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# A Review of Research on Rural Human Settlement Environment Governance in the Context of Rural Revitalization

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**Abstract:** Rural human settlement environment governance constitutes a critical component of the Rural Revitalization Strategy, and the economic and social development of rural areas is inseparable from such governance. Against the backdrop of the implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy, this paper elucidates the positive impacts of rural revitalization on the rural human settlement environment. It synthesizes the current state of research and projects future trends in the study of China's rural human settlement environment, including: constructing a theoretical system within an interdisciplinary context, refining rural human settlement environment evaluation mechanisms, and enhancing rural human settlement environment governance levels.

**Keywords:** Rural Human Settlement Environment; Rural Human Settlement Environment Governance; Rural Revitalization; Rural Development

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## I. Introduction

Rural human settlement environment governance is a vital element of the Rural Revitalization Strategy, directly affecting farmers' quality of life and sense of well-being, and holds significant importance for the comprehensive economic and social development of rural areas. In recent years, the Rural Revitalization Strategy has achieved notable progress; however, the governance of the rural human settlement environment remains a challenging endeavor. In 2018, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the "Opinions on Implementing the Rural Revitalization Strategy," emphasizing the urgency and importance of optimizing and improving the rural human settlement environment. On December 5, 2021, the General Offices of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council jointly issued the "Five-Year Action Plan for Improving Rural Human Settlements (2021-2025)," signaling that China's rural human settlement environment governance is entering a new phase, with accelerated efforts to achieve more comprehensive and in-depth improvements.

In recent years, academic research on rural human settlement environment governance has gradually increased both domestically and internationally. Domestic scholars primarily focus on two dimensions—the physical environment and the social environment in rural areas—exploring core themes such as the "Rural Revitalization Strategy"<sup>Error! Reference source not found.-Error! Reference source not found.</sup>, "New Rural Construction"<sup>Error! Reference source not found.-Error! Reference source not found.</sup>, "Rural Governance System"<sup>Error! Reference source not found.-Error! Reference source not found.</sup>, and "Rural Development"<sup>Error! Reference source not found.-Error! Reference source not found.</sup>. From an international research perspective, the focus has predominantly been on the multifaceted impacts of the rural human settlement environment on residents' daily lives, yielding significant results particularly in areas such as "Climate Change and Adaptation"<sup>Error! Reference source not found.-Error! Reference source not found.</sup>, "Mental Health and Social Well-being"<sup>Error! Reference source not found.-Error! Reference source not found.</sup>, "Physical Activity and Public Health"<sup>Error! Reference source not found.-Error! Reference source not found.</sup>, and "Infectious Disease Prevention and Public Health"<sup>Error! Reference source not found.-Error! Reference source not found.</sup>.

Given the importance of rural human settlement environment governance, this paper, within the context of the Rural Revitalization Strategy, elaborates on its positive impacts on the rural human settlement environment, summarizes the current research status, and identifies existing shortcomings. Looking forward, it is anticipated that future research on China's rural human settlement environment will strengthen efforts in constructing theoretical systems within an interdisciplinary context, improving evaluation mechanisms, and refining strategies to enhance governance levels. This aims to provide references for improving the effectiveness of rural human settlement environment governance in the new era and supporting the implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy.

## **II. The Impact of Rural Revitalization on Rural Human Settlement Environment Governance**

The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed the Rural Revitalization Strategy, explicitly prioritizing the resolution of issues related to agriculture, rural areas, and farmers (the "Sannong" issues) as a top priority for the entire Party. This strategy transcends the scope of New Rural Construction, adhering to the principle of prioritizing the development of agriculture and rural areas and comprehensively promoting multifaceted construction. The series of achievements realized since the strategy's implementation have actively improved the rural human settlement environment.

### **2.1 The Implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy Provides Guarantees for Rural Human Settlement Environment Improvement**

#### **2.1.1 Policy Support**

In 2022, the "Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Comprehensively Promoting the Key Work of Rural Revitalization in 2022" stated that the continuous advancement of rural human settlement environment governance should proceed from the farmers' perspective, considering their actual needs. Rural toilet renovation should be adapted to local conditions, utilizing dry toilets

where suitable and flush toilets where water is available. Domestic sewage treatment should implement differentiated and refined strategies, promoting it in an orderly manner based on different regions and circumstances. Furthermore, efforts to treat black and odorous water bodies in rural areas should be intensified, implementing comprehensive measures to create a clean and tidy rural environment<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup>. Since the implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy, the enactment of relevant policies has provided an effective guarantee for rural human settlement environment governance.

### 2.1.2 Increased Financial Investment

The No. 1 Central Document issued in 2019 proposed "establishing a government investment mechanism with local governments as the mainstay and central government subsidies. The central finance will provide subsidies for projects such as promoting toilet renovations on a village-by-village basis and reward advanced counties in rural human settlement environment governance. Counties are permitted to integrate and coordinate funds in accordance with regulations, concentrating them on rural human settlement environment governance"<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup>. The establishment of this government investment mechanism has provided a solid financial foundation for rural human settlement environment governance.

