

Research on Rural Governance in Japan: Adapting to Local Conditions

SUN, Maoran ^{1*}

¹ South China Institute of Frontier Science (Guangdong), China

* SUN, Maoran is the corresponding author, E-mail: maoransun86@gmail.com

Abstract: Japan's rural governance adopts a model of adapting to local conditions, promoting the development and revitalization of rural areas through the participation of village building movements, farmers' associations, and social organizations. The village building movement emphasizes the inheritance of local characteristics and culture, attracting talents and tourists by improving infrastructure and improving quality of life, and promoting the development of rural economy. The Farmers' Association has played an important role in agricultural production, processing, and sales, improving farmers' income and living standards. At the same time, rural governance in Japan also focuses on environmental protection and has taken a series of measures to protect and improve the rural environment, achieving sustainable development.

Keywords: Japanese, Local Conditions, Rural Governance, Sustainable Development.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10067876>

1 The Village Building Movement Promotes Rural Development

After World War II, the Japanese government began to carry out socio-economic recovery and reconstruction, with a focus on cities. The economic levels of cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, and Kobe rapidly improved. On the other hand, it has also led to a large influx of rural population into cities, resulting in a serious imbalance in industrial and agricultural development, and the widening gap between urban and rural areas. There is an urgent need for rural regeneration and development. In the late 1970s, the village building movement initiated by the former governor of Oita Prefecture, Hiramatsu Shouyan, and gradually promoted to the whole country brought vitality and opportunities to rural areas. The village building movement adheres to the principles of being based on local conditions, self-reliance, and facing the future, emphasizing the exploration of specific models that conform to the laws of local development by combining local resource endowments. At first, the movement only focused on the development of rural economy, and then gradually expanded to improve the landscape and environment, health and social welfare, and other aspects of rural life based on the improvement of economic level.

In the village building movement, the "one village, one product" strategy is the most representative and successfully applied form. The concept of "one village, one product" advocates "seeking cultural roots from the place of growth", encourages and promotes each town and village to develop unique products suitable for the local area based on their

own resources, development foundation, and characteristics, not only agricultural, forestry, and aquatic products, but also innovative and meaningful handicrafts, tourism projects, traditional cultural facilities, folk celebrations, etc., and builds unique regional brands and advantages based on the principle of adapting to local conditions, Cultivate industrial bases based on market demand. At the same time, in order to increase the added value of products, 1.5 industries have been developed, and simple processing of agricultural products has been carried out to make them more value-added. At different stages of rural development, the Japanese government has also timely formulated and adjusted regulations and policies to provide legal and regulatory support for various fields related to agriculture. The ultimate goal of the village building movement is to "create people". The Japanese government has carried out diversified education and training in the village building movement to improve the overall quality and level of villagers. Local governments have opened various tutoring classes and workshops for free, recruited and dispatched lecturers to teach related courses to villagers, and sent students and housewives to study and visit abroad at public expense, expanding their horizons and knowledge growth. The implementation of various measures has greatly promoted the economic and social development of rural areas, establishing a solid foundation for improving the level of rural social governance.

2 Agricultural Association for Promoting Rural Revitalization

The Agricultural Association is a very important

organizational part of rural revitalization in Japan, and is the most extensive and important economic cooperation organization in Japan. The Agricultural Cooperative Association is the abbreviation of the Agricultural Cooperative Association. In 1947, Japan introduced the "Agricultural Cooperative Organization Law" to provide legal protection for the establishment and development of the Agricultural Cooperative Association. Afterwards, from 1948 to 1949, Japan established a nationwide network of Agricultural Cooperative Organizations. The Agricultural Association is essentially a semi official and semi civilian organization supported by the Japanese government to help farmers improve agricultural production efficiency and promote rural development. The Farmers' Association is based on administrative villages and has three levels: central, prefecture, county, and municipal villages, corresponding to the National Federation, county-level federations, and grassroots farmers' associations.

