



Challenges and Opportunities for the Conservation of the Traditional Village in China

ICOMOS CHINA

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Honored guests, ladies and gentlemen,

- Good morning. Welcome to attend the “Founding Meeting of CIVVIH Asia-Pacific Sub-Committee and the Scientific Symposium”.
- China is a country with nearly 10,000 years of farming civilization. As the specimen of farming civilization, traditional villages are not only the foundation and essence of outstanding traditional Chinese culture, but also carry modern culture and the spirit of times. It is of great importance for the conservation of traditional villages, inheritance of cultural heritage, promoting outstanding traditional culture, realizing the strategy of rural reitalization.

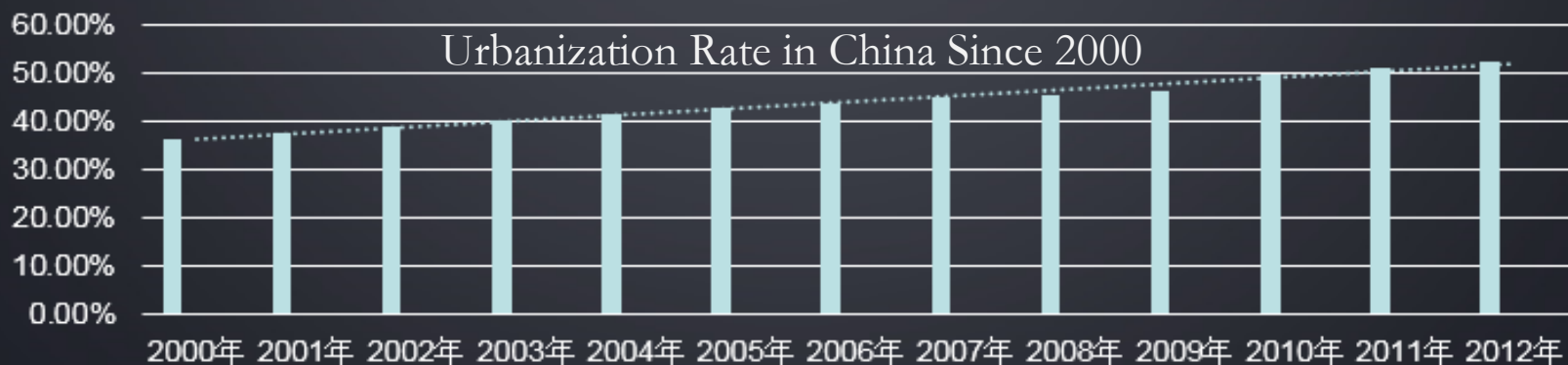


I. Difficulties and Challenges for Traditional Villages Conservation in China

1. Contradictions Between Traditional Villages Conservation and Urbanization

- Urbanization and industrialization are two engines for achieving modernization of a nation. Since the Reform and Opening, the speed of urbanization has been accelerated, which is an import way for solving three rural issues: agriculture, rural areas and farmers.
- In 2012, the urban population of China has reached 710 million, and the rate of urbanization has basically reached the average level of the world. A large number of rural people migrated to cities. Through the adjustment of zones and areas, a number of rural areas were transformed into urban areas.

2000-2012年我国城镇化率增长示意图



I. Difficulties and Challenges for Traditional Villages Conservation in China

Problems

- Natural villages disappear in scale. In 2000, there were 3.6 million natural villages in China, but in 2010, there were only 2.7 million natural villages. The speed of disappearance is still accelerating, many of them are traditional villages or cultural relics.



I. Difficulties and Challenges for Traditional Villages Conservation in China

Problems

- More and more rural youths are flooding into cities, which causes the “hollowing out” situation in rural areas. Only the old, children and women stay in rural areas. Many traditional rural residential buildings are in disrepair or unoccupied. The houses are dilapidated, let alone the inheritance of culture.



I. Difficulties and Challenges for Traditional Villages Conservation in China

2. Contradictions Between Traditional Villages Conservation and Regulation

- According to the *Law of Land and Administration of the People's Republic of China*, house sites are provided to villagers freely, one rural household can own one piece of land for building house, but they should not transfer it or use it for non-agricultural construction purpose, which is the same in the *Property Law of the People's Republic of China*. But the *Property Law* doesn't prohibit the sale, lease and mortgage of the house site.
- It caused two problems in villages. Firstly, “one rural household can own one piece of land for building house” stimulates villagers to build new houses in their original villages. Secondly, some courtyards with high artistic value are sold, so as to build new house.

