

The Urban-Rural Relationships in China in the Context of COVID-19: From Urban-Rural Integration to Rural Rebuilding

Jianhua Fan
Central China Normal University

Ran Qi
Communication University of China

Rural villages are the foundations of Chinese Society. City and the countryside, associating with the concept of social organic cycle “falling tree leaves return to the ground,”¹ have supported each other for thousands of years. However, Chinese history in modern times has not developed as it was imagined theoretically. While the city is advancing, the countryside is declining. The duality of urban and rural areas has eroded the countryside, and their relationship has undergone a fundamental transformation. This deformed social structure must be corrected. Therefore, since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the work to reconcile the contradictions between urban-rural relationships runs through the entire process of China’s socialist modernization. This provides the logical main line of the urban-rural integration. City is a consumption group,² and it does not have a production function, and the raw materials needed for urban development are all obtained from the countryside. Unlike cities, rural areas have always been production bases.³ However, limited by the scarce economical structure of self-sufficiency, if a rural village wants to prosper, it must rely on the urban market. As a result, the dual nature of the interaction between urban and rural economic development has conditioned that the urban-rural relationship is an interdependent, mutually restrictive and inseparable balanced one. This also means that the fundamental essence of urban-rural integration lies in the rebuilding of the rural social pattern from a modern perspective. In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 disconnected the rural and urban areas in China, which caused a major blow to both cities and rural areas. When the organic cycle of the society is broken, the city will suffer first, and the countryside also cannot avoid economic losses. The cities and the countryside seem to have truly fallen into what Fei Xiaotong calls “the tragedy of urban bankruptcy and rural primitivization”. Examining the urban-rural relationship under the epidemic, we see that the countryside has become a buffer for social distress and a refuge for urban crises. In the post-epidemic phase, rebuilding a more flexible and resilient organic cycle is the theme of urban-rural relations.

Keywords: urban-rural dual structure in China, COVID-19, urban-rural integration, rural rebuilding

INTRODUCTION

During the Spring Festival of 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 has caused China to suffer catastrophic losses in many aspects, including economic and social aspects. Wuhan was closed on January

23, and the next day all parts of the country launched a first-level crisis emergency response. Suspension of work and production and home isolation restricted the scope of people's activities to one foot centered at home. Except for a very small number of supermarkets needed to guarantee people's basic living needs were still operating normally, almost all factories, shops, offices, schools and urban buses were closed.⁴ This has never happened before in the more than 70 years in history. In the rural areas in China, in order to prevent the spread of the epidemic, the government took extreme measures to close villages and cut roads to restrict the entry of migrants. Airplanes, high-speed railways, highways, and even inter-city, urban-rural, and village traffic were all blocked. All connections now relied on the Internet. The severance of commodity circulation and interpersonal communication has severely disconnected urban and rural areas. For thousands of years, the pattern of mutual dependence between urban and rural areas has been broken. When urban people were consciously or forcibly closed by the grid management to dozens of square meters of home space in urban high-rise buildings, most rural villagers could breathe fresh air in their courtyards. The villages, which had been forgotten or abandoned for a long time, thus became a desirable home for people, and the relationship between urban and rural areas has once again undergone profound changes. This makes us wonder what exactly the relationship between China's urban and rural areas under a major epidemic is. If the epidemic continues for a long time, how should we handle the relationship between urban and rural areas? How can the countryside become a solid base to face major disasters and urban development? How can cities treat and feed the countryside? Where is the future of the rural development and rural revitalization?

NEW MEANING OF THE URBAN-RURAL RELATIONSHIP IN THE NEW ERA

The ever-advancing cities and the gradually abandoned villages constitute the basic structure of Chinese society in the modern times. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the urban-rural relationship has generally undergone a development process from urban-rural coordination to urban-rural integration as the government tried to tackle the dual contradiction problem between the urban and rural areas. Facing the tragedy of duality of urban and rural areas accumulated over thousands of years, Fei Xiaotong (2019, 28) wrote in *Rural Recovery*: The rural is still our base for revival. His remarks reveal that the fundamental essence of urban-rural integration lies in the modern rebuilding of the rural areas, including rebuilding the man-land connection indicated by the phase of falling leaves returning to the ground and rebuilding the organic cycle between urban and rural areas (ibid., 87). This epidemic has allowed us to see the dual contradiction between the urban and rural areas more clearly, and to understand the comprehensive interaction between urban and rural areas. Obviously, the rural areas are increasingly affected by cities. Small disturbances in cities may cause waves in the rural areas. The outbreak of the crisis has hit both the urban and rural areas. The transmission of crises in any public areas will be faster, and at the same time, it will affect urban and rural development more comprehensively.

The Urban-Rural Relationship Is the Basic Issue of China's Socialist Modernization Process

The development of urban-rural relationship since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 has always been in line with the process of China's socialist modernization. The issues derived from the duality of urban-rural development have always been major issues in Chinese economic and social development. In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the government had too many things to do. In response to the recovery of the national economy, the government set the development goal of establishing an advanced industrial country under the planned economy system and formulating a strategic framework to prioritize the development of heavy industry. Mao Zedong (1956) pointed out in his "On the Ten Major Relationships" that the heavy industries are the focus of country's construction, and we must give priority to the development of production materials. Therefore, in order to guarantee the supply of production materials and the accumulation of original capital needed for industrial development, the government had allocated a large number of resources from the rural areas to cities through the unified purchase and sales and planned distribution of the industrial and agricultural products. But in this economic exchange, the price of industrial product was higher than its value, and the price of

agricultural product was lower than its value. And the difference between the two products shows a scissors-like trend. This is obviously an unequal exchange, and the consequence is that rural resources are plundered. In 1958, in order to improve the efficiency of unified purchasing and marketing, the government quickly established a people's commune system with centralized operation, centralized labor, and unified distribution. At the same time, the development of industry continued to increase the urban labor force, so that food was in short supply in urban areas and became a heavy burden. Therefore, in order to prevent urban overloading, the state government began to restrict the excessive flow of the rural population to cities. It promulgated the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Household Registration, which clearly stipulates the agricultural population and the non-agricultural population by law. Since then, household registration seemed to have become an implicit distribution clause in public services, capital, resources and other aspects of urban and rural lives. Cities had become rural parasites, grabbing rural resources excessively. The contradictions between accumulation and consumption, industry and agriculture, and cities and villages had become more prominent. Peasants were firmly imprisoned on the rural land. The urban-rural relationship was in a state of division, and the dual social structure of urban and rural areas had been formed since then.

