

Original Paper

Tapping and Cultivating the Main Force of Rural Ecological Environment Governance

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Abstract

The Third Plenary Session of the Twentieth Central identified the advancement of integrated urban and rural development as a crucial aspect of Chinese-style modernization. The session underscored the importance of refining the institutional framework for integrated urban and rural development as a viable strategy for addressing the challenges faced by agriculture and rural areas, and for fostering the growth of a robust agricultural sector. The revitalization of the countryside is essential for the overall strength and prosperity of the nation. When the countryside flourishes, the nation benefits, and vice versa. To revive the nation, it is imperative to prioritize the revitalization of the countryside. General Secretary underscored the importance of this point, stating: "Agriculture is a fundamental sector of the economy, and the process of modernization in China is inextricably linked to the advancement of the agricultural industry. "To revitalize agriculture, it is essential to integrate scientific and technological advancement." The primary challenges currently facing China's rural ecological environment governance can be broadly classified into three categories: the need to clarify the role of rural ecological environment governance for townspeople, the necessity to cultivate townspeople's enthusiasm for participating in rural affairs, and the importance of identifying a driving force to facilitate this participation. The second issue pertains to the "technology to the countryside" initiative, which has resulted in an increased degree of specialization and a dearth of farmers' own professional knowledge and skills. This contradiction has led to the current state of rural technology construction in the countryside. Secondly, the discrepancy between the heightened specialization of "technology to the countryside" and the dearth of professional expertise among farmers has resulted in a stagnant trajectory in the development and implementation of technology in rural areas. It is imperative to disseminate scientific ecological concepts and accurate technical methods to these grassroots "elites," so that an increasing number of "elites" can master the requisite knowledge and technology. By encouraging the participation of ordinary villagers in neighboring areas, the primary force of rural

ecological governance will gradually be released and activated, forming a consistent stream of endogenous power that will significantly advance the realization of rural ecological revitalization.

Keywords

Villages, governance, revitalization

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee recently considered and adopted the Decision on Further Comprehensive Deepening Reform and Promoting Chinese Modernization. This document identified the necessity for further reform and modernization in order to facilitate China's continued development. The integration of urban and rural areas is an indispensable aspect of China's modernization process. The establishment of an effective institutional framework for urban-rural integration represents a viable strategy for addressing the limitations of the agricultural sector and fostering the development of a robust agricultural economy. Presently, China's environmental development continues to experience profound and complex changes. The challenges associated with the domestic emphasis on China's unbalanced and inadequate development remain prominent, and the advancement of ecological environmental protection is a significant undertaking. The issue of unbalanced and inadequate development is not solely evident in material production and living standards. Despite China's vast expanse, the majority of its ecological resources are concentrated to the west of the Aigun-Tengchong line. Conversely, the majority of human activity and development occur to the east of this line. Over the past four decades, the rapid development of China has resulted in the emergence of significant ecological and environmental challenges, which have become a significant impediment to further advancement. The rapid development of urbanization and industrialization has resulted in a constant search for new development space by both industrial and financial capital within the city. In parallel, the countryside has emerged as a favored destination for capital. Due to the backwardness and lack of ecological and environmental protection concepts in the countryside, the irrational use of ecological resources, the development of social enterprises for profit, coupled with the reality that ecological and environmental governance compared to urban areas have been ignored, a number of ecological and environmental governance of the countryside instead of becoming a weak link, become a shackle on the road to rural revitalization.

The primary actors in rural ecological environmental governance are still the villagers. It is therefore essential to identify ways of stimulating the enthusiasm of the villagers to participate in rural affairs. In order to do so, it is necessary to ascertain the driving force of the villagers, which must also be found in the masses. The lack of effective endogenous impetus for villagers' self-governance can be attributed to various factors, including the backwardness of rural ecological concepts, the weak rural ecological awareness, and the inability of technology to effectively address the challenges faced by rural communities. Once a theory or technology can be grasped by the masses, its potential is limitless. First and foremost, in the context of contemporary rural ecological governance, it is imperative to adopt a deliberate training approach that caters to the specific needs of townspeople, who are known for their

