

Rural Revitalization in China: Land-Use Optimization through the Practice of Place-making

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ABSTRACT

In the process of globalization and rapid urbanization, most villages in the world are facing the challenge of transformation and revitalization. Few studies explain how villages evolve dynamically because of ignoring villages' internal connections. By focusing on land-use optimization, this paper aims to reveal the process of rural transformation in the theory of place-making from a micro perspective. With the case study of Yuanqianshe in China, it is found that in the rural post-productivism transformation, place-making can take full advantage of rural rich resources through the different stakeholders' cooperation. In this process of place-making, villagers become leading actors of rural transformation, while the government and society have irreplaceable roles. The case study shows that human-land relationships can be coordinated in the process of place-making, which lay a foundation of harmonious neighborhoods for the land-use policy implementation. The place-making ultimately brings about the optimal allocation of rural resources. We suggest that incentive policy like the Substitute Subsidies with Rewards and rural planning should be adopted to help villagers further realize rural revitalization towards post-productivism.

Keywords: rural transformation land-use optimization post-productivism place-making
China

1. Introduction

Rural transformation is one of the common issues faced by all countries in the world, covering the fields of rural transformation, globalization, environmentalism, and post-productivism, and more (Wilson, 2001; Beesley et al., 2003; Krag, 2017). Globalization is described as a stable and universal force, which is an external influencing factor opposite to the rural lifestyle. Globalization changes rural area's society, economy, and environment (Chen et al., 2019a; Li et al., 2020a). Among these changes, the most important one is that more and more productive factors flow from villages to cities, making the rural issues of population loss and economic downturn more serious (Woods, 2007).

During the rapid urbanization in China, more attention is needed to pay to the rural decline (Feng et al., 2019; Lang et al., 2018). The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China decides to implement the National Rural Revitalization Strategy. The research of rural issues is connected to the futures of hundreds of millions of rural residents in China. Through rural revitalization, the gap in living standards between urban and rural can be gradually narrowed, which is crucial to promote coordinated regional development (Hui et al., 2018).

Throughout the world, the rural transformation of developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States are leading the way, showing a shift from productivism to post-productivism (Wilson, 2001; Argent, 2002; Mather et al., 2006). So far, scholars have analyzed rural transformation in China mostly from the macro spatial dimension or social dimension, including studies on land transition (Li et al., 2015b; Qu et al., 2019), land circulation (Li et al., 2015a; Qu et al., 2019), land remediation (Hui and Bao, 2013), spatial participator (Long et al., 2010; Lang et al., 2016), and rural planning (Li et al., 2016). Rural transformation is a dynamic process that involves the practice of place-making to reconstruct the rural social-economic morphology and regional spatial patterns (Long et al., 2012; Lang et al., 2018). The village has often been viewed as a homogenous entity responding entirely to external forces, with less awareness of possible changes from internal forces (Wilson, 2001). But the changes from the within is vital for rural transformation because we do not know what has happened in the village and what the various villagers has reacted.

It is necessary to observe the villagers' interaction process to explain the rural transformation more detailed from the perspective of placemaking. The theory of place-making integrates both with the structure process theory of sociology and the time-space theory of geography at the micro-level (Pred, 1983; Li et al. 2020b), which is more persuasive in explaining the dynamic changes in villages. The rural landscape, as a concrete representation of rural transformation, undergoes many changes over time (Mather et al., 2006), which gives us a straightforward way to observe the rural revitalization dynamically.

Therefore, this paper discusses the mechanism of land-use optimization through place-making, filling in the gap that the neglect at the micro-level in the current studies. Further, it conducts more integrated and systematic research on rural transformation from the perspective of rural stakeholders to provide more operational policy suggestions and planning advice to solve the rural decline problem. This paper chose Yuanqianshe in Xiamen City for a case study, where rural transformation is impacted by the rapid development of globalization and urbanization significantly.

The rest of this paper is as follows: the second section briefly reviews current studies on rural transformation, including the rural development trend towards post-productivism, place-making for the transition towards post-productivism, and the research progress of Chinese rural transformation. The third section proposes a theoretical framework based on the theory of place-making. It helps to reveal the rural transformation towards post-productivism from an internal perspective. The fourth section analyzes a rural case from China, which is succeeded in achieving a post-productivist shift by place-making. The fifth section discusses three parts: (1) the need to consider various possibilities of rural development in policymaking, (2) the role of planning in rural transformation, (3) and the effect of the villagers in place-making. Finally, the paper summarizes that place-making can promote land-use optimization, and both the suitable land-use policy and rural planning can help the villages realize rural revitalization.

2. Literature review on rural transformation studies

2.1. The rural development trend of post-productivism

Rural development in developed countries has an essential evolution from “productivism” to “post-productivism” (Wilson, 2001; Spocter, 2013; Hay and Hay, 2017). After World War II, rural food production was placed at the center, pursuing the industrialization of agriculture policy and resulting in the high intensity of cultivating the land. With the agreements of a series of food free trade between countries, the central position of agriculture in society weakened a lot. Simultaneously, the rural development trend of “post-productivism” appeared in developed countries (Wilson, 2001). Post-productivism emphasizes consumption-oriented ideology for rural agriculture development and believes that rural production should be diverse rather than specialized (Ilbery and Bowler, 1998; Argent, 2002). The land-use practices from farming to consumerism (Spocter, 2013), which are essential for humanity, also reflect the relationship between consumer demand and village supply.