The turning point was in 1978, marked by the red handprints of 18 farmers in Xiaogang Village, Fengyang, Anhui.⁵ The prelude to reform and opening-up was kicked off, and the third agricultural revolution represented by the Household Contract Responsibility System⁶ was started. This changed the collective economy of the people's commune, liberated the land production and management rights, and greatly mobilized farmers' enthusiasm for production. But unfortunately, this system had not changed the urban-rural dualistic situation, and even caused some secondary problems. The rights of migrant workers in cities could not be guaranteed, and a large number of surplus labors generated in rural areas had to stay in the village for employment. In view of this, in the early 1990s, the state government successively promulgated various policies to support rural collectives and individual farmers to set up various enterprises, and the emergence of township and village enterprises had brought prosperity to the rural economy. At that time, with the gradual relaxation of the household registration system and the establishment of the socialist market economy system, a large number of rural surplus laborers moved to cities in the late 1990s. The process of urbanization proceeded rapidly. However, in contrast to this, production factors such as rural capital and labor once again began to flow one-way to the cities. Township enterprises were also gradually declining. Entering the 21st century, with China's accession to the WTO, globalization kicked off, and the process of urbanization in China had further accelerated. Benefited from the open policies, a large amount of cheap labor and the vast market, China's manufacturing industries have rapidly developed and became the World Factory.⁷ However, in the central and western regions of China, a large number of impoverished villages, empty nest villages, widow villages, and villages with children left behind by parents, had emerged. The rural decline continued to accelerate.

Confined to the decline of the countryside caused by the continuous urban-rural dualistic situation, the government has realized that the overall development of the urban and rural areas has become a vital issue for China's socialist modernization. In 2002, the government established the idea of coordinating urban and rural development for the first time. In October 2003, the Third Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China further clarified the development policies of "coordinating urban and rural development" and "solving the three rural issues as the top priority of the party's work."⁸ This declared that the urban-rural relations entered a turning point. In recent years, with the introduction and practice of the concepts such as new urbanization, targeted poverty alleviation, and beautiful rural construction, urban and rural coordination has continued to develop. In 2017, the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party proposed the strategy of rural revitalization and regarded it as one of the seven national development strategies. It is clear that building the new urban-rural integrated relationship is the key to solve major social contradictions and realize people's yearning for a better life in the new era.

The Real Contradiction of the Urban-Rural Relationship Lies in the Unbalanced and Insufficient Development

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that the main contradiction in current Chinese society is between the people's growing need for a better life and unbalanced and inadequate development. Among them, the unbalanced urban-rural development and insufficient rural development are the main one.

Since the reform and opening up, great progress has been made in China's urbanization construction, and great changes have taken place in the countryside. By 2019, China's rural poverty population has decreased from 250 million to 5.51 million, and the poverty incidence has dropped from 30% to 0.6%. However, although rural per capita disposable income in poor areas is increasing at an average annual rate of 9.7% in real terms, the gap between urban and rural areas is still large. According to the statistical data of National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBSC 2020a), the disposable income of rural residents in 2019 was 16,021 yuan that is only 38% of urban residents' disposable income. The income difference is only one aspect and there are big gaps in transportation, communications, housing, medical care, education, and culture also. In particular, a large number of young and middle-aged rural laborers flock to cities to work, which has caused rural development to lose vitality and motivation, and the contradiction between urban and rural imbalances has become increasingly prominent. At the same time, there were about 290 million peasant workers living in cities (NBSC 2020b). Although they bear a deep peasant brand, they are different from peasants in nature. This group has not engaged in agricultural production for a long time and has been out of rural life for a long time. They bring cheap labor to the city and make a major contribution to urban development. But the reality is that they are not accepted by the city, because they cannot enjoy the same treatment as urban residents in terms of labor and employment, social security, medical and health care, family education, housing, and transportation.

The lag in rural development caused by the dual urban-rural structure has a fundamental impact on the social and economic life of the entire country. There are currently 560 million people in the country's rural areas, accounting for 40% of the country's total population (NBSC2020c). The social status of the peasants will not change with the process of urbanization. How to satisfy their yearning for a better life is a major issue to solve in Chinese society. The countryside is the place to remember the excellent Chinese traditional culture, the ecological wetland with high-quality natural environment and the spiritual home in the memory of countless urban residents. While the urbanization rate continues to increase and the urban and rural economy continues to develop, the rural revitalization construction under the background of new urbanization needs to deeply explore the potential value and humanistic significance of the countryside. In this way, people living in the countryside can be balanced and dignified both at material and spiritual level.

The Essence of the Integration of Urban and Rural Areas Lies in the Modern Rebuilding of the Urban-Rural Social Structure

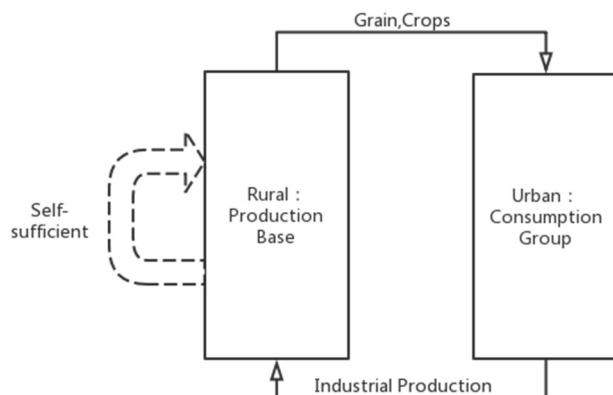
From the above discussion, we can draw a conclusion that the duality split is not caused by the city and the village themselves. From the regular pattern of economic operation, the city and the countryside are one body. From the perspective of urban evolution, cities are the products of the earth (Miller and Mumford 2016, 1) and models of rural societies that are highly centralized and functionalized. So cities naturally inherit the genes of the countryside, just as Miller and Mumford (ibid.) described:

Every phase of life in the countryside contributes to the existence of cities. What the shepherd, the woodman, and the miner know, becomes transformed and 'etherealized' through the city into durable elements.

