

Research on Innovative Paths of Grassroots Social Governance in China Based on Collaborative Governance Theory: A Case Study of N City in China

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Abstract. The theory of collaborative governance emphasizes participation and cooperation, aiming to solve complex social problems, promote citizen participation, community autonomy, and innovative development of public policies. This theory also plays a very important role in grassroots governance in China. The purpose of this article is to further explore the significance of collaborative governance theory in the future response of grassroots governments to innovative development by studying a representative grassroots innovation case in China. This will help reflect the interests and concerns of all parties, establish a stable social environment, and promote sustainable social development. This study mainly uses semi-structured interviews to visit and collect data at the grassroots level of the case community. Finally, based on theoretical background and interview results, this study analyzes and summarizes effective strategies for innovative development of grassroots governance. Strategies include emphasizing the application of internet technology, strengthening talent cultivation, and enhancing cooperation to expand resources.

Keywords: Grassroots governance, collaborative governance theory, institutional innovation.

1. Introduction

Collaborative governance theory is a new governance model that emphasizes the collaborative cooperation between the government, the market, and society. It provides a solid foundation for promoting democratic innovation in society, as well as a framework and methods for decision-making to achieve common governance of public affairs. Since the reform and opening up, Chinese society has gradually entered a period of transformation, with rapid economic and social development. As the last mile of public governance, the innovative development of grassroots governance has been the overall trend in recent years. And its specific development path is still in the exploratory stage. In the context of modernization of the national governance system, grassroots organizations need to further develop through understanding the profound connotation of collaborative governance theory in the process of innovative development.

This article aims to explore how to use collaborative governance theory to assist grassroots social innovation in China. This study takes the "Resident Satisfaction Assessment" system in N City as a case study, specifically exploring the pain points and advantages of grassroots governance innovation practices in the implementation process and providing reliable suggestions for the development strategy of grassroots governance innovation.

Prior to this study, multiple scholars had conducted research on the impact of collaborative governance theory on grassroots governance innovation. Regarding the definition of collaborative governance, some scholars point out that autonomy and participation at the level of various stakeholders and communities are important. In order to solve their shared public affairs, achieve social governance objectives, and unleash the value of collaborative governance through mutual aid, collaboration, and integration, various social actors engage in a process known as collaborative governance [1]. Particularly, the relevance of reciprocity to the formal collaboration between state and non-state actors is highlighted by acknowledgement of interdependence, openness to exploring similar values, reciprocal benefits, and common issue descriptions [2]. Collaborative practices

emerge as a promising strategy towards achieving the profound transformation necessary for sustainability [3].

Regarding community autonomy, some scholars have conducted research on community residents' satisfaction and its related factors. This study discovered that interpersonal components of resident happiness were a mediator in the association between concrete characteristics of resident contentment and WOM intention, emphasizing the value of interpersonal communication and social engagement [4]. The improvement of residents' satisfaction will lead to more positive community autonomy, and more residents are willing to express their opinions through various means and jointly govern the community with other community leaders.

Currently, there are still shortcomings in research in this field. For example, some researchers have not observed the utilitarian demand for innovation, which is manifested in the superficial innovation of formalism. To avoid this situation, researchers should conduct in-depth community visits and interviews with grassroots workers to gain a deeper understanding of the progress of grassroots innovation. This study will focus more on the unique perspectives brought by grassroots workers. By studying the residents' satisfaction evaluation system as a new approach, starting from the theory of collaborative governance, readers can further understand the future development path of grassroots innovation.

2. Theoretical Foundation

The theory of collaborative governance is a fusion of collaborative theory in natural sciences and governance theory in social sciences and is a governance model of power sharing. Collaborative governance, which is defined as the process of creating, directing, facilitating, operating, and overseeing cross-sectoral organizational arrangements to address public policy issues, has become a respected institutional form among professional and research audiences in a widening range of policy domains [5]. This model mainly refers to the joint coordination and cooperation of multiple entities in their respective abilities, promoting the formation of a state of interdependence and common development. In grassroots communities, it is to respect the reasonable demands of diverse subjects in grassroots governance, establish systematic and effective governance methods and systems, improve the level of grassroots governance, and form a governance state of diverse co governance.

Traditional government management theory focuses on consolidating the government's sole subject position, while emphasizing that the government is the only entity with the right to formulate and implement governance plans. Compared to traditional social governance theories, the theory of multi-agent collaborative governance emphasizes the full role of the government in management, organization, coordination, and other processes, transforming its identity into the initiator and coordinator of the multi-agent governance system, which helps the government to control key information in governance work. The design of a collaborative arrangement must take political and distributional factors into account for each distinct stage of the policy-making process, with the respective contributions of each participating institution being correctly measured and acknowledged [5]. From a global perspective, collaborative governance has broadened the scope of government governance and promoted the improvement of efficiency in handling multi domain issues. In addition to achieving mutually beneficial results, collaborative governance aims to resolve any political disputes that may develop when member entities negotiate the allocation of responsibilities and rewards [5].

