

Analysis of the Willingness and Path of Metropolitan Residents to Participate in Rural Landscape Design: A Case Study of Yanjing Village, Yexie Town

Zihan Ni, Xinyi Jiang, Xiaoyu Xu, Chunzi Wu, and Tianhong Fang

Student of East China University of Science, Shanghai, China

ABSTRACT

With the proposal of the concept of ‘people’s city construction’, the participatory construction has gradually attracted people’s attention and attention. In Yanjing village, a suburb of Shanghai, there is a rural ‘nursing home’ where managers and the elderly people from nearby villages are actively participating in rural landscaping activities. This paper takes the village as the research object, and on the basis of literature research, finds out the participation willingness, influencing factors, participation mode, organizational form, funding source, technical support and other issues, and forms a semi-structured questionnaire. Through field observation and in-depth interview, the interview text of the above questions is obtained, and then the conclusion is drawn through the text analysis method and inductive summary method. The conclusion shows that the villagers have a strong willingness to participate and are currently in the spontaneous stage, with the vacant land in front of or near the nursing home; the main difficulties include insufficient plant design and planting techniques, aesthetic appreciation, insufficient funding sources, arbitrary organizational form and the lack of regulations. Through technical guidance, expand the source channels of funds, such as villagers’ self-financing + government subsidy + enterprise donation; establish a multi-party coordination mechanism, such as forming a rural landscape design team composed of villagers, village committees, volunteers and experts, and formulate rules to guarantee the sustainable development of rural participatory landscape design.

Keywords: Participatory, Landscape design, Path analysis

INTRODUCTION

In the context of China’s rural revitalization and the construction of Shanghai’s beautiful countryside, the suburbs of Shanghai have ushered in development opportunities. In rural construction, the subjectivity of villagers is often neglected. The problem of villagers being marginalized and losing their subjectivity is still serious, and there is a serious disconnect between rural construction and the actual needs of villagers (Li et al., 2024). The enthusiasm of villagers to participate in rural construction has not been fully utilized. With the introduction of the concept of ‘people’s city and people’s construction’, participatory rural construction has gradually attracted attention and attention. At the heart of participatory landscape design is ‘people-centered’,

with residents asking questions, Participate in problem solving, This participatory landscape design is more adaptable and developmental. It is conducive to the activation of endogenous power and sustainable development of rural areas. In recent years, there have been many cases of participatory landscape design in Shanghai, such as Shanghai Chuangzhi Farm, which uses participatory landscape construction to create a highly interactive urban farm space through community residents (Xue, 2023); In the Habitat Garden construction project in Baoshan District, Shanghai, the designers and residents jointly created the 'Sishi Ruyi Garden' for Sitang Village, such as the Shanghai Dongming community construction activities, which fully embody the concept of 'people's community'.

As an important resource with both environmental and economic properties in rural areas, rural landscape is the premise of rural revitalization (Li et al., 2024). Excavating the potential value of rural landscape, carrying out landscape planning and design, improving rural landscape, and promoting industrial development will promote rural revitalization projects. The locality and adaptability of participatory landscape design can give a higher success rate to rural landscape construction, and at the same time, villagers' participatory landscape design can enhance the ability of sustainable development of rural construction. At the same time, the participation of villagers in the construction of rural landscape is beneficial to the construction of rural community cohesion and the improvement of villagers' sense of rural identity.

In Yanjing Village, on the outskirts of Shanghai, there is a rural 'retirement home' where managers and elderly people from nearby villages are actively involved in landscaping activities. Taking the village as the research object, this paper studies the path of urban residents' participation in rural landscape design through field investigation and questionnaire interviews, aiming to further analyze and position the path of residents' participatory landscape design.

PARTICIPATORY LANDSCAPE DESIGN

At the heart of participatory design is participation. According to King Santley, participatory design is a broad concept that encompasses any scale and type of participatory design process, including urban public space design, regional planning, urban renewal, urban development planning, or residential community design (Zhong, 2020). Through external guidance and help, community residents take the initiative to make design decisions and take action, develop design ideas 'from the bottom up', and make the design results unique, adaptable and long-lasting (Xue, 2023).

