Review Article

Development Model of Rural Governance in Internet Plus in the New Era

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With the advent of the Internet era, the brand-new concept of "Internet Plus" is promoting the innovation of rural governance mode through unprecedented technical means. "Internet Plus governance" is the only way to realize the modernization of grass-roots governance, and it is also a technical means that grass-roots governments are trying to use at present. It not only meets the basic needs of the broad masses of the people but also closely combines democratic governance with people’s happiness as the foothold of modern grass-roots governance. It not only realizes people-oriented humanistic care but also embodies the ruling policy of governing the country according to law. However, at present, villagers’ ability and awareness of participating in rural governance and using "Internet Plus" are weak, and the government’s planning and design of rural governance in "Internet Plus" are not systematic, and the investment related to rural governance has not been implemented. Based on this actual situation, this paper analyzes the problems existing in rural governance under the background of "Internet Plus" and the causes of these problems and puts forward corresponding countermeasures to prevent and solve the potential crisis of rural grass-roots governance, explore a sustainable way to keep close contact between democratic governance and people’s happiness, and provide effective reference materials and practical enlightenment for rural revitalization and grass-roots democratic governance.

1. Preface

In the 2019 government work report, “promoting the construction of a government ruled by law and innovation in governance” was taken as the latest deployment to implement the strategy of comprehensively governing the country according to law, and “strengthening and innovating governance methods” were put forward [1, 2]. It points out the direction of grass-roots governance, building a new model of urban and regional community governance, and promoting grass-roots governance innovation [3]. The issue of “agriculture, rural areas, and farmers” has always been the focus of the state, and it has been the focus of the No. 1 document of the Central Committee for many years [4]. In addition, at present, the golden age of the rapid development of “Internet Plus” is being ushered in, and the urban-rural dual structure is gradually disintegrating. Whether the whole village can develop stably is closely related to the level of governance capacity [5, 6]. Improving rural grass-roots governance capacity is the most important task in rural governance at present. After the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China’s macropolicy on rural areas changed rapidly, and the rural grass-roots government gradually changed from “governance-oriented” mandatory governance to “service-oriented” people-oriented governance [7–9]. However, the current situation of rural grass-roots management shows that the concept of rural grass-roots management cadres is still quite different from the new policies or requirements of the central government, and there are still many problems in actual governance [10, 11]. In order to effectively implement the development concept of "people-oriented” and deepen the practice of rural grass-roots governance transition, the author will deeply explore the existing problems of rural grass-roots governance under the current background of "Internet Plus”; clarify the current role of the government, village committees, and farmers in grass-roots governance; prevent and solve
the potential crisis of rural grass-roots governance; and effectively promote the rapid transformation of rural grass-roots governance [12–14].

2. “Internet Plus” and Rural Governance

2.1. The Importance of Rural Internet Development. Nowadays, human beings have stepped into and gradually adapted to the information society, and information Internet and services have gradually penetrated into all fields of economy, society, and life, effectively supporting the rapid and efficient operation of the whole society. Since 2010, the global Internet industry has entered a period of rapid development [15–17]. According to the data released by the World Bank and IWS, the number of global Internet users continued to grow rapidly from 2009 to 2021. In 2020, the total number of global Internet users was 4.648 billion. As of March 31, 2021, the number of global Internet users had reached 5.169 billion [18–20]. The number of global Internet users from 2009 to 2021 is shown in Figure 1.

For China, which has entered the decisive stage of building a well-off society in an all-round way, the improvement of information Internet infrastructure is the key factor and important support to promote the development of new economy. By December 2021, the number of Internet users in China had reached 1.032 billion, an increase of 42.96 million compared with December 2020, and the Internet penetration rate reached 73.0% [21, 22]. Statistics on the scale and Internet penetration rate of Chinese netizens from 2016 to 2021 are shown in Figure 2.

Therefore, it is extremely urgent to speed up the development of rural information Internet, and at the same time, the development of information Internet infrastructure is the key factor and important support to promote the development of new economy. By December 2021, the number of Internet users in China had reached 1.032 billion, an increase of 42.96 million compared with December 2020, and the Internet penetration rate reached 73.0% [21, 22]. Statistics on the scale and Internet penetration rate of Chinese netizens from 2016 to 2021 are shown in Figure 2.

