

Exploration of Transitional Community Resilience Governance: A Case Study of Community S in Suzhou City, China

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Abstract

With the vigorous development of urban construction in China at the end of the 20th century, transitional communities have emerged as an important driver of urban economic development. Currently, the drawbacks of transitional communities in the process of modernization are constantly being exposed, prompting numerous reflections from urban leaders, and the transformation and upgrading of transitional communities has become a vital issue. Taking S community in Suzhou City as an example, this article elaborates on its current development status and theoretical basis. Leveraging resilience governance theory and using the pyramid model, the S community is thoroughly analyzed from three levels and six aspects, identifying various problems and proposing countermeasures and suggestions relying on theories of collaborative governance, digital sharing, and diverse stakeholders. By coordinating planning and empowering data to enhance physical resilience, promoting institutional resilience through collaborative governance and institutional innovation, and enhancing cultural resilience through community culture and inclusive communities, this research explores a unique transformation path for the S community, identifying common experiences and providing empirical insights for resilient governance of transitional communities.

Keywords

Resilience governance; Transitional communities; Diverse stakeholders.

1. Introduction

In the perspective of the modern risk society, grassroots governance is facing numerous challenges and uncertainties, as grassroots communities are entering a new stage of development. Since the reform and opening up, with the continuous advancement of industrialization and urbanization processes, the urban territory has been expanding continuously, leading to the emergence of a large number of transitional communities formed by "village transformation into urban housing", with the Suzhou S community being one of the representative communities. In the early stages of urban expansion, the emergence of transitional communities has greatly facilitated urban development, with land development bringing substantial fiscal revenue to the government and the rural migrants providing a large amount of cheap labor. However, with the high-level development of cities and the new requirements for grassroots governance, the shortcomings of transitional communities have gradually become apparent, with heterogeneous group composition and traditional management methods severely limiting community vitality, leading to many security and risk issues. In addition, the frequent occurrence of various sudden events has triggered contemplation on the transformation of grassroots governance. In accordance with the "Recommendations of the CPC Central Committee on Formulating the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Goals for 2035" proposing the construction of livable, innovative, intelligent, green, humanistic, and resilient

cities, promoting resilient governance of transitional communities has become a key breakthrough. Implementing resilience theory in the governance of transitional communities provides a new research perspective for innovative community governance models. On one hand, this is conducive to enhancing the community's risk resistance ability, strengthening resilience to pressure, and better coping with global complex and changing compound risks; on the other hand, it is beneficial for further exploring governance methods for transitional communities and providing experiential reference for the development of other communities. Therefore, the article focuses on the S community in Suzhou City, Jiangsu Province. By utilizing methods such as online interviews, field observations, and literature review, the analysis is conducted with the assistance of relevant theories on resilient governance. It identifies governance issues in the current transitional community and explores a unique development path.

2. Theoretical foundations:

Transitional communities, also known as "village to residential" communities or relocation communities, are a phased phenomenon developed during a specific historical period. After the 21st century, along with the reform of the fiscal and tax decentralization system, the pattern of economic development and urbanization has changed, and the impetus for the development of the local government has changed from "industrial finance" to "land finance". The development drive of local governments changed from "industrial finance" to "land finance". The development of urbanization is no longer purely industrialization-based industrial development and population gathering, but government-led "land enclosure movement" as the main form of "planned change". In this process, a large number of landless peasants were passively involved in the city, and the original form of rural settlements was cut up and resettled by the government in a unified community, i.e., a transitional community. In the process of development, transitional communities have also shown many unique characteristics, such as urban-rural dichotomy, dichotomy of social relations, dichotomy of governance structure, etc. Resilience governance, the word "resilience" first came from the physical field, describing the object can be quickly restored to its original state after deformation by external forces, describing the object has a strong buffer capacity and pressure resistance, and the concept has since been introduced into the field of public management. Resilient governance refers to the establishment of a resilient governance model, which can quickly and effectively respond to the risks and conflicts in the external environment and realize the stability and sustainable development of the field. In order to clarify the criteria of resilient governance, community resilience building is categorized into three levels and six dimensions with the help of the pyramid model, so as to identify the existing problems and suitable transformation strategies of S-communities in a more targeted way. The physical layer includes spatial resilience, technological resilience and facility resilience, which provide the physical foundation for community development; the institutional layer includes institutional resilience and organizational resilience, which provide the organizational system and governance model for community development; and the conceptual layer includes cultural resilience, which is the endogenous driving force for community development (see Figure 1).