Participatory landscape design can effectively improve the mutual adaptability between villagers and the new design, and at the same time enhance the sustainable development of the design. Participatory landscape design is connected with the actual construction of beautiful villages in Shanghai, aiming to allow villagers to participate in the process of actual rural landscape design independently through the reasonable guidance of the government and relevant organizations, so as to avoid the flooding of 'overall planning and construction type' in rural landscape design (Deng et al., 2021). At the same

time, villagers can effectively transform surplus labor in the process of participatory design, and jointly tap the potential of the countryside, develop the characteristics of the countryside, and promote the common development of the rural social-economic and cultural while protecting the rural landscape (Huishan et al., 2020).

DATA ACQUISITION

Case Selection

Yanjing Village, Yexie Town, Shanghai, is about 50 kilometers away from the center of Shanghai. In 2015, the ‘Happy Elderly Village’, an organization that aims to provide elderly care services for the elderly in rural areas, was established. This institution is to create a nursing home at the doorstep with ‘filial piety’ as the core driving force by leasing idle homestead houses in a row, carrying out age-appropriate renovation, and improving service facilities. This is the first elderly care institution in Shanghai with the participation of social forces, through the intensive use of idle resources and the extensive absorption of various forces, so that the elderly in rural areas can achieve ‘in-situ elderly care’, effectively saving various costs and maximizing the use of resources.

Analysis of the Current Situation

Based on the objectives of participatory design, this study was conducted on its users (villagers), using the accompanying observation method and random interview method.

On-the-Go Observation

Through in-depth follow-up of the specific activities of the villagers, the effectiveness of the villagers’ participation in participatory landscape design in the village was explored. At the same time, in the communication with the person in charge and the two-day visit, the participatory activity schedule of the villagers of Yanjing Village was obtained.

The daily life of the elderly in the village, especially in the morning, various special activities will be held to meet the physiological and psychological needs of the elderly, among which the morning exercise after breakfast and the afternoon square dance are fixed periods for the elderly to have long-term contact with the landscape in the village. In order to further understand the influence of the landscape in the village on the daily behavior of the elderly, we adopted the accompanying observation method, selected a day when the weather conditions were suitable for outdoor activities, and recorded the activities of an elderly person in good physical condition for a day.

Interview Surveys

In the process of field research, we interviewed 20 villagers in Yanjing Village, mainly the villagers of ‘Happy Elderly Village’ and the village committee responsible for running the old people’s village. Among the two groups, the villagers are the majority and the interview questions have a wide range of

universal questions, but also targeted questions, aiming to extract the core needs of Yanjing Village for landscape.

For the elderly, considering the social and cultural background of our country, most of the elderly like to grow vegetables, so the shallow questions about participation tend to be ‘Whether you grow vegetables’ and ‘Do you want to design your own vegetable garden’, and then gradually go deeper, such as ‘Whether you have the enthusiasm to design a garden or vegetable garden’, and finally understand the feelings of the elderly about the current state, such as ‘do you like the life pattern here’.

When asked about some design questions, most of the old people said that they don’t know much about these, but they simply like farming, and most of them are led by the village committee in terms of greening. They think that they can’t design. On the other hand, it can also be seen that the villagers’ interest in participation is not high, their enthusiasm for public affairs is low, and the overall encouragement mechanism of the village committee for participatory design is not complete.

Finally, when asked if they have more expectations and ideas for life, the old people still said, ‘It’s good here now’, which can be seen that their village currently meets most of the needs of the elderly.

For the village committee group, mainly the village chief and staff were interviewed. In addition to participatory facilities such as vegetable gardens in the village, there are also management issues, such as revenue and funding sources.

Regarding the problem of participatory design, the village committee and the person in charge said that ‘there are still some problems in this aspect, after all, most of the elderly still only like to grow vegetables, and it is still a bit of a problem for you to let them design, and they can’t think of how to design’, which can be seen that the overall willingness of the elderly to participate is very low and the design ability is insufficient.

The care of the elderly village for the elderly is not limited to material things, but also pays a lot of attention to spirituality, such as the annual old people’s day, wedding shows, farmhouses and ‘grandparents class’, which can develop our traditional culture.

