of rural construction. What's more, it can expand the mass basis created by public space, to achieve the purpose of restoring the memory of countryside, emplacing nostalgia, protecting excellent rural culture and continuing the historical context of rural areas through the construction of rural public space.

#### **1. The main body of construction: strengthening the community position as the main body to lead the whole process of construction**

Whether in cities or villages, the community, as an important organizational form in modern society, is a basic social unit based on a certain region and value identity. Under the background of deepening the process of urbanization in China, strengthening community self-control management has become a necessary way to solve a series of urban and rural problems. Community is built but not formed naturally for living adjacent to each other. The "built" means continuously manage and create the community. Specifically, community building is the process of making the residences a "big family" with a sense of place identity and humanistic care.

Rural public space is an important place for villagers to have daily life, a vital carrier for carrying out rural cultural activities, and a main platform for the continuation of village community. It has played a significant role in rural order, rural life and the rural environment construction.

In recent years, governments at all levels, colleges and universities, and planning and design enterprises have participated in the tide of rural construction, creating a representative sample of rural public space. However, in the term of the actual effect of its construction, the construction investment type from top to bottom is difficult to meet the specific needs and living habits of the villagers, the reformed public space is usually difficult to be widely recognized and accepted by the villagers, and then it is difficult to carry out followup secondary management and creation.

In contrast, the construction of rural public space within the concept of community building should be a continuous evolution and deepening process rather than the result of one-off completion. Therefore, the main body of its construction must be and can only be the real users of rural public space, that is, villagers and villagers' committees that represent the wishes of most villagers. The main body of rural community represented by villagers and village committees needs to play an absolute leading role in spatial construction planning, space

The principal role of rural community in spatial construction is mainly reflected in three aspects. The first is the planning subject of the construction of rural community public space. The historical context and the spirit of the rural areas have been inherited from generation to generation, and have been integrated into the rural community. Only the rural community dominates the construction planning of the public space, can it reflect the rural style and nostalgia to the greatest extent, and enhance the sense of identity and belonging of the vast multitude of villagers.

Second is the main body of the construction of rural community public space. To maximize the enthusiasm of villagers in the construction of rural public space, it can greatly reduce the development cost. In another thing, it can also enhance the participation of villagers in the construction, cultivate the sense of ownership of the villagers, and establish emotional connection with the public space during the construction.

The last is the main body of use and management in rural public space construction. In the later period of the construction of rural public space, other construction subjects withdrew one after another, while the villagers in the community will continue to live and produce there. Therefore, after the completion of the space completion, the community villagers will take on the main role in the public space management. The management work mainly includes three aspects: the space management for daily use, the management of daily maintenance of space and customs facilities and the organizational management of non-routine celebrations and recreational activities.

## **2. The principle of construction: to seek common construction of rural space and to jointly govern and share the achievements of construction.**

The construction of rural public space under the mode of community building is essentially led by the village committee and all the villagers, coordinated by other social forces, and built by the rural community's spontaneous spatial construction behavior. In the specific construction process, it needs to establish a perfect internal and external communication and cooperation mechanism, and adhere to the basic principle of collusion, co-construction, co-governance and sharing in the whole process of construction.

### **2.1 Synergy and collusion in the overall planning and layout of rural public space.**

At the beginning of space construction, taking the rural community main body composed of village committee, county sages and villager coordinated with the construction planning enterprises, scientific research institutes, colleges and universities and other social forces, to tease out the cultural spirit and material basis of the local countryside, and form a comprehensive understanding of the "local people", "culture", "land resources", "production" and "sceneries" in the local characteristics. On this basis, the aim is to establish the overall spatial function layout and landscape needs of the space.

## Construction of Rural Public Space Based on the Concept of Community Building

To achieve the goal of adjusting measures to local conditions, highlighting the points, placing appropriate density of space in rural public space, while taking into account the needs of most villagers' daily life, entertainment, production and political demands, it also need to let the unique rural public space to carry the local context, convey the spirit of the rural community.

