

The Practical Enlightenment of Rural Grass-roots Deliberative Democracy from the Perspective of Typical Cases

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ABSTRACT: Actively promoting the construction of deliberative democracy at the grass-roots level in rural areas is a key measure to respond to the diversified interests of villagers, improve the efficiency of rural governance and implement the people 's democracy in the whole process. Based on the analysis of typical cases of deliberative democracy at the grassroots level in rural areas, three core practical inspirations can be extracted : to build a solid foundation for the effectiveness of consultation with the full coverage of the special system and the deep connection of the governance system, and to consolidate the institutional guarantee by focusing on the formulation of regulations and systems in the whole process of consultation and promoting the deep integration of the consultation system and the rural governance system ; process optimization and technology empowerment are used to improve the operational efficiency of deliberative democracy, and the effectiveness of consultation is improved by standardizing the full-cycle process of consultation and breaking the barriers to participation with the help of digital tools. Classified cultivation and coordination mechanism should be used to strengthen the role of participants, implement differentiated cultivation for different subjects, build a cross-subject linkage mechanism, and gather participation forces to provide practical guidance for the high-quality development of rural grassroots deliberative democracy.

Keywords: rural grass-roots ; rural governance ; consultative democracy ; practical enlightenment

I. Introduction

As China's social governance system continues to deepen, grassroots governance has become a critical component in the process of modernizing national governance. Deliberative democracy, with its core characteristics of multi-stakeholder participation, consensus-building, and democratic decision-making, has emerged as an important approach to advancing the modernization of grassroots governance. In rural areas, however, the implementation of deliberative democracy faces numerous challenges due to constraints such as complex population structures, limited governance resources, and insufficient governance capabilities. Currently, China's rural development has entered a new phase of rural revitalization, with significant changes in the

governance environment and the needs of farmers gradually becoming more diverse and personalized. Against this backdrop, the traditional dual-subject governance structure of village “two committees” is no longer fully compatible with the actual needs of rural governance in the new phase. Developing rural grassroots consultative democracy has thus become an important means of meeting villagers' demands, improving rural governance efficiency, and implementing whole-process people's democracy. In fact, rural grass-roots consultative democracy plays a crucial role in optimizing rural governance. It not only effectively regulates the operation of rural grassroots self-governance powers and creates a favorable environment for the development of various rural undertakings but also encourages and attracts ordinary villagers to actively participate in rural governance, fostering governance synergy through collective decision-making and offering suggestions. In this process, villagers' political participation and democratic literacy are simultaneously enhanced, rural grassroots conflicts are effectively resolved, and this contributes to the formation of a good social governance landscape characterized by joint construction, co-governance, and shared benefits, laying the foundation for building a social governance community where everyone is responsible, everyone fulfills their duties, and everyone enjoys the benefits.

In practice, grass-roots consultative democracy in rural areas has opened up new avenues for rural governance, demonstrating clear advantages in resolving disputes among the public, mitigating grassroots conflicts, regulating the exercise of power, and optimizing public oversight. Since the implementation of consultative democracy at the grassroots level in rural areas, various regions have explored diverse forms of consultation, such as “Village Night Talks,” “Hui-Han Village Deliberative Assemblies,” and “Residents' Discussions,” all based on the principles of consultation for the people and consultation by the people. These initiatives have effectively promoted the awakening and enhancement of villagers' democratic awareness, self-governance ideology, and political participation capabilities. This article examines the practical implications of rural grassroots consultative democracy from the perspective of typical cases. It not only extracts replicable experience models from concrete practices to provide references for optimizing consultative democracy practices in various regions but also further enriches the practical theoretical framework of rural grassroots consultative democracy, providing a strong foundation for improving the grassroots governance system under the backdrop of China's modernization.