The Farmers' Association adheres to the principle of seeking profits for farmers and provides services that almost cover all aspects of farmers' lives. In agriculture, the Farmers' Association responds to market demand by understanding the current market situation of agricultural products and inviting agricultural instructors to assist farmers in formulating agricultural planting plans; Provide agricultural production materials and support with technology and agricultural machinery facilities to farmers, and assist them in the processing, storage, and sales of agricultural products. Its operation has improved farmers' risk resistance and market competitiveness of agricultural products, effectively safeguarding farmers' interests. In addition to agriculture, the Farmers' Association also carries out credit services such as savings and financial credit to promote the flow of farmers' funds. Insurance services such as elderly care and medical care provide social security for farmers, as well as various undertakings such as health care, news and intelligence, tourism, and culture. As a professional organization in the field of land ownership, the Farmers' Association not only expands the scale of agricultural operations under the system of dispersed land ownership, but also effectively organizes farmers, enhances the cohesion of small farmers, and provides agricultural technology training for farmers. It plays a significant role in improving farmers' knowledge level, organizational level, and assisting farmers in independently participating in rural social governance. In modern rural governance in Japan, the Agricultural Association and the administrative system are a dual track system of mutual cooperation Modern Japanese Rural Governance and Its Reference. As a communication bridge between the government and farmers, the Farmers' Association not only assists in the implementation of agricultural policies, but also represents and upholds the vital interests of farmers. Its professional and comprehensive characteristics have shown great power in assisting the government in revitalizing rural areas, helping villagers improve their lives, and participating in rural governance. But the current relationship between the

Farmers' Association and the government is also becoming increasingly close, with a tendency towards partial alienation in speaking for farmers.

3 Participation of Social Organizations in Rural Social Governance in Japan

In the eyes of the Japanese government and the public, social organizations are carriers of private participation in public affairs, also known as non-profit organizations (NPOs) or civil society. In rural social governance, more importantly, there are social organizations or geopolitical organizations established in villages under the influence of village community culture.

In 1998, the Japanese government promulgated the "Specific Non profit Activity Promotion Law", and non-profit organizations developed rapidly under the protection of the law. Since then, non-profit organizations have carried out various public welfare activities in Japan, gradually participating in social welfare, cultural education, community building, international assistance, disaster relief, environmental protection, human rights protection, and other social governance fields, to make up for the government's shortcomings in public service supply. As one of the important ways for the public to participate in society, non-profit organizations in Japan have a wide range of activities and strong public welfare professionalism. In the six industrialization movements officially promoted in 2010, relevant organizations played a significant role in the training and integration of new farmers, the maintenance and inheritance of rural traditional culture, and the construction of rural environmental sanitation and medical health systems. The practice of non-profit organizations participating in social governance is mainly divided into four categories. One is to provide public goods and services that are directly related to people, assist vulnerable groups, and reflect social fairness and justice. The second is to serve as a bridge and link for communication between the government and society, advocating and encouraging people to express their opinions and suggestions, guiding public opinion, providing suggestions and suggestions, and contributing opinions to the government's formulation of reasonable and effective policies. The third is to advocate social civilization and participate in the construction of a sustainable modern society. Especially in the field of environmental protection, many non-profit organizations actively promote and educate environmental awareness, advocating for people to independently classify, reduce waste, and reuse items. The fourth is to participate in the handling of public crises, where non-profit organizations have close contact with grassroots people, understand social issues, and can assist the government in handling public crises in a timely manner.

4 Participation of Social Organizations in Rural Social Governance in Japan

In the eyes of the Japanese government and the public, social organizations are carriers of private participation in public affairs, also known as non-profit organizations (NPOs) or civil society. In rural social governance, more importantly, there are social organizations or geopolitical organizations established in villages under the influence of village community culture.

In 1998, the Japanese government promulgated the "Specific Non profit Activity Promotion Law", and non-profit organizations developed rapidly under the protection of the law. Since then, non-profit organizations have carried out various public welfare activities in Japan, gradually participating in social welfare, cultural education, community building, international assistance, disaster relief, environmental protection, human rights protection, and other social governance fields, to make up for the government's shortcomings in public service supply. As one of the important ways for the public to participate in society, non-profit organizations in Japan have a wide range of activities and strong public welfare professionalism. In the six industrialization movements officially promoted in 2010, relevant organizations played a significant role in the training and integration of new farmers, the maintenance and inheritance of rural traditional culture, and the construction of rural environmental sanitation and medical health systems. The practice of non-profit organizations participating in social governance is mainly divided into four categories. One is to provide public goods and services that are directly related to people, assist vulnerable groups, and reflect social fairness and justice. The second is to serve as a bridge and link for communication between the government and society, advocating and encouraging people to express their opinions and suggestions, guiding public opinion, providing suggestions and suggestions, and contributing opinions to the government's formulation of reasonable and effective policies. The third is to advocate social civilization and participate in the construction of a sustainable modern society. Especially in the field of environmental protection, many non-profit organizations actively promote and educate environmental awareness, advocating for people to independently classify, reduce waste, and reuse items. The fourth is to participate in the handling of public crises, where non-profit organizations have close contact with grassroots people, understand social issues, and can assist the government in handling public crises in a timely manner.

