

The Life Course of a Long-Lasting Affection Medium: A Fieldwork Based on the Communication Practice of the Rural Loudspeakers in North China

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The loudspeakers played a crucial role in rural community during the COVID-19 pandemic, and had returned to the public with the help of short video platforms. However, with the continued popularity of digital media, is the revival of the loudspeakers which belong to traditional media just a flash in the pan? What the historic process of return has the loudspeakers undergone? Based on these questions, the paper applies Bourdieu's sense of practice theory, focuses on "habit" throughout, adopts the research methods of online ethnography and fieldwork, and conducts participant observation and targeted in-depth interviews in a village in North China for about nine months. The study found that: (1) There is the lag of habit in the state's handling of social relations in villages. Based on rational habit, village cadres used the loudspeakers to manifest their physical presence and restructure their authority; the villagers, operating under perceptual habit, rationalized the presence of the loudspeakers through using the key words such as elders, nostalgia, and homesickness; (2) the loudspeakers was maintained under the habit of village cadres and ordinary villagers, and the outbreak of the epidemic made the loudspeakers as an habit truly "appearing"; (3) the young village cadres, on the other hand, acquired this habit through imitation, transposed the loudspeakers into the short video platform, and carried out different forms of experimentation and innovation, thus surpassing the previous forms of loudspeakers practice. The return of the loudspeakers is the result of the game of different habits. As a long-lasting affection medium, the loudspeakers, on the one hand, has become an important media scene and memory field indispensable to rural community, and on the other hand, the people living on this land have a deep attachment to the loudspeakers, which is indirectly transformed into the bearer of homesickness. This brings new inspiration for us to rethink the relationship between the traditional media and the new media, the iteration of cadres and the change of rural community.

Keywords: loudspeakers, sense of practice, long-lasting affection medium, life course

Introduction

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, loudspeakers in rural areas across the country frequently appeared on short video platforms, which quickly became popular on the Internet by virtue of their vivid and friendly and local characteristic language, winning the favor of the majority of netizens. "You are not

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responsible for yourself, I'll let you go to 24-hour duty” (你自己对自己不負責任，我就让你去24小时值班) (a village in Henan loudspeakers broadcast content), “You do not think you go on others, people are very welcome, you do not be too confident” (你不要以为你上人家去，人家就很欢迎你，你别太自信了) (a village in Tianjin loudspeakers broadcast content), “Comrades, how can you treat your guests like this, how can you treat this epidemic prevention and control like this, where people treat their guests to report to each other” (同志们你们怎么好意思待客，你们咋就这样子对待这个疫情防控，凡是有人待客互相举报哈) (a village in Sichuan loudspeakers broadcast content) (People's Daily, 2020). It can be seen that the loudspeakers play a crucial role in broadcasting the latest epidemic information and spreading the knowledge of epidemic prevention in rural areas, and it can be said that loudspeakers still exist in rural community, broadcasting rural public affairs and playing an effective role in rural governance. Through the combing of previous studies on loudspeakers papers, it is found that the loudspeakers have been regarded as a product of the state since its birth (He, 2018), and the studies on it mainly focus on its broadcast content for textual analysis and explore the power relations behind it. In this line of thinking, the loudspeakers have always been used as a tool and a means to explain society and people's behavior, rather than an object to be interpreted. In other words, previous studies fail to turn attention to the penetration and transformation of society by the loudspeakers as an actor. Based on this, this paper tries to explore the dynamic value of the loudspeakers as an actor and connect the middle way between individual action and the society as a whole. So the paper applies Bourdieu's theory of the sense of practice, which Bourdieu believes “practice is the intermediary between individual action and the development of society as a whole” (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 75), and practice is a place of “compromise” between things and meanings. In Bourdieu's theory of practice, he introduces a number of key concepts such as “champ” and “habitus” which are the two main factors determining practical behavior.

