

Original Paper

From “Capital Space” to “People’s Space”: Theoretical
Reconstruction and the New Civilization Paradigm in Modern
People-Centered Cities

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Abstract

China’s urbanization is moving towards a new stage of intensive development focusing on improving the quality and efficiency of existing urban stocks. This article systematically explains the evolutionary logic and theoretical connotations of “modern people-centered cities” based on the Marxist theory of urban-rural relations and traditional Chinese city-building wisdom. This concept aims to transcend urban alienation dominated by capital logic and establish the ontological status of “the people”. The study constructs a four-dimensional theoretical framework covering value ontology, development dynamics, functional systems theory and evaluation epistemology, and proposes four practical pathways: returning spatial justice, transitioning development momentum for intensive growth, reshaping functional systems, and enhancing governance efficiency. Ultimately, this research aims to offer Chinese insights into global urban governance.

Keywords

modern people-centered cities, evolutionary logic, theoretical connotations, practical pathways

1. Introduction

Cities are the crystallization of modern civilization, serving as an essential foundation for human survival and development. Urban issues are common challenges of the times faced by all countries in the process of modernization. In the new era, the Party Central Committee with Comrade as its core combines Marxist urban thought with the reality of socialist urbanization with Chinese characteristics, implements the people-centered development philosophy at the urban spatial level, and continuously promotes theoretical and practical innovation in urban modernization. General Secretary set forth the construction goal of “building an innovative, livable, beautiful, resilient, culturally advanced, and smart

modern people-centered city” at the Central Urban Work Conference held in July 2025 (Xi, 2026). As the latest theory of urban modernization with Chinese characteristics, the modern people-centered city is a new urbanization paradigm proposed by the Communist Party of China based on the current status of urban development and construction requirements under new historical conditions. It clarifies the development direction and action guide for urban work at present and in the future.

2. The Evolution Logic of the Modern People-centered Cities

China’s urbanization process is undergoing a profound transformation from quantitative accumulation to qualitative leap. With the full rollout of the country’s “15th Five-Year Plan”, urban development has essentially bid farewell to the extensive stage of large-scale incremental expansion, and has fully entered a new era of intensive development centered on improving existing stock, quality and efficiency. Against this grand historical background, as a concrete expression of Chinese modernization in the urban spatial dimension, the construction of a theoretical system and practical path for the “modern people-centered cities” is particularly urgent. This is not only a systematic response to the contradictions accumulated by rapid urbanization in the past few decades, but also a forward-looking plan for the future form of urban civilization.

This chapter aims to deeply analyze the evolutionary logic of the modern people-centered cities concept through the dual perspectives of knowledge archeology and historical institutionalism. The birth of this concept is not a castle in the air, but is based on the critical inheritance and creative transformation of Eastern and Western ideological resources. It is rooted in the philosophical speculations on urban-rural relations by classic Marxist writers, draws on the city-building wisdom of “harmony between nature and humanity” in the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and continues trial and error and adjustment in the century-old practice of the party leading the people in urban construction. From “productive cities” to “people’s cities”, this evolutionary process reveals the unique inner philosophy of China’s urbanization path - that is, while critically transcending the crisis of Western modernity, it is committed to building a new form of urban civilization that puts people at the core, takes into account efficiency and fairness, inherits history and faces the future.

2.1 Theoretical Origins: Coupling and Innovation of Dual Genes

The birth of the modern people-centered cities theory is neither a simple imitation of Western modernity nor a complete reproduction of Chinese tradition, but a deep coupling of “classical theory” and “local wisdom” in the context of the sinicization of Marxism.

On the one hand, the discussions of urban-rural relations and the nature of cities by classic Marxist writers constitute the direct theoretical source of the modern people-centered cities. Through their inspections of industrial cities such as Manchester and London, Marx and Engels profoundly revealed the endogenous driving force of urban development - social division of labor. They pointed out that the separation of urban and rural areas is the inevitable result of the contradictory movement of productive forces and production relations, and capitalist private ownership intensifies this opposition, making

cities a tool for capital proliferation, thus leading to human alienation. Therefore, one of the fundamental tasks of communism is to rebuild the organic connection between urban and rural areas and realize “people’s free individuality” on the basis of eliminating class antagonism. Lenin further enriched this theory. He was keenly aware of the pivotal role of central cities in the revolution during the imperialist stage, and emphasized the importance of cultural connections between urban and rural areas. The modern people-centered cities theory inherits this critical spirit and takes “eliminating the urban-rural divide” as the ultimate goal. However, it abandons the retroism of returning to pastoral and instead pursues “rural urbanization” based on inheriting the achievements of capitalist civilization. This reflects the integrity and innovation of Marxist urban-rural integration theory.