In the transformation process of post-production, village actors, and land-use have changed significantly (Argent, 2002; Spocter, 2013; Burton and Wilson, 2006). One noticeable change is the attitude and behavior of villages subjects. Firstly, the discourse right of farmers who used to be marginalized is increasing (Wilson, 2001). They incline to use knowledge investment instead of material investment. Secondly, the government encourages the development of organic agriculture from the policy level (Hay and Hay, 2017), which aims to reduce the surplus of agricultural commodities and prevent environmental degradation related to farms. The focus of food production has changed from quantity to quality (Wilson, 2001). Finally, along with the process of counter-urbanization, a new class of residents is brought into rural areas (Argent, 2002), and their entry also influences rural development.

Villages were treated as a second home for urban residents, which formed rural recreation (Vepsäläinen and Pitkänen, 2010; Chen et al., 2019b).

The other noticeable change is rural land-use. In the consumptionorientation of post-productivism, the rural land-use changes from the single grain production function to various consumption functions (Spocter, 2013). The various consumption functions cover the nonagricultural needs of rural ecological environment protection, experience entertainment, and agricultural consumption (Burton and Wilson, 2006). These types of land support rural areas to provide diverse socioeconomic landscape rather than traditional agricultural products (Ilbery and Bowler, 1998; Wilson, 2001; Argent, 2002). Then villages show multi-level consumption farms, organic farmlands, ecological habitat, and other types of rural landscape (Burton and Wilson, 2006; Hay and Hay, 2017).

In the past, agriculture was at the central place, and farmers were the leading professional group in China’s villages, which reflected the developing logic of productivism. Along with the process of rapid urbanization, a large portion of rural populations are migrating to cities (Sun et al., 2011), and the broad areas of farmlands were abandoned (Liu, 2018), leading to the dramatic hollowing out of villages. Meanwhile, cities and villages are turning from being a relatively isolated area into a tightly connected whole (Li et al., 2015b), in which city people are becoming the potential consumers of the village. Villages need to explore their value to meet the needs of urban consumers.

2.2. Place-making for the transition towards post-productivism

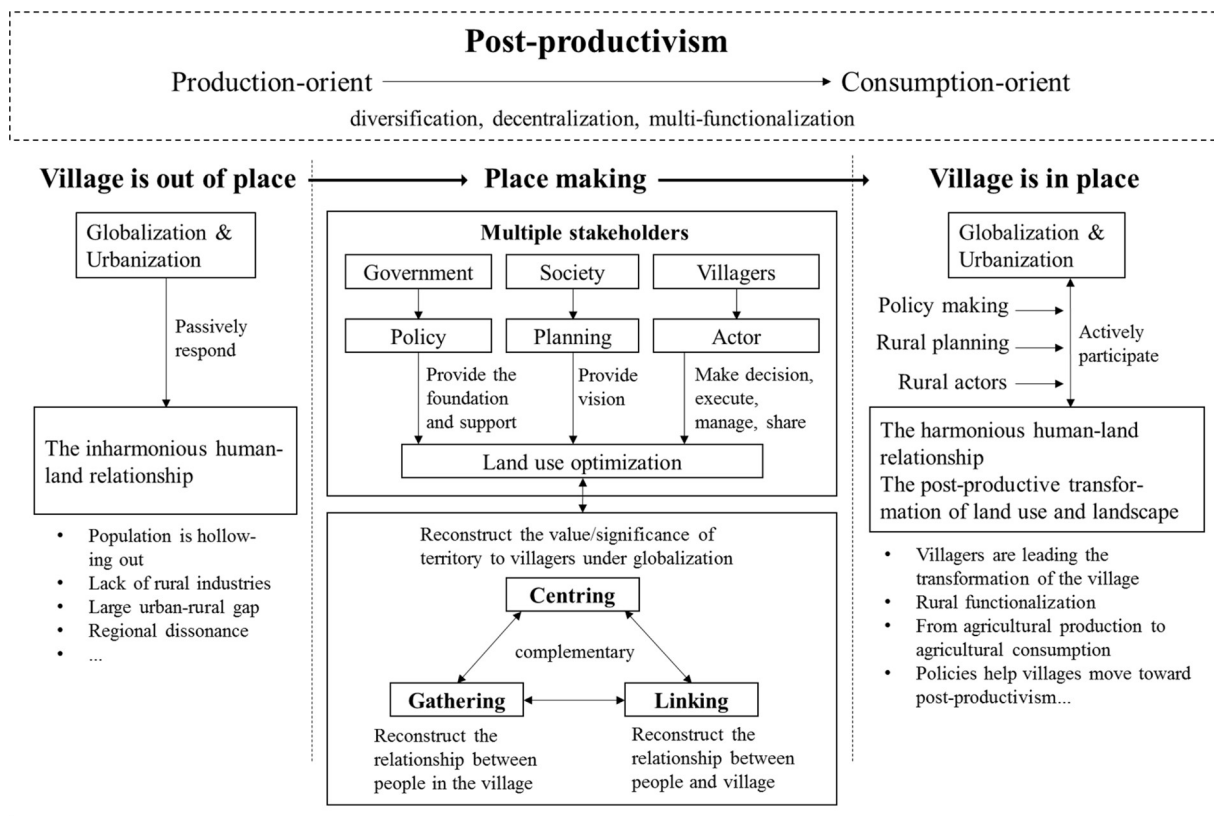
At present, studies of post-productivism focus more on the importance of the political economy perspective, which regards all villages as a homogeneous agricultural space, ignore the existing complex connections and obtains little acknowledgment of changes from within (Wilson, 2001). Villages are the basic unit where different forces (e.g., society, government, and market) interact. It is necessary to focus on the villages’ human-land relationship from the micro-scale. The theory about place-making can help us further deepen our understanding of the complex processes of rural transformation by injecting an actororiented component (Wilson, 2001).