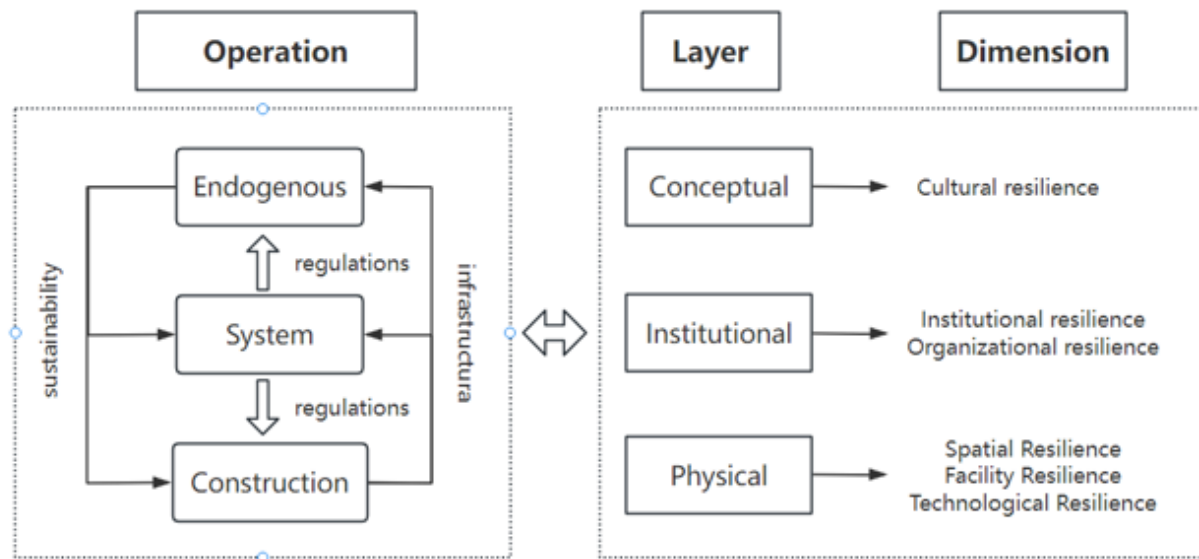


Fig.1 Pyramid model of community resilience construction

3. Status of cases

Located in the southernmost part of the Industrial Park, Community S of Xiantang Street in Suzhou City was established in 2009 when the municipal government approved the removal of villages and the establishment of residences, and was formed by the combination of several administrative villages that were relocated, including two relocated districts, namely, Z Homeland III and IV. According to the public data of Suzhou Industrial Park Management Committee, the total population of the community is 13,446, of which 1,234 households with 5,326 local residents and 8,120 foreigners have been registered. The location of the community is superior and the transportation is convenient, with a number of bus lines, such as No. 56 and No. 59, directly arriving at the entrance of the community; the community is well supplied with medical, cultural and recreational services, with a medical and health service station, a library, an activity room for the elderly, a basketball court, etc.; the community is richly equipped with shopping and eating venues, with a number of small restaurants, convenient supermarkets, banquet halls and so on.

At the physical level, because the S community was built relatively late, the internal and external planning of the community is more open and standardized, and the related infrastructure is sufficiently built to effectively meet the daily life needs of the residents. In recent years, the community has actively promoted digital transformation, equipped with more convenient and efficient equipment and facilities, and strengthened digital security measures such as monitoring and access control, so as to enhance the community's internal and external risk-resistant capacity; at the institutional level, there is generally a traditional street party committee governance model. Transitional communities are located between cities and villages, and community governance not only reflects the obvious urban street system of governance, but is also influenced by many traditional township rules and blood relations. Existing governance concepts and approaches are mostly "after-the-fact", i.e., measures are taken to address instability after it occurs, and the relevant preventive systems and technologies are low. At the cultural level, the community has built small theaters, movie screening rooms, gyms and other cultural participation facilities. The community regularly provides residents with holiday parties, cultural festivals, and invites relevant experts to conduct popular science lectures, etc.,

so the supply of cultural services is relatively adequate. Since 2010, Community S has been organizing a cultural week every year, adopting the approach of "the community sets the stage and the public sings the opera" to carry out different types of lecture tours, commentary performances and so on, so as to educate the public and make them enjoy themselves.