On the other hand, the ancient Chinese city-building ideas of “harmony between nature and humanity” and “Li-Yue Order” have provided profound cultural nourishment and spatial paradigm for the modern people-centered cities. Different from Western urban planning that emphasizes geometry and order, ancient Chinese cities placed greater emphasis on “adapting to natural endowments and making the best of local topographical advantages” and integrated the natural landscape with humanities and rituals. The spatial layout of “ancestral temples on the left, altars of soil and grain on the right, the imperial court in front, and markets at the rear,” as established in the Kao Gong Ji (Records of Examination of Craftsmen) chapter of the Rites of Zhou, was not merely a geographical encoding of political power, but also a reflection of the governance wisdom of “isomorphism between family and state.” Furthermore, Guan Zhong’s assertion that “city walls need not strictly conform to geometric rules, nor must roads adhere to rigid alignments” highlights the unity of practical rationality and artistic philosophy in Eastern urban planning. The contemporary practice of modern people-centered cities is a return to this ecological concept of “Tao follows nature”, emphasizing that cities must not only satisfy economic functions, but also carry historical memories and cultural nostalgia. This echoes the ancient understanding that “cities are containers.”

2.2 Practical Accumulation from the Perspective of Historical Institutionalism

From the perspective of historical institutionalism, the formation of modern people’s cities is the product of the Chinese Communist Party’s continuous strategic adjustments in the face of external environmental constraints and internal development needs in different historical periods. This process shows clear characteristics of path dependence and path breakthrough, and has experienced a phased transition from the strategy of “encircling the cities from the rural areas” to “productive cities” and ultimately to “people-centered cities”. During the period of socialist revolution and construction, faced with the imperialist blockade and the urgent need to “build a nation”, Chinese cities were shaped into “productive cities” that served the priority development strategy of heavy industry. The logic of urban evolution during this period was deeply dominated by the planned economic system. Urban functions were highly univocal and mainly served the establishment of the national industrialization system. Whether it is the layout of Soviet-aided construction projects during the “First Five-Year Plan” or the construction of strategic rear areas in the central and western regions during the “Third Front

Construction”, urban space has become a complex of factories, mines and supporting living areas. Although this “productive orientation” laid the country’s industrial foundation in the short term, it also led to deep-seated contradictions such as lagging public services and the solidification of the urban-rural dual structure. Although the establishment of the household registration system and the implementation of the policy of unified purchase and marketing of agricultural products were historically reasonable at the time, they objectively created an institutional gap that hindered the free movement of the population, causing the urbanization rate to grow slowly during this period, and cities becoming more political and administrative appendages.

Since the reform and opening up, with the shift of the focus of the work of the party and the state, the functional positioning of cities has undergone fundamental changes. The combination of surplus labor released by the household responsibility system and foreign investment attracted by the opening-up policy has promoted the accelerated interaction between industrialization and urbanization. From “controlling the scale of large cities and actively developing small towns” to “coordinated development of large, medium and small cities and small towns”, to urban agglomerations becoming the main form of urbanization, China’s urban pattern has undergone a dramatic restructuring. In particular, the reform of the tax-sharing system in 1994 and the establishment of the land bidding, auction and listing system in 2004 gave birth to the “land finance” and “park industrialization” models, which greatly accelerated the physical expansion of urban space. However, this evolutionary path has also brought about structural problems such as “land urbanization is faster than population urbanization” and “semi-urbanization”. Although hundreds of millions of migrant workers have entered cities, they are unable to enjoy equal public services due to household registration barriers and are in a state of “semi-urbanization”. This shows that although urbanization since the reform and opening up has made great achievements in economic performance, there are still institutional flaws in social inclusion and comprehensive human development.