Bourdieu defines a field as “a network or a configuration of objective relations that exist between various locations” (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 93). He argues that the field is essentially a power relation and that capital determines the construction of power relations. In turn, the field is an arena in which subjects use, deploy, or fight for their own resources in order to maintain the existing distribution of capital or to subvert it, a process Bourdieu also calls “the strategic use of rules or capital, etc., to actively construct or reorganize” (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 103). Another determining factor, habitus, refers to the unconscious behavior of the body, a predisposition, a structured structure. On the one hand, the habit is a product of history, the result of personal experience accumulated over time, and this historicity is stored mainly through the practitioner's body. At the same time, the habit is not always “appear”, but requires certain stimulus devices to be brought to the prominence. In other words, familiar situations and people only contribute to the corresponding habitus. Moreover, the habit also have a characteristic of acquisitive, meaning that it can be achieved by mimesis, which is distinct from recollection and knowledge, as it does not remember the past, but re-experiences it. In previous studies on loudspeakers, the process and result of loudspeakers practice are limited by structural factors, but Bourdieu's sense of practice theory inspires us to organically combine structure with human perception and choice, and the structure of structure is also suitable for addressing loudspeakers practice behavior at present, so the sense of practice theory is suitable for the subject of this paper. It can be seen that both “field” and “habit” contain an ideology that transcends the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity, i.e., field is both objective and subjective, and habit seems to be subjective but is also deeply influenced by objective factors. In conclusion, Bourdieu's theory of practice provides a good line of thinking about the turn in media studies, especially when it is in dialogue with the previous research on loudspeakers, which can reveal how the media

practice around loudspeakers is different nowadays. After examining the media practice of loudspeakers in rural community from the perspective of “field” and “habit”, the following two specific research questions are raised after combing the relevant literature and theoretical lineage.

Q1: What kind of change process has the loudspeakers undergone to return to the public?

Q2: What is the practical logic behind the return of the loudspeakers to the public? How do different actors interact with them?

For exploring such a progress problem, qualitative research method is better than quantitative research; thus this paper adopts the research method of fieldwork, and the offline field site is chosen in W village which located in Hengshui, Hebei Province. The online ethnography focused on the post-1990s village cadres in the TikTok platform, and selected three typical young village cadres to focus on. At the same time, supplemented by the in-depth interview method, the research subjects of this paper are divided into two main categories: One is the village cadres and the other is the ordinary villagers. After pre-research, the study finally identified 28 interviewees, including eight village cadres and 20 ordinary villagers. Eight village cadres included five male village cadres aged 50-59 (S01 to S05 were village cadres from village W), and three post-1990s village cadres (S26 to S28). The general villagers (S06 to S25) were all from W village, considering the possible differences in attitudes toward loudspeakers at different ages, and thus the age range of general villagers was large (25 to 74 years old), with a more balanced distribution of male to female gender ratio, nine males and 11 females. Also included were two villagers who had been working away from home all year round.

The Holding of the Loudspeakers

The Lag of National Habits

The appearance of loudspeakers in rural community was originally a state action. At the beginning of New China, the state was faced with a totally new regime, especially in rural areas, and how to spread the voice of the Party and the state to the rural became the top priority of all the work. Facing the rural audience with low literacy, the sound medium became the first choice of the state. Compared with ordinary radio, the cost of loudspeakers is relatively low and can be quickly put into use in rural society, which in turn makes the state propaganda network quickly sink to the vast rural areas.

Although the national policy on loudspeakers has been introduced for a long time, the real implementation to W village was accompanied by the arrival of the political movement, the Great Cultural Revolution. According to the description of S16 (an old secretary of W village), the loudspeakers were initially placed on the roof of the village committee, and the main broadcast content at that time included three parts: first, basic village affairs, which included village cadres’ meetings, party members’ meetings, all villagers’ meetings, and work arrangements of production teams; second, national policies and spiritual instructions were read out by the special broadcasters of the broadcasting station; third, entertainment functions, such as playing “The East Is Red” and other types of red songs and modern Beijing operas. When talking about the loudspeakers, the three historical periods most frequently mentioned by the interviewed villagers were the Great Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, family planning in the 1980s and the “public food” period that had been running through the rural community. Each of these three periods corresponds to a specific period of state policies and institutions, namely, the political propaganda and cultural policies related to the Cultural Revolution, the family planning policies, and the agricultural taxation system. The institutional construction of the state in rural society was carried out and implemented through the loudspeakers. Thus, as an infrastructure construction, the

loudspeakers itself can be considered as a concrete element of state institution building, which not only becomes one of the important means for the state to manage the rural society, but also ensures that the state can exercise its power within its control.