II. Literature Review

Currently, regarding the theoretical construction and practical exploration of grassroots consultative democracy in rural areas, the domestic academic community has formed a multi-dimensional, multi-perspective research framework, and relevant findings can be organized into four core directions. First, from the perspective of the institutionalization of rural grassroots consultative democracy and the establishment of its procedures, scholars generally focus on the supportive role of institutional safeguards in rural grassroots consultative democracy. Some studies suggest that institutional development should be at the core, achieved through improving laws and regulations, establishing supervision and accountability mechanisms, enhancing farmers' political literacy, and strengthening the consultative awareness of grassroots officials, to build a robust rural consultative democracy mechanism, thereby enhancing rural governance efficiency (Qu Yancun and Chen Haobin, 2017; Wu Yongjiang and Li Zhi, 2024; Qu Xia, 2025). Other scholars emphasize that exploring democratic consultation pathways that align with both theoretical and practical needs is key to enhancing institutionalization levels. They suggest optimizing consultation operational processes, improving mechanisms for public participation, designing practical institutional frameworks, and enhancing cadre training systems to create practical forms tailored to village realities (Zhou Yaru, 2016; Ding Zhuoyue, 2025). Other studies have pointed

out that current rural consultative democracy faces issues of standardized chaos, arguing that institutionalization pathways must be tailored to local characteristics to address specific issues, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. They also highlight that there are still significant shortcomings in top-level institutional design, grassroots regulations and guidelines, and procedural norms for consultation (Chen Mengqi, Li Xiaoguang, 2018; He Yonghong, 2021; Wu Bingbing, Liu Wei, 2024).

Second, from the perspective of functional studies conducted across different contexts and viewpoints, the role of grassroots consultative democracy in rural areas exhibits diverse adaptability. Some studies place consultative democracy within the framework of village self-governance, proposing that it is an important component in promoting rural revitalization, innovating rural governance, and expanding orderly political participation among the public. It holds particular significance for achieving good governance in rural areas of ethnic minority regions along the border, and has explored pathways for building consultative democracy within the context of village self-governance (Yang Xiaolan, 2018; Zi Rongyao, 2025); Based on the results of community governance surveys in multiple regions, grassroots consultation, with the participation of diverse stakeholders at its core, serves as an important channel for resident self-governance. It can effectively address practical issues such as the construction of volunteer service systems and the coordination of medical supplies, assisting grassroots communities in finding solutions tailored to their actual circumstances (Luo Xiaoping, 2023; Yang Shoutao, 2025); Another study approaches the issue from the perspective of rural “hollowing out,” arguing that the inability of migrant populations to participate in deliberation leads to the “hollowing out” of the deliberative process. It constructs a targeted path for deliberative democracy from four dimensions: the integration of village officials, the participation of returning migrant workers, the coordination of formal and informal organizations, and the improvement of procedural systems (Bai Qipeng & Yan Liguang, 2016).

Third, from the perspective of the role of governance subjects, the academic community focuses on the leading value of grassroots organizations in deliberative democracy. Some scholars have proposed that grass-roots consultations are always embedded in organizational leadership and government leadership, institutionalization and proceduralization are the basis for the operation of deliberative democracy, and consultations focus more on ' transactional ' issues to solve grass-roots governance problems. This process also improves the adaptability of grass-roots governance (Lang Youxing, 2016 ; liu Lanjian and Li Dan, 2025) ; some studies also believe that grassroots organizations have the political advantage of taking charge of the overall situation and coordinating all parties in the rural deliberative democratic governance pattern. Their leadership role is the key to the formation of a coordinated governance pattern among multiple subjects, and the democratic mechanism within the organization plays an important role in improving the democratic consciousness and ability of villagers (Zhang shiwei, 2021 ; Wang Chuncheng and Guo Yiwen, 2025) ; it is further pointed out that the deliberative democracy at the grass-roots level in the new era needs to rely on the four mechanisms of concept infusion, organization embedding, platform co-construction and business docking, and build an organization-led deliberative democracy model from the three dimensions of political logic, realization mechanism and practice platform (Yang Liyun, 2022).

Fourth, from the perspective of case studies, scholars analyze local experiences to distill replicable practical models. A study focusing on Linhai, Zhejiang, proposes that the local grassroots consultative democracy represents the deepened development of “democratic dialogue,” forming the ‘344’ experience characterized by “three platforms, four mechanisms, and four types of consultation,” and emphasizes that replication must adhere to the principles of institutionalization, proceduralization, and focusing on substantive issues (Lang Youxing, 2016); Based on the outcomes of the Shangyang Street Community practice in Hangzhou, the core reason for low consultation participation was identified as the disconnect between issues and public needs. This led to the