A place (village) is open to the world, so it inevitably changes and transforms over time (Friedmann, 2010). According to the theory of place-making, we can describe the human-land relationship with the words “in place” and “out of place” from the micro-scale (Cresswell, 2004). People are often supposed to belong to a particular place, which we can call “in place.” “Out of place” means when people leave the place they belong to, social problems may arise, and there will be a spatial transgression called an “anachronism” (Cresswell, 2004).

2.3. Rural transformation in China

Previous research on Chinese rural transformation mostly paid attention to either spatial or social dimensions (Li et al., 2015a; Liu, 2018; Qu et al., 2019). However, few people focus on the human-land relationship and land-use, which needs to form a comprehensive perspective by combining the spatial dimensions and social dimensions.

In terms of the rural spatial dimension, Li et al. (2015a) explored the land circulation between urban and rural areas. Further, Qu et al. (2019) discussed land transition between construction land and cultivated land. Both land circulation and land transition are considered to be an effective method to solve the rural problem. The government separates rural land from urban land through the dual land regime while leaving a small door open for policy and planning adjustment (Li et al., 2019). Due to this, a small number of rural lands have successfully transformed their function (rural land change into urban land). However, land reform might face many difficulties in reality and be prevented since the villagers’ opposition (Hui and Bao, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the social dimensions of rural



Rural Revitalization

Fig. 1. The theoretical framework of this study. Source: Drawn by authors, 2019. transformation.

In terms of the rural society dimension, scholars have pointed out that the participation of villagers in rural transformation is very vital (Long et al., 2010; Lang et al., 2016). Rural transformation is closely involved with urbanization, which is part of the national structural transformation under globalization (Berdegué et al., 2013). The increasingly close interaction between urban and rural areas has attracted and cultivated new community leaders and intellectual elite. Different people have different ways of dealing with rural development, which can form a mixed force. Only when this potential force is brought into full play can the real rural transformation take place. In rural planning and rural revitalization, villagers' public participation has gotten increasing attention from the government and scholars (Li et al., 2016). The village, which follows the self-exploration development mode, can maintain the rural characteristics and avoid being assimilated into the city.

Through the literature review, we can conclude that the conceptualization of post-productivism provides us with a meaningful way to understand the rural transformation from a macro perspective. In contrast, the theory of place-making provides us with an analytical framework to understand the transformation at a micro-level. As the former paragraph mentioned, it is essential to analyze land-use for rural transformation from the micro perspective, which was paid little attention in previous studies. Therefore, this article wants to propose an analytical framework that is more suitable for the current rural transformation based on the analysis above.

3. Analytical framework

This study reveals the process of rural transformation in the theory of place-making from a micro perspective. This paper regards village as a basic unit of interaction between different stakeholders (including society, government, and villagers), and examines how diverse actors promote rural transformation towards post-productivism collectively through land-use optimization. As a result of passively responding to globalization, more and more rural laborers are attracted to the city, resulting in population loss, industrial decline, abandoned farmlands, and other problems in villages. Human-land relationship in rural areas is out of balance, and especially the villagers lack a sense of belonging. The various rural problems indicate that people in the village are "out of place." To make people feel "in place" again, we need to make the village more vibrant by place-making. Place-making is the process of promoting the interaction between different stakeholders and reconstructing the relationship between individuals and the village. Each village has its unique resources. Villagers are very familiar with their hometown, and they can discover the resources and value of the village. In this process of place-making, villagers can realize the reallocation of resource to optimize land-use.

The theoretical method of place-making includes three intertwined aspects of centering, gathering, and linking (Feuchtwang, 2004). The meaning of centering is to cultivate centers of belonging through the village characteristics excavation (Friedmann, 2010). With specific locations, these places will be the unique "landmarks" that are different from other villages (Lynch, 1960). These "landmarks" not only make people appreciate the characteristic rural landscapes and culture but also carry the individual experience and collective memories back to the places that are regarded as homogenized territory (Feuchtwang, 2004). Village history and culture is the joint possession of the villagers even though they have left the village, so exploring the culture and traditions is an essential content of centering. In China, people keep the tradition of returning home for festivals, celebrations, and ancestor worship in the village, which enhances the process of centering.

Good cities are places of social encounters (Paddison & McCann, 2014), which is the same in the village. The ultimate intention of a gathering is to rebuild the rural social relationships through reiterative social practice. The practice includes beautifying rural environments, developing rural industries, and improving living

conditions, which requires different people's co-working. This co-working initiative forms a particular neighborhood network of kinship among the villagers, which eventually turns into an indispensable part of one's life. Generally, the skillful or talented villager (e.g., an able person with a particular ability in agricultural production, a grassroots officer who deals with various households, or a warm-hearted person who can manage daily neighborhood relations) has to communicate with diverse groups of people more frequently, making himself/herself become an essential node in the relationship network.

In the theory of place-making, the linking between individuals and villages is fundamental, which is the distinctive difference between "in place" and "out of place". The steady linking contains the meaning in a given location and the sense of time involved in establishing attachment to place (Cresswell, 2004; Relph, 1976). The activity experience and psychological feelings can solidify people's cognition of a specific space. Through what is made and remade daily (Cresswell, 2004), the individuals and villages will become a community of destiny. In other words, the development of each person is closely related to the whole village, and in turn, the development of the village has a profound impact on each one.