2.3 Realistic Motivations: Reflection on Dilemmas and Paradigm Transformation in the New Development Stage

In the new era, as China’s economic and social development enters a new stage, the marginal benefits of the traditional urbanization model are diminishing, and the proposal of modern people’s cities has become an inevitable choice to deal with practical difficulties and achieve paradigm transformation. The conclusion of the 2025 Central Urban Work Conference on “shifting from large-scale incremental expansion to existing stock improvement, quality and efficiency” (Xi, 2026) marks a fundamental turning point in China’s urban development logic.

The motivation for this transformation first stems from a deep reflection on the “thing-based logic”. For a long time, driven by the logic of capital, urban construction has often fallen into the alienation dilemma of “emphasis on construction over people’s livelihood” and “emphasis on commerce over residence”. Urban space has been overly commodified, resulting in high housing prices, uneven distribution of public service resources, and fragmentation of historical context. At the same time,

“pancake-style” urban expansion has occupied a large amount of cultivated land, and the per capita construction land area far exceeds international standards. This extensive growth model is no longer sustainable. The proposal of the modern people-centered cities is precisely to correct this development deviation of “seeing things but not people” and re-establishing the ontological subjectivity of the people as the fundamental attribute of urban development.

Secondly, the emergence of governance crisis forces the reconstruction of urban governance logic. In megacities, the lack of cross-departmental coordination and governance mechanisms has led to the phenomenon of “data islands” and “administrative fragmentation”. In the face of complex “urban diseases” such as traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and public health, traditional bureaucratic management often lags in response and lacks coordination. In addition, it is difficult for new immigrants (migrant workers) to integrate into urban society, which not only causes social and psychological alienation, but also lurks hidden dangers for social stability. These problems force urban governance to shift from single administrative management to a “joint construction, joint governance and shared benefits” pattern involving the participation of multiple entities, using digital technology to empower grassroots governance and enhance the city’s resilience and response capabilities.

Finally, the rise of new quality productive forces provides the material foundation and technological possibilities for urban transformation. With the maturity of the Internet, artificial intelligence and big data technology, data has become a new factor of production. This enables cities to no longer rely solely on traditional factor inputs such as land and labor, but can achieve intensive development through technological innovation. In 2024, the urbanization rate of China’s country’s permanent population will reach 67% (National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China, 2025), marking the eve of the urbanization process entering a mature stage. In this context, cultivating the source of innovation and promoting the integration of industry and city through urban renewal have become the key to stimulating the endogenous power of cities and towns. It is on this technical and economic basis that the modern people-centered cities proposes the goal of building a composite city that is “innovative, livable, beautiful, resilient, culturally advanced, and smart”.

3. Theoretical Connotations of Modern People-centered Cities

In the context of the global urbanization process facing structural dilemmas and value alienation, the “modern people-centered cities” proposed by China is not only an adjustment of urban development strategy, but also a profound theoretical construction of a new form of urban civilization. Based on historical materialism and contemporary urban governance theory, this article systematically explains the theoretical connotations of the modern people-centered cities from the four dimensions of value ontology, development dynamics, functional system theory and evaluation epistemology.

As a container of human civilization, the development logic of cities is always accompanied by a philosophical examination of the relationship between “people” and “things”. For a long time, although the urbanization process led by the West has created huge material wealth, it has also fallen into the

dilemma of “spatial alienation” under the dominance of capital logic. This has led to social class divisions, deterioration of the ecological environment and loss of public spirit. In this global context, the concept of “modern people-centered cities” proposed by China is not only a profound insight into the laws of urban development, but also a contemporary reconstruction of the Marxist urban view.

3.1 Reconstruction of Value Ontology: From “Capital Space” to “People’s Space”

The primary connotation of the modern people-centered cities theory lies in the fundamental reconstruction of urban ontology. In the traditional Western capitalist urbanization logic, cities are often alienated as tools for capital proliferation, and their spatial production follows the principle of “capital first”. This model dominated by instrumental rationality reduces cities to “materialized fields” that are external to people and govern human life, resulting in a lack of spatial justice and social class separation. (Wang & Zhang, 2026)

Different from this essence, the modern people-centered cities theory establishes the fundamental attribute of “the people” at the ontological level and realizes the historical return from “thing-based logic” to “human-based logic”.