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3. Contradictions Between Traditional Villages Conservation and the Improvement of Residents' Life

- With the progress of the society and the increase of income, profound changes are taking place in rural communities. There is change from traditional big families to modern small families, meanwhile, the live of residents are improving.
- There is incompatibility between villages and traditional dwellings or villages, for example, the outdoor toilet, a lack of bathroom and private space, poor indoor lighting, heating problems, heatstroke prevention, low drainage and frequent repairmen is needed.
- In terms of economy, the cost of protection is much higher than that of new construction. Thus, it is a common phenomenon to demolish the old and build the new, to build the new and the old together.



I. Difficulties and Challenges for Traditional Villages Conservation in China

4. Contradictions Between Traditional Villages Conservation and Tourism Development

- By combining effective conservation and development together, it is undoubted that tourism will promote the conservation of traditional villages. Tourism plays an important role in promoting the economic development, increasing the income of villagers, and recognizing the value of traditional villages.
- The tourism administrative department also notices the problem of the commercialization of traditional villages, homogenization of the development, and the marginalization of villagers.
- Villages lost the authenticity with the new-constructed scene spots and the loss of villagers. The hotels and squares built nearby cause damage to traditional villages as well.

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4. Contradictions Between Traditional Villages Conservation and Tourism Development

- It is still under discussing by scholars whether tourism can achieve the sustainable development of rural areas and raising the level of rural civilization or not.
- Among the 250 5A-level scenic spots in China, 28 scenic spots rely on the tourism of traditional villages directly, which accounting for 11% of the 5A-level scenic spots. Only villages that are adjacent to tourist market and large-scale attractions or popular routes can benefit from tourism.



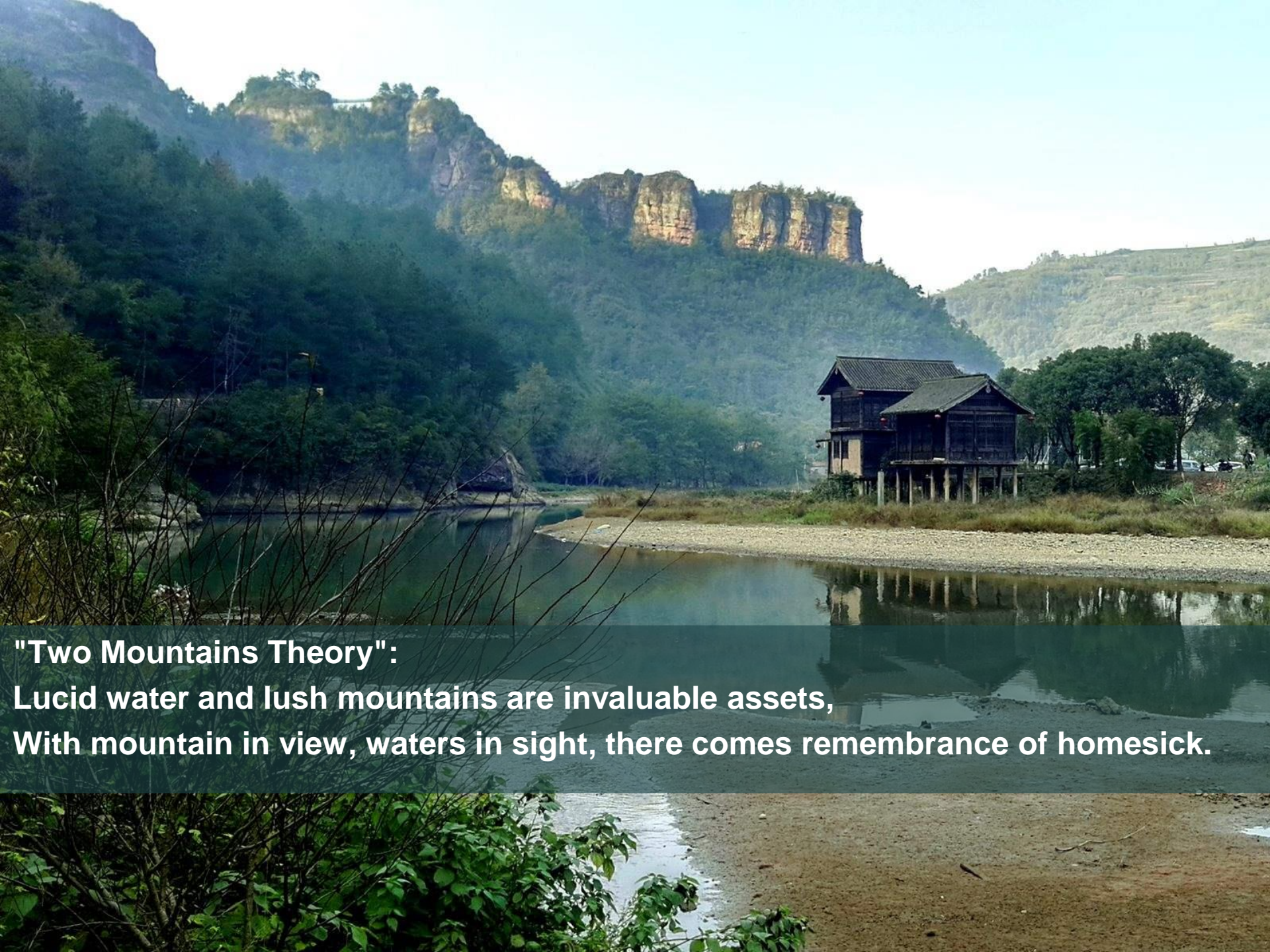
II. The New Era and Opportunities for Traditional Villages Conservation

- Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the Party and the government have attached great importance to the protection and utilization of cultural heritage. *Suggestions on Implementation of Projects to Promote and Develop Outstanding Traditional Chinese Culture* was issued in 2017, it proposed to strengthen the conservation of cultural relics in new urbanization and new rural construction and implement projects for traditional villages conservation.
- The 19th CPC National Congress clearly put forward the implementation of the strategy of rural vitalization, strengthening cultural confidence and promoting the prosperity of socialist culture.
- In 2018, the government released the “No.1 Central Document”, *Suggestion on the Implementation of the Strategy of Rural Vitalization*, it put forward that it is important to promote and develop the outstanding traditional culture and protect cultural relics in rural areas.

II. The New Era and Opportunities for Traditional Villages Conservation

1. Three Rural Issues: “Agriculture, Rural Areas and Farmers” are the Top Concerns of the Government

- During the decisive stage in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, we should carry out targeted poverty alleviation. Addressing “three rural issues: agriculture, rural areas and farmers” should have a central place on the work agenda of the Party. Let agriculture be a promising industry and let rural areas become a beautiful homeland for farmers.
- Urbanization also clearly requires that more attention should be paid to the preservation of villages’ original features, trees should be cut down in a limited space, lakes should not be filled by earth, and house should be demolished in a low rate. The living conditions of residents should be improved on the original villages as far as possible.



"Two Mountains Theory":
Lucid water and lush mountains are invaluable assets,
With mountain in view, waters in sight, there comes remembrance of homesick.

II. The New Era and Opportunities for Traditional Villages Conservation

2. Official Strategies for Agriculture, Rural Areas and Farmers

- Since 2014, seven ministries and commissions, including MOHURD, Ministry of Culture, State Administration of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China, have jointly conducted the selection of Chinese traditional villages for four times, and 4153 traditional Chinese villages are nominated.



II. The New Era and Opportunities for Traditional Villages Conservation

2. Official Strategies for Agriculture, Rural Areas and Farmers

- Each department has the specialized funding for rural areas, such as, beautiful villages construction, rural environment improvement, tourism development fund, rural cultural station construction, farmers' bookhouse, traditional villages conservation, cultural relics conservation and activity room for Party members in rural areas.



II. The New Era and Opportunities for Traditional Villages Conservation

3. Public participations in Rural Construction

- According to statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture, nearly 4.5 million entrepreneurs who come from rural areas return to their homeland. There are nearly 1.2 million people, including college students, veterans, besides, there are nearly 1.3 million university students and workers in town areas going to start business in rural areas.
- They mainly work in the following industries, farming, agricultural products processing industry, living service industry, leisure agricultural, rural tourism, homestay, e-commerce, etc.

II. The New Era and Opportunities for Traditional Villages Conservation

3. Public participations in Rural Construction

- Most of them are nature-loving youths.



II. The New Era and Opportunities for Traditional Villages Conservation

3. Public participations in Rural Construction

- They introduce modern technology, lifestyles and business ideas to rural areas, which leads to new forms of industries and development. Thus, the development of rural areas are promoted and the income of rural people increases.
- This the new hope for the conservation of traditional villages in rural areas. It also provides treasurable experience for the diversified adaptive reuse of traditional villages.
- State Council issued *Suggestions on Supporting Entrepreneurship and Innovation of Returning Rural People and Promoting the Integration of Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Industry in Rural Areas*.

III. Suggestions for the Promotion of Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Villages Conservation

1. Playing the Leading Role of Government for the Traditional Villages Conservation

- First of all, leaders at different levels should bear the idea of cultural relics conservation and traditional villages conservation in mind, regarding the adaptive reuse of traditional villages as the main task of “the strategy of rural vitalization”, taking the responsibility of comprehensive coordinated-development, enhancing supervision and inspection guidance, increasing financial investment and solving practical difficulties and problems.

III. Suggestions for the Promotion of Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Villages Conservation

1. Playing the Leading Role of Government for the Traditional Villages Conservation

- Departments relating to cultural relics, culture, housing and urban-rural development, agriculture, environmental protection, land and tourism should strengthen cooperation and improve collaboration to form a concert effort to centralize funds and effectively solve the problems of traditional villages conservation, environmental protection, infrastructure construction, cultivation of featured industry, implementing tasks of the “strategy of rural vitalization”.