Table 1. Outline of the on-site interview and its basis.

| Number | Interview outline | Proposed basis |
|--------|---|---|
| 1 | Hello, what do you do in Yanjing Village? | Identify the interviewee so that the language of the interview can be established for follow-up. |
| 2 | How long have you lived/worked in the village? | Clarify the respondent’s familiarity with the situation in the village. |
| 3 | How do you pay/collect for residential care in the village? | Learn about the main sources of funding in the village. |
| 4 | What kind of events are held in the village? | Find out what types of activities the villagers are interested in/other incomes in the village for the elderly. |

(Continued)

Table 2. Outline of the on-site interview and its basis.

| Number | Interview outline | Proposed basis |
|--------|---|--|
| 5 | Have you held an event themed around the village landscape? | Pick up on the previous question and cut to the landscape theme. |
| 6 | Who is in charge of the construction and design of the landscape in the village? | Explore the villagers' understanding of the landscape in the village. |
| 7 | Do you like the garden/garden/landscape design here? | A basic understanding of the villagers' evaluation of the landscape in the village. |
| 8 | What do you like/dislike about it? | Pick up on the previous question and guide the respondent to feedback the problem. |
| 9 | Do you think the investment in landscape construction is sufficient? | Understand the investment of the landscape construction activities of the nursing home from an objective/subjective perspective. |
| 10 | How often/how often do you go to the garden/vegetable garden? | The frequency is used to judge how much the landscape here is loved by the villagers. |
| 11 | What do you usually do when you go to these places? / What features do you think these places can offer? | To explore the general function and role of the landscape of Yanjing Village in the hearts of the villagers |
| 12 | Do you find these features helpful? | Judge whether the landscape design and functional layout are reasonable. |
| 13 | Whether or not you are involved in the landscape (greening) design here | Judge the participation of villagers in landscape design in Yanjing Village. |
| 14 | If you were given an opportunity to participate in landscape design, what would you like to add? | Continuing from the previous question, the core needs of the villagers of Yanjing Village for landscape and other functions are directly derived |
| 15 | Would you like to be personally involved in the landscape design of the old people's village? | Understand the willingness of villagers to participate in landscape design. |
| 16 | What are your reasons for being willing/unwilling? | Continuing from the previous question, this paper explores the main reasons that affect the willingness of villagers to participate |
| 17 | Would you be more willing to participate if the organization is organized in a group and the content is interesting and there are incentives? | Preset solutions and guide villagers to express their true thoughts. |
| 18 | Before participating in the landscape renovation design, set up relevant knowledge popularization classes (such as aesthetic literacy training, botanical science popularization, etc.), are you more willing to participate? | In response to the core demands of the villagers, try to propose further solutions |
| 19 | What other suggestions do you have for the current landscape status of the Happy Nursing Home? | Guide the villagers to diverge their thinking and kickback the villagers' subjectivity |
| 20 | Do you have any expectations and visions for the future? | Find out the current aspirations of the villagers and their satisfaction with their current life, and conclude the interview |

Note: The specific questions of the interview can be adjusted according to the actual situation

FACTORS INFLUENCING PARTICIPATION

Through field surveys and interviews with local villagers, we have identified the following factors influencing the implementation of this participatory landscape design practice.

The Villagers' Sense of Subjectivity Is Insufficient

According to the interviews with the villagers of Yanjing Village, it can be seen that the subjective consciousness of some villagers is still insufficient,

which influences the participatory landscape design process of Yanjing Village. Many villagers are not very motivated to participate in village activities, and usually stay in their houses except for necessary outings. The village chief had to visit the villagers in person many times to encourage them to participate in the activities, and many villager volunteer posts were set up for the villagers to choose to participate in, but there was still little success. Due to the lack of subject awareness, for the landscape design in the village, most of the villagers are still in a state of 'acceptance', the idle homestead cannot be utilized, the villagers' sense of participation and gain in the rural construction is at a low level, and the landscape design can not be effectively connected with the specific needs of the villagers, which makes the construction of Yanjing Village fall into a bottleneck.