Based on the discussion above, we propose an analysis framework (Fig. 1): This paper assumes that an excellent human-land relationship is essential to form a steady community of destiny. However, due to the passive response to globalization and urbanization, villagers lose both the confidence in village development and the sense of belonging to the village. Villages are "out of place," and the human-land relationships become incoordinate. Villagers, government, and society need to play their roles in the rural transformation towards post-productivism. By place-making through "centering, gathering, and linking," the relationship between individuals and their villages can be rebuilt. With the exploration of a particular resource, more and more unique places can be made in villages, which are distinguished from the monotonous and placelessness landscape in the context of globalization (Relph, 1976). The place-making brings the optimization of land-use, which helps to the consumption-oriented transformation. Villages increase land-use value and provide various products to meet the demand of the global and urban markets. Eventually, through reiterative social practice, rural human-land relationship returns to a steady-state, making village "in place" again.

4. The Practice of Yuanqianshe, Xiamen city, China

4.1. Data source

Xiamen City is one of the earliest special economic zones in China. The rapid development of globalization and urbanization impacts the village significantly, including more rural land being expropriated into urban land and more people moving to the city for working, which results in the village hollowing out. However, Yuanqianshe solved this problem and achieved land-use post-productivism shift by placemaking. It is necessary to reveal how this village changed from decline to revival.

Our research team has been following up the practice in Yuanqianshe since 2014. We have conducted rich interviews and investigation about the villagers, which provides us with abundant materials. We hope to take Yuanqianshe as a case study and provide an interpretation of place-making for rural transformation, filling in the knowledge gap of current studies that neglects rural transformation from the micro perspective.

In order to analyze the case more detailed, this paper has obtained three types of data (Table 1): (i) Changes of land-use. This paper identifies land-use changes both by Google Maps and photos. The remote-sensing images from Google Maps are updated regularly every year, so we can compare land-use changes over a longer period. We have collected detailed photos yearly for long-term research, which helps us identify land-use changes more accurately. (ii) Statistics of village development. The paper mainly obtains the data from village committee, including the quantity changes of income, population and tourists. (iii) Place-making process information. We interviewed key participants (such as village committee, cooperatives, villagers, planners, and the like) to obtain the information about the background, process and results of the place-making.

It should be pointed out that the paper discussed one case study of Yuanqianshe in Xiamen City, but many villages in China, which the authors have participated in or observed, all presented familiar rural transformation of post-productivism. These villages located in the majority of China, including Zengcuo'an and Dongpingshan (in Xiamen City, Fujian Province), Yanqian (in Zhaoqing City, Guangdong Province), Kangxi (in Shaoguan City, Guangdong Province), Shenjing (in Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province), Jiaochangwei (in Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province), Dongluo (in Taizhou City, Jiangsu Province), Bolinsi (in Hong' a County, Hubei Province), Tuguan (in Xining City, Qinghai Province), Heicheng (in Xining City, Qinghai Province), and A'zheke (in Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province). Thus, it is suggested that there is a universal trend for post-productivism shifting in Chinese rural transformation. However, considering the length of the paper, we discussed Yuanqianshe as one typical case.

4.2. Land-use optimization through the practice of place-making

4.2.1. Yuanqianshe used to be "out of place"

Yuanqianshe is a native village close to the urban area in Haicang District, Xiamen City, Fujian province, China (Fig. 2). This village has more than 220 permanent families, with about 750 permanent residents. With a history of over 700 years, it contains profound historical and cultural artifacts. It also has plenty of farmlands that produce vegetables to the city. In the progress of urbanization, the low efficiency of traditional agriculture forced people to leave Yuanqianshe to work in cities, leaving more farmlands and forests unused. Historic buildings were abandoned and decayed. Public space was filled with litter and garbage, and rural roads were narrow where people could easily collide. In a word, Yuanqianshe was out of place. In the process of urban development, Yuanqianshe had been taken into the Haicang District Village's Demolition Agenda. Most villagers, however, were indifferent to the village's demise, and they thought there was nothing they could do.

4.2.2. Multiple powers and land-use optimization in place-making In 2013, the Xiamen government issued the policy of "Substitute Subsidies with Rewards" to encourage urban and rural communities to transform by themselves. Some villages like Xishanshe village have made some achievements to improve their living environment successfully. Therefore, they can apply the "Substitute Subsidies with Rewards" policy to supplement their previous costs. In 2014, Yuanqianshe arranged villagers to visit Xishanshe village. A young rural sage ("Xiangxian"), Mr. Chen Junxiong, who lived and worked in Yuanqianshe, also joined that visit. The visit inspired the young rural sage to get involved in the rural transformation. He wanted to change the future demolition fate of Yuanqianshe as Xishanshe village had done successfully.

The young rural sage and the village committee led the villagers to dismantle the pigpens and chicken houses, turning these spaces into beautiful street corners. The success of this place-making action aroused the enthusiasm and confidence of villagers for the rural transformation. These villagers' efforts have shown their desire to improve the rural environment, which helped their village win government policy

Table 1

Data obtaining methods Source: by authors.

Types of Data	Methods and Description
i Changes in land-use	Yuanqianshe started Google Maps in 2014. The maps of 2012, 2014, 2017 and 2019 were downloaded to identify landuse for a long period comparison
ii Statistics of village development	Statistics Quantity changes of income, population, tourists etc. provided by the village committee
iii Place-making process	Interviews Interviews with key participants such as village committee, cooperatives, villagers, planners, etc. about the background, information process and results of place-making

support and changed the decision of the demolition agenda. Relying on the government policy of “Substitute Subsidies with Rewards,” the villagers could make much effort to achieve place-making for the village. Yuanqianshe invited an urban planning institute to carry out rural planning with professional knowledge. The institute drew a blueprint for the village and set up the development goals on rural tourism and environmental improvement, which helped Yuanqianshe develop from material input to knowledge input.