### 2.1.3 Technical Guidance

Driven by the Rural Revitalization Strategy, rural human settlement environment governance efforts continuously explore and innovate technologies and models. For example, implementing models such as "government guidance, market operation, farmer participation"<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup>, and formulating governance measures tailored to local conditions<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup>, all contribute to enhancing the efficiency of governance work. Following the introduction of a series of policies, local governments organized experts, scholars, and research institutions to conduct research and demonstration projects on technologies related to rural human settlement environment governance, providing technical guidance and support. Simultaneously, the government encourages and guides social capital and professional institutions to participate, offering technical support and consulting services for rural human settlement environment governance.

## 2.2 The Implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy Improves the Rural Human Settlement Environment

### 2.2.1 Improvement of Living Infrastructure

In the practice of advancing the Rural Revitalization Strategy, improving rural living infrastructure is an indispensable part of rural human settlement environment governance. To this end, efforts must focus on implementing infrastructure construction projects such as rural road accessibility projects and water supply guarantee projects, laying the foundation for rural human settlement environment governance<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup>. Since the strategy's implementation, investment in rural living infrastructure construction has significantly increased, leading to a marked improvement in the rural living environment. Infrastructure such as

roads, electricity, and communications has been continuously upgraded, making rural transportation more convenient and substantially enhancing farmers' quality of life.

#### 2.2.2 Creating an Ecologically Livable Environment

The Rural Revitalization Strategy emphasizes the protection of the rural ecological environment and has intensified efforts to control rural environmental pollution. Domestic sewage treatment, the "toilet revolution," and the classified treatment of rural domestic waste promote the comprehensive quality improvement and upgrading of the rural human settlement environment. Research indicates that rural human settlement environment governance fosters both an ecologically livable natural environment and an ecologically livable cultural environment. On one hand, the appearance of villages has evolved from simple cleanliness and tidiness to a comprehensive, systematic, and ecologically healthy new stage. On the other hand, rural greening and beautification efforts gradually focus on starting from farmers' genuine needs, truly embodying the people-oriented concept<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup>.

#### 2.2.3 Enhanced Public Participation and Satisfaction

Studies demonstrate that the embedded mobilization rural governance model, relying on grassroots Party organizations, can effectively improve the village environment and livability at a low cost, fully aligning with rural development needs<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup>. The generation of trust leads farmers to identify with and accept environmental governance policies and measures, thereby enhancing their sense of participation and satisfaction throughout the governance process<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup>. Simultaneously, the leading role of village committees and Party members guides farmers to deeply engage in the governance process<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup>. Therefore, optimizing the rural human settlement environment helps improve rural social governance levels, strengthens the cohesion and combat effectiveness of grassroots Party organizations and autonomous organizations, and promotes rural social harmony and stability.

### III. Summary

Reviewing the relevant research reveals that the implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy provides a solid guarantee foundation for rural human settlement environment governance in terms of policy support, financial investment, and technical guidance. Concurrently, the strategy's implementation effectively improves rural living infrastructure and the ecological environment, and enhances farmers' satisfaction by increasing their participation, bringing positive impacts to the rural human settlement environment.

Since Professor Wu Liangyong established the Sciences of Human Settlements system, related domestic research has progressively deepened. However, weaknesses persist in areas such as refining theoretical systems, optimizing evaluation mechanisms, and improving governance levels, which constrain the progress of rural human settlement governance in the new era. Therefore, future research should prioritize strengthening these aspects.

## **IV. Suggestions**

### **4.1 Constructing a Theoretical System within an Interdisciplinary Context**

Research on the theory of rural human settlements exhibits two major trends: First, in theoretical innovation and methodology, the integrated application of interdisciplinary knowledge becomes crucial. Analytical tools from disciplines such as statistics and geography are employed to broaden and deepen research perspectives and depth. Second, in empirical research, extensive field investigations should be conducted to different rural areas, constructing a comprehensive socio-economic database reflecting rural human settlements. Simultaneously, special attention should be paid to the cognitive differences among various social groups regarding rural human settlements to fully understand the current situation and reveal its macro patterns, regional characteristics, and evolutionary trends.

### **4.2 Improving Rural Human Settlement Environment Evaluation Mechanisms**

Evaluating the rural human settlement environment constitutes a core approach to understanding environmental trends and measuring governance performance, requiring multi-dimensional optimization and innovation. Regarding the evaluation subject dimension, based on clear evaluation criteria, while incorporating opinions from governments and professional institutions, it is essential to firmly adhere to the perspective of rural residents as the main body, staying attuned to their interests. In terms of evaluation methods, regional characteristics and perceptual differences of the settlement environment should be considered, selecting appropriate indicators, designing questionnaires, and utilizing advanced theories and technologies to construct an evaluation framework model. Concerning the temporal and spatial dimensions, short-term evaluations aim to reveal interim achievements and shortcomings, while medium- and long-term evaluations aim to provide strategic guidance for the long-term planning and construction of rural human settlements.

### **4.3 Enhancing Rural Human Settlement Environment Governance Levels**

As China's requirements for rural human settlement environment governance escalate, future research should focus on governance subjects, content, and models. Regarding governance subjects, it is necessary to enhance the scientific nature and continuity of government supervision and assessment, strengthen collaboration and cooperation, and stimulate the willingness of rural residents to participate while considering their actual experiences. The choice of governance content and models must be based on scientific procedures. Through methods such as field visits, questionnaires, and interviews, researchers should understand regional environmental characteristics, residents' cognitive differences, and settlement construction needs. This allows for the construction of a reasonable indicator system and scientific analysis of the current situation, problems, and causes related to the rural human settlement environment, subsequently proposing targeted solutions and recommendations.

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