2.2 Cooperative construction among multi-level subjects in rural public space and common participation among all members of rural communities.

On the premise of the early master plan, with the division of labor and cooperation, the main bodies gradually construct the dot space like ancient trees, public wells, line space like streets and lanes, surface space like ponds and squares, and mixed space like ancestral halls, theatres, and academies.

In the process of construction, the village committee and county sages act as organizers, to fully infect the positivity of the local community villagers, so as to make them give complete play to their own technical advantages, and utterly participate in the practice of the community space construction. Ranging from the public walkways in front of their own homes, up to the decoration and layout of the public activity square, all of which should be participated by the whole staff and created together.

2.3 Coordinated maintenance and sustainable management after the completion of the construction of rural public space.

Among them, collaborative maintenance is mainly aimed at the basic environmental facilities of rural public space, including public sports facilities, cultural facilities, entertainment facilities, green landscape facilities and walking roads. After the construction of rural public space, the village committee would set up an expert facility maintenance group, organizing personnel with certain professional ability in the community to repair and maintain the facilities on a regular routine, check the hidden dangers of safety, and improve the health environment.

In addition, under the guidance of government departments, the village committees, county sages and other organizations need to give full play to their abilities for the sustainable governance of public space. They should formulate the corresponding norms of civilized behavior in rural public places, cultivate farmers' awareness of rights and responsibilities, and establish a regular responsibility mechanism in order to maintain the sustainable governance and development of rural public space by the way of combining self-autonomy, the rule of law and the rule of moral.

2.4 Community sharing of rural public spaces.

Rural public space is an important place for villagers to have social interaction, interpersonal communication and cultural exchange with each other. The construction results of rural public spaces should be shared by all members of the community. In the community, perfect consultation mechanism and management methods should be established to ensure the fair, just and efficient distribution of public space resources.

After the construction of public space, villagers are encouraged to take an active part in

public activities. On the basis of consultation, village committees and various rural people's organizations regularly organize corresponding celebrations, temple fairs, performances, sports, production, learning and other large-scale activities to ensure the utilization rate of rural public space and related space facilities, so that more community members can participate in public activities.

### **3. Construction path: ensure division of labor in multi-agent, implement layer by layer in detail.**

The construction of rural public space under community building is a systematic project involving multiple construction bodies and multi-development stages. It is necessary for each body to do its own work well on the basis of defining their respective rights and responsibilities and division of labor, negotiate and progress together, and gradually implement the pre-planning, medium-term construction and subsequent maintenance and management. The specific construction path mainly includes the following four aspects.

**3.1** The Government plays a platform role in formulating relevant policies and bringing together the forces of all sides. In various forms of rural public space construction, the government plays an irreplaceable leading part. Under the mode of community building, the rural governments at all levels no longer take on all things in the top-down way but mainly reflect responsibility in three aspects: policy formulation, platform construction and supervision and implementation.

Among them, the policy formulation mainly includes making the incentive policies and guidance for the revitalization and development of rural public space, and the financial support for representative rural public space construction projects. Collaborated with platforms, the construction is mainly manifested in the government to show the platform function and information advantages, with the purpose of attracting domestic outstanding teams and talents as the main body into rural public space construction.

After the completion of the platform construction, the construction leading power will be gradually transitioned to the rural community represented by the village committee. The government is mainly responsible for the approval and supervision in implementation of each stage of the construction project, to control the main direction of the construction project.

**3.2** The village committee exerts the main body function in the organization and coordinates the construction stages and the internal and external resources of the community.

After the government completes the policy formulation and the multi-agent platform construction, the village committee plays the dominant and leading role in the whole construction process. Internally the village committee should organize the villagers, the county sages and other parties to actively support, participates in the whole process of public space construction. Externally, the village committee should coordinate the social forces of all sides, and fully supports the high-quality implementation of rural public space building from the

aspects of funds, technology, talents, management and so on.