Therefore, since the city was born, no matter how it develops, it has been inseparable from the supply of resources from the countryside. From the perspective of the synchronic stage of urban and rural development, the most distinctive urban-rural relationship lies in the interdependence of economic activities, that is, the "rural and city complement each other" (Fei 2019, 21) (Figure 1. Villages, as the

production bases, their surplus agricultural products are continuously shipped to cities. And the city as an industrial center acquires all its raw materials for industrial production need from the countryside. At the same time, the industrial manufactured goods are imported into the countryside. As a result, a circulation cycle is formed between the village and the city. However, rural and urban areas as the two main bodies of the cycle, are not equal. On the one hand, cities are more fragile than villages because as a production base for agricultural products, villages have a self-sufficient self-circulation. In other words, the survival of the village could have been independent of the city, but the city could only rely on the village. This means that once a crisis hinders this cycle, cities will suffer first and become "the cancer of the entire social organism" (Fei 2019,98). On the other hand, the countryside has also suffered huge losses. The intensification of the dual contradiction between urban and rural areas has caused the reduction of rural arable land and the loss of labor force, leading to the decline of rural production functions. The countryside is increasingly dependent on and constrained by the circulation, and the crisis in the city has become a crisis in the countryside. Therefore, to rebuild the deeply integrated relationship between urban and rural areas, it is essential to reshape a more stable organic cycle and rebuild a more flexible and resilient social structure.

FIGURE 1
RURAL-URBAN COMPLEMENT



URBAN AND RURAL AREAS AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19

On the eve of the Spring Festival in 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic suddenly hit Wuhan and spread rapidly. This is a major emergency with the fastest spread, the widest range of infections and the most difficult prevention in China. Many facts have proved that China’s epidemic prevention measures have been effective, but the urban-rural relations that have been exposed again under the pandemic are also worth pondering.

During the large-scale outbreak of COVID-19, cities and villages showed completely different life scenarios. Obviously, compared to rural areas, cities are more affected by the epidemic. This also shows that villages have stronger survival resilience than cities, and the resource and functional value of villages are further highlighted and revealed. However, in the context of the increasingly close urban-rural ties in the new era, measures such as closing cities and villages during the epidemic have obviously brought a series of tests to urban-rural relations. The urban-rural division and the disconnection between urban and rural areas have made cities lose their dependence on daily life needs, but also prevented rural agricultural and sideline products from entering the urban markets. The daily industrial products needed by villages cannot be supplied, which is tantamount to an even worse disaster for the vast rural areas where the sanitation foundation is extremely weak.

The Traffic Interruption Isolates the Connection Between Urban and Rural Areas, the Agricultural Economy Is Greatly Affected

Under special circumstances during the epidemic, although the travel bans like closing the city and the village effectively prevented the spread of the epidemic, but it also blocked the urban-rural connections in traffic. Because cities are highly mobile, the impact of the epidemic in cities is much greater than in rural areas. However, under the current background of close and frequent urban-rural ties, the impact of the epidemic on urban and rural areas is all-round.

The impact of the epidemic on rural areas is more reflected in the circulation of urban and rural production. Cities are the front-end market for surplus products in rural areas, but due to the epidemic ban a large number of agricultural and sideline products cannot be transported to cities, resulting in poor market sales. The lack of export of raw materials resulted in a backlog of products that caused large-amount unsold sales. In the first quarter of 2020, the added value of Chinese primary industries fell by 3.2% (Zhao 2020). In particular, the obstruction of the production and marketing of fresh vegetables, fruits, and flowers has caused catastrophic economic losses in agriculture. Traffic obstruction and the reduction in employment caused by business shutdowns have also seriously affected migrant peasant workers. The unemployment rate of migrant workers in cities in June 2020 is 0.7% higher than the same period last year (Zhang 2020). And in the first half of 2020, the average monthly income of migrant workers fell by 6.7% year-on-year (NBSC2020d). The pandemic has had a huge impact on the employment of rural migrant workers that was originally less stable. The living conditions of migrant workers stranded in the city are equally disturbing. The suspension of work and production in all walks of life makes it difficult for migrant workers in cities to guarantee their basic living income. The difficulty of returning home also made some migrant workers have to stay in the city. The original traffic control to prevent the spread of the epidemic obviously lacked reasonable early warning and emergency arrangements. The social order problem hidden under the disconnection between urban and rural areas has become the biggest gray rhino crisis in urban and rural governance.

The circulation segment links both urban and rural supply and demand, and the impact of the epidemic on circulation is bound to cause a chain reaction in cities. On the one hand, rural areas are the market for urban manufactured goods, and agricultural materials and industrial products related to cities cannot reach the countryside. On the other hand, during the epidemic prevention and control period, rural products such as meat and eggs have become essential living materials for home epidemic prevention. However, due to the outbreak of the epidemic and the barriers to the circulation; the supply to the urban areas is obviously insufficient. In areas where the epidemic is more severe, there has even been a phenomenon of looting. The mismatch between production and sales, supply and demand are out of line, and the widening price gap increases the living burden of the poor people. The normal life of urban citizens is disrupted, and the living necessities cannot be effectively guaranteed.