Collaboration fosters better learning abilities, the consideration of many viewpoints, and innovative problem-solving techniques [6]. A set of institutional arrangements known as collaborative governance are created to accomplish a common goal by numerous leaders, including principals from the public sector [7]. The application of collaborative governance theory in grassroots community governance is mainly reflected in: the participating governance entities involved in grassroots governance are diverse, and on the basis of maintaining the government's main position and leading role, more attention is paid to the role of non-governmental organizations, ordinary

citizens, and others in participating in decision-making and management of affairs in grassroots governance, fully exerting the positive role of coordinated governance. At the same time, the ways of grassroots community governance are also diverse, and a single government policy regulation has become history. Different forms of transaction difficulties may arise at each level of the policy process, from policy formation to implementation and evaluation, where collaborative governance may take place [5]. Nowadays, more emphasis is placed on the coordination and joint decision-making of multiple interests, promoting sufficient supply of grassroots public goods and services, promoting the harmonious development of grassroots communities and the coordination of relationships between various entities, maintaining social stability, meeting the diverse needs of residents, and improving the realization of public interests.

This theory is also an extension of the people-oriented governance concept. In the process of grassroots community governance, in addition to the collaborative governance between the government and nongovernmental organization, managers and community residents also share common interests and responsibilities. Collaborative governance fully reflects public interests in the governance process, building an equal and collaborative grassroots community environment and a collaborative governance system.

The theory of collaborative governance provides a theoretical basis and guidance for implementing effective social governance innovation in China. This theory provides guidance on the necessary conditions for successful cooperation between government departments and other organizations to achieve innovation, such as establishing a shared decision-making mechanism. On the contrary, grassroots social governance innovation has tested the application of collaborative governance theory in practical society through practice, thereby promoting further development of the theory. Through experiments, scholars can evaluate the applicability and effectiveness of collaborative governance in different social contexts, thereby determining the theoretical content that needs improvement and improvement.

3. Case Study

3.1. Case Description

The resident satisfaction evaluation system, as one of the effective measures for grassroots innovation, is based on the people-oriented governance concept and guided by resident satisfaction. It has established a multi-dimensional evaluation index system, emphasizing the collaborative governance of government departments, grassroots communities, and community residents, thereby helping to improve the level of grassroots service management.

These N city communities mainly collect positive and negative evaluations from residents, as well as three content evaluations that allow residents to score special indicators. Based on different proportion of evaluation channels, more comprehensive quarterly evaluation results are formed, and the total scores and rankings of adult evaluations are summarized at the end of the year.

This approach aims to fully leverage the government's supervisory role in community streets, provide financial incentives to community streets that rank among the top in residents' satisfaction evaluations, verify negative evaluations raised by residents during the evaluation process, and issue them to specific street departments for rectification, promoting grassroots community workers to actively respond to residents' needs.

The resident satisfaction evaluation system has three characteristics. Firstly, there are diverse collection channels and multiple evaluation dimensions. The evaluation process in N city is mainly as follows: third-party organizations select residents within the community every quarter and invite residents to rate approximately 25 question dimensions through various methods such as phone calls, online questionnaires, and home visits. The scores for each quarter are then summarized at the end of the year to form the total score and ranking of the community. The director of the H community in N city introduced this:

Overall, I think the scoring standards are relatively user-friendly. There are door-to-door visits, phone surveys, and wired surveys, and each item has a proportion. However, I am not sure what the specific proportion is because we do not participate in the process, and we only know the final result in the end. Overall, it should be relatively comprehensive.

The satisfaction system of residents in an urban area presents a multi-channel and multi-dimensional characteristic.

Secondly, the evaluation results of the system are highly subjective, and there are also significant individual differences between the results. The residents of H city mainly interact with third-party personnel responsible for the evaluation process, without the participation of community workers. In an interview, a community leader from N city said:

Because our residents are also completely blind in their selection, for example, some people need elderly care services, while others want environmental services. There are many personal factors such as this. Blind selection cannot guarantee a similar proportion of each type of person, so there is also a bit of luck in the score.

Due to the varying personal needs of residents, the focus of evaluation is different, and the experience of community services is not entirely consistent, which leads to significant differences in the results of community satisfaction ratings among different resident samples.