III. Suggestions for the Promotion of Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Villages Conservation

2. Making Conservation and Development Planning Scientifically

- The prerequisite for the traditional villages conservation is to guide the adaptive reuse of traditional villages and the social and economic development.
- This planning must be “the one with a combination of multiple rules”, strategies must be carried out on the basis of the characteristics and the reality of rural life. Meanwhile, unique strategy should be carried out to each village.
- Firstly, it is necessary to solves problems related to key work, carry out specific measures and fulfill needs.
- Secondly, priority should be given to solve problems related to water supply, electric supply, gas supply, sewerage evacuation and sanitation of outdoor toilets.
- Thirdly, it is significant to make plan for the development direction of village space, including housing, public facilities etc., rationally according to the natural environment.

III. Suggestions for the Promotion of Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Villages Conservation

2. Making Conservation and Development Planning Scientifically

- The general plan of traditional villages conservation should include industries which are suitable for rural areas, encouraging and cultivating industries which compliant with the historical and cultural value of traditional villages, and industries which match the capacity of environment.



III. Suggestions for the Promotion of Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Villages Conservation

3. Focusing on the Key Point and Demonstration of the Traditional Villages Conservation

- For the released 4135 traditional villages, plan should be made firstly according to their historical and cultural value, and problems that they are facing with. Measures should be taken step by step.



III. Suggestions for the Promotion of Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Villages Conservation

3. Focusing on the Key Point and Demonstration of the Traditional Villages Conservation

- The State Administration of Cultural Heritage has chosen 270 traditional villages, which should be protected in national level and provincial level, to implement the project of conservation and adaptive reuse.
- The pilot project has already been launched in the first 51 traditional villages, some buildings has been protected under this project, including ancestral hall, drama house and folk dwellings.



III. Suggestions for the Promotion of Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Villages Conservation

3. Focusing on the Key Point and Demonstration of the Traditional Villages Conservation

- Supporting the project “Rescue the Ancient Houses” made by China Foundation for Cultural Heritage Conservation. In Songyang County, Zhejiang Province, project has been done, cooperation is made between local government so as to explore a new model for traditional villages conservation among the government, society and villagers.
- Some successful cases should be taken as examples, providing suggestions and lessons for the methodologies and mechanism of traditional villages conservation in other regions and areas.



III. Suggestions for the Promotion of Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Villages Conservation

4. Encouraging the Public Participation in Traditional Villages Conservation

- The related government departments should emancipate the mind, solve problems, innovate management and broaden ways, encourage public participation in the adaptive reuse of traditional villages and raise conservation fund. Meanwhile, by relying on “Internet Plus” and other new means to enrich contents of the adaptive reuse of cultural relics, PPP (Public-Private Partnership) model should be promoted.
- Exploring the public to make use of cultural relics building which are of collective property right. Contract of conservation and use should be signed under the premise of not damaging the cultural relics and changing ownership, and transfer part of the right.

III. Suggestions for the Promotion of Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Villages Conservation

4. Promoting the Public Participation in Traditional Villages Conservation

- Emphasis should be given to the interests and participation of villagers. Whether it is planning or a project for adaptive reuse of traditional villages conservation, villagers' opinions should be put in priority, as villagers are hosts of heritage and the most important stakeholders as well.
- Meanwhile, it is necessary to give full play to the role of experts and professional technicians, as they are participants and mentors of the adaptive reuse of traditional village conservation. They ensure the authenticity, scientificity, accuracy and the achievability of technology for the inheritance of culture.

III. Suggestions for the Promotion of Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Villages Conservation

5. Combining Traditional Villages Conservation with Improvement of Residents' Life

- While emphasis is given on the inheritance of culture and heritage conservation, it is necessary to pay more attention to improve the lives of villagers of the traditional villages.
- We must firmly persist in the continuity of villagers' life and the living conservation of culture. Demolishing all the buildings and rebuilding them again should be banned, and villagers must not be transferred to other places forcibly. Besides, treating traditional villages as specimen to make a conservation is not advocated.
- Under the premise of effective conservation, we should take the practical problems of villagers into consideration, letting them adapt the modern life more effectively through the transformation of indoor facilities.

III. Suggestions for the Promotion of Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Villages Conservation

5. Combining Traditional Villages Conservation with Improvement of Residents' Life

- The infrastructure, such as water, electricity, communications, and hygiene conditions should be improved while the structure and traditional features of cultural relics are not damaged. Thus, it will be much more convenient for villagers.
- Public cultural activity rooms, libraries, and Party member activity rooms in traditional villages, should be set up in public cultural relics, or they should be set up in traditional dwellings which are borrowed and rent by villagers.



Thank you!