2.2. The Necessity of Accelerating the Development of Rural Internet. In 1974, Katsman proposed that the adoption of new communication technology would increase the information exposure of every member of the whole society and enrich the types of existing information. However, the existing information affluent class can have more information advantages than others by using new technologies early. Therefore, new communication technologies emerge in an endless stream, and the information gap among people tends to increase. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China's Internet has developed rapidly and become an Internet power, but it is not yet an Internet power. At present, the digital divide in China exists not only in urban and rural areas but also between rural areas in central and eastern China and rural areas in western China. However, in the western rural areas, it also exists between the local poor and nonpoor areas. Therefore, accelerating Internet construction in rural areas, especially poor rural areas, is undoubtedly an important means to narrow the digital divide. Judging from the current problems faced by the grass-roots society and the governance practice of the grass-roots government, the existing difficulties will limit the promotion and implementation of the modernization of grass-roots governance. Therefore, it is necessary to speed up the development of local Internet and develop related applications of e-government aimed at indigenous grass-roots governments as soon as possible. In recent years, the scale of rural netizens in China has continued to expand. The number of rural Internet users in China has reached 284 million, and the Internet penetration rate in rural areas is 57.6%, which is 1.7 percentage points higher than that in December 2020. The difference in Internet penetration rate between urban and rural areas is 0.2 percentage points lower than that in December 2020. Statistics on the scale and penetration rate of rural netizens in China from 2017 to 2021 are shown in Figure 3.

At present, China’s economic growth is facing many problems, such as slow investment growth, insufficient consumption power, and slow export growth. From the perspective of domestic areas, the potential of economic growth lies in rural areas. On the one hand, as long as the circulation efficiency of rural production factors is improved, it will bring great vitality to China’s economic growth. The key is to deepen the rural reform, especially the rural land system reform. It also depends on the actual development of the local market, but all the resources in rural areas contain huge market development potential, and the rural market will undoubtedly become the next “gold mine” of Internet development. In addition, accelerating the development of rural Internet will inevitably promote the development of Internet-related industries. There are not only hundreds of millions of Internet users to be developed in rural areas but also a large number of Internet markets that need the development of major Internet companies and the filling of various Internet products.

2.3. What Can the Development of Rural Internet Bring? At present, the construction of rural culture is still relatively backward. Accelerating the development of rural Internet is likely to bring immeasurable social and cultural impact. Through the Internet, it can meet the growing cultural and entertainment needs of local residents, bring them more spiritual pleasure, and be more conducive to their physical and mental health. At the same time, the Internet also allows migrant workers to chat with their families through video at
Figure 1: Number of Internet users in the world from 2009 to 2021.

Figure 2: Statistics on the scale and Internet penetration rate of Chinese netizens from 2016 to 2021.

Figure 3: Statistics on the scale and penetration rate of rural Internet users in China from 2017 to 2021.
any time, so as to strengthen social stability in urban and rural areas, promote family harmony, and increase personal happiness and psychological pleasure. Rural governance is the key and difficult point of grass-roots governance. To realize the modernization of rural governance, we need timely innovation to cope with the changes of the times. In view of the current problems in China’s rural governance, how to improve the rural governance capacity and level and achieve the healthy and sustainable development of rural governance is a topic worth studying.

China’s “Internet Plus” campaign has not only been brilliant in the economic field but also gradually implemented in the political, cultural, and social fields. Nowadays, with its huge user base and strong innovation advantages, the Internet strongly supports the innovation of rural governance. Its advantages are as follows: it can activate the endogenous power of social governance subjects to participate in social governance innovation and actively participate in governance innovation. On the Internet, all governance subjects can first get relevant information equally, including whether to participate in governance innovation and how to deal with related issues in time, so as to encourage them to participate in governance innovation initiatives. In the traditional governance mode, villagers and social organizations have almost no channels to express their opinions, and the right to speak is dominated by the government and its agents. In contrast, in the new governance model, villagers have a relatively free voice. Due to the popularization of Internet technology, villagers have gained more right to speak. The active speeches of villagers and social organizations can help open a harmonious road leading to active participation of villagers and social organizations in grass-roots management and improve the accuracy of relevant policies put forward by rural governance.

2.4. “Internet Plus” Rural Governance Innovation Problems

2.4.1. “Internet Plus” Lack of Ability and Awareness. In the virtual world of the Internet, people can break the psychological barrier, give full play to the right of free speech, speak boldly, or actively express their demands in the real world without channels. At the same time, the information expressed by the people on the Internet is often closely related to the important interests of the people. Therefore, as long as the administrator is good at analysis, he can quickly find and solve the problems raised by the people that are closely related to the people’s interests. The harmony of the countryside and the villagers’ sense of peace of mind and happiness have also increased. However, at present, grass-roots managers are tired of the above-mentioned inspections and evaluations, and the communication and interaction platform between managers, villagers, and social organizations established through the Internet is actually not perfect. In addition, many grass-roots managers are old and not proficient in Internet technology. Therefore, it is necessary to improve their Internet application ability.