This reconstruction is first reflected in the confirmation of the city’s subject status. The modern people-centered cities theory points out that cities belong to the people, urban development relies on the people, and urban achievements are shared by the people. This is not only an answer to the essential question of “To whom does the city belong, and for whom is it intended”, but also a contemporary practice of the Marxist thought of “all-round human development” . The city is no longer a capitalized space that divides social classes, but a “community” where people discuss, build and share together.

Secondly, this reconstruction reflects a comprehensive transcendence of the logic of spatial production. The modern people-centered cities break through the capitalist development concept of simply pursuing “investment in things” and embarks on a governance path that pays more attention to “investment in people”. It emphasizes the “dialectical unity of subject and object in space”, that is, urban space originates from the people’s practice, and the fundamental purpose of its production is to respond to the people’s practical needs. By transforming the Party’s comprehensive leadership advantages into urban governance effectiveness, and using urban renewal actions as a starting point to activate endogenous power and vitality, this model effectively alleviates environmental pollution, public safety and other urgent and anxious issues of public concern, and demonstrates the superiority of the socialist system in concentrating efforts to accomplish big things.

3.2 Transformation of Development Dynamics: From “Factor-Driven” to “Innovation-Driven”

The theoretical connotations of the modern people-centered cities are deeply reflected in the fundamental transformation of the economic development paradigm. China’s traditional urbanization path has gone through an extensive growth stage driven by factor input and investment. Although this model has brought about rapid economic growth, it has also led to problems such as resource waste, environmental damage, and “land urbanization” being faster than “population urbanization”. Facing the new normal of the economy and the requirements of high-quality development, the theory of modern

people-centered cities proposes an “innovation-driven” power mechanism.

The core of this mechanism lies in the cultivation and release of “new quality productive forces”. As an advanced productivity quality that meets the requirements of green development, new productivity provides a new source of power for urban green development by optimizing the allocation of factors through technological innovation.

At the level of transition of development momentum, we must abandon the old path of over-consumption of future potential and put innovation at the top of new development concepts, but the “people-oriented” nature of innovation must be clear. Cities are no longer just gathering places for industrial production, but have evolved into sources of innovation and talent gathering places. The integration and application of new technologies such as new generation information technology and advanced manufacturing technology have not only given rise to advanced production tools, but also reshaped the supply model of urban public services. As a new factor of production, data combines with traditional factors such as labor and capital to produce a multiplier effect. Its core direction is to break information barriers and promote the inclusive sharing of public resources such as education, medical care, and elderly care. By stimulating entrepreneurial spirit and promoting the collision of diverse cultures, cities have become the core field for cultivating strategic emerging industries, thereby enlarging the economic pie while providing solid material support for improving the quality of life of all citizens.

At the level of path transformation, China’s urbanization is shifting from “large-scale incremental expansion” to “improving quality and efficiency of existing resources”, which means that urban development will pay more attention to refined governance, urban renewal and ecological restoration, and its essence is the return of spatial justice. By building a multi-party collaborative linkage mechanism with the whole process of people’s democracy as the core, we will guide the public to deeply participate in community micro-transformation and spatial planning, and open up the “last mile” from technology research and development to people’s livelihood applications. This transformation fundamentally corrects the contradiction of people are alienated from the city in traditional urbanization, restores urban space from a tool for capital appreciation to a home for citizens, makes urban development truly serve the improvement of people's quality of life, and achieves the organic unity of efficiency and fairness, development and protection.

3.3 Reshaping of Functional Systems Theory: From “Instrumental Rationality” to “New Form of Civilization”

A modern people-centered city is not only a collection of physical spaces, but also a carrier of new forms of urban civilization. In terms of functional positioning, it has achieved a sublimation from the creation of a simple "civilized city" to an inner transition of "urban civilization", reflecting the deep integration of the six characteristics of innovation, livability, beauty, resilience, culturally advance and smart.