The geopolitical organization in Japan refers to the autonomous organization "Machino Association" that integrates and serves all residents. It is a grassroots autonomous organization in rural Japan and also the largest category of Japanese civil society organizations. The "Town Council" exists in both administrative and natural villages

and is elected by residents. Its work includes enhancing mutual understanding among residents, governing various public welfare matters in the countryside, and representing residents to express their demands to the government. However, in practical life, the Town Council is not completely separated from the management of the government. In Japanese rural villages, in addition to the town council, there are also numerous self-help and mutual aid organizations that participate in rural social governance, where residents self manage and serve. Among them, there are labor organizations, water management organizations, agricultural organizations formed based on productive affairs such as land and water use, fire brigades formed based on daily life relationships to maintain public safety, funeral groups embodying "justice and humanity", life coordination organizations, etc., as well as elderly organizations, youth organizations, children's organizations, and women's organizations formed based on different age groups and genders. These rural social organizations each have a certain activity development cycle, with funding sources such as member contributions and government funding. Under the leadership of the organization leader, members participate in relevant activities according to rules, serve themselves and other villagers, and support and maintain the orderly operation of rural society.

5 Attention to Environmental Protection

Japan has invested a huge amount of manpower, material resources, and financial resources in environmental protection. Relevant government departments have issued various laws and regulations related to environmental protection at different times, covering various fields such as agriculture, industry, and service industry, with detailed classification and clear responsibilities. All levels of administrative autonomy assume corresponding responsibilities, and the environmental standards that urban and rural areas need to comply with are the same. In Japan, rural areas not only serve as places for agricultural production, but also play an important role in land protection, biodiversity maintenance, water conservation, and the protection and formation of natural landscapes Experience in Rural Environmental Protection in Japan. So in rural environmental protection in Japan, relevant measures not only focus on the pollution problems caused by people's daily production and life, but also attach great importance to its function as a natural space itself. The agricultural village sewage facilities managed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries are specifically designed for rural domestic sewage treatment projects, including domestic miscellaneous drainage, feces, rainwater, etc. For other uneconomical mountainous plains and other areas scattered with single family residences, specific purification tanks will be built to treat domestic wastewater and sewage. The Waste Treatment Law and the Container Packaging Recycling Law provide detailed

regulations for the recycling treatment of household waste. The "Livestock Excrement Law" formulated in 1999 clarified the management implementation and methods for the unique livestock production environment problems in rural areas, especially for livestock production enterprises that must strictly manage livestock excrement according to standards. There are also numerous measures such as a water cycle system and regulations on the use of fertilizers and pesticides to protect the environment, develop environmentally friendly agriculture, and create a harmonious and sustainable living environment.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the editor and anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and valuable suggestions.

Funding

Not applicable.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher..

Author Contributions

Not applicable.

About the Authors

SUN, Maoran

Director of the Social Science Research Centre at South China Institute of Frontier Science (Guangdong), with research interests in sociology, classical philosophy, ESG, and digital transformation systems.

References

- [1] Dilley L, Gkartzios M, Odagiri T. Developing counterurbanisation: Making sense of rural mobility and governance in Japan[J]. *Habitat International*, 2022, 125: 102595.S
- [2] Ohta R, Ryu Y, Kataoka D, et al. Effectiveness and challenges in local self-governance: Multifunctional autonomy in Japan[J]. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2021, 18(2): 574.
- [3] Chabay I. Taking time, sharing spaces: Adaptive risk governance processes in rural Japan[J]. *International journal of disaster risk science*, 2018, 9: 464-471.S
- [4] Sarker A, Itoh T, Nakashima M, et al. Rural environment, self-governance of local common-pool resources and development planning in Japan[C]//Resource paper presented at the Seminar on Planning of Rural Development, organized by the Asian Productivity Organization, Japan, held in the Philippines. 1999: 6-11.
- [5] Doo-Chul K, Hye-Jin B. Coping with depopulation and demographic ageing in rural Japan: from government to local governance[J]. *Revija za geografijo*, 2009, 4(1): 77-88.