The young rural sage gathered his classmates and old friends to form the Jishengyuan Cooperative, a rural organization. Jishengyuan Cooperative worked coordinately with the elders’ group and village committee. They mobilized villagers together to participate in rural transformation. Then, villagers were united to develop the rural industry by making urban vegetable fields, developing rural tourism, and reusing old buildings. The organizations above drove the land-use optimization (Fig. 3): (1) The farmlands were changed from traditional productive agriculture to diverse experiential agriculture. (2) The rural buildings were changed from normal productive use to consumptive use. (3) Facilities were provided to support rural tourism. (4) The village developed a science education route.

The land-use changes of farmlands exhibited the consumption orientation of post-productivism (Fig. 4). Fig.4 show several kinds of landuse optimization between 2012 and 2019, including that some lands (such as unused woodlands, traditional vegetable fields, and other unproductive lands) were transformed into urban vegetable fields and factories were changed to tourism supporting facilities like parking lots and DIY workshops. Through land transfer and replacement with other villagers, the Cooperative firstly transferred 1.7 ha of land as an experimental area in 2014 to make urban vegetable fields. The traditional vegetable field, which was initially a large area with lower profit, was divided into small unit plots of 0.002 ha. The urban vegetable fields were rented to urban consumers for leisure, who regularly came to pick up vegetables and experience farming. The villagers did not need to learn new techniques for making urban vegetable fields. They just helped their customers manage their vegetable fields, which increased their income value by four times. This greatly enhanced the confidence of those villagers, so increasing lands were put together to expand the area of urban vegetable fields.

At the same time, with the knowledge and technology provided by universities, Yuanqianshe started food processing industries like pineapple cake-making and nougat-making. Overall, the use of farmlands has changed from the original single agricultural planting to multifunctional urban agriculture. The latter was attached to secondary and tertiary industries, which were mainly for leisure and entertainment.

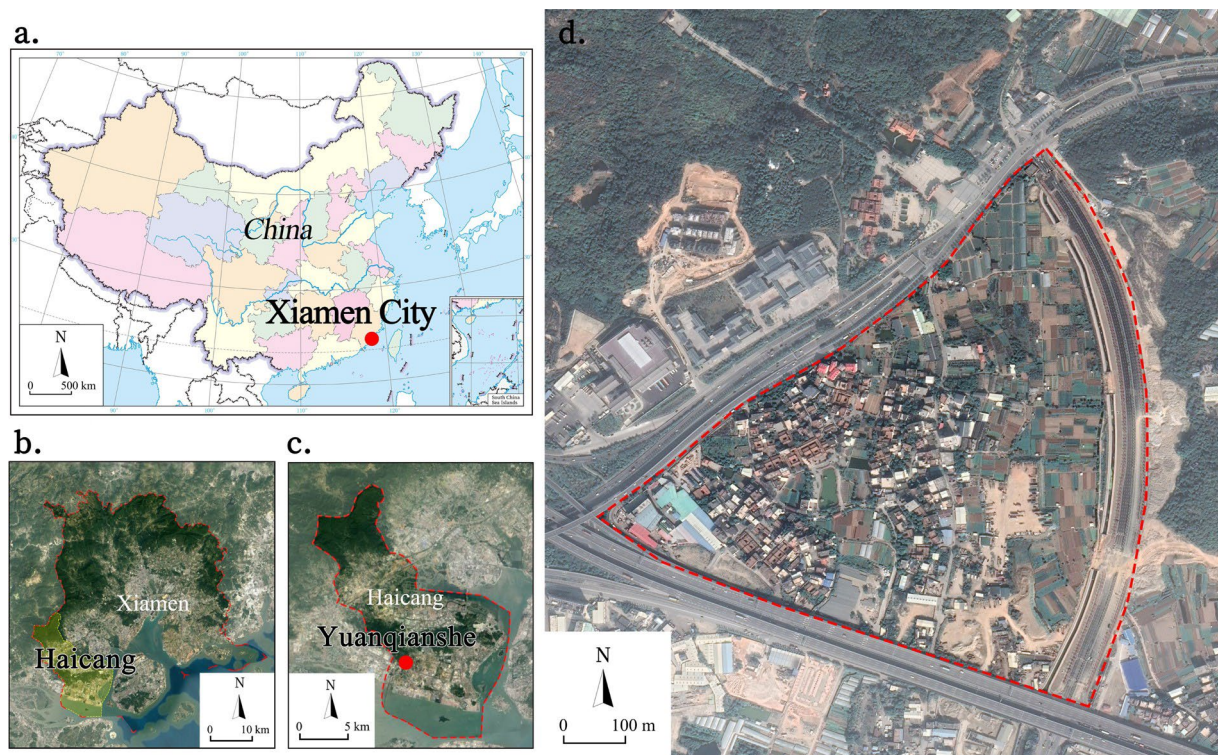


Fig. 2. The location map of Yuanqianshe in Xiamen City, China.

Notes: (a) Xiamen City in China; (b) Haicang District in Xiamen City; (c) Yuanqianshe in Haicang District; (d) An image of Yuanqianshe in 2019. Source: Authors adopted from Google Maps in 2019.