This reshaping is first reflected in the integration of political and social functions. Different from the alienation of capitalist urban functions into surplus value production tools, modern people’s cities

emphasize the “coupling of subjects and tools.” At the macro level, administrative divisions serve national governance and long-term stability; at the meso level, they coordinate economic construction and public services; at the micro level, they directly respond to residents’ daily needs. Urban functions are reshaped into an organism that serves the overall development of society. It not only builds a firewall for various urban systems to prevent risk chain reactions, but also builds a full-chain prevention and control system to achieve dynamic adaptation of risk management and development.

Secondly, this reshaping is reflected in the generation of civilization forms. Cities are concentrated expressions of economic, political, cultural, social and ecological civilization. It not only requires construction on the material level, but also emphasizes cultural inheritance, social governance and humanistic care on the spiritual level. Different from the civilizational form of Western cities that is based on capital-driven and individual supremacy, People’s City adheres to joint construction, joint governance and shared benefits, and coordinates urban space, social relations and public value. Through “remembering history” and “remembering nostalgia”, we can maintain historical memory in the process of modernization and build urban characteristics that integrate people, history and culture (Yao, Hu, & Xia, 2026). This form of civilization not only avoids the homogenization dilemma of “a thousand cities with one face”, but also continues the roots of civilization in the wave of modernization, thereby creating a new form of urban civilization that is different from ancient theocratic cities and industrial capital cities.

3.4 Innovation in Evaluation Epistemology: Whole-process People’s Democracy and “Taking People’s Satisfaction as the Yardstick”

The theoretical closed loop of the modern people-centered cities lies in its unique evaluation epistemology, which adheres to the people’s city built by the people, managed by the people, and evaluated by the people. This is not only a work orientation, but also a fundamental criterion for testing the effectiveness of urban governance. It marks the profound transformation of urban governance from one-dimensional management to full-process people’s democracy.

This innovation is first reflected in the depth of subject participation. The people are the main force in urban construction and development, rather than passive service objects. By integrating the whole process of people’s democracy into the entire life cycle of urban planning, construction, operation, and governance, a joint construction, joint governance, and sharing pattern led by party building and coordinated efforts by the government, market, and society will be established (Lv & Zhang, 2026). This mechanism absorbs public opinion and pools people’s wisdom through democratic consultation, making the city truly a common home for all citizens, and demonstrates the unique advantages of socialist democracy in urban governance.

Secondly, this innovation is reflected in the accuracy of value attribution. The modern people-centered cities theory proposes that the allocation of public service resources should be based on the principle of “universality, fundamentalness, and safety-net provision”, with special attention to the needs of vulnerable groups. With the help of digital technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence,

real-time monitoring of urban ecological environment quality and safety assessment can be achieved to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of ecological environment governance. At the same time, digital technology is used to achieve precision and intelligence in the supply of public services, allowing every citizen to enjoy the fruits of development equitably, and highlighting the warmth of urban construction for people's livelihood.

Finally, this innovation is reflected in a fundamental shift in evaluation criteria. Whether urban work is done well or not does not depend on a single economic indicator or political performance project, but on the people's "sense of gain, happiness, and security". This word-of-mouth evaluation mechanism transforms abstract "the people" into concrete governance performance feedback, achieves the unity of value rationality and instrumental rationality, and ensures that the city always moves forward along the "people-oriented" track.

The modern people-centered cities theory is a vivid practice and concrete manifestation of Chinese modernization theory in the urban field. Through the four-fold reconstruction of value ontology, development dynamics, functional system theory and evaluation epistemology, it systematically answers the question of the times: What kind of city to build and how to build it.

This theory not only transcends the traditional urbanization model dominated by capital logic, but also provides a Chinese solution for global urban governance. It proves that cities are not only the engines of economic growth, but also the ladder of progress of human civilization; they are not only the accumulation of physical space, but also the carriers of people's better lives. In future practice, with the further release of new quality productive forces and the in-depth development of people's democracy throughout the process, modern people-centered cities will surely show more vigorous vitality and contribute more wisdom to the creation of new forms of human civilization.