At present, young people, middle-aged workers, and villagers with high educational level in rural areas are working, and most of those who stay in rural areas are middle-aged and elderly people. Middle-aged and elderly people have a deep sense of belonging to the village where they live, so they are naturally very enthusiastic about rural construction and rural governance. However, due to their limited educational level, their independent learning ability is not strong, so almost no one can skillfully use the Internet, and even fewer can participate in rural governance through information means such as WeChat and Weibo. And out are mostly young people, but most of them work not too keen on the local governance, even if they learned rural governance through the Internet, especially the young people under the age of 30, who grew up mostly in the city with my parents, also are not familiar to home, have no sense of belonging, and also did not attend the will of the rural governance.

2.4.2. No Systematic Planning and Insufficient Investment. “Internet Plus” rural governance is a systematic project that includes all aspects of society. In 2019, the General Administration of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council jointly issued the Outline of Digital Rural Development Strategy, requiring that “by 2025, important progress will be made in rural digital construction.” However, the pace of promoting the construction of digital villages varies from place to place. The developed coastal villages (such as some rural areas in Zhejiang) and the well-developed rural areas around the cities have made rapid progress, while other areas have not made much progress. Digital rural construction is also difficult to advance scientifically, and rural governance of “Internet Plus” is even more difficult to realize. At present, the official listing of the National Rural Revitalization Bureau is not only a symbol of China’s overall victory in the fight against poverty but also the starting point for the full implementation of rural revitalization and the new life and struggle. According to relevant data, there are 4,003 enterprises related to rural revitalization in China, and the establishment time of these enterprises is mostly concentrated in the last three years, among which the number of registered enterprises in 2020 is 1,039, with a year-on-year increase of 26.6%. The number of registered enterprises related to rural revitalization from 2010 to 2020 is shown in Figure 4.

In the implementation of “Internet Plus” rural governance innovation, digital rural construction is the foundation. China’s non pretext population is mainly in rural areas. The development of regional digital rural construction is unbalanced, and the input of rural regional factor resources (manpower, capital, material resources, technology, etc.) is insufficient. In 2018, the rural investment in county digital agriculture accounted for 25.2% in counties with less than 100,000 yuan, and only 20.0% in counties with more than 5 million yuan. The investment in supporting local digital construction was too low, which made it impossible to effectively promote “Internet Plus.” The number of rural revitalization-related enterprises has been growing rapidly since 2018. According to relevant data, in 2018, a total of 340 related enterprises were newly registered, with a year-on-year increase of 439.7%. In 2020, the number of registered enterprises reached 1,039, a year-on-year increase of 26.6%. From January to February of 2021, the number of
registrations was 82. Third-tier cities are prominent, with Shaoxing, Chongqing, and Heze in the top three. In 2021, the number of regional distribution of rural revitalization-related enterprises is shown in Figure 5.

2.5. How Does “Internet Plus” Promote Rural Governance Innovation?

2.5.1. Strengthen the administrator’s Awareness of “Internet Plus.” Improve the ability and awareness of local administrators to use Internet Plus. Rural governance is moving towards modernization. However, the local grass-roots administrators are generally older now. Therefore, in recent years, the employment of young managers has attracted attention, and the management system has been optimized accordingly. However, overall, they still lack the support of “Internet Plus” technology, and their ability to innovate social governance by using “Internet Plus” tools is not strong. Therefore, it is necessary to train grass-roots managers to transform the traditional rural governance model into the “Internet Plus” rural governance model.

Encourage rural managers to boldly use “Internet Plus” to innovate their working methods. By equipping the visitors with mobile devices with functions such as telephone, GPS, and video recording, real-time monitoring is carried out to confirm whether their visits are in place. In order to establish the population information database within the jurisdiction, the population information database of the jurisdiction is established based on the platform of the township community management linkage center, and each family is given a “two-dimensional code.” Visitors can scan the “QR code” of the mobile terminal to obtain relevant information. This database and access information can also be accessed from the mobile device. At the same time, the terminal will be uploaded to the community management platform within a period of time. Internet Plus technology will bring new problems to supervision. For example, the information monitored by the Internet may be different from the actual information, and it is often difficult for Internet technology to monitor whether equality, honesty, and laws and regulations are followed in actual situations. But we can also apply laws and regulations to the Internet, even if their binding force is limited. At present, China has also realized the supervision of all aspects of rural governance; almost all villagers can participate in the supervision.