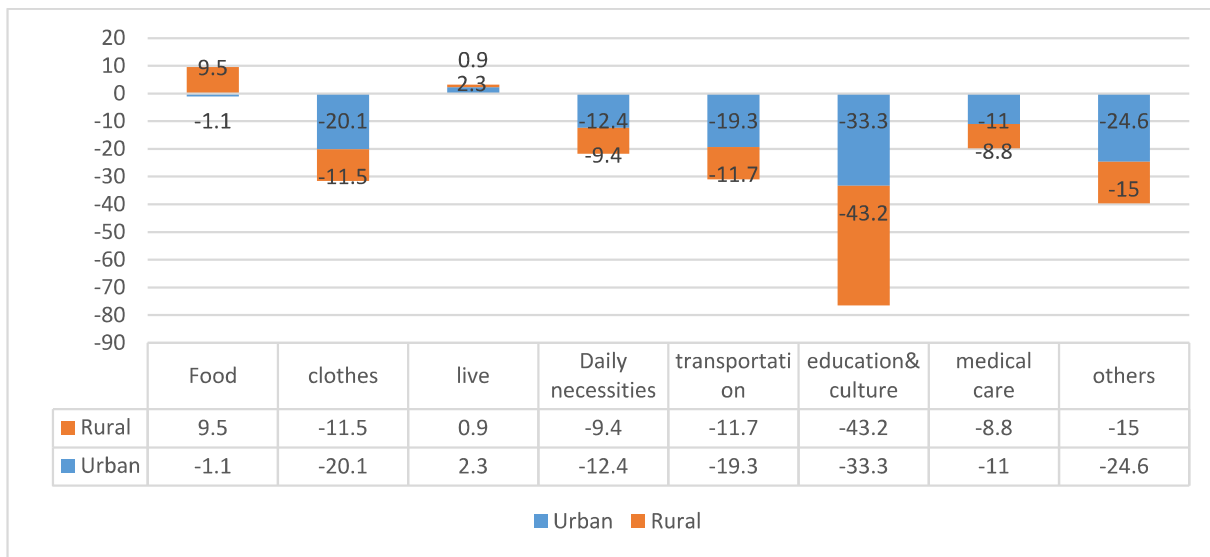
The impact of the epidemic on urban and rural areas has moved from circulation to production, consumption and even social security. The transmission of crises in the public sphere is faster and more comprehensive in the new era of China's socialist modernization. The increasingly integrated and frequent urban-rural relationship promotes the flow of urban and rural production factors and improves the efficiency of resource allocation. At the same time, it also turns urban and rural areas more into one living community. When the urban and rural areas that belong to the same life system are faced with major public crisis events, no one can survive as an island and only protect themselves. The impact of the epidemic on cities is also deeply felt in rural areas.

The Fragility of Urban Survival Is Fully Demonstrated, and the Rural Value Is Worthy of Attention

The impact of the epidemic on cities is obviously greater than that on villages. In the consumer market mainly affected by the COVID-19 in the first quarter, except for education, culture and entertainment, all consumption expenditures of urban residents have fallen significantly higher than those in rural areas (Figure 2) (NBSC2020e). The high density and high mobility of cities have paved the way for the occurrence and spread of risk events. Although cities have better disaster prevention facilities, better medical conditions, and better emergency management systems, cities are more vulnerable than

villages when faced with the major public crisis events. The individualization and independence of urban life makes urban interpersonal relationships more indifferent and unfamiliar. The high density of urban population also makes the virus easier to spread. The narrowness of personal living space in cities makes people who have been forced to stay at home for a long time to be physically and mentally more vulnerable. On the contrary, although the public infrastructure in rural areas is relatively weak and the control and governance capabilities are relatively insufficient, the social structure of the traditional rural community enables it to show stronger survival resilience than cities when the crisis comes.

FIGURE 2
PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE OF URBAN AND RURAL RESIDENTS IN 2020 Q1



The rural area is the stabilizer of social development. The stable traditional community structure in the village keeps it order and is stable for a long time, so that it can self-mediate in time under the impact of crisis. The relatively abundant self-sufficient production enables the villages to maintain certain living needs during the epidemic. In the epidemic prevention and control work the rural social structure that is close, tolerant and trusting can be concentrated on a high degree of cooperation based on collective consciousness. Village cadres and village volunteers become the backbone of the rural basic level prevention and control workers during the epidemic. The low population density in the countryside and the relatively sufficient buffer space for disaster avoidance have also effectively prevented the spread of the epidemic. Low-carbon, healthy and friendly lifestyles and ecological environment have also made the countryside a paradise outside the epidemic. Even due to the prevention, and control management, the villages were forced to close, but the villagers can still live-in peace.

The village is a buffer for social distress. The reason why cities can withstand the cruelty of war and undertake the impact of disasters is due to the continuous supply of living materials from the countryside. "Cities always absorb fresh and pure life from rural areas. These rural people resurrect the cities with their flesh and blood, and with their eagerness" (Mumford 1961:53). The reason why Greek cities were able to maintain a democratic style in the development process was rooted in the village genes contained in it. Even in the most prosperous era of the Greek city-state, there was no abundant productive products and extravagant consumption that modern cities have, but plenty of leisure, freedom and unrestrained time as the most distinctive characteristics of the village which was available adequately. During the epidemic control period, when cities were deeply affected by the spread of the COVID-19 due to their high mobility, the villages accommodated a large number of urban returnees, and reduced the possibility of

secondary transmission with its small scale and low mobility. And in the post-epidemic phase, villages will also become energy storage pools for urban restoration and reconstruction after the disaster.

Reflecting on the urban-rural relationship under the pneumonia, cities and villages have shown closer complementary functions, and the value of the countryside needs to be further emphasized. In the past, urban and rural construction, no matter whether agriculture was used to supplement industries or industries were used to promote agriculture, rural areas have long been marginalized. The integration of urban and rural areas in the new era is in fact a reshaping of the previous urban-rural relationship and functional roles. If cities and villages want to maximize benefits through functional connection and difference, they have to re-focus on rural values and carefully consider the role of the villages in the social structure and function system. Only by forming a resilient structure that integrates urban and rural areas can we successfully cope with sudden crises and risks.