4. Practical Pathways to Modern People-centered Cities

China's urbanization process is undergoing a profound transformation from scale and speed to quality and efficiency. Based on the concept of "people's city", the construction of a modern people-centered cities is no longer limited to the expansion of physical space, but points to a systematic social project involving the economic base, superstructure and ecological civilization. The practical approach to modernizing the people's city is essentially a correction of the imbalance between the city's "instrumental rationality" and "value rationality" and aims to create a high-quality development community that combines innovative vitality, livable quality, ecological resilience and civilized depth through institutional innovation and technological empowerment.

4.1 The Return of Spatial Justice: Resource Allocation From "Capital First" to "Shared Benefits for the People"

The logical starting point of modern people-centered cities practice is to redefine the logic of ownership and use of urban space. For a long time, under the influence of the traditional capital-oriented urbanization development model, the imbalance of urban spatial resource allocation

has become prominent, resulting in structural shortcomings that emphasize development and construction, neglecting people's livelihood facilities, emphasizing commercial formats, and neglecting housing security. The practical approach to the modern people-centered cities is firstly reflected in a return to value rationality, that is, through fair allocation of spatial resources, it promotes the transformation of urban construction from "carnival in some areas" to "sharing by all people".

This transformation is embodied in three levels of adjustment in practice. The first is the inclusive guarantee of residence rights. The core mission of a city is to provide people with a comfortable and convenient living environment. Under the guidance of this concept, urban construction no longer only focuses on the rise of landmark buildings, but pays more attention to protecting the housing rights of various groups, especially new citizens, young people and groups with special difficulties. By building a housing supply system that is "universal, fundamental, and affordable", urban space is striving to become a beautiful home for all people to live together, rather than a simple tool for capital appreciation.

The second is the equalized supply of public services. The theory of the modern people-centered cities emphasizes breaking down administrative divisions and household registration barriers, promoting the extension of high-quality public resources such as education, medical care, and culture to the grassroots and covering weak areas. This change in resource allocation logic aims to dissolve the dual structure within the city, so that urban development results can benefit every individual more equitably, thereby promoting common prosperity in the dimension of spatial justice.

Finally, there is the pluralistic joint governance of public space. Traditional urban planning is often dominated by the government alone, with limited public participation. The modern practice path emphasizes "joint discussion, joint construction, joint governance and shared benefits", and extensively absorbs public opinion and pools peoples wisdom in the planning and use of public space. This mechanism not only enhances the scientific and democratic nature of planning, but also essentially confirms the people's subject status as urban masters, making urban space truly a "community" that carries collective memory and public life.

4.2 Transition of Development Momentum and Intensive Development: Urban Renewal Driven by New Quality Productive Forces

If resource allocation solves the question of "development for whom", then transition of development momentum answers the question of "how to develop sustainably". Policy practice since 2025 clearly shows that China's urban development has officially bid farewell to the extensive model of large-scale incremental expansion, and has fully entered the intensive development stage with the core of improving quality and efficiency of existing stock. The core task of this stage is to activate the city's endogenous development potential through the conversion of development momentum.

The key to this practical approach lies in the cultivation and release of "new quality productive forces". The theory of modern people-centered cities place "innovation" at the core of development. By deeply integrating cutting-edge technologies such as the Internet, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence

into the urban fabric, the city is no longer just a gathering place for industrial production, but has evolved into a source of innovation and a highland for talents. In particular, the introduction of data as a new factor of production reacts chemically with traditional factors such as labor and capital, greatly improving total factor productivity and providing a steady stream of power for urban green transformation and industrial upgrading.

In this context, urban renewal actions have become the key to promoting intensive development. This action is not a simple “demolition of the old and new construction”, but a systematic reshaping of the city’s internal spatial structure and functions. On the one hand, through “micro-renovation” and “embroidery” efforts, old communities and old factory areas are organically updated, which not only retains the historical context of the city, but also improves the living environment; on the other hand, by optimizing the layout of industrial space, promoting the green transformation of industrial parks, promoting the integration of industry and city, and enabling the city to achieve higher-quality economic circulation and social interaction within a limited space.

4.3 Reshaping of Functional Systems: Collaborative Evolution of Six Dimensions

The modern people-centered cities are not abstract concepts, but are presented through specific material forms and functional systems. Based on current practical exploration, this functional system is being reshaped in all directions along the six dimensions of “innovation, livability, beauty, resilience, culturally advance, and smart”, aiming to build a multi-dimensional balanced, organically unified urban life.