2.5.2. Cultivate the Villagers’ Awareness of “Internet Plus.” Strengthen publicity and education, and cultivate villagers’ ability to participate in the innovation of rural governance in Internet Plus. “Internet Plus” provides a platform and tools for villagers to participate in governance innovation, but to effectively use the platform and tools, it is necessary to master the basic skills of using the Internet. The younger generation of villagers are skilled in the Internet and have a strong ability to accept new things. However, the ability of the older villagers to learn new things is weak, and they are not good at using the platform tool “Internet Plus,” so it is more difficult to participate in the innovation of rural governance in “Internet Plus.”

Therefore, in order to promote the development of rural governance in “Internet Plus,” people with weak awareness of “Internet Plus” should be given the opportunity to learn relevant knowledge and skills. The government should make full use of the Internet platform, expand the effective channels for citizens to express their worries and demands, and improve the mechanism of democratic speech, so that the masses can fully express their demands. You can also use the Internet platforms such as official website, official WeChat, Weibo, and WeChat official account to get public opinion faster and better, and you need to use the Internet to improve the grid management of towns, communities, and villages and make full use of online and offline platforms to discover and deal with social contradictions in time, such as on-site office meetings, to give timely feedback and deal with problems and contradictions. Through these measures, villagers not only participate in governance innovation but also use the Internet to build various communication platforms.
2.5.3. Integrate Resources and Optimize the Rural Governance Environment. Accelerate the effective integration and development of information resources. The combination of Internet rural governance requires the effective integration and development of information resources. The government should disclose information resources other than state secrets to the public through government business. Improve information security in an all-round way. "Internet Plus" is risky. In the Internet age, a large amount of information and data flow to promote various governance institutions to participate in governance innovation, while there are risks of information leakage and various information security problems. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the information security function and comprehensively improve the information security level. Strengthen Internet security supervision. Even if high-end security equipment and advanced security technology are used, it is difficult to achieve zero risk. Therefore, Internet users need the government to formulate corresponding management countermeasures or develop a monitoring system to enhance information security when strengthening the vigilance of information security risks.

It is of great social value to a fair and healthy society, and rural governance should also make efforts to improve social fairness. The Internet, because of its low threshold and high penetration rate, is essentially “fair.” However, when the Internet is applied to the innovation of rural governance, the Internet needs to maximize its own “fairness” and build a fair rural governance environment. Internet has promoted communication among people, and villagers can have a clearer understanding of their rights and obligations in society. The development of “Internet Plus” is the key to improve the fairness of the whole society. Promote the whole society, especially the government, monopoly enterprises, and other powerful departments to further reach a consensus with the society on the issue of “fairness,” and then create a fair environment in the real society by decentralizing power and taking on more social responsibilities.

3. Conclusion

At present, the country is actively promoting the rural revitalization strategy. Governments at all levels should integrate the digital rural construction plan into the rural revitalization strategy plan. All rural governance needs to be innovated according to the actual rural conditions. At the same time, the digital rural construction plan and implementation plan, as well as the detailed rules that can be implemented, must be formulated, and a digital rural standard system must be established.

The ultimate goal of grass-roots rural governance based on the general idea and concept of “Internet Plus” is to enhance people’s sense of acquisition and identity through the common participation of the masses. It is important to strengthen the power of grass-roots organizations and improve the degree of farmers’ organization. Therefore, only by fully mobilizing the enthusiasm of the masses and supporting and participating in the cocreation, coconstruction, governance, and cogovernance of grass-roots rural areas can the grass-roots governance in “Internet Plus” region be maintained. In addition, the role of rural grass-roots government in the environment must be changed from control-oriented management to service-oriented management. It is necessary to take “Internet Plus” technology as the fulcrum and change from the previous control-oriented government to a people-oriented service-oriented government.

Therefore, to promote the innovation of rural governance, we need to start from the following aspects: do a good job in strategic planning, and make overall adjustment for the innovative scheme of rural governance in Internet Plus. Secondly, the innovation of rural governance needs formal, professional, and systematic-related organizations to ensure the smooth implementation of the plan. Then, vigorously strengthen the propaganda work of “Internet Plus” and build a professional education and collaboration platform for the staff involved in the innovation of rural governance. In addition, we should effectively integrate, develop, and utilize the information resources of social governance in rural areas and increase the input of resources to realize the healthy development of rural governance.

Data Availability

The figures used to support the findings of this study are included in the article.
Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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