The Rural Epidemic Control Foundation Is Weak, and the Urban-Rural Integration Needs to Be Intensified

Although the impact of the epidemic on rural areas is significantly less than that in cities, there are obviously many shortcomings and secondary risks in rural epidemic control work. Public health is the biggest shortcoming in the prevention and control of this rural epidemic. Compared with cities, rural public health infrastructure is relatively weak and medical and health care conditions are obviously insufficient. It is also difficult to support the health prevention and control of rural epidemics if it is solely dependent on village-level clinics. Rural health institutions have insufficient diagnostic capabilities and insufficient stocks of epidemic prevention materials and it is difficult to meet the emergency needs of sudden outbreaks. Problems such as weak farmer's health education and basic sanitation knowledge as well as farmer's inadequate attention to the pneumonia epidemic, have made the prevention and control of the epidemic in rural areas more difficult. Approaching the Spring Festival of 2021, the epidemic broke out in Hebei, with 354 COVID-19 infection cases in 8 days. It is worth noting that this epidemic mainly distributed in rural areas. The confirmed cases are mainly peasants, and many of them had participated in gathering of people such as wedding banquets, funerals and other gathering activities. It indicates that peasants' weak awareness of individual protection, the peculiar acquaintance model and the close neighbor relationship in rural areas undoubtedly increase the difficulty of epidemic prevention and control. Compared with cities, rural areas have now become the main areas in China to overcome COVID-19.

Social governance is also a major problem in rural epidemic prevention and control. Rural governance has its own special forms and methods. For example, in the prevention and control of the rural epidemic, the "little horn"⁹ played an important role. However, rural governance is relatively independent and autonomous. Therefore, if the uploaded prevention and control tasks are truly implemented in the rural areas, it is faced with the problem of effective local transformation. Governments should formulate prevention and control measures based on local conditions. While giving rural entities a certain amount of initiative, they also need to further regulate and coordinate the relationship with rural grassroots. In addition, the lack of a horizontal joint prevention and control mechanism in rural areas makes communication unclear and hinders the flow of inter-village resources and traffic, which are also problems in the prevention and control of rural epidemics. Different from the city's convenient internal network linkage system, the large number of natural villages often have one-way connections, and the poor interaction and communication often results in the obstruction of material supply in remote villages which undoubtedly increases the difficulty of governance for epidemic prevention and control.

The general lack of knowledge to handle emergency crisis among peasants can easily lead to misleading public opinion dissemination. From the SARS epidemic to the Wenchuan earthquake, and to the pandemic, the experience of many sudden public events has shown that citizens' crisis awareness, response quality and crisis emergency response capabilities directly affect the loss situation and the efficiency of crisis management in the process of crisis prevention and control. As the front line of epidemic prevention and control in rural communities, shaping a good health culture and cultivating public spirit are important and powerful supports for epidemic prevention and control. Popularizing basic

epidemic prevention and control knowledge, strengthening public health education, improving the people's public health emergency knowledge, and strengthening community coordination in the overall urban epidemic prevention and control are the top priorities in further preventing the spread of the epidemic (Hu and Long 2009). Farmers are generally inadequate in emergency response literacy and are prone to panic due to the outbreak of the epidemic, making it often difficult to make correct judgments in the complex information environment shaped by the internet. Uncertainty in the development of the epidemic and unclear information can also easily cause negative or false public opinion dissemination in public information sharing. Compared with the developed information network and timely information transmission in cities, the secondary disasters caused by public opinion dissemination undoubtedly increase the difficulty of prevention and control of the epidemic in rural communities.

Obviously, cities have superior basic conditions and more systematic prevention and control system in terms of public services, urban governance, and the transmission of public opinion than the rural villages. Under the vision of urban-rural integration, building a new type of urban-rural relationship requires deep interaction and coordinated development in multiple dimensions between urban and rural areas.

RURAL REBUILDING IN THE POST-EPIDEMIC ERA

Rural villages are the foundations of Chinese Society (Fei 1992). The rural area is the solid foundation for urban development and the city is an important support for rural revitalization. For thousands of years, urban and rural areas have been one entity and they are relying on each other. However, as the process of urbanization continues to accelerate, the countryside as the matrix of urban development has gradually fallen into a state of loss. The urban-rural relationship issues surrounding the dual urban-rural system have been continuously exposed in this epidemic. In the post-epidemic phase, the construction of a new urban-rural relationship should be based on the two strategic systems of new urbanization and rural revitalization to promote the flow and qualitative interaction of urban and rural elements, to cherish rural values more and to focus on improving the overall resilience of urban and rural areas. This will be the most important task for the government for a long time in the future.

Intensify the Integration of Urban and Rural Areas, and Promote the Organic Interaction of Urban and Rural Elements

The new urban-rural integration is not only a reshaping of the previous urban-rural relationship, but also an inherent requirement of urbanization and rural revitalization strategies in the new era. The new urbanization has announced the historic end of the differentiation between urban and rural areas which was represented by the household registration system and has rectified the urban-rural division caused by the dual structure. Rural revitalization is a strategic deployment based on the integration of urban and rural areas and the comprehensive revitalization of the rural areas to achieve socialist modernization. There are various proofs that the core issue of the relationship between urban and rural areas is the free flow of production factors. During the epidemic, the stagnant flow of production elements caused by traffic control led to a certain degree of disconnection between urban and rural areas, which in turn affected the economic and social development of cities and villages. Therefore, the key to urban-rural integration in the post-epidemic phase is to achieve qualitative interaction in industry, ecology, interpersonal, governance and culture based on the strategic integration of new urbanization and rural revitalization and to promote the effective transformation of urban and rural resources.