summary of experiences such as the “Neighborhood Ward” and “Six-Step Work Method,” proposing that precise issues and project-driven approaches be used to enhance consultation recognition (Li Jiajia and Tang Langshi, 2019); Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province, has implemented the “Tongdewei Public Consultation Committee,” Nanyang City, Henan Province, has implemented the “4+2” work method, and Minhang District, Shanghai, has conducted “public policy assessments.” the coordination and linkage mechanism for grassroots consultative democracy construction led by the People's Political Consultative Conference established in Yichang City, Hubei Province, the Party Member Deliberation Meeting established in Baiyun Subdistrict, Ningbo City, Zhejiang Province, and the “Gai Bu Gan Su Mu” mechanism inherited by the 12 tribes of Xicang in Luqu County, Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province, all demonstrate distinct local characteristics. These practices correspond to different types of grassroots consultation, including grassroots social consultation, rural self-governance consultation, grassroots CPPCC consultation, grassroots intra-party consultation, and grassroots consultation in ethnic regions, providing rich examples for the diversified development of grassroots consultative democracy (Wang Zhankai, 2021).

Overall, existing research has covered the core dimensions of rural grassroots consultative democracy, including its institutions, functions, actors, and practices. However, there are still limitations: most studies either focus on a single aspect (such as institutional design or case analysis) or are limited to a specific perspective (such as “hollowing out” or organizational leadership), lacking a systematic integration of consultative democracy from theoretical construction to practical implementation, and from problem diagnosis to path optimization. Based on this, future research should further break down the boundaries between multidimensional studies to form a comprehensive examination of rural grassroots consultative democracy, providing more targeted theoretical support for practical implementation.

III. Multi-subject Role Positioning in Rural Grass-roots Deliberative Democracy

1. Township government : the leading force of rural grass-roots deliberative democracy

Among the levels of articulation between state power and the rural governance system, the township is the lowest administrative unit of rural management, and is also the key node connecting state governance and rural autonomy. In the practice of rural grassroots consultative democracy, township party committees and governments play a leading role: on the one hand, they need to take on the core functions of policy supply, rule design and policy implementation; on the other hand, they need to coordinate the interests of various departments and resolve the contradictions and differences between different participating subjects. Combined with the current deployment and requirements of rural grassroots governance, the core task of the township Party committee and government in rural grassroots consultation and democracy focuses on strengthening the macro-planning and direction guidance of village consultation and democracy, not only to ensure that the Party's leadership comprehensively covers the initiation, advancement, and implementation of grassroots consultation, but also to deal with all kinds of problems in the process of consultation in a timely manner, so as to ensure that the consultation and democracy always follow the correct direction of development. It is also necessary to deal with all kinds of problems that arise in the consultation process in a timely manner, so as to ensure that consultation democracy always follows the right direction of development. China's grassroots consultative democracy has always been based on the fundamental premise of adhering to the Party's leadership, and the Party's leadership and the government's leading role have been deeply integrated into the concrete practice of grass-roots consultation, a process that can further consolidate the ruling party's leading position in grass-roots society. From practical experience, it is difficult for rural grass-roots consultative democracy to develop in a healthy and sustainable

manner without the effective leadership of the organization, a conclusion that has been repeatedly verified by practical cases in many regions.

2. Farmers: the core force and key reliance of rural grass-roots consultative democracy

As the main labor group in rural areas, farmers are not only the core support of agricultural production activities and the development of agricultural industry, but also have the dual attributes as both the objects and subjects of rural governance. In the practice of rural grass-roots consultative democracy, the participation of the villagers is a key prerequisite: without the in-depth participation of this subject, the democratic rights of farmers will lose the realization of the carrier, and the rural grass-roots consultative democracy may fall into a formalized predicament.

From the perspective of the composition of participating entities, farmers in rural grass-roots consultative democracy can be divided into two major categories: the first is the rural elite group, specifically referring to individuals or groups within rural society who significantly outperform ordinary villagers in terms of social prestige, status, and economic resources. Typical representatives include new rural elites, large-scale farming and livestock breeding operators, rural technical backbone personnel, and small and medium-sized enterprise operators who have ventured out to start businesses. As the core representatives of informal authority in rural governance, this group plays a crucial role in promoting the diversification of governance actors in rural areas. In the practical implementation of grass-roots consultative democracy in rural areas, they can exert a strong demonstrate and leading role. The second group consists of ordinary villagers, who are both the grantors of formal village-level power and the parties entrusted with its exercise. The active participation of ordinary villagers not only serves as the foundational guarantee for achieving the goal of rural self-governance but also constitutes the fundamental supportive force for the orderly advancement of grass-roots consultative democracy in rural areas. As such, fully activating the participation enthusiasm of ordinary villagers and leveraging their role as key actors is the core component of effectively conducting rural grass-roots consultative democracy work.