adaptability, assertiveness, and appeal to grassroots organizations. This approach aims to cultivate these townspeople into "grassroots elites," individuals who possess not only the capacity to think critically but also the ability to act effectively at the grassroots level. Educating them in ecological concepts and cultivating their technical application skills will result in these "grassroots elites" demonstrating greater enthusiasm for participating in rural affairs. Furthermore, as the "grassroots elites" originate from the general population, they can be seamlessly integrated into the broader community. Leveraging their own influence, they can gradually disseminate democratic and ecological awareness throughout rural areas, inspiring the majority of the population to engage in rural affairs with enthusiasm. It is essential to cultivate and establish a grassroots elite team comprising individuals from the local community. This will facilitate the villagers' understanding of the intrinsic link between the management of rural ecological environments and their own developmental interests. This, in turn, will effectively stimulate the villagers' participation in the governance of their own affairs.

Secondly, the discrepancy between the increasing specialization of "technology to the countryside" and the dearth of farmers' own professional knowledge and skills has resulted in the grassroots government and grassroots organizations adopting an elite approach to the diffusion and application of emerging technologies. Furthermore, the monopoly of technological talents in the countryside has led to a situation where the elites have exclusive control over the deployment of these technologies, which has in turn made the application of technologies increasingly complex. The concentration of technological expertise in rural areas has led to the formation of a monopoly by elite groups over emerging technologies in these areas. This has resulted in a lack of effective governance due to the inability of these technologies to be grasped by the masses, thereby preventing the formation of an effective governing force. The mass line has a high implementation threshold, and the elite line is susceptible to becoming detached from local reality. Therefore, the most effective approach is to combine the two in a harmonious and organic manner. "Grassroots elites" can be the initial adopters of new technology and skills, thereby assuming a pioneering role. These grassroots elites possess a profound sense of identity with the local ecological environment and a relatively extensive local practical experience. This enables them to effectively stimulate the local villagers' ecological governance identity and participation, fostering a sense of governance enthusiasm.

Ultimately, the mobilization and nurturing of the primary forces driving rural ecological governance can facilitate the development of a pluralistic co-governance model for rural ecological governance. The traditional governance structure employs a government-led unitary governance model for rural ecological environmental governance. This model faces a series of challenges, including a lack of effective supervision, limited governance inputs, and low governance efficiency. Additionally, it has been observed that the grass-roots government's fulfillment of responsibility and the efficacy of their governance in terms of effecting change for the better of the ecological environment are also lacking. It is thus evident that replacing the traditional one-dimensional governance model with a shared governance model involving multiple subjects can effectively alter the current governance pattern of

the grassroots government, which is currently led by a single individual. "Grassroots elites play a pivotal role in the establishment of a pluralistic governance structure. They can effectively stimulate local villagers' engagement in governance through their personal networks and provide more comprehensive and objective counsel on the local grassroots government's governance strategy, assisting the grassroots government in formulating a more evidence-based strategy, which is crucial for the two-way virtuous relationship between grassroots organizations and the grassroots government. This is of great consequence for the establishment of a two-way positive interaction between grassroots organizations and the local government.

In the context of the urban-rural dichotomy that has emerged in the new era, the effective governance of rural ecological environments hinges on a significant influx of resources. This includes the deployment of simple and mechanical technologies in rural areas and the migration of talents to these regions. However, these strategies have not succeeded in fostering the enthusiasm of rural communities to engage in grassroots initiatives and align themselves with the principles of governance. This is evident in the observations made by Fei Xiaotong in his seminal work, "Vernacular China." Despite the introduction of these external elements, the grassroots population has remained largely detached from the concept of ecological governance. The conscious cultivation of grassroots elites represents a potential solution to this problem. It is necessary to disseminate scientific ecological concepts and appropriate technical methods to the grassroots level, where they can be absorbed by the grassroots elites. As more and more grassroots elites gain this knowledge and expertise, they can then disseminate it to their neighbors, thereby gradually establishing a grassroots-led approach to rural ecological governance. As more and more grassroots elites master the knowledge and techniques and as ordinary villagers in surrounding areas are encouraged to participate, the main force of rural ecological governance will gradually be released and activated. This will result in a steady stream of endogenous forces, which will significantly contribute to the realization of the ecological revitalization of villages.

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