With the advent of Reform and Opening-up, the loudspeakers in some rural societies have become advertising content, and the political function of the loudspeakers has been weakened, and it has changed from a “symbol of the state” to an “advertising carrier”. The village of W has also experienced a certain degree of “exit” of the state.

Since the Reform and Opening-up, the frequency of using the loudspeakers and the content of propaganda in W village have changed greatly. Firstly, in terms of frequency of use, with the adjustment of national policies on agriculture, the function of loudspeakers to publicize national policies and mobilize peasant groups has gradually weakened, thus the phenomenon of “not diligent” as the villagers said. Secondly, the degree of marketization of the countryside is deepening, and the loudspeakers are turning into an “advertising carrier”. The change in the use of loudspeakers reflects the withdrawal of state power, but not simply because the voice of the state is buried in commercial advertisements and TV programs. In previous studies, the “withdrawal” of the state in rural society has often included a passive connotation, a kind of forced departure after the emergence of commercial messages and television media. Actually the “withdrawal” of the state’s voice is also somewhat proactive, as the state policies and systems propagated by loudspeakers from the 1970s to 1990s have gradually weakened in the subsequent rural construction, such as the abolition of agricultural tax in 2006, and the village cadres no longer need to collect taxes from villagers through loudspeakers. With the modernization and development of the state governance system and governance capacity, the political functions of the state have been transformed, and the state has taken the initiative to stealthily withdraw from the political power field of rural society.

Social change does not happen overnight, and as a huge machine, the state always has its own development habit. After the “withdrawal” of state power, the state has introduced measures such as “Cuncunxiang” (村村响) broadcasting policy and emergency broadcasting system construction in an attempt to strengthen the control and governance of rural community again. However, the reality is not as expected, and rural society is constantly adapting and adjusting in the face of the loudspeakers project organized and implemented by the state. During the research process, it was found that most villages did not turn on the emergency broadcasting equipment on time as required by the higher level, i.e., if there is an emergency, the emergency broadcasting content of the county and township cannot be conveyed to the villages in time. Not only that, the implementation of the regulations required by the higher government to be repeatedly broadcast, the village cadres are not optimistic, most of the village cadres leave the contents which are copied unused, and the loudspeakers have become a “private instrument” specifically to broadcast the village affairs. According to the regulations of the higher government, the village needs to broadcast the contents about the epidemic notification, the fight against black and evil, and the construction of civilized countryside at 7:00 am, 11:30 pm, and 5:00 pm every day. However, in the process of research, it was found that villages, including W, did not comply with the requirements of the higher government. As for the reasons, the village cadres pointed out that: Firstly, the regulated contents of the county and township government are mostly some repetitive and meaningless information. Secondly, if the loudspeakers broadcast every day on time would indeed affect the lives of nearby villagers, some villagers complained to the village branch secretary that the loudspeakers were a little noisy.

At the same time, in face of the political tasks of the higher government, village cadres will adopt the strategy of “expedient implementation” (Zhong, 2018) in the implementation process according to the nature of the task, and respond negatively to that “low incentive-low constraint” type of tasks. The vast majority of village-level organizations face this type of task by adopting corresponding strategies such as “deception” and “collusion”. The majority of village cadres have long been able to do long sleeves in the face of questioning inquiries from higher levels of government, and because higher levels of government have limited human and energy resources, they do not devote all their attention to the process of inspection and supervision on this. Thus, this provides enough room for the village cadres to measure.