3. Social organization : an important participant in rural grass-roots deliberative democracy

As a key link between grass-roots governments and farmers, social organizations can leverage their status as partners of grass-roots governments to help alleviate practical problems faced by governments in rural governance, such as insufficient resource supply and limited governance capabilities. Rural social organizations originate from grass-roots communities and have a more accurate understanding of the actual needs of farmers. They can respond to the diverse interests and demands of farmers and play an important role in the practice of grass-roots deliberative democracy in rural areas.

From the current composition of social organizations in rural areas, the main types include agricultural operating enterprises, farmers' professional cooperatives, and rural collective economic organizations. At the same time, external organizations such as village-based assistance institutions and social welfare assistance groups also provide valuable support for the development of grass-roots consultative democracy in rural areas. It is worth noting that rural social organizations typically possess a high level of professional expertise regarding the topics of deliberative consultation. Their joint participation with villagers in the deliberative consultation process not only effectively fills the capability gaps between grass-roots governments and villager groups in certain specialized fields but also further enhances the scientific rationality and practical feasibility of the consultation outcomes.

IV. Typical exploration of rural grass-roots deliberative democracy

1. Chongqing Jiangjin District ' Small Court Council Chamber ' : Micro-consultation activates the vitality of grass-roots governance

In response to the challenges of scattered rural settlements and difficulties in convening community meetings, Jiangjin District, Chongqing Municipality, has innovatively developed the “Courtyard Deliberation Hall” consultation model. This initiative establishes consultation venues within the courtyards where villagers reside, establishing a tiered consultation mechanism where “minor matters are discussed in the courtyard, and major decisions are made at the village level.” This approach effectively addresses the challenges of “difficulty in convening meetings and low participation rates” in rural grass-roots consultations.

In terms of institutional design, the “Small Courtyard Deliberation Hall” establishes the “Five Fixed” rules: fixed agenda (focusing on issues such as courtyard environmental improvement, neighborhood dispute mediation, and micro-infrastructure construction that are of urgent concern to villagers), fixed personnel (one representative per household, including retired party members, new local elites, and resident lawyers serving as “deliberation advisors”), fixed process (“propose the agenda—collect opinions — on-site negotiation — implementation and feedback” in four steps), set timelines (simple matters decided on the spot, complex matters with progress feedback within 7 days), and set supervision (select 3–5 villagers to form a supervision group to track the implementation of matters). The core advantage of this model lies in its “micro-level” negotiation units, which transform broad rural governance issues into specific matters close to villagers' lives, lowering participation barriers; simultaneously, professional expertise is introduced to provide technical and legal support, enhancing the feasibility of negotiation outcomes. Data shows that Jiangjin District has established over 800 “Courtyard Deliberation Halls,” with a cumulative total of over 3,200 matters resolved through deliberation in 2023. Villager participation rates exceeded 85%, and matter resolution rates surpassed 90%. The relevant experience has been promoted across the entire municipality of Chongqing, providing a replicable model for grass-roots deliberative democracy in rural areas that is “grounded in reality and delivers tangible results.”

2. 'Digital Negotiation Platform ' in Qingshen County, Sichuan Province : Technology Empowerment to Solve the Negotiation Problem of ' Hollow Village '

As a typical agricultural county, Qingxian County in Sichuan Province has a labor force migration rate of 35%. Traditional offline negotiations face the “hollowing out” dilemma of “young adults being absent and opinions being difficult to unify.” To address this, Qingxian County has established the “Cloud Qingxian—Village-Level Negotiation” digital platform, which uses an “online + offline” integrated model to break down the temporal and spatial barriers preventing migrant villagers from participating in negotiations, achieving full coverage and real-time online participation in rural grass-roots negotiation democracy.