Promote the Industrial Interaction in the Process of Agricultural and Rural Modernization

The process of agricultural and rural modernization is essentially a process of exchange and interaction of urban and rural elements. With the acceleration of new urbanization and the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, agriculture has been transformed from traditional self-sufficient small-scale farming to commercialized market-oriented modern agriculture. The revitalization of rural industries is an important starting point for fundamentally realizing agricultural modernization, and it is also an

important path to marketization of the rural economy, and a fundamental guarantee for increasing peasants' income. With the vigorous promotion of rural cultural revitalization, the leisure economy represented by rural cultural tourism and sightseeing agriculture has risen, and cultivating land is no longer the only means of making a living for peasants. Agriculture has also begun to deeply integrate with industries such as tourism, health and elderly care, showing a trend of diversified development. With the development of rural industries, the countryside has become a consumer market with huge potential and the most important consumer group comes from the city. The resource capital, advanced technology and scientific management required for modern agricultural production also originate from cities and the construction of public infrastructure supporting the integrated development of rural industries also depends on cities. For large rural development projects promoted by rural revitalization, cities will become an important support for rural agricultural modernization.

Promote Low-Carbon, Healthy and Friendly Ecological Interaction

The huge impact of the epidemic has reawakened the importance of health and hygiene in social and economic development. It is very important to implement the concept of low-carbon, healthy and friendly green development into the urban-rural integrated development system. Establishing an ecological civilization view of urban and rural development is also an important part of ecological restoration and urban repair in the post-epidemic phase. To promote a good ecological interaction between urban and rural areas, it is necessary to strengthen the institutional integration and unification of urban and rural ecological governance, especially to prevent the shift and spread of industrial pollution to the countryside. It is also necessary to transform the mode of industrial development so that the countryside can become an ecological wetland with conservation awareness and environmental consciousness. Through the test of the pandemic, people have become more clearly aware that a good rural ecological and livable environment is an important choice for urban residents to build a second residence in the future. The second residence, for urban residents, is an ideal place to realize a healthy and beautiful life. For the village, it is an effective breakthrough for enhancing vitality and upgrading.

Form an Open, Tolerant and Caring Interpersonal Interaction

Interpersonal interaction between urban and rural areas is the social trend of urban and rural development in the new era, and it is also a new driving force for the overall rural revitalization. Groups of migrant workers working in cities play an important role in the urban-rural interaction. They bring the more avant-garde ideas and fashionable lifestyles in the city back to the countryside, and at the same time provide a large amount of labor capital for the operation of the city. The rural revitalization needs talented people coming from the cities, and smart rural migrant workers returning to villages. They bring the urban technology, capital and scientific construction concepts to the countryside, which is an important support for the overall revitalization of the countryside and the rescue of the countryside decline. The key to promoting interpersonal urban-rural interaction is to create an open, tolerant and humanistic development environment. Especially during the epidemic, the survival dilemma of migrant workers staying at railway stations and difficulty in resuming employment in cities requires further attention in the post-epidemic phase. To achieve true urban-rural integration in the process of urbanization is to develop human interaction.

Form a Social Governance of Mutual Consultation, Joint Construction and Sharing, and Shape a Cultural Identity of Trust and Harmony

Cultural identity and social governance are interlinked functional systems. The integration of urban and rural areas to achieve social governance depends on the "Mechanical Solidarity" (Durkheim and Lukes 1984,57), which is a social cohesion and centripetal force based on interdependence and mutual cooperation. To form a social organic unity, it is necessary to build a cultural identity and a harmonious society based on tolerance and trust. In recent years, the Chinese government has undergone role changes and power decentralization, while this practice has empowered multiple entities in the market to participate and has also tested the community's consciousness of society. The integration of urban and

rural areas should be used to shape the collective cultural identity of urban and rural areas to condense the social participation forces of citizens, not only to achieve urban and rural coordination in the construction of public service facilities, but to reconcile the contradictions between urban modern culture and rural culture. Governments need to integrate cultural concepts such as harmony in rural culture and harmony between man and nature into urban development, and at the same time integrate modern values of urbanization into rural development.

Cherish Rural Values and Build a Flexible Functional System

The impact of the epidemic has made the value of villages more prominent. Even if there are no complete public facilities and sufficient material reserves, nor a fairly complete disaster prevention system and emergency response mechanism, the villages have shown greater survival resilience and anti-risk capabilities than cities. In-depth analysis of the internal mechanism of rural prevention and control, and building a close functional system integrating urban and rural areas, and to embed the moral customs of the village into the concept of urban development and return to the humanistic value goal of urban construction are topics that should be used for reference and reflection in the post-epidemic phase of urban integrated development.

In fact, there is a natural cultural inheritance relationship between the city and the countryside. The village settlements of the Neolithic Age brought about a production economy that transformed nature and protected the proliferation of human offspring. The unity of man and nature, blood and land, constitute the most basic way of life in primitive villages. Mankind complies with the needs of survival and carries the humanistic ideal of a utopian good life, thus nurturing cities. The order and stability of the village, together with its mother-like protection and sense of comfort, are passed on to the city, so that the city can remain vigorous for a long time and human civilization can be sustained (Mumford 1961). Even though the city has produced a high degree of division of labor, social differentiation and power concentration in the cultural return, and the pursuit of large-scale production, mechanization, and automated urban expansion have gradually shifted the city itself from pursuing the goal of humanistic value. But the village customs which remain in the urban communities and neighborhoods do not cause urbanites to evolve into a rabble of atomized individuals. When one side is in trouble, the neighbors support each other, and the urban society turns crises into opportunities time after time as it grows.