It can be seen that the “broadcasting or not broadcasting” of the loudspeakers is a practical activity that the village society actively adapts to the state system and makes adjustments on its own. In this regard, the state does not take a completely rigid attitude; for many village committees do not broadcast on time, the government is also taking the attitude of “turning a blind eye to the situation”. Bourdieu pointed out that when habits are not in harmony with the situation they encounter, they often produce active adaptation or lagging, and the state’s habits clearly produce a clear mismatch in the face of the long-changing rural society, and the government’s conservative approach to the problem is a reflection of the “lagging” effect of habits. The attitude of the higher government not only means the change of the “state-society” relationship, but also represents the change of the way the state power works. Firstly, the government-led “Cuncunxiang” reflects the state’s willingness to be continuously “present” in rural society, which is also the habit of the state in dealing with rural social relations; secondly, the grassroots self-government organizations at the village level are not completely passive in absorbing state policies, but actively adapt and localize them. And the relationship between the state and rural society shows a state of mutual adaptation and cooperation in the practical interaction about the loudspeakers, which reflect the transformation of the state governance system to modernization.

Rational Habitus: Incarnation and Authority

After experiencing the withdrawal of the state, the daily use of loudspeakers in village life is mainly dominated by village cadres, who use it most of the time to propagate political messages on straw burning ban and land contracting, except for messages on epidemic prevention and control, etc. In other words, the loudspeakers become an important propaganda tool adopted by village cadres in the process of village construction in order to accomplish specific tasks at different stages. In this process, the village cadres become the opinion leaders among the villagers and they take the lead in explaining the national policies on the loudspeakers, and if there are any more villagers who have doubts, the village cadres resort to face-to-face communication. Thus, the loudspeakers are the first channel for village cadres to transmit their views and opinions on national policies to the whole village. Through the archaeology of multiple channels and field survey records of the propaganda contents of loud speakers, it is found that these broadcast contents have obvious paternalistic rhetorical characteristics. Although these broadcast contents themselves do not have any coercive power or legal significance, they often become the behavioral norms of villagers and thus have binding power. For example, the punitive measures such as “light fines of 200 and heavy detention” stated by the village branch secretary of Village W when banning straw burning.

The real human voice can never escape its dependence on the sound source, so the presence of the voice is tantamount to the presence of the body. The village branch secretary makes his own voice through the

loudspeakers, and the voice symbolizes his physical presence. The presence of the body can give rise to a series of different indications in the mouths of villagers, such as “the village chief is serious and responsible for his work”, “the village chief is in the village”, and so on. Thus, once there is no radio on any day, the villagers will know that the village chief has not come to the village committee. It can be said that the loudspeakers have become a powerful proof of the presence of village cadres.

Another important point is that at the beginning of the New China, the loudspeakers become an important media tool used by the state to manage rural society. Therefore, the loudspeakers still carry the socialist color and represent the strong presence of the state in the countryside so far. Especially for the nostalgic village farmers, the loudspeakers still symbolize the strong state authority. The village cadres have made full use of this media characteristic of the loudspeakers to perpetuate it as a socialist habit and accumulate their symbolic capital as the spokesman of the state in this way. In the process of using the loudspeakers, village cadres rationalize themselves as the spokesmen of the state, so that only village cadres can use the loudspeakers in Village W. Moreover, the content of the broadcast is further compressed, so that information such as commercial advertisements is regarded as “trivial” by village cadres, and the emerging media such as WeChat group become the platform to take up these trivial “small matters”. By tying themselves to the party and the state, village cadres aim to continuously convey and reinforce to villagers the idea that village cadres are the spokesmen of the state.

Whether to prove the presence of the flesh or to “re-characterize” the authority reflects a rational habit in the village cadres. By excluding commercial and private messages and incorporating popular songs, they try to regain the declining traditional authority, win new discourse power, and reconstruct their political prestige in the village.