The platform's functional design focuses on full-process digitization: first, in the issue collection phase, villagers can submit their requests through a WeChat mini-program, and the system automatically categorizes and summarizes them before forwarding them to the village “two committees,” preventing issues from being “screened out”; second, in the negotiation participation phase, the platform uses a “live streaming + real-time chat interaction + online voting” format, allowing migrant workers to watch negotiation meetings in real time, participate in discussions through real-time chat questions and voice comments, and have voting results displayed instantly; Third, in the implementation phase, the platform features a “progress tracking” module. The village Party branch and village committee must regularly upload photos and videos of task progress, allowing villagers to view and evaluate them at any time. If satisfaction rates fall below 60%, the matter must be re-negotiated. Additionally, Qingxian County has established a “digital consultation + data empowerment” mechanism. By

analyzing consultation data accumulated on the platform, the county identifies hot topics of concern to villagers (such as elderly care, education, and industrial development), providing a basis for selecting future consultation topics and formulating policies. By 2024, the platform had covered all 76 administrative villages in the county, conducting over 580 online consultations. The participation rate of villagers living outside the village increased from less than 10% to 45%, effectively addressing the issues of “lack of people” and “lack of opinions” in consultations in “hollowed-out villages.” This provides practical reference for the innovative development of rural grass-roots consultative democracy in the information age.

V. Practical Enlightenment of Rural Grass-roots Deliberative Democracy

1. Establishing a solid foundation for effective consultation through comprehensive specialised systems and deep integration with the governance system

The practice of the “Small Courtyard Deliberation Hall” in Jiangjin District, Chongqing, provides a clear model for how rural grass-roots consultative democracy can ensure effectiveness through institutional design. Its core insights lie in the dual approach of “comprehensive coverage of specialized systems” and “deep integration with the governance system.”

From the perspective of specialized institutional construction, the “Small Courtyard Deliberation Hall” is not merely a platform for deliberation but a closed-loop system covering the entire lifecycle of deliberation through the “Five Determinations” rules: “Determining the Agenda” focuses on issues such as courtyard environment improvement, neighborhood dispute mediation, and micro-infrastructure repairs—matters of urgent concern to villagers—ensuring that deliberations remain grounded in rural realities; “Determining personnel” establishes a basic participation structure with one villager representative per household, while also incorporating veteran party members, new local elites, and resident lawyers as “deliberation advisors,” ensuring the villagers' central role while introducing professional expertise to avoid the dilemma of “non-experts discussing professional matters”; “Determining procedures” follows a standardized four-step process of “proposing an agenda—collecting opinions — on-site negotiation — implementation and feedback” to standardize the negotiation sequence, preventing the negotiation process from becoming arbitrary or fragmented; “Set deadlines” by distinguishing between simple matters that can be decided on the spot and complex matters that require a progress update within 7 days, addressing the efficiency issue of “discussing without deciding”; “Set supervision” by having villagers elect 3–5 people to form a supervision group, which tracks the implementation of matters throughout the process to prevent negotiation results from remaining theoretical. It was through this specialized system that the blocked irrigation channel issue in Xiaoyuan Village, Ci Yun Town, was swiftly resolved. Village representatives, the village “Two Committees,” and water conservancy technicians reached a consensus through negotiation on a plan combining “village labor contributions + village collective material subsidies,” completing dredging and reinforcement within 10 days. This effectively addressed the irrigation needs of over 20 households, clearly demonstrating the specialized system's role in ensuring the practical effectiveness of negotiations.

From the perspective of systematic integration, it is necessary to promote the deep integration of the consultation system with the existing rural governance system, using a combination of “rigid integration + multi-party supervision” to address the challenges of indecision and inaction. Integrating the consultative democracy system with the village self-governance system, we should clarify the operational procedures for consultative democracy within institutions such as village representative assemblies and village deliberative councils. Major matters such as the disposal of collective assets and industrial development plans must first be

subject to consultation to reach consensus before being submitted for voting, making consultation an indispensable link in village self-governance; Integrating with the village affairs disclosure system, requiring information such as consultation topics, lists of participants, discussion records, and outcome proposals to be fully disclosed through village affairs bulletin boards and village WeChat accounts, ensuring villagers' right to know and right to supervise; Integrating with rural revitalization policies, mandating the conduct of consultative democracy in key areas such as industrial support, infrastructure construction, and rural environment improvement to ensure policies align with rural realities and villagers' needs. Simultaneously, a multi-tiered supervision mechanism is established, with the Village Affairs Supervision Committee conducting monthly inspections of the implementation of consultation outcomes and quarterly reports to the Village Representatives' Assembly. For matters involving major public interests, third-party institutions are commissioned to conduct mid-term and final evaluations, with evaluation results linked to the performance evaluations of village officials. This approach drives the transformation of the consultation system from formal norms to practical implementation, achieving synergistic progress between consultative democracy and the rural governance system.

