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Endogenous Drivers of Rural Revitalization in Ethnic Regions in the New Era

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Abstract: Rural revitalization in ethnic regions faces the dilemma of "blood transfusion dependency"-characterized by "massive inflows of external resources coupled with persistent insufficiency of endogenous driving forces." The root cause lies not in a lack of subjective initiative, but in the structural contradiction between productive forces and production relations. This paper employs the materialist conception of history as an analytical framework to provide a philosophical definition of "endogenous driving forces" and applies it to research on rural revitalization in ethnic regions.Research indicates that rural production relations in ethnic regions exhibit a multi-layered, overlapping structure comprising the socialist system, the market economy, and traditional communal relations. At four levels-property rights, organization, distribution, and traditional social relations-systemic contradictions exist with the requirements for the development of productive forces. The fundamental path to stimulating endogenous momentum lies in proactively adjusting the aspects of production relations that act as obstacles, thereby transforming them from "shackles" on productive forces into "forms of development."

Keywords: Materialist Conception of History; Productive Forces and Relations of Production; Ethnic Minority Regions; Rural Revitalization; Endogenous Driving Forces

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

In the rural revitalization of ethnic regions, despite the continuous infusion of substantial fiscal funds and aid projects, the "wait-rely-beg" mentality in some villages has not been effectively reversed; once external aid is withdrawn, development becomes unsustainable. This dilemma of "dependence on external support" raises a fundamental question: What exactly is endogenous momentum? What are the conditions for its emergence and suppression? Existing research often remains at the operational level-such as "mobilizing initiative"-and lacks a root-cause structural explanation.

1.2 Literature Review

Existing research has unfolded along three main lines. First, at the policy implementation level, studies focus on "blood-building" solutions such as industrial support and the deployment of talent to rural areas, but they implicitly treat endogenous momentum as a matter of subjective initiative. Second, from sociological and anthropological perspectives, research explores sociocultural roots through concepts such as market development and social capital, yet lacks a comprehensive analytical framework.Third, from a Marxist perspective, some scholars have applied the materialist conception of history to analyze land systems and the collective economy; however, the structural characteristics of the multi-layered interplay of relations of production in ethnic regions require further in-depth examination. In recent years, the concept of "new-quality productive forces" has been introduced, highlighting how technological innovation and digital empowerment can activate endogenous momentum. This paper aims to construct an analytical framework based on the dialectical movement of the contradiction between "productive forces and relations of production."

1.3 Research Questions and Analytical Framework

This paper poses three progressive questions: What is the philosophical essence of "endogenous dynamism"? What structural contradictions exist between productive forces and relations of production in ethnic regions? How can these contradictions be transformed

through adjustments to the relations of production? The methodological foundation is the materialist conception of history, and the core tool is the method of contradiction analysis. The operational approach involves: deriving development requirements from the three elements of productive forces; decomposing the existing structure based on the four levels of relations of production ; diagnosing contradictions through comparison; and proposing adjustment pathways.The case studies in this paper are drawn from public reports and serve as supporting evidence for theoretical deductions.

2. An Interpretation of Endogenous Dynamics from the Perspective of the Materialist Conception of History

2.1 The Philosophical Implications of Endogenous Dynamics

“ Marx pointed out that when relations of production transform from a “form of development” of productive forces into a “shackle,” the era of social revolution arrives.[1]” The essence of the movement of contradictions is “conflict”-the ongoing tension between the demands of productive force development and existing relations of production; it is precisely this contradiction that constitutes the fundamental driving force of social development.From this, we derive the philosophical definition of “endogenous driving force”: the self-driven capacity for transformation within a social system when the contradiction between productive forces and relations of production is in a state of “alignment.” Its characteristics are as follows: it originates from material production practices rather than subjective will; it manifests as a dynamic movement of contradictions; and it depends on the adaptability of relations of production to productive forces rather than external incentives.