Realize Symbiotic Development with Complementary Functions

The most fundamental function of the village, as a maternal existence in urban evolution, is to nurture. In the new era, the village still practices this function. The countryside is a cultural support for the continuous inheritance of Chinese excellent traditional culture (Chen 2019). However, the closed and static characteristics of primitive villages affect the transcendence of rural China and the overall revitalization of the countryside. The city evolved from the countryside is a container that encompasses everything and a magnet with full gravity. Several wonderful civilization evolutions in history have occurred in cities. Especially since the Industrial Revolution, fast-growing cities have opened up closed and static traditional villages. However, the frequent flow of factors and expanded interpersonal communication have not created a closer functional integration of urban and rural areas. Instead, cities became crazy predators of rural resources, which led to a more serious decline in rural areas and also caused urban crises. There is a dark side in both the countryside and the city. Although cities can tolerate the infinite expansion of the market and the infinite accumulation of production factors, the cities themselves do not have the ability to provide and produce all kinds of production factors needed for industrial development. The production factors required for industrial development have always depended on the vast rural society. Although rural society is scattered, it is rich and diverse, and can provide a steady stream of labor and production materials for urban industrial development (Li and Lv 2019). The outbreak of the epidemic is a catalyst point, stimulating the original function of the village, making it play an important auxiliary and buffering role when an urban crisis occurs. Many of the problems presented by the villages also require cities to make up for their shortcomings in the post-epidemic phase of urban-rural

integration. The complementarity of urban and rural functions is to offset the dark side of urban and rural development and achieve symbiotic and harmonious development.

Improve Overall Resilience and Shape the Interlinked Life Community

The concern over the rural areas and the ecological concern of rural people have become concepts that transcend “clan” and embody “kind” (Huang 2007). In the risky society created by the rapid flow of factors, rapid urbanization, and globalization, cities and villages have become more and more united in life and share weal and woe. The loss of the countryside and the future development are closely related to the city. The cultural homesickness and social worries of the countryside have followed the cities. When crises occur, society develops and civilization sustains, and cities and villages need to share responsibilities and achieve overall flexible adaptation and resilient development.

Do a Good Job in Urban and Rural Planning Under the Concept of Great Health

As a complex ecosystem, the development of a city not only follows certain objective laws, but also has certain complexity and uncertainty. Especially large cities often face many tricky problems that have no ready-made or obvious solutions, and they are often accompanied by various emergencies that have huge impacts but are hard to predict (Zhang 2018). The source of risk is the structural social problem caused by cultural values hidden behind the social process (Huang and Xia 2020). From the SARS epidemic in 2003, to the Ebola virus and Zika virus and to the current outbreak of the COVID-19, major events have revealed that if the harmonious relationship between man and nature is neglected in the process of social development, heavy losses will be caused. Rapid urbanization has undoubtedly caused high environmental costs in both rural and urban areas. In particular, the prominent problems of population expansion, traffic congestion, and resource scarcity in large cities have brought huge social health costs. The future urban and rural construction should re-examine and reflect on the interdependence among man, nature and city from the source of value. On the one hand, it is necessary to strengthen the ecological bottom-line constraints in urban and rural planning. Government needs to guide people to establish healthy life concepts and behaviors and shape a healthy environment for sustainable development. On the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen the disaster early warning, diagnosis and post-disaster repair mechanisms in urban and rural planning. Planners need to pay attention to the strategic blank of urban and rural planning, and reserve flexible emergency space for the crisis.

Shape the Urban-Rural Living Circle Under the Concept of Community

The long-term urban-rural dual system of unbalanced distribution of urban and rural elements has led to social fragility. To realize the transition from social fragility to social ecology, it is necessary to allocate public elements in urban and rural spaces as needed and manage intensively and efficiently. Living circle is a good method.¹⁰ The living circle is a new urban planning concept adapted to the people's yearning for a better life. From the 15-minute community living circle in Shanghai to the community-neighborhood-residential block three-level living service in the development plan of Xiong'an New District, the living circle promotes a more humane urban and rural planning and governance. Its essence lies in realizing the spatiotemporal production and reproduction of social capital through the overall planning of physical facilities in space, so as to achieve sustainable development. Therefore, the essence of the construction of a living circle integrating urban and rural areas is not simply the allocation of space resources in the construction of hard facilities, but the realization of the evolution from urban and rural public service living circles to the cultural meaning. The living circle promotes top-down collective management and control to the active participation of urban and rural citizens, and maximizes the rights and interests of citizens to realize the overall ecological livability of urban and rural areas. With maximizing the rights and interests of citizens, it also realizes the overall ecological livability of urban and rural areas, activates the local inheritance of culture, cultivates literate cultural citizens, and enhances social cohesion and collective consciousness.

CONCLUSION

This paper is first based on the historical perspective to analyze the relationship between urban and rural areas. It is not limited to tracing history but hopes to clearly reflect the present situation. Secondly, the COVID-19 epidemic is a good perspective to consider the urban-rural relationship. Any major emergencies in history will make many social development problems more prominent and even change the entire social structure. For example, the Black Death in the Middle Ages created an era of extreme sin and darkness, but it also gave birth to a new era of Renaissance. Similarly, the Spanish flu of 1918 accelerated the end of the First World War to a certain extent. And back to the current Chinese urban and rural areas, SARS in 2003 exposed the public service imbalance in urban and rural development to the public's perspective. The COVID-19 epidemic has re-emphasized the important value of rural areas in the country's socialist modernization. The high degree of urban civilization is quite fragile in the face of the epidemic. However, despite the relatively backward economic and social development of the village, it is like an ecological forest that can breathe. It preserves the organic circulation between urban and rural areas and makes disasters quiet here.

Over the 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the outlook of urban and rural has undergone major changes. The socio-economic development is also advancing by leaps and bounds, but the problem of urban-rural relationship has always existed. How to solve this problem will accompany the entire process of China's socialist modernization. Currently, China has eliminated absolute poverty, 98.99 million rural poor people, 832 poor counties, and 128,000 poor villages have all been lifted out of poverty. There is no doubt that the solution of the problem of poverty alleviation in rural areas will become a turning point in the problem of urban-rural relations. In other words, overcoming the problem of poverty alleviation is not the end of China's urban and rural social development, but the starting point for a new round of rural revitalization, and a deep alleviation of poverty in industries, talents, culture, ecology, and organization.