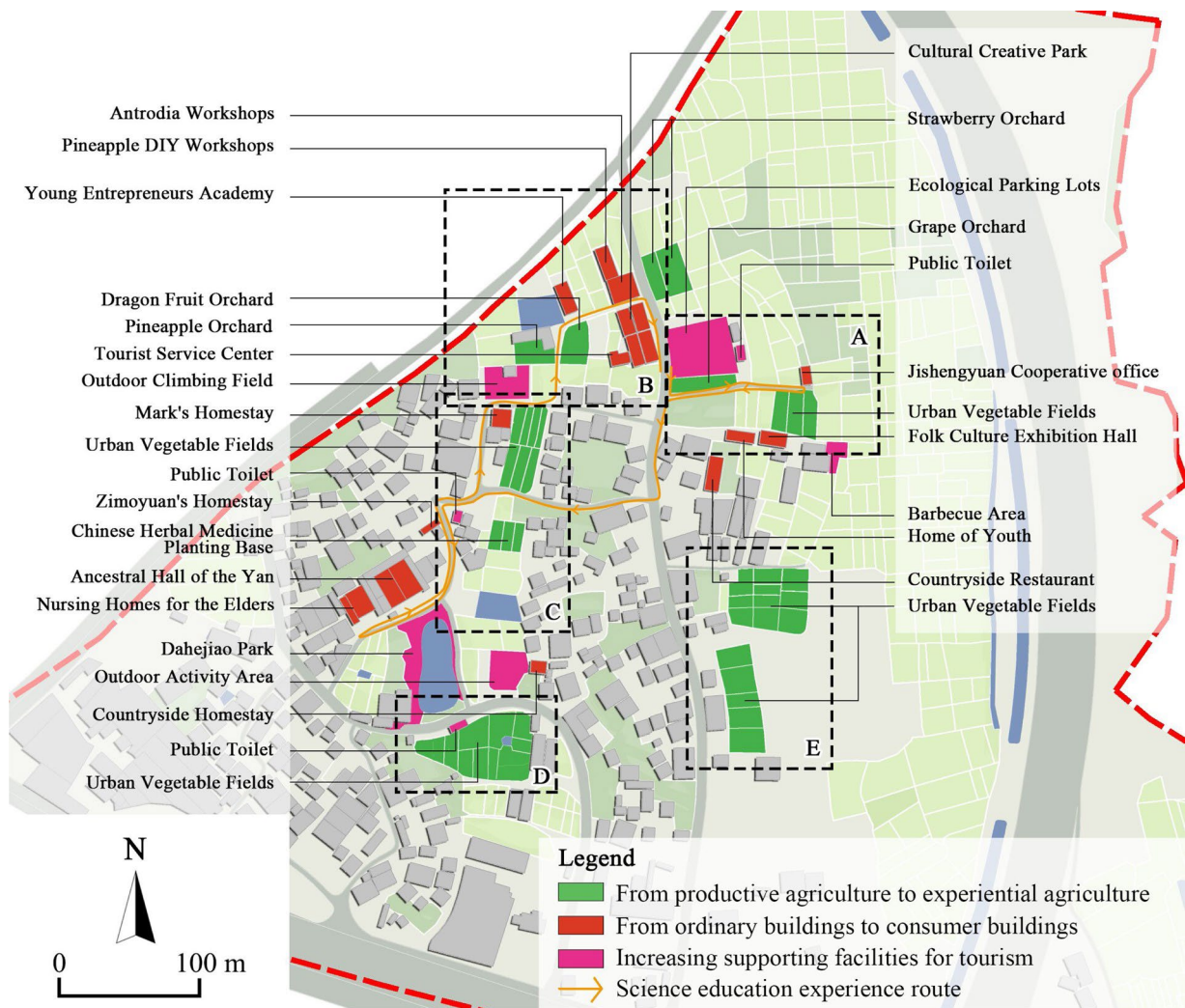


Fig. 3. Schematic diagram of land-use optimization in Yuanqianshe. Source: Drawn by authors in 2019.

The landscape of farmlands changed from large rural vegetable fields to small urban vegetable fields, which provides us with a more valuable sightseeing experience (Fig. 5-A).

4.2.3. Back "in place": centering, gathering and linking

4.2.3.1. Centering: forming the landmark. The villagers in Yuanqianshe created a series of centripetal landmarks through place-making (Fig. 5B~E). Through place-making, the dirty and disordered environment is transformed into a livable village, which can bring more social and economic benefits for the villagers. Villagers pulled down chicken coops and junk sheds to unblock the village road and form a circle touring route, which also saved space for the construction of public square. The old buildings had been reused as activity centers for the elderly. The abandoned factory was transformed into a DIY workshop. The villagers built a rustic summerhouse around environment-friendly ponds to meet the needs of recreational gathering. The new rural construction reflects the villagers' increasing awareness about environment protection, which was advocated by post-productivism.

Supported by government funds, the Jishengyuan Cooperative has turned an abandoned school, known locally as "Xuezaicheng", into an activity center named "Yuanqian Rural Happiness Yard." It provides places with multiple functions, including an elders' activity center, a traditional Chinese culture classroom, and a rural free clinic. This old building has become a symbolic space for villages to care for the elders. "Dafudi" used to be the private house of scholar-officials in ancient times, but now it was transformed into a museum. There are many traditional farming tools displayed in "Dafudi," where visitors can appreciate the traditional agriculture.