2. Improving the effectiveness of consultative democracy through process optimization and technological empowerment

Jiangjin's "Small Courtyard Deliberation Hall" addresses the issue of fragmented deliberation through a closed-loop process of "proposing issues—collecting opinions—on-site negotiation—implementing feedback." Its "micro-level" deliberation units lower participation barriers and increase villagers' participation rates; Qingshen County's "Digital Consultation Platform" uses a technology-enabled model combining "live interaction and progress tracking" to break through the spatial and temporal barriers of "hollow villages" and achieve full digitalization of the consultation process. Both cases offer insights: optimizing consultation mechanisms requires a two-pronged approach. At the process level, establish a standardized, full-cycle process encompassing "consultation preparation—conducting consultations—converting results," including pre-disclosure of topics, introduction of neutral facilitators, and establishment of satisfaction feedback mechanisms to ensure orderly and efficient consultations; At the technical level, a digital platform integrating online solicitation, real-time participation, and progress supervision should be established. Big data analysis should be used to understand villagers' needs, while drawing on Qing Shen's "digital consultation + data empowerment" experience to extend technological applications from "expanding participation channels" to "supporting precise decision-making," thereby enhancing the coverage and scientific rigor of consultations.

First, in terms of optimizing the consultation process, it is necessary to establish a standardized, end-to-end process covering consultation preparation, consultation implementation, and the conversion of consultation outcomes, thereby eliminating arbitrariness and fragmentation within the process. During the negotiation preparation stage, the village Party branch and village committee must publicly disclose the negotiation agenda, background materials, meeting schedule, and list of participating parties through village bulletin boards, village We Chat accounts, and door-to-door notifications at least seven working days before the meeting. They should also set up suggestion boxes and online feedback channels to collect preliminary opinions from villagers, laying the groundwork for the negotiation. For example, when a village negotiated the construction plan for an elderly care service center, it publicly disclosed relevant information 10 days in advance and conducted door-to-door visits to collect opinions, thereby clarifying the direction of the negotiation. During the negotiation phase, a neutral moderation and equal deliberation mechanism must be established. The moderator should be a neutral individual elected by the village representatives' assembly, a township government staff member, or a third-party representative, to avoid the village "two committees" dominating the process. Additionally,

deliberation rules such as one person, one vote, and time limits for speaking should be established. Topics with significant disagreements should be discussed in stages. The negotiation process should be recorded in writing and through audio-visual means and archived. During the implementation phase of negotiation outcomes, a closed-loop system of coordination, execution, and feedback should be established. Consensus reached through negotiation should be incorporated into the village affairs decision-making directory after being approved by a vote. Implementation should be carried out in stages based on complexity, with clear deadlines set. After implementation is completed, the results should be publicly disclosed, and a satisfaction survey should be conducted. If the satisfaction rate is below 60%, the negotiation process should be restarted.

Secondly, at the technological empowerment level, leverage the internet and big data to optimize the efficiency and coverage of consultations. An online negotiation platform has been established, integrating channels such as WeChat mini-programs and village official accounts, to enable functions such as topic collection, online discussion, voting, and result disclosure. Migrant workers can participate in negotiations via video, and villagers can view negotiation results and implementation progress in real time. Additionally, big data analysis is used to examine villagers' opinions and negotiation records, identifying core demands and points of contention, providing support for topic selection and process guidance. It also tracks implementation outcomes, providing a basis for optimizing future negotiations.