The Design Ability of the Older Generation of Villagers Is Insufficient

The popularization of compulsory education in China is relatively short, and the education level of the older generation is generally not high, and there will be deficiencies in the design of communication and expression skills. According to the current situation of Yanjing Village mentioned in the interview, it can be seen that most of the residents have little experience in landscape design and have no enthusiasm to participate in landscape design. At the same time, the villagers' one-sided perception of design makes most of the landscape in the village appear monotonous, and the used fields are used for growing vegetables, and there are few ornamental vegetation decorations. The lack of design ability leads to the fact that even if the villagers spontaneously participate in the design activities, they will still fail to achieve the desired results, which will reduce the enthusiasm of the villagers to participate in the next activity, forming a vicious circle.

Lack of Funds

In terms of capital, with the acceleration of urbanization, most of the young labor force and industrial resources in rural areas are concentrated in cities, so that rural areas have lost a lot of productivity, making it difficult for the rural economy to obtain more financial support. At the same time, because the economy of many rural areas mainly relies on traditional agricultural cultivation and animal husbandry, and the return on capital of these industries is relatively low, the source of funds for the rural economy is limited. In the interviews, we concluded that the economy of Yanjing Village also suffers from the above problems, mainly due to the lack of funds, and the existing means are to increase public infrastructure and jobs, such as the construction of nursing homes. However, at present, it seems that the income of the nursing home is difficult to sustain the operation of the nursing home. In addition, Yanjing Village will also hold fundraising meetings on a regular basis, but due to its own lack of funds, the fundraising efficiency is not high, and the benefits of social resources from the outside world are also one-time and unstable. Therefore, the development of Yanjing Village also needs to use other hands to obtain funds.

The Mechanism Is Not Perfect

Due to the suddenness of the start-up of the participatory landscape design, the publicity was not in place, resulting in its arbitrary organizational form, imperfect rules, and management conflicts. Therefore, we improve the corresponding mechanism by increasing publicity and training, reasonable division of labor, and regular monitoring and evaluation to promote this participatory landscape design.

PATH ANALYSIS OF VILLAGERS' PARTICIPATORY LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Stimulation of the Villagers' Subjective Consciousness

On October 22, 23, the Happy Elderly Village ushered in the annual Public Welfare Elderly Day, and with the preparation of volunteers, more than 500 elderly people in the village became the protagonists of the day's activities. The regular 'Grandparents One Lesson' activity creates an intergenerational learning space and encourages the elderly and teenagers to learn from each other, which can enhance the happiness and sense of achievement of the elderly group more than simple visits. At the same time, the village has set up many volunteer positions for the elderly, such as field tea workshops and field cafes, and also allows the elderly to participate in the layout of the courtyard.

By revitalizing the idle homestead, the innovative pension model of 'not leaving home, not leaving the soil, not leaving the hometown, and not leaving relatives' is running well in Yanjing Village. Under the influence of the atmosphere of 'acquaintance society', the elderly people in the Happy Elderly Village take the initiative to improve and maintain the current living environment, and the sense of value and vitality of the elderly group has been awakened, and the energetic elderly have become the main force in rural construction. When they have free time, the old people often learn tea art, handicrafts, and flower arrangement together, and the connotation of cultural and social values carried by the countryside continues to deepen in this process.

Taking the 'Happy Elderly Village' in Yexie Town as an example, the villagers' participation is improved, and their sense of gain and value in rural construction and transformation is enhanced, and their own conceptual awareness of 'being the master of the house' is stimulated. The stimulation of the main consciousness can ensure the enthusiasm of villagers to participate in a series of subsequent activities and promote the benign development of rural construction.

Cultivation of Villagers' Design Ability

The premise of participatory design is to stimulate the villagers' sense of subjectivity, so that the villagers have the idea of participation, rather than hanging on to their own nothing. With a sense of ownership, the cultivation of design ability is the most important.

First of all, there is the issue of education and awareness, so that the villagers can change their consciousness and actively participate in the construction of the village. With a history of more than 30 years of universal compulsory education in China, most of the elderly today are from peasant backgrounds, generally have a low level of education, and are indifferent to public affairs. Through the guidance of party building, a variety of activities are held, based on the love of the old people for the land, in the daily life and planting of little by little change their ideas, from simple vegetable planting to a certain spontaneous design and planning of vegetable planting and flowering, out of the traditional rural model, to the modern participatory rural design.