2.2 The Dialectical Relationship Between “Exogenous” and “Endogenous”

No social development can occur without external exchange. In his examination of the dissolution of the primitive commune, “Engels pointed out that the transformation of external prisoners of war into slaves occurred precisely because surplus products had already been created internally.Methodological Implications: External factors are only truly transformed into endogenous driving forces when they are “assimilated” by the movement of internal contradictions and become new factors that either propel the development of productive forces or compel the transformation of relations of production. Conversely, if external inputs bypass the movement of internal contradictions, they become “foreign elements” that reinforce dependency rather than stimulate dynamism.[2]”

2.3 The Multi-Layered Structure of Production Relations in Ethnic Regions

Rural relations of production in ethnic regions exhibit a three-layered overlap: the framework of the socialist system, market economic relations, and traditional communal relations. Traditional communal factors possess dual attributes-they provide security and facilitate collective action (protective function), yet they may also exclude new elements and entrench inefficient practices (restrictive function). The core issue lies in what roles these factors currently play and how to facilitate their transformation.

3. The Actual Contradictions Between Productive Forces and Relations of Production in Ethnic Regions

3.1 Requirements for the Development of Productive Forces: The Driving Force

Profound changes in the three elements of productive forces constitute the requirements for development. At the level of the workforce, this requires a transition from traditional farmers and herders to workers equipped with modern skills. “In Qiannan Prefecture, Guizhou,[3] the “Promote Standard Mandarin, Revitalize Rural Areas” initiative has conducted more than 1,600 training sessions, benefiting over 92,000 participants; improved language proficiency is becoming a breakthrough point for the transformation of human capital.”At the level of the means of production, the requirement is a shift from traditional farming tools to mechanized, facility-based, and digital tools. At the level of the objects of labor, the requirement is an expansion from single-sector agriculture and animal husbandry to the integration of the primary, secondary, and tertiary industries. “Lusui City in Yunnan has transformed Lisu cultural resources into tourism products through the “Five Ones” model of

agriculture-culture-tourism integration, achieving the transformation of "resources into assets and villagers into shareholders[4]. These three aspects of development requirements are concrete expressions of the intrinsic evolutionary logic of productive forces.

3.2 The Multilayered Structure of Existing Production Relations and Diagnosis of Contradictions

Existing relations of production in ethnic regions face issues across four levels. At the property rights level, while the "separation of three rights" framework has been established, the market for property rights transfers remains underdeveloped, and tensions exist between the tradition of communal pasture ownership and the contracting system. At the organizational level, family-based operations still dominate, and the problem of "hollowed-out" cooperatives is prominent. At the distribution level, workers' share of primary distribution is disproportionately low, and transfer payments are not precisely aligned with productive needs.At the level of traditional social relations, mutual aid networks and authority structures can both organize collective action and exclude new elements.

By comparing the requirements of productive forces with the current state of production relations, four sets of structural contradictions have been identified.

Contradiction 1: The conflict between fragmented operations and the need for socialized productive forces. Modern agriculture requires large-scale operations, but the fragmented model of smallholder farming makes it difficult for farmers and herders to pool their resources.

Contradiction 2: The conflict between the urgent need to improve workers' skills and the lack of development pathways. The lack of intrinsic motivation and limited self-development capacity among farmers and herders in Sichuan's ethnic minority regions stem from the social system's failure to provide institutional channels for transforming aspirations into capabilities.

Contradiction 3: The coexistence of protection and constraints in traditional community relationships. Mutual aid networks provide a buffer against risk, but egalitarianism dilutes the benefits of innovation, and traditional authority resists external factors.

Contradiction 4: The structural disconnect between external inputs and internal absorption. Unclear property rights, disorganized structures, and unfair distribution result in input funds being consumed evenly across the board, projects lacking organizational support, and technologies lying idle due to incompatibility.

3.3 A Dialectical Examination of These Contradictions

In terms of universality, the contradictions in ethnic regions are essentially concrete manifestations of the fundamental contradictions of human society. However, their particularities must not be overlooked: production relations are overlaid with multiple factors; traditional communities play a dual role; cultural factors substantively participate in the formation of production relations; and geographical marginality amplifies the difficulty of transformation. From the perspective of evolutionary trends, at the level of productive forces, improvements in infrastructure are reducing information asymmetry, and at the level of production relations, new organizational forms are continuously emerging, though the evolution is tortuous and fraught with tension.