Sensual Habits: The Elderly and Nostalgia

When asked “whether there is still a need for the loudspeakers”, almost every villager’s first response is “of course, there are so many old people in the village”. This shows that in the villagers’ pure values, the main audiences of the loudspeakers are the old farmers left behind in the countryside. In less developed rural areas like W Village, most of the older people still do not use smartphones. Even if they have smartphones, their cognition and tendency to use them are far behind those of young people. Therefore, the loudspeakers still play an important propaganda role for the majority of old farmers: informing village affairs, conveying national policies, and playing red songs. Although the emergence of new media such as WeChat has weakened the function of the loudspeakers, it is still a strong medium for those with low media literacy, and the old farmers rely strongly on the function of the loudspeakers. Most villagers emphasize the importance of the loudspeakers to the old farmers in the village, which not only shows their concern for the old people in the village, but also highlights a social consensus of helping each other, and it is under such a social value atmosphere that a possible village community is increasingly formed, and the value of the loudspeakers as a “tribal drum” has a chance to reappear.

When I was a child, I was very excited to know that our village was going to install the loudspeakers, and when the installation was finished, modern Beijing opera were often broadcasted. I and the other children sang and danced along with the loudspeakers. (S15)

The villagers interviewed always talk about their memories of the loudspeakers, and they can tell a series of stories from the old object of the loudspeakers. In S15’s memory, the loudspeakers were a child’s toy, and

the entertainment function of the loudspeakers was highlighted at that time. Different individuals have different memories of the loudspeakers, but all of them are closely related to their life history, such as “paying public food” mentioned in S11, “family planning” mentioned in S14, and “cultural revolution” in S19. Carolyn Marvin (1988) argues that the obsolescence of “old media” is related to how individuals and groups perceive it. Generally speaking, people tend to think of “old media” as media that are no longer used, while the new media are more relevant to people and are used frequently. Therefore, the key to judging the old and new media is not the function of media technology, but the relationship between people and technology. From this perspective, the loudspeakers are not an “outdated” and backward medium in the China village daily life; on the contrary, the content it broadcasts and the memories it produces are closely related to the villagers.

Bourdieu argues that habitus is embedded in the human body (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 87), and thus a phenomenological analysis of the villagers’ interactive practices with the loudspeakers can dissect the history that resides in the villagers. Usually we see the loudspeakers as a sound medium, but the particular spatial location determines how we listen to it. People are used to seeing the loudspeakers as a “sound medium”, but ignore the subtle actions of villagers in their interaction with the horn. It finds that whenever the loudspeaker broadcasted some specific village affairs, villagers who were walking would always stop and listen carefully, villagers who were working in the fields would also slow down, and if there were villagers who continued to talk, some other villagers would interrupt them in a low voice, “Stop, somebody are talking up there”. And if the villagers who happened to be chatting in the square, some of them would also look up at the loudspeaker. Thus, it seems that the loudspeakers are not simply a medium to trigger people’s hearing, but also affect the villagers’ visual and other perceptual systems.

It (the loudspeakers) represents the state, the village cadres don’t have that much power yet, and from that time it has been transmitting the voice of the state to today, so it represents the policy guidelines of the party. (S09)

According to Bourdieu, habitus is the historicized body (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 76). Looking up implies that the villagers maintain a certain distance from the loudspeakers, and because of the particular gesture of looking up, the villagers are always in a state of esteem and admiration. These subconscious actions of stopping to listen and slowing down reflect the villagers’ attitude of respect towards the loudspeakers. In other words, the loudspeakers are given a lofty status and visual worship effect, which in turn creates a subtle sense of majesty. From this perspective, the loudspeakers itself convey an ideological message that looking up symbolizes authority, in other words, the loudspeakers are a symbolic symbol carrying power relations. The loudspeakers as a continuing habit make the villagers live in the past system and occupy the system in practice, and to this extent, the villagers’ continuous use of the loudspeakers keeps the old system alive.

It can be said that the villagers’ emotional dependence on the loudspeakers is firstly reflected in their concern for the old farmers in the village. The natural disadvantage of the elderly in using the media under the digital wave makes most villagers rationalize the existence of the loudspeakers based on the social consensus of helping each other; even though they are aware that the loudspeakers are not very useful to them, they still tend to keep it. Secondly, as a “field of memory”, the loudspeakers still store the individual memories of most villagers. Whenever there are special moments, the holding of the loudspeakers will become the object for the villagers to provide memories. Through the interaction between the villagers’ bodies and the loudspeakers, it can be seen that the villagers always have reverence and worship for the loudspeakers, which symbolizes the power of the state, and these three sensual habits are stored in the villagers’ bodies and make the loudspeakers persist.