4.2.3.2. Gathering: reconstructing the relationship. Yuanqianshe's villagers enhanced their sense of belonging by co-working. In this process of place-making, young and old villagers have rebuilt connections. Before the official place-making, the village chief and the young rural sage asked for the support from the elderly at the beginning, because the older villagers, who have lived longer in the village and had a broader connection between the villagers, can call on more villages to join in. In the past, the old had a wrong impression of some young villagers because of young's apparent laziness. While under the leading of the young rural sage, the young changed the minds of the elderly successfully. As a result, the neighborhood relationship between villagers became more harmonious.

Participating in traditional festivals and other collective activities also played an essential role in the "gathering" of Yuanqianshe. In addition to traditional festival activities (e.g., the Torch Festival, Lxian'gong Worshipping, Fujian-Taiwan drama, etc.), the village added productive collective activities such as taking full family photos, the elder banquet, and the New Year's party. These activities encouraged villagers to hold wedding banquets at home, providing more opportunities to communicate with others. Everyday activities of daily construction, ranch management, festival events, and other joint actions


























Parcels	Land-use Optimization	2012	2014	2017	2019
A					
B					
C					
D					
E					

Fig. 4. Land-use from changes 2012 to 2019 in selected parcels of Yuanqianshe.

Notes: Parcel A, unused woodlands were transformed into urban vegetable fields; factories **were** changed into ecological parking lots. Parcel B, traditional vegetable fields were transformed into urban vegetable fields; factories were changed into DIY workshops. Parcel C, unproductive ponds, and wasteland were changed into urban vegetable fields. Parcel D, wastelands were transformed into urban vegetable fields. Parcel E, unused woodlands, were transformed into urban vegetable fields.

Source: Aerial images from Google Earth in various years of 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2019 by authors.

were added to the memories of villagers, strengthening the collective consciousness of villagers.

4.2.3.3. Linking: returning to the state “in place”. Place-making enables individuals to form a community of destiny that involves everyone in the village and build a state of the harmonious human-land relationship. The “linking” displays villagers’ sense of belonging, and this sense subsequently can enhance villagers’ collective consciousness of participation. With the development of the tourism-oriented industry, Yuanqianshe forms a new model of rural transformation. In 2018, Yuanqianshe received nearly 24,000 visitors, with 1.4 visiting groups per day (from Jishengyuan Cooperative, 2019) (Table 2). The number of tourists brought high demand for rural tourism, which created jobs for the home-returning villagers. In order to meet the needs of urban consumers, the home-returning villagers work hard to produce more products, including experience agriculture, rural restaurants, DIY pineapple cakes, and traditional food and traditional culture courses. The connection has been further strengthened through the sharing of benefits from rural industries, which has reconstructed the economic interest ties of villagers. This unique connection rebinds the villagers from the discrete state to the community of shared interests, which helps the village return to the state “in place.”

From the case study, we conclude that the rural transformation of Yuanqianshe is successful. The transformation of Yuanqianshe not only gained the recognition and appreciation of villagers but also attracted many villagers to return home and start businesses in the village. The physical environment has been greatly improved, and the industry has been flourishing. The place-making showed significant post-productivism characteristics: rural vegetable farming has shifted from agricultural production to rural consumption; rural production is diverse,











Parcels	Before transformation	After transformation
A	 <p>Traditional large vegetable fields</p>	 <p>New small fields of the unit division</p>
B	 <p>Illegal sheds</p>	 <p>Village green sketches</p>
C	 <p>Iron parts processing factory</p>	 <p>DIY workshop and ecological parking, with road widening</p>
D	 <p>A pond full of stagnant and dead water</p>	 <p>An environment-friendly pond with running water and villagers' creations</p>
E	 <p>Idle triangle</p>	 <p>A new pavilion according to villagers' requirements</p>

Fig. 5. Comparison of land-use and landscape of Yuanqianshe before and after transformation. Source: photos taken by authors on site survey during 2014-2019.

Table 2

Summary of official visiting and cadre reception training Source: Jishengyuan Cooperative, 2019.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Daily visitors	43	48	45	66
Daily visiting groups	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.4
Total visitors	15,556	17,451	16,359	23,956
Total visiting groups	405	435	382	511

decentralized, and multi-functional (Fig. 6); formerly marginal villagers became the dominant actors in urban-rural development; and more villagers attached greater importance to protecting natural environment.

5. Discussion

5.1. The needs to consider various possibilities of rural development in policymaking

The case of Yuanqianshe provides us some implications on how to make a suitable policy to help the village move towards post-productivism. The policy like “Substitute Subsidies with Rewards” motivates villagers to work harder to improve the environment and develop industry, by which villages can attain the government financial incentives. Meanwhile, the government could get a decent return with small input by encouraging villagers to optimize land-use. However, the co-existence of productivism and post-productivism will last for a long time in China, and it is necessary to consider the various possibilities of rural development with regional differences. China’s essential protection of farmland policies and other productive policies is still valid and has had a profound impact on China’s land-use (Liu et al., 2014), which makes its food supply safer. Therefore, productivist policies have their reasonability and necessity. To guarantee food supply, how can we improve the utilization efficiency of rural land and narrow the gap between urban and rural areas? This is a conundrum that many countries around the world want to solve.

For the rural areas close to the urban market, it has the potential to become villages like Yuanqianshe. The trend for agriculture experiencing and natural landscape sightseeing is continuously increasing, which provides the impetus for the utilization of village resources. In these areas, it is more suitable to implement policies of post-productivism to meet the needs of urban residents’ consumption and promote the diversification of land-use, rather than policies of productivism, which is to guarantee the safety of food production. From a policy perspective, policies of post-productivism focus away from mainstream commodity productivist models of development towards high value-added and innovation in the rural economy (Macken-Walsh, 2009). Land-use policies’ attention to post-productivism is increasing in China, which promotes rural transformation gradually. Different regions in China, including Fujian Province, Guangdong Province, Jiangsu Province, and Qinghai Province, mentioned above, have proposed various land-use policies to encourage the many developments of rural areas, including encouraging villagers to enrich their farmlands function by developing rural tourism and school science activities, etc.