3. Strengthening the role of participating entities through classified cultivation and coordination mechanisms

The practices of the “Small Courtyard Deliberation Hall” in Jiangjin District, Chongqing Municipality, and the “Digital Deliberation Platform” in Qingshen County, Sichuan Province, both highlight the central value of “people” in deliberative democracy. Only by enabling different stakeholders to fully utilize their capabilities and collaborate effectively can we avoid the dilemma of deliberation being dominated by a few or resulting in the silence of the majority. The Jiangjin “Small Courtyard Deliberation Hall” does not limit deliberation to ordinary villagers but actively recruits veteran party members, new local elites, and resident lawyers to serve as “deliberation advisors”: veteran party members leverage their prestige to mediate neighborhood disputes, new local elites utilize their resources to facilitate project implementation, and resident lawyers provide legal expertise. Together, they combine “informal authority” with “professional capability,” setting an example for ordinary villagers while offering diverse solutions to issues; Qingshen County, facing the reality of a high proportion of migrant workers, utilized the “Cloud Qingshen” platform to overcome spatial and temporal constraints, attracting over 30 villagers working outside the county to participate in cloud-based consultations on the citrus industrial park. Simultaneously, it collaborated with agricultural enterprises, cooperatives, and other social organizations to provide industrial planning recommendations. This enabled the demands of ordinary villagers, the opinions of the migrant workforce, and professional institutional proposals to converge and integrate on the same platform, ultimately yielding a win-win solution of “guaranteed rent plus profit sharing.” These two cases clearly illustrate that capacity building for participants in rural grass-roots consultative democracy must move beyond a one-size-fits-all cultivation model and shift toward a systematic approach of “differentiated policies + collaborative linkage.” For ordinary villagers, efforts must be made on two fronts: raising awareness and enhancing capabilities. In terms of awareness, traditional one-way lectures should be abandoned in favor of more engaging methods, such as showing videos of local cases like the Jiangjin Waterway Governance Project and the Qingxin Industrial Consultation Project, sharing “consultation outcomes redeemable for daily necessities” points rules in village WeChat groups, and organizing “consultation experience days” to invite villagers to observe deliberative meetings, allowing them to directly perceive the benefits of participation. In terms of capacity, adopt

a practical “expert lectures + role-playing” model, inviting grass-roots governance experts to explain how to clearly express demands and balance individual and collective interests, and simulate scenarios such as “resolving disputes over residential land” and “discussing the use of collective funds” to help villagers master deliberation rules through practice; Additionally, drawing on Jiangjin’s “council advisors guiding villagers” experience, a pairing mechanism was established between rural elites and ordinary villagers. Before negotiations, advisors help villagers organize their demands, and during negotiations, they guide villagers to speak orderly, gradually eliminating their concerns about not daring or knowing how to speak up.

For rural elites, it is essential to strengthen their sense of public responsibility and provide platforms for them to fulfill their roles: By regularly organizing specialized seminars on “Rural Revitalization and Consultative Responsibility,” and drawing on the case of Qing Shen County’s overseas elites participating in “cloud consultations” to drive industrial income growth, we can guide new rural elites and large-scale farmers and breeders to move beyond a mindset prioritizing personal interests, and recognize their responsibilities in fostering consensus and leading villagers; simultaneously establish empowerment platforms such as deliberative groups and supervisory task forces, enabling rural elites to collect villagers’ opinions, assist in organizing deliberative meetings, and track the implementation of deliberative outcomes. This approach leverages their influence while preventing them from becoming advocates for special interests through accountability mechanisms. For social organizations, it is necessary to address the dual challenges of insufficient professional capabilities and inadequate participation channels: the government can purchase services to support agricultural technology promotion institutions and legal consultation organizations in providing training on industrial consultation expertise and policy interpretation skills for rural social organizations, while also promoting partnerships between mature urban social organizations and rural cooperatives or village collective enterprises to share deliberative consultation experiences; Regarding participation channels, establish a “direct communication channel for social organization opinions,” allowing agricultural enterprises and public welfare organizations to directly submit agenda suggestions to village “two committees,” similar to how cooperative opinions were incorporated into industrial negotiations in Qingxian County, ensuring that the professional advantages of social organizations are truly integrated into the negotiation process.

More importantly, it is necessary to establish a cross-subject coordination mechanism comprising “pre-negotiation, opinion integration, and collaborative implementation.” Prior to formal negotiations, the village Party committee and village committee should organize ordinary villager representatives, rural elites, and social organizations to conduct small-scale pre-negotiations to identify points of disagreement on the agenda in advance and avoid deadlock in formal meetings. During negotiations, designated personnel should record the opinions of different subjects. For issues with significant disagreements, relevant parties should be organized to communicate separately to find a balance of interests. After negotiations, clearly define the implementation responsibilities of all parties and promote the implementation of negotiation results through division of labor and collaboration, transforming consensus on paper into tangible results.

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