Thirdly, the evaluation results are easily influenced by the objective environment. A few years ago, a significant portion of the work of community workers in N city was focused on epidemic prevention and control. An interviewee in charge of the N community introduced:

In the past few years, the epidemic took up too much of our service time, and we spent most of our time focusing on epidemic prevention and control. We are responsible for checking health codes, testing nucleic acids, and so on, which leaves us with no time to handle other tasks every day.

Despite the active assistance of some volunteers and party members, the workforce is still insufficient, resulting in community workers being unable to arrange time to follow up on other tasks in prevention and control work, which has led to a decline in some indicator scores in the evaluation.

3.2. Case Analysis

In the process of this case study, this research mainly adopted a semi-structured interview method. This research conducted interviews with multiple grassroots staff members by preparing specific interview questions (including online telephone communication, face-to-face interviews, etc.). When asking questions, this research conducts in-depth exploration and open-ended questioning of some issues, effectively following up and controlling the research direction. This research collected their opinions and suggestions on the resident satisfaction evaluation system and grassroots innovation, and organized and summarized the interview content through video recording and other means, providing reliable reference for research and analysis in the later stage.

After analyzing the interview results, this research summarized the basic effectiveness of this system in N city.

Firstly, the implementation effect of the resident satisfaction evaluation system in N city is generally good, and there is also room for improvement. The director of H community in N city commented on this system in an interview:

The evaluation system is actually a positive, cyclic, and proportional feedback to the community.

During interviews with community workers, most of them recognized the positive effects of the evaluation system on community life, work ability, and residents' satisfaction. They also suggested that the evaluation indicators and score ratios could be updated in real-time based on actual situations.

Another concern is the "bottom level perspective" reflected in the innovative practice of the resident satisfaction evaluation system in N city. The bottom level perspective focuses on the actual situation within the community, such as residents' demands, community cultural atmosphere, etc. The bottom level perspective undoubtedly has a positive significance for grassroots social governance innovation. A respondent said:

I feel that most residents are willing to cooperate with us in our work. For example, last summer, many retired cadres were willing to braved the heat to help us with volunteer work of picking up and sending children. But they also feel that sometimes their opinions are only formal and do not fall into the ground, so they are not satisfied and over time, they are unwilling to provide opinions.

The underlying perspective brought by residents can not only help understand the community situation and the changes brought by various activities to the community, but also stimulate residents to actively participate in governance.

During the implementation of this system, there are also many problems.

Firstly, the overall participation of residents is insufficient, and the actual effectiveness of innovation is insufficient. In the various monthly community activities carried out in the community, the main target audience and participating groups are the middle-aged and elderly, which cannot achieve full coverage for various groups of community residents. At the same time, this research found that most of the participating groups also tend to prioritize participating in activities that can actually obtain goods or experience sufficient. In activities such as making dumplings during the winter solstice, offering courses to teach retirees how to use mobile phones, and allocating funds to build roads for residents, residents have shown high overall enthusiasm; For activities such as giving lectures and evaluating the daily work of grassroots workers, some residents still hold the view that wasting time is not yet effective. The negative attitude of residents towards certain activities can also be manifested as a low overall participation of residents in grassroots governance. According to the theory of collaborative governance, residents, as an indispensable part of the governance body, play a crucial role in decision-making and other processes. However, the passive participation of residents can lead to limited scope of evaluation perspectives, thereby undermining the effectiveness of the evaluation system.

Secondly, innovation costs are high, but activity funds are scarce. The theory of collaborative governance emphasizes sufficient resource support in the collaborative process. The limited financial resources limit the implementation of joint governance activities, leading to deviations in the evaluation results. The government's insufficient financial support for daily community work and limited funds for grassroots workers to carry out activities have resulted in many activities being unable to be carried out, fundamentally limiting the diversified development of grassroots workers' services and failing to meet the diverse needs of residents. For example, if they want to rebuild a road section that has been in disrepair for a long time, they lack sufficient financial support and request help from the co construction unit, but they are also unable to start construction due to the unit's inability to arrange funds in place. For example, a community worker interviewed wants to build a senior university for retired individuals in their community, but there is still financial difficulty in preparing the necessary books. Community workers have a variety of innovative ideas, but the cost of innovation is high, and they face significant financial obstacles in actual implementation.

Thirdly, the lack of talent leads to a lack of sustainability in innovation. Individuals with diverse professional knowledge and skills have a positive impact on the effective application of collaborative governance theory at the grassroots level. Grassroots work itself needs to undertake various administrative tasks delegated by the government, which involve a wide range of issues. However, at the same time, grassroots communities are constantly facing new issues from residents' feedback. Although the content of community work is not complex, it is generally trivial and numerous. In the current process of grassroots governance, financial support is not sufficient, and daily activity expenses still require grassroots cadres to proactively contact co construction units for sponsorship. However, the salaries of staff are relatively insufficient compared to the time and energy required in daily life. Combining the above two aspects, the diverse and trivial job responsibilities and relatively low wages have resulted in the inability of grassroots communities to retain more young talents.