5.2. The role of planning in rural transformation

The rural transformation in China is quite different from that in western countries referred to a different background. Through the practice of Yuanqianshe, we can see that planning (which set up the development goals and projects both on rural tourism and environmental improvement) plays a vital role in promoting rural transformation towards post-productivism in China. In western countries such as Britain and the United States, the village is basically in a stable development state, which is the desired place for living. With the development of suburbanization and counter-urbanization in western countries, people prefer to live in the countryside. More and more public resources and capital are flowing back to the rural areas, which bring about changes in the village. For instance, villages become a second home.

However, China is still in the process of rapid urbanization; rural resources and capital are still attracted by cities. The issues of population loss and economic downturn are still severe in rural areas. Through the planning in place-making, we can change the passive role of rural areas to form a stable human-land relationship. We can make a plan to consider the potential future development of rural areas more comprehensively. Then we put the plan into practice through collective place-making and make full use of rural land. Through land-use optimization, we can not only improve the villagers’ quality of life but also develop rural, diverse industries. The diverse industries are carried by rural land, which leads to rural land functionalization. As Fig. 3 shows, traditional productive farmlands changed into urban vegetable fields, kinds of the orchard, planting base, etc.

5.3. The critical effect of rural actors in place-making

Villagers played a critical role in place-making. Using the government’s policy of Substitute Subsidies with Rewards, Yuanqianshe villagers raised an appeal against the village being demolished and changed the development direction of the village. Yuanqianshe villagers, through place-making, promoted the land-use optimization. The rural transformation focused on several industrial developments in Yuanqianshe, which presents a typical post-productivism shift. The rural tourism projects include urban vegetable fields, rural restaurants, DIY activities, and outdoor climbing, etc. Most of these ideas came from the local villagers. For example, Mr. Chen, the man who raised the idea of the project to turn the traditional farmland into the “urban vegetable fields”, was inspired by the famous “Happy Farm” game on social media at that time. It showed that villagers could promote the village to transform agricultural space into consumption places through a bottomup approach.

6. Conclusion

With the shift from productivism to post-productivism, this paper proposed an analytical framework of rural transformation based on land-use optimization from the micro perspective. This analytical framework has explained the rural transformation by analyzing the roles of villagers, government, society, and other different stakeholders and discussing the place-making process of centering, gathering, and linking. With the case study under the analytical framework described in Fig. 1, it proves that the practice of place-making is a practical method to achieve rural revitalization in China, which provides an essential reference for the practice of rural transformation in most countries. This paper concluded the following findings.

First, rural transformation in China presents the consumption orientation of post-productivism. The rural tourism makes the village become a functional part of the urban-rural system, which provides multiple functions, including science education, sightseeing, and farming experience. Second, place-making can take full advantage of productive resources in the rural areas and turn these resources into landscape products that can be consumed. Place-making can promote land-use optimization and enhance the value of the village. During the process of place-making, the villagers’ attitudes would shift towards post-productivism. Villagers become more active in rural transformation and change their previous marginalization state in rural development. Third, both policy and planning play an irreplaceable role in the rural transformation towards post-productivism. We suggest that incentive policy like the Substitute Subsidies with Rewards should be adopted to help further villagers realize rural revitalization towards post-productivism. It can encourage rural villagers to carry out placemaking about the environment and industrial activities from bottom up. With the detailed research about the villages, the rural planner can understand what the villages need and what the villages can do, which can make the planning more practicable.

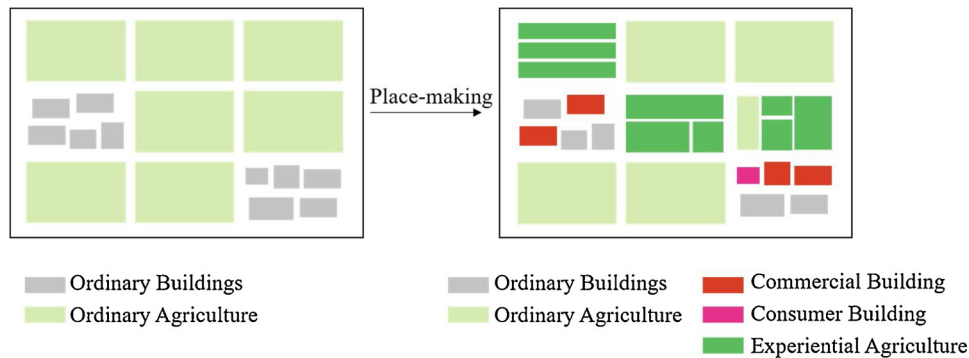


Fig. 6. Land-use optimization in Yuanqianshe. Source: Drawn by authors in 2019.

This paper analyzes the rural practice in Xiamen, a developed coastal city, inevitably having some limitations. There are many types of villages in China, and their various ways of rural transformation need to be revealed through more extensive research. In future research, we will explore the rural transformation in other regions.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Yaofu Huang: Formal analysis, Writing - original draft. **Eddie C.M. Hui:** Investigation, Conceptualization. **Jinmiao Zhou:** Visualization. **Wei Lang:** Formal analysis, Writing - review & editing. **Tingting Chen:** Formal analysis, Writing - review & editing. **Xun Li:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Resources.

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