4. Analysis of existing problems in Community S

In order to clarify the specific objectives of community resilience construction, combined with the characteristics of grassroots governance in China, the pyramid model of community resilience construction is constructed, as shown in Figure 1. Community resilience construction consists of 3 levels, 6 dimensions including physical level of spatial resilience, no facilities resilience, technical resilience: institutional level of institutional resilience, organizational resilience: conceptual level of cultural resilience." The "3+2+" dimensions allow for the construction of a "big down, small up" Golden Hitchhiker pattern. The construction of community resilience in different dimensions has its own significance, among which, the "physical layer" formed by the combination of spatial resilience, facility resilience, and technological resilience constructs the physical construction system of the resilient community to lay the hardware foundation for the construction of the institutional layer and the conceptual layer; the institutional layer constituted by the institutional resilience and organizational resilience further forms the governance system of the resilient community to effectively operate on the physical layer and provide the foundation for the other dimensions to function effectively. The institutional layer composed of institutional resilience and organizational resilience further forms the governance system of the resilient community, which relies on the physical layer for effective operation and provides institutional support for the resilience construction of other dimensions; cultural resilience, as the conceptual layer, becomes the internal energy of the resilient community, and the construction of cultural resilience enables the five resilience dimensions in the community's physical and institutional layers to be enhanced in a sustainable manner.

4.1. Physical level

1. Ambiguity and disorganization of facilities

Community S lacked systematic thinking at the early stage of construction, resulting in crisscrossing roads and buildings within the community, which easily caused vehicle congestion during peak commuting hours; Community S's internal space is obviously modularized, and due to the lack of management of the community property, many residents privately occupy the community's public space, resulting in a lot of fragmented, courtyard-type grey space, which affects the community's resilience against risks; Community S's infrastructure construction is lightweight and well-equipped but neglects later maintenance. The infrastructure in Community S is lightweight and well-equipped but neglects maintenance at a later stage, for example, fire escapes and slow walking paths are well-built but often occupied due to a lack of management at a later stage, which affects their original performance; based on the low level of per capita income in Community S, the community is less equipped with emergency response facilities, and there is less planning for the public space for emergencies, and there is also less storage of emergency supplies.

2. Inefficient data sharing and ineffective technology integration

S community technology is poorly utilized, in risk warning, information sharing, smart community and other aspects to be enhanced, not fully applied and give full play to the advantages of digitization; S community staff in the data processing process is difficult to clarify the responsibilities, effective categorization of processing, multiple reports, duplication of statistics, data loss phenomenon is frequent, easy to cause data sharing inefficiency; data

sources are different channels, complexity and diversity, information fragmentation Obviously, it is difficult to ensure that the information is accurate and effective, and "laughter" events are frequent; the corresponding information feedback mechanism is also difficult to provide timely feedback to the residents, which is prone to a crisis of confidence.

4.2. Institutional level

1. Poor risk response mechanisms and neglect of prevention

Resilience governance throughout the community risk prevention before, during and after the whole stage, but in the governance mechanism of the S community, often the resources and forces are concentrated in the late stage of the risk, ignoring the prevention and regulation of the risk, and did not do an effective response; S community prevention exercise planning in form, the process is sloppy, the lack of effective emergency escape education; in the process of S community governance of the asymmetric rights and responsibilities of the various departments, without the formation of a scientific emergency treatment chain system, prone to the phenomenon of disconnection and decentralization, often easy to miss the golden time of emergency treatment. And the relevant accountability system is not clear, unable to effectively encourage the relevant personnel to fulfill their duties.

2. Poor synergistic governance and weak emergency response

At present, the governance model of Community S is still relatively traditional, and the participation and influence of the subjects in community governance is low, and it is difficult to ensure the full democracy and objectivity of community decision-making. On the one hand, Community S has not set up relevant ways for the subjects to participate in community governance, such as consultation meetings, democratic supervision, financial disclosure, etc., to ensure that the whole process of community affairs is clear and transparent; on the other hand, due to the limited capacity of autonomy in Community S, it is difficult to effectively organize the formation of a synergy among all the subjects in response to emergencies, and to reasonably divide the work according to different characteristics to respond to the crisis together.

4.3. Conceptual level

1. Insufficient sense of mastery and community culture

More than half of the residents in Community S are foreigners. As these people are mostly migrant workers, they are prone to rent changes, job changes and other factors to change their place of residence, so they have a weaker sense of belonging to the community, and a weaker motivation to participate in community building; even though Community S regularly carries out all kinds of cultural activities, they tend to satisfy only some of the specific groups, and often ignore the real cultural demands of the residents. At the same time, the participation of residents is low, and it gradually develops into a "face project". Community culture does not mean simple cultural activities, but should be the unique driving force of the community that can give warmth and motivation to the residents.