To break the problem of the urban-rural dual system is still the top priority. We need to start with more cherishing the countryside. The specific method is to take the rural revitalization strategy as an important starting point and continuously intensify the value connotation of urban-rural integration. The subject of social participation including the governments and the city planners needs to truly stand from the perspective of human development and create space for future generations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Jianhua Fan is a professor at National Research Centre of Cultural Industries, Central China Normal University. His main research directions are cultural industrial theory and history, the festival culture, national history and culture, human geography and Chinese native culture. Ran Qi is a PhD candidate in the School of Cultural Industrial Management, Communication University of China. Her email address is qirancuc@outlook.com.

ENDNOTES

1. It means that the leaves of a tree fall to its roots on the ground. It is a metaphor that things have a certain destination. It mostly refers to that people who live in a foreign country will eventually return to their hometown.
2. For the past 100 years, cities have been brokerage stations for foreign goods, and almost all local products used in exchange for foreign goods have been supplied by villages.
3. Fei Xiaotong expressed this in *Rural Recovery*. The countryside is a traditional Chinese production base that places equal emphasis on agriculture and labor. They maintain a high degree of self-sufficiency in their daily lives. People in the countryside who are accustomed to lowering their lives to cope with the famine, apart from salt, can easily settle for a self-sufficient economy, although this economy is inevitably scarce.
4. On January 23, 2020, the Wuhan government announced that the city's urban buses, subways, ferries, and long-distance passenger transportation will be suspended from 10 am on the same day; the airport and

railway stations will be temporarily closed. Following this, provinces and cities in China adopted compulsory measures such as closing cities and villages to strictly control the movement of people. Until the end of March, China's epidemic eased significantly, and the country began to resume transportation and production in an orderly manner.

5. On November 24, 1978, 18 households of farmers in Xiaogang Village signed an agreement very tragically to divide the cultivated land. Everyone pressed a red handprint. This event was recorded in the annals of Chinese history and represented the beginning of the Chinese household contract responsibility system.
6. The household production contract responsibility system is a form of agricultural production responsibility system in which farmers take the family as a unit and contract land and other production materials and production tasks to collective economic organizations (mainly villages and groups).
7. At the turn of the century, with China's accession to the WTO, China's reform and opening up continued to deepen. The broad market, cheap labor and preferential policies have attracted many multinational companies to choose to set up factories in China. For example, Coca-Cola, Unilever, Procter & Gamble, etc. all entered the Chinese market at this time.
8. Three Rural Issues means the issues of agriculture, farmer and rural area.
9. The little horn is kind of the broadcast used to convey news and notices to villagers in rural China. During the epidemic, the little horn played an important role in broadcasting the government notices and the health knowledge.
10. The 15-minute community living circle has been widely used in China. As a measure of urban life planning, its basic meaning is that there are complete public facilities such as education, commercial transportation, cultural and sports, and elderly care within 15-minute walk from the center of the home to make the city more livable.

REFERENCES

- Chen, X.W. (2019, September 20). Protect and Play the Function of the Village, Build a Community of Shared Future in Cities and Village. *Entrepreneur Daily*, (008).
- Durkheim, E., & Lukes, S. (2014). *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press.
- Fei, X.T. (1992). *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fei, X.T. (2019). *Rural Recovery*. Beijing: China International Trust and Investment Corporation Press.
- Hu, P., & Long, X.Y. (2009). Community Participation from the Perspective of Public Crisis Management. *Journal of Sichuan Economic Management Institute*, 1, 35-36.
- Huang, L., & Xia, W.T. (2020). *Value Reshaping and Planning Response Under the Concept Of 'One Health'*. Guangdong Urban & Rural Planning and Design Institute Co. Ltd. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from http://www.gdupi.com/Common/news_detail/article_id/7469.html.
- Huang, Y.H. (2007). Literature and Country. *Journal of Literary Review*, 1, 54-56.
- Li, H.Y., & Lv, C.Z. (2019). From Divide to Conquer: The Change and Trend of Urban-Rural Relationship in the Process of Modernization. *Journal of Henan Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 46(05), 8-15.
- Mao, Z. (1956). On the Ten Major Relationships. *Marxists Internet Archives Website*. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_51.htm.
- Miller, M.C., & Mumford, L. (2016). *The Culture of Cities*. New York: Open Road Media.
- Mumford, L. (1961). *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- NBSC. (2020a). Statistical Communique of the People's Republic of China on the 2019 National Economic and Social Development. *National Bureau of Statistics*. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zxfb/202002/t20200228_1728913.html.
- NBSC. (2020b). 2019 Migrant Workers Monitoring *National Bureau of Statistics*. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zxfb/202004/t20200430_1742724.html.
- NBSC. (2020c). *China Statistical Yearbook 2019*. Beijing: China Statistics Press.

- NBSC. (2020d). The Overall Plan For Epidemic Prevention Has Achieved Remarkable Results. The National Economy Gradually Recovered in The First Half of the Year. *National Bureau of Statistics*. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zxfb/202007/t20200716_1776194.html.
- NBSC. (2020e). Residents' Income and Consumption Expenditure in the First Quarter of 2020. *National Bureau of Statistics*. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zxfb/202004/t20200417_1739334.html.
- Zhang, Y. (2020). The Employment Situation Is Gradually Improving, The Employment of Key Groups Still Needs Attention. *China Economic Net*. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from http://www.ce.cn/xwzx/gnsz/gdxw/202007/17/t20200717_35346643.shtml.
- Zhang, C. (2018). The Experience Reference of “Leave Blank” in Urban Planning at Home and Abroad and Its Enlightenment to Chongqing. In *Sharing and Quality-Proceedings of the 2018 China Urban Planning Annual Conference (14 Planning Implementation and Management)* (pp. 633-640). China Association of City Planning, China Urban Planning Society.
- Zhao, T.L. (2020). The Economy Was Affected by the Impact of the Epidemic in the First Quarter, The Long-term Development Trend Has Not Changed. *China Economic Net*. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from http://www.ce.cn/xwzx/gnsz/gdxw/202004/19/t20200419_34722139.shtml.