The Reappear of the Loudspeakers

Stimulus Mechanism: Epidemic Outbreak

According to Bourdieu, habits do not always “appear”, but require certain stimulation mechanisms to make them “reappear” (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 75). Even though the loudspeakers have left a “cold memory” in the bodies and psyches of both village cadres and ordinary villagers, people living in rural society use it as a rational tool or emotional support and do not want to forget it. However, this memory mechanism is buried deep in the heart, and if there is no special event, they will not take the initiative to tell about it, but the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic makes the loudspeakers appear again, and the “cold memory” can be reactivated.

Bourdieu points out that the course of action directed by habitus is most likely accompanied by a strategic calculation of costs and benefits, and this strategic calculation brings the process of habitus operating in its own way to the level of consciousness (Li, 2019, p. 117). Thus, it can be seen that individual behavior guided by habit itself contains a calculation of certain costs and benefits. In the face of the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, village cadres, drawing on their previous work experience, first thought of their familiar loudspeaker, which for them never disappeared from their daily work, and not only that, but always played an indispensable role.

I was a soldier before. In the army we always use this loudspeaker ... our village usually if there is a fire, the village cadres are also using this to call people to put out the fire. (S02)

Habit is an important criterion for judging the situation quickly and responding to it when time is urgent and conditions are constrained. Village cadres do not have sufficient time to choose which media tool to use when faced with an unexpected public health event, yet their past work experience tells them that the loudspeakers are the preferred tool for dealing with emergencies, as it can efficiently convey the notification of village cadres in a short period of time and indicate the urgency of the situation through the use of language and changes in tone. In other words, the loudspeakers are the most efficient and least costly media tool for responding to public health emergencies in rural communities.

The authoritative and accurate notification of the epidemic delivered by the loudspeakers also relieved the villagers’ anxiety and nervousness because of the epidemic to a certain extent and gave them psychological comfort.

A few years ago when the epidemic, the village was not allowed to go out, every day, we listened to the loudspeaker ... epidemic information, and what is not allowed to string, our village will also broadcast songs. (S20)

During the epidemic, the propaganda of the loudspeakers rekindled the memory of the loudspeakers in the villagers’ bodies, and this memory was an unconscious reaction, such that they would have a natural authority-like belief in the message delivered by the loudspeakers, so that they never questioned its truth or falsity, and this was the trace left in their bodies by history.

The loudspeakers are sometimes uplifting, sometimes serious and frightening, sometimes humorous, but regardless of the rhetoric, the spiritual basis it represents is a sense of solidarity that brings the villagers a sense of “collective excitement”. Because of the common situation and the high concern about the epidemic, the loudspeakers break away from its previous role and become an important supporter of emotional comfort. The need for offline communication was growing due to the epidemic, but as the situation worsened, the public

longed for a common presence to relieve the tension and anxiety. Thus, the content of the loudspeakers broadcast, especially the songs, created a space for villagers to express themselves and communicate with each other. At the same time, the common presence of all the villagers, who were listeners of the loudspeakers and experienced the epidemic, provided an imaginary connection for the villagers and thus created a virtual public space. Thus, the loudspeakers during the epidemic are a constant reminder that all the villagers are witnessing this important historical moment together.

Habitus is a product of history, or a structure of structure, and habitus is expressed mainly through individual bodily behavior, which is divided into bodily gestures, such as “how to listen”, and mental states, such as “how to remember”. However, the habits left by the state system on the villagers’ bodies are not always visible, while the epidemic can trigger the body’s habitual response and summon the collective consensus and ideology dormant in the villagers’ bodies.