Use a variety of activities to stimulate the design potential of villagers. Yanjing Village often holds a variety of activities: through village concerts, music and agriculture are blended, through joint activities with nearby primary schools, with children's innocence and childlike fun, to inject new vitality and bring new ideas into the lives of the elderly, through 'marriage for the elderly' and other activities, to make up for the possible shortcomings of youth and regain the feeling of youth, so that the elderly can find that design can exist everywhere in life, can design, and stimulate design potential.

Sources of Funding

In terms of fund raising, Yanjing Village gathers income from the government, villagers, nursing homes, and enterprises. Every year, Yanjing Village submits project applications to relevant government departments to seek financial support, maintains the basic income of the operation of the Happy Nursing Home from its services to the elderly and the villagers of Yanjing Village, and at the same time, establishes partnerships with enterprises and non-governmental organizations to jointly invest in projects, and displays the village's excellent projects with the help of new media official accounts and other means to attract donations from all walks of life. In this project, it is worth noting that the donations of residents' children will be transferred to the construction of their hometowns after the success of their youth careers, and it will also serve as a reference for the path of capital raising in metropolitan and rural areas. In addition to the above existing sources of funding, we believe that Yanjing Village can set up a charitable foundation or cooperate with charitable organizations to obtain donations from the public.

In terms of fund management, village leaders need to build a professional team: a professional fundraising team, including experienced planners, financial experts and marketers, can assist in project promotion, fund raising and managing the use of funds.

Fund management mechanisms should be transparent to the public, ensure that the funds raised are managed effectively and transparently, and demonstrate the progress and results of rural activities to donors and investors. Establish a sound financial system and reporting mechanism, and regularly announce the use of funds to relevant parties. For donors and investors, consider creating incentives, such as incentive programs, naming benefits, etc., to encourage more people to participate in fundraising.

In conclusion, setting up a fund-raising system requires adequate planning and preparation. Raising funds through multiple channels and maintaining communication and cooperation with relevant parties can better support the development of metropolitan villages.

Synergy Mechanism

Villagers, enterprises, grass-roots organizations, volunteer organizations, etc. form a coordination mechanism through lectures, seminars and other forms, on the basis of fully soliciting the opinions of villagers, formulate landscape construction plans and divide them into a number of small projects, strive for government financial support, and encourage villagers to raise their own funds, clarify the main body of responsibility, regularly monitor and evaluate the results of landscape construction, and commend villagers and individuals who have made outstanding contributions to landscape construction and maintenance, so as to improve the sense of honor and gain.

Through the above analysis, we can see the importance of villagers' subjective awareness, design ability and funding source in the process of rural landscape construction and long-term maintenance. Only by stimulating the active participation of villagers, cultivating their design ability, and ensuring sufficient funding sources can we create a distinctive rural landscape and achieve rural revitalization. On this basis, the government and all sectors of society should work together. The exploration of villagers' participatory rural landscape construction and long-term maintenance path is helpful to improve the participation of villagers, give full play to the main role of villagers, and create a characteristic rural landscape. The government and all sectors of society should work together to provide strong support for villagers to participate in the construction of rural landscapes and help the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy.

CONCLUSION

As the medium of rural culture and the main place for local villagers' outdoor activities, rural landscape plays an important role in the construction of rural areas. Through the field investigation of Yanjing Village, Yexie Town, Shanghai, the local villagers were observed and interviewed with each other, their work and rest activities were analyzed, and the influencing factors were sorted out, such as the lack of villagers' main awareness, the lack of design ability of the older generation, the lack of funds, and the imperfect mechanism, etc., and promoted participatory landscape design through public welfare to help the elderly, held activities, capital planning, and improved the coordination mechanism, which promoted the implementation of the national rural revitalization policy and provided new ideas and directions for rural landscape design. Participatory landscape design is an important way to enhance the sustainable development capacity of rural construction and meet the diverse needs of local villagers. Encouraging local villagers to jointly design and formulate landscape construction is conducive to stimulating the villagers' main consciousness, cultivating design ability, realizing the effective transformation of surplus labor, and jointly tapping rural potential,

developing rural characteristics, and promoting the common development of rural social-economic and cultural while protecting the rural landscape.

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