Last but not least, there is still room for improvement in the evaluation system itself. The imperfection of the residents' satisfaction evaluation system leads to a lack of effective feedback on residents' needs. And effective feedback is precisely what is emphasized in the theory of collaborative governance. The resident satisfaction evaluation system involves multiple indicators, and in the

process of designing evaluation questionnaire questions, third parties tend to replace resident satisfaction with customer satisfaction that leans towards the economic category. This also leads to the focus of evaluation indicators being more on subjective evaluation of objective aspects such as living environment and interpersonal relationships. During the evaluation process, the proportion of scores for channels such as "telephone interviews", "door-to-door research", and "online research" should also be repeatedly considered, and the selection and sample size of surveyed residents should also be comprehensively considered.

4. Discussion

In order to promote the important role of collaborative governance theory in grassroots innovation, improvements should be made in the following aspects.

Firstly, focus on the application of e-government in grassroots governance and achieve multidimensional cooperation. Based on the people's analysis of the primary coordination mechanism and data sharing mechanism in the government's digital reform, the government should advance the government's digital reform in accordance with the needs of the people, increase the effectiveness of the various functions of the government, and enhance the sense of security, gain, and happiness of the populace [8]. Grass roots workers should adhere to the combination of "Internet plus" and innovative measures such as the residents' assessment system, establish a residents' service platform, and improve the online evaluation system. Grassroots workers should also use big data technology to accurately identify groups in need of help, understand the demands of the general population more accurately, and promote closer connections between grassroots organizations and residents, building a governance situation of co construction, co governance, and sharing.

Secondly, the government should strengthen talent training for grassroots management personnel. In addition to involving people from various spheres and silos to accomplish more than standard decision-making processes, governance calls for a maturation process that is typically required to strengthen a network's capacities, including key roles and responsibilities [9]. To improve the talent cultivation mechanism, it is necessary to cultivate grassroots workers to have a clearer positioning of their own identity, improve work efficiency, and improve their own quality. In the actual work process, introduce the results of the resident satisfaction evaluation system, continue to promote the close connection between the evaluation results and performance, and fully mobilize work enthusiasm.

Finally, grassroots organizations should also collaborate more with other organizational departments and introduce external resources. In terms of network architecture that enable sharing of knowledge, skills, resources, and shared goals in a governance network, mutual interaction between actors serves as the foundation for the development of cooperation links in a governance network [10]. Enrich event funds through cooperation. The government can also consider setting up special funds for grassroots innovation, encouraging grassroots communities to carry out innovative projects in the governance process, and stimulating the vitality of grassroots governance system construction.

There are still some limitations in this study. This study used a semi-structured interview method, and it largely relies on the subjective descriptions and opinions of the participants themselves, and its results may be influenced by the biases, false memories, and social expectation biases of the participants. At the same time, due to the lack of methods to collect a large amount of data and obtain accurate results through calculation, the results of this study may not represent the opinions of all samples in the region. It should also be noted that resident satisfaction assessment itself is only one of the methods for grassroots governance innovation. When studying this case through collaborative governance theory, the conclusion cannot fully represent the only solution for the future path of grassroots governance innovation.

5. Conclusion

This study is mainly based on the content of collaborative governance theory, investigating the grassroots innovation case of resident satisfaction evaluation system. Due to the characteristics of co construction, co governance, and sharing, as well as taking root in the actual community of grassroots social governance, under the guidance of collaborative governance theory, grassroots governments should promote the formation of a diversified and co governance social governance structure and promote continuous innovation of China's governance system. In the construction process, it is necessary to adhere to people-oriented principles, pay attention to emotional needs, and achieve the application of emotional governance in grassroots work. At the same time, further promote the combination of grassroots social governance and information technology methods and promote multi-party cooperation. Strengthening the construction of grassroots talent teams is also crucial, and it is necessary to attach importance to the positive role of grassroots talents. Grassroots workers need to clarify their responsibilities and positioning and explore innovative governance models and systems that are more suitable for grassroots society.

In the future research process, researchers can conduct longitudinal research by collecting data over a long period of time to capture the changes in grassroots governance innovation measures over time. This can provide important data for the sustainable development of grassroots innovative governance measures. At the same time, researchers can also conduct comparative studies on grassroots governance innovation cases in different regions in the future. This can help determine the best path and provide effective recommendations for policies. In future research on the resident satisfaction evaluation system, it is also possible to focus on the impact of various background factors on the design of the evaluation system.

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