Individuals in the same domain tend to be unified in their habits, but the habits within a certain group may be regarded as new by other groups, and the “heterogeneity of moral habits” is highlighted at this time. Therefore, when the loudspeakers with a strong Henan accent appear in the short video platform, it instantly hits the hearts of netizens outside the countryside and triggers strong emotional resonance.

Acquiring Habits: Moving on and Beyond

If village cadres and villagers suffering from “nostalgia” based on their own power considerations allowed the loudspeakers to persist, the epidemic provided a spatial and temporal opportunity for its “appearance”. Under the gaze of urban curiosity, the loudspeakers can really return to the public’s view on the short video platform. With the change of symbols symbolized by the loudspeakers, the loudspeakers as a flow are further “strengthened” under the impetus of young village cadres.

The habitus of different members of the same group tends to be uniform (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 85), both older and younger village cadres belong to the village workers, and at this level they belong to the same group and thus their habitus tends to be unified. The loudspeakers practice of young village cadres can be attributed to the result of imitation. Since September 20, 2021, when the account “Huang Zhishu of Jinzipu Village” posted his video, he has released a total of 120 short videos, five of which are related to the loudspeakers, and his first work was released in the form of sending Mid-Autumn wishes with the loudspeakers. By examining the works in the short video platform of young village cadres, we found that they tend to imitate the rhetoric and expressions used by older village cadres in their broadcasting, and the wording still has a “paternalistic” commanding tone, such as “There are no old and young people on the road to the Yellow Springs” (黄泉路上无老少啊), etc.

I just saw that the loudspeaker was on fire on Weibo at first, and saw that many people were discussing it. Just want to use the flow of the loudspeaker to do a shake number of their own, not only can record their work, the most important thing is to promote our village, bring more investment for the benefit of the villagers. (S26)

Both S26 and S27 regard the form of “loudspeakers + short video” as a symbol of traffic, and the loudspeakers become the inspiration and motivation for S26 to start his personal TikTok number, and also an important consideration for S27 to place the loudspeakers. At this time, the loudspeakers are not just a tool for propaganda, but its main function has changed, from a sound medium to a display medium for others to exhibit. In the process of acquiring the loudspeakers, although these young post-1990s village cadres did not experience

the special era at that time and did not have the history that the loudspeakers gave to their bodies, they carried out imitation in it, and the dialectal expressions and the rhetoric of slangs and jokes were their main objects of imitation.

I speak dialect at the village. There are many old people in the village, some of them can't understand Mandarin, so it's convenient to speak dialect for everyone to communicate. And the loudspeaker is mainly for the elderly, mainly to make them understand. (S28)

The development of media technology has enabled certain habits to be passed on through time and across regions. The inheritance of such habits is not only reflected in the propaganda content of the loudspeaker or the interaction between village cadres and the loudspeakers, but also the memory and ideology of the times and the collective consensus carried behind the loudspeakers. But this inheritance is not different from the subtle "craftsmanship" of the aging village cadres, but sees the loudspeaker as a symbol of flow, which becomes a selling point to attract the audience. It is precisely because of the failure to take into account the authority of the loudspeakers that the young village cadres dismantle its meaning in the short videos.

In the short videos of the loudspeakers, the post-1990s village cadres often attach a lot of tags such as "rural loudspeaker", "rural revitalization", "I speak for my hometown", and "rural epidemic prevention and control" to increase flow and get more likes. At the same time, some young village cadres will also intentionally put some hunting elements into the video content production to create gimmicks to attract the public's attention. It must be admitted that short video production about loudspeakers brings visibility and empowerment to village cadres and their villages, and the fact that villages are seen means more opportunities for development. This authority is not recharmed by the state, but by their own authority based on personal charm and ability.