In the economic dimension, committed to building a “dynamic and innovative city”. By carefully cultivating innovation ecology and strengthening the synergy between technological innovation and industrial innovation, cities are becoming the source of new quality productive forces. In the residential dimension, pursuing the creation of a “comfortable and convenient livable city”. Adhere to putting people at the core, coordinate production, life, and ecological space, and create a good environment suitable for business, living, entertainment, and tourism. In the ecological dimension, firmly moving towards a “green, low-carbon and beautiful city”. Firmly establish the concept of “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets”, integrate green and low-carbon into the entire process of urban renewal, and build a beautiful home where man and nature coexist harmoniously. In terms of safety, striving to build a “safe, reliable and resilient city”. In the face of increasingly complex urban risks, the city’s ability to resist risks and self-recovery should be comprehensively enhanced by filling infrastructure shortcomings, improving emergency response capabilities, and promoting the transformation of governance models to pre-emptive prevention. In the spiritual dimension, actively cultivating a “culturally advanced city that advocates virtue and kindness”. A modern people-centered city pays attention to inheriting the historical context and retaining “nostalgia”. By promoting the core socialist values and enhancing citizens’ civic awareness, we can ensure that a city possesses not only height but also warmth. In the governance dimension, we will accelerate the construction of “convenient and efficient smart cities”. Use big data, blockchain and other technologies to empower

urban governance, break down information islands, build a “smart brain” for urban operations, and achieve refinement and intelligence in urban governance.

4.4 Improvement of Governance Efficiency: Two-way Interaction between Digital Intelligence Empowerment and Global Narrative

The practical pathway to modernizing people-centered cities ultimately rests on the modernization of governance systems and governance capabilities. Facing the complex system of megacity governance, traditional administrative methods have become ineffective and must rely on the dual drive of mechanism innovation and technological empowerment.

On the one hand, we need to build a high-efficiency governance structure empowered by digital intelligence. Taking the leadership of party building as the core, relying on institutional innovations such as “handling complaints as soon as they are received”, we use the demands of the masses as the driving force of governance. At the same time, by building a “smart brain” for urban digital governance and integrating urban lifeline engineering data, we can achieve accurate identification and efficient disposal of urban operation risks. This governance model not only improves administrative efficiency, but more importantly realizes the transformation from government management to social co-governance, forming a benign interaction of government guidance, social adjustment, and residents' autonomy.

On the other hand, to shape the image of the city with “global narrative”. The construction of a modern people-centered cities is not only an internal people’s livelihood project, but also an external national business card. In the digital age, improving a city’s global storytelling capabilities has become an important practical path. This requires the city to not only work hard on its internal strength, but also make good use of its external strength to effectively convey the city’s development achievements, cultural heritage and values to the world through digital platforms and intelligent communication methods. The practice in Shanghai and other places shows that by creating a distinctive cultural symbol system and using digital IP to activate the city’s image, the city’s international influence and attraction can be effectively enhanced.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the construction of a modern people-centered city is not a temporary expedient, but a systematic strategy proposed by the Communist Party of China based on a deep understanding of the laws of urban development, reflection on the crisis of Western modernity, and the summary of a century of construction experience. From a theoretical perspective, it has realized the creative combination of Marxist “urban-rural integration” thought and the traditional Chinese wisdom of “harmony between nature and humanity”; from a historical logic perspective, it has completed the functional transition from a “production-oriented city” to a “service-oriented society”; from a practical perspective, it is building a high-quality urban community through the return of spatial justice, the

transition of development momentum, the reshaping of functional systems, and the improvement of governance efficiency.

With the rollout of the “15th Five-Year Plan” and the vigorous development of new quality productive forces, modern people-centered cities will not only solve the problem of “urban disease”, but also serve as a carrier of a new form of human civilization, showing the unique charm of Chinese modernization to the world. This is not only a firm answer to the fundamental question of “To whom the city belongs and for whom it is intended”, but also a Chinese response to the eternal proposition of “harmony between humanity and city”.

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