From the early public opinion search, construction planning, fund raising to the medium-term construction plan agreement and construction operations, and to the later stage of space maintenance and preservation, as well as the final alternation of space management powers and responsibilities, all need to be completed under the overall organization and coordination of the village committee.

For better functions of organization and coordination, the village committee can establish an efficient and regular multi-agent communication mechanism by holding special discussion sessions about multi-subject space construction, carrying out space construction propaganda activities, setting up a special class on public space construction management, and jointly compiling the proposal for the use of public space civilization, and so on.

Before the concrete implementation of the results of the consultation at each stage of the construction, the village committee shall convene the villagers' Congress to make a democratic decision and submit it to the directly administered government department for approval and supervision.

**3.3 Social forces are actively involved in rural construction and provide talent and technical support.**

Due to the limitations of village committees and villagers in terms of educational level and specialty, the construction of rural public space under the mode of community building is difficult to be completed independently by villagers organized by village committees. It is necessary to provide needful talents and technical guarantees for the building of public space with the help of various social forces, including planning enterprises, vocational colleges, non-governmental organizations and so on.

In the process of participating in the construction, the social organizations, especially professional planning enterprises and colleges and universities, need to provide construction suggestions and construction options for the villages according to the needs of the villagers and the actual situation of the villages.

On the key issues related to their own interests and demands, they need to consult with the village committees, community villagers and other stakeholders to determine the solutions in line with the interests of all parties. In addition, assigning specialized personnel to participate in the whole construction process of the project from planning to construction and then to management is the thing should be done. If necessary, it is imperative to send resident personnel to guide the villagers until the completion of space construction.

**3.4 Villagers' organizations form spontaneously to ensure the sustainability of construction results.**

The indigenous residents of the rural community are the important founders and participants of the space construction, as well as the actual users and maintenance of the space. After the completion of space construction, when other construction subjects have withdrawn

### Construction of Rural Public Space Based on the Concept of Community Building

one after another, the enthusiasm and standardization of villagers to participate in public activities directly determine the actual impact and sustainability of rural public space construction.

Therefore, in the later stage of construction, villagers should be encouraged to form a space management group spontaneously, so that while the space continues to operate steadily, more villagers can form spontaneous and continuous construction, promoting and developing the rural public space continuously. In this process, it will gradually explore a number of key individuals who have a higher voice in the process of continuous construction and play a core leading role in the villagers' organization, and take it as the key to realize the final transformation from the village committee to the rural organization.

### Conclusion

The concept of community building originated from the Rural Building Movement in Japan in the 1960s. In the early days, the community building in Japan was characterized by a high degree of villagers' autonomy. From the discovery of the problem to the organization and planning, and then to the execution and the implementation, all done by civilian power. And its scope of construction was not only limited to the community environment, but also included industrial revitalization, cultural revitalization and so on.

However, the community building in rural China, whether the level of villagers' autonomy, cultural quality, nature of the rural land, management system and so on, is quite different from Japan, and the original villager autonomy model in Japan must not be copied. Based on this, this paper argues that the rural community building in China should be based on the characteristics of the community and the needs of the villagers to control the overall direction of construction.

The government, colleges and universities, enterprises, and rural sages and so on should fully exploit their resource advantages to take the lead in building practice. Finally, through the gradual improvement of the rural style and appearance, it would mobilize villagers to participate in enthusiasm, attract outsiders to return home and participate in the overall construction of community over human, culture and production.

### Research Achievements and Values

This paper systematically proposes the strategic framework of collusion, co-construction, co-management and sharing of rural public space construction under the concept of community building. And it comes up with the spatial construction path at the four levels of government service, village committee leadership, social force intervention, and residents' spontaneous participation.

The relevant results greatly enrich the theoretical system of multi-agent collaborative co-construction of rural public space at the theoretical level, and have a certain guiding effect on the subsequent expansion of research in related directions. At the same time, it can help the vast

Liu Lin

### Construction of Rural Public Space Based on the Concept of Community Building

rural areas of China to effectively improve the quality and level of rural public space construction at the practical level, and better meet the material, spiritual and cultural needs of villagers.

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