4. Pathways to the Generation of Endogenous Driving Forces

4.1 Theoretical Premises for the Transformation of Contradictions

The materialist conception of history requires us to proceed from the objective demands of the development of productive forces, rather than from subjective wishes. The most fundamental requirement for the development of productive forces in rural areas of ethnic regions is the transition from a traditional natural economy to modern industrial forms under a socialist market economy. The direction of contradiction transformation is clear: to transform the relations of production from "shackles" on productive forces into "forms of development."

4.2 Proactive Adjustment of Production Relations: Four Pathways

Improving Property Rights Relations. To address the conflict between fragmented management and the requirements for the socialization of productive forces, we must promote the effective implementation of the "separation of three rights" and regulate the land transfer market. "The practice in Bangda Village, Xizang Autonomous Region China,

demonstrates that the reform of separating the "three rights" can effectively revitalize the collective economy. For traditional common-pool resources such as pastures, we should explore a model of "shared property rights plus modern governance.[8]

Reorganization of Business Entities. To address the conflict between the need to improve workers' skills and the lack of development pathways, farmers and herders should be elevated from mere raw material suppliers to participants in the industrial chain. The cooperative economy serves as a crucial intermediate link in the transition from individual-based to socialized production. "In Ruoergai County, Sichuan-where the "Party Organization + Cooperative + Farmers" model is implemented-all 88 village collective economic organizations have achieved full coverage of their members.[6]

Optimization of Distribution Relations. To address the issue of unequal profit distribution stifling motivation, increase the share of primary distribution through supply chain extension and interest-linkage mechanisms. "Lushui City's "4321" model (40% village collective dividends, 30% employee wages, 20% farmer dividends, 10% cooperative profits) provides a reference.[4] Reasonable distribution is a prerequisite for the reproduction of the labor force and the material foundation for worker motivation.

Creative Transformation of Traditional Communities. To address the contradiction where protection coexists with constraints, the spiritual core-such as mutual aid, cooperation, and ecological wisdom-has been integrated with modern organizational forms: traditional village mutual aid has been transformed into cooperative labor mutual aid, and traditional ecological taboos have been transformed into the cultural underpinnings of modern ecological agriculture and animal husbandry.

4.3 Conditions for "Internalizing External Resources"

The transformation of external resources into endogenous driving forces requires the simultaneous fulfillment of three conditions. Productive forces condition: Input factors must be compatible with local conditions. Relations of production condition: There must be a form of production organization capable of effectively organizing workers.Subject-related condition: Workers must transform from passive recipients into active participants. When all three conditions are met simultaneously, external resources are absorbed by the dynamics of internal contradictions, and internal distribution relations are adjusted and upgraded through the application of new factors. These four levels of adjustment mutually reinforce one another: property rights form the foundation, organization serves as the vehicle, distribution acts as the incentive, and traditional factors constitute a unique element. Endogenous momentum is not "stimulated," but rather "spontaneously emerges" once the dynamics of contradictions are resolved.

5. Conclusion

This paper argues that the root cause of the lack of endogenous momentum in rural revitalization in ethnic regions lies in the structural contradictions between the four levels-property rights, organization, distribution, and traditional factors-and the requirements for the development of productive forces. The fundamental path to stimulating endogenous momentum lies in proactively adjusting the obstructive aspects of production relations, transforming them from "shackles" on productive forces into "forms of development."The creative transformation of traditional communal factors is a unique challenge for ethnic regions and also represents a theoretical convergence point where Marxist ethnic theory and the materialist conception of history intersect. Rural revitalization is the self-unfolding of the movement of internal social contradictions; external assistance should create conditions for this self-unfolding. "The "15th Five-Year Plan" period presents a strategic window of opportunity for ethnic regions in frontier areas to narrow development gaps. Only by deeply grasping the laws governing the contradictory movement between productive forces and production relations can we fundamentally resolve the dilemma of dependence on external aid.[7]

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