While individual behavioral disposition systems within each group tend to be uniform, there are structural variants of individual behavioral disposition systems depending on social trajectory and location (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 85). We see that these young village cadres are not just "copying" but innovating in the process of imitating and learning the practice of loudspeakers. In the survey, most of the young village cadres took the initiative to involve the villagers in the media practice. In the video of "Huang Zhishu of Jinzipu Village" on October 19, 2021, the village secretary had the owner of the farm who lost his fruits spoke before the loudspeakers, while he supervised aside and made a final statement. In the process of the short video broadcast, the broadcast content with the corresponding pictorial text played a good propaganda role and warning effect, and the media practice of young village cadres involving the public actively in the loudspeakers was not only this TikTok case. It is worth noting that the form of short video makes the interior of the loudspeakers visible. In the past, the equipment built into the office of the loudspeakers was usually regarded as a symbol of power and had a certain mysterious nature, as many villagers said, "I have never even been in the office of the brigade headquarters, and people don't let us enter freely". But the short video makes the once invisible information visible, and plays a role in demystifying the "supreme authority" of the village.

The Mid-Autumn Festival is coming up soon, I represent the two village committees to wish the villagers a happy Mid-Autumn Festival. The chicken, duck and mooncakes should be prepared up, now that living conditions are better, the holiday should have the true appearance of a holiday. Everyone can give your family a call who work outside. The brothers and sisters who are working outside to go home for the holidays to spend more time with your families, less to play some mahjong. (Mr. Huang)

The above is the video of “Jinzipu Village Branch Secretary Huang” sending blessings on September 20, 2021; you can see that, unlike the traditional paternalistic and serious tone of the village branch secretary, and unlike other young village cadres who imitate the tone of playfulness, the warm wishes of Branch Secretary Huang on specific holidays highlight the humanism of the grassroots staff. The broadcast reveals a strong concept of family filial piety and brotherhood, and the replies in the comments such as “Happy holidays to Mr. Huang”, “Thank you, Mr. Huang, happy Mid-Autumn Festival”, and so on which make people feel warm, and the emotions between cadres and villagers in such a back and forth are interpreted in a new way.

Young village cadres break through the shackles of previous rules and resources, creatively use new media technology to give full play to their own initiative, subvert the inherent broadcast form of the loudspeakers, and add their own ideas, allowing the public to truly participate in the media practice, deconstructing the authority of traditional village cadres relying on the state in a relaxing way.

Conclusion

From the loudspeakers as a national system sunk to the rural community, to the loudspeakers with the “Reform and Opening-up” gradually out of the public view, and then today along with the “Cuncunxiang” policy loudspeaker re-active in rural life, even take advantage of the epidemic “Opportunity”, with the short video platform as a “net popularity”. Through the life history of the loudspeakers, we can see that in the rural political field, it has experienced the practice led by the state, to the media practice around the main body of the village, and then to the practice carried out by the main body of the media today. In other words, the village society in the past was deeply influenced by the structure of the state system, while the village today has deconstructed the authority of the state in the real sense with the development of media technology, and the media logic has increasingly penetrated and dominated the political field of the village.

The media logic that takes place in the rural political field is different from the media logic of the Internet platform that scholars usually think of. This media logic arises from the mutual construction of the old and new media after the collision, that is, the “mediatization” of the old media by the new media. Under this inter-mediality, the ideology, collective spirit, and memories of the times carried by the loudspeakers as the old media are combined with the new media’s characteristics of focusing on flow and dispelling, resulting in a media logic path of fusion of emotion and rationality, where emotion summons the collective consensus of the village level society and identification with the state, and rationality achieves the real sense of “disenchantment”, the authority of the state.

Thus, we can see that around this media logic progression, different subjects have launched different practical actions accordingly. Firstly, the group of village cadres, both old and young village cadres, began to use the loudspeakers more intensively due to the flow symbols symbolized by the loudspeakers, and at the same time began to frequently use local dialects and slangs or even local artistic expressions with unique local characteristics. As for the villagers, they also began to recall their past history about village on the short video platform. The loudspeakers become a field of memory bearing their personal history. Through combing the life course of the tweeter, we can see that the tweeter belongs to a kind of emotional medium in a sense. The long feeling is not only reflected in its long-term ambiguous entanglement with the rural community, but also in the respect for the country, the friendship between people in the rural community and the remembrance of the villagers for the gradually passing countryside reflected by the village cadres and ordinary villagers in their interaction with the loudspeakers.

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