2. High degree of homogenization and prone to conflicts

The composition of the population in Community S is complex, and social affairs are numerous. The age difference, lifestyle difference, and income type of each group in the community are large, and the daily communication is very little, so the relationship between the residents is relatively thin. These differences can easily lead to an increase in the number of disagreements and even a surge in conflicts among the community residents, which makes the resilient governance of Community S more difficult; in addition, the heterogeneity of the composition of the residents in Community S can easily lead to the diversification of community affairs, such as the medical protection of the residents and the management of the migrant population, all of which are the challenges of transitional community governance.

5. Recommendations for countermeasures

5.1. Leveraging data integration

In the process of transforming Community S, it is important to adhere to top-level planning and systematically build a community resilience network. We should revitalize the available resources in the public space in the community, such as community plaza, warehouse, nucleic acid kiosk, etc., to prepare space for emergency evacuation and storage of materials, and check and ask residents to remove the "gray space" occupied by private individuals, so as to realize the fragmentation of polymerization, and enhance the spatial resilience. In the form of Community S's leading role and residents' active participation, the community inspects the internal infrastructure, overhauls and replaces old facilities to lay a good foundation for the resilience of facilities; Community S coordinates the stockpiling of relevant emergency items, strengthens the management of materials, and guarantees the stable supply of materials in emergency situations; in addition, the relevant personnel regularly guide the inspection of all kinds of emergency roads and emergency entrances and exits, and so on, so as to enhance the resilience of the community and standardize parking.

Modernized resilience governance cannot be separated from digital integration and innovation. Community S should make full use of the technical means to guarantee the smoothness of the whole process of data collection, analysis and sharing, to efficiently and accurately discover crises, prevent crises, and respond to crises; at the same time, to build a relevant early warning platform, implement long-term dynamic monitoring, and provide technical support for emergency management. In the development of technology at the same time pay attention to the training and introduction of talents, the data of the early warning platform is always analyzed for reliability, and it becomes the last line of defense to guarantee the accuracy and effectiveness of the data.

5.2. Utilizing collaborative governance

Community S should revolutionize the traditional risk response mechanism, changing the focus from response processing to early warning and prevention to minimize the impact of emergencies. The community committee should actively take the lead in organizing emergency escape education, learning about emergency response, and normalizing preventive drills. The whole exercise is well documented and evaluated, and relevant professionals are invited to correct errors throughout the process, so as to cultivate a more standardized way of emergency handling among residents. The community did a good job of the relevant accountability system, so as to standardize the behavior of community staff, to ensure that the entire process of data processing is accurate and error-free, in order to promote the S community governance to do a good job of institutional resilience.

Constructing resilient communities, S communities rely solely on government initiatives is completely infeasible, we must give full play to the initiative of each subject, multiple subjects of group efforts. In the whole stage of emergency management to actively guide the main body to participate in the construction of the formation of street government, community councils, community property, residents of the formation of the pluralistic governance pattern, through the consultative meeting to jointly decide on the response measures. At the same time, it is also necessary to give full play to the role of grass-roots party building, in the critical period to play a unifying role in party building, the rapid formation of the emergency community, improve the ability to integrate resources, so as to form the emergency response, promote the formation of organizational resilience.

5.3. Cultivating a cultural atmosphere

Cultural resilience, compared with physical resilience and institutional resilience, cannot be quantified, but it is an important internal driving force to promote the construction of resilient communities. In the face of the unique characteristics of the S community, the community should carry out publicity and education through multiple channels, through WeChat groups, community activities, board posters, consultative meetings and other forms of publicizing emergency knowledge, and to enhance the residents' sense of belonging to the community and sense of well-being, and to enhance the sense of community. When choosing community activities, the opinions of various groups should be widely solicited, so as to form a truly enjoyable community culture, improve the participation and enthusiasm of residents, and enhance the cultural resilience of the community in a truly effective way.

In order to avoid community conflicts and discomforts as much as possible, and to enhance the connection and communication of community residents, Community S should establish relevant conflict regulation mechanisms, such as building mediation committees, and seek credible resident representatives to formulate community conventions, so as to build a harmonious and harmonious resilient community; at the same time, Community S should communicate with the relevant governmental departments to explain the complex and special public affairs of community residents, and to provide as much as possible all kinds of social security. Community S should also coordinate the distribution of resources, take care of vulnerable groups, and form a fair and authoritative neighborhood committee, which is the most solid guarantee for a resilient community.

Concluding remarks

The resilience governance of Community S in Suzhou City has a long way to go, and it requires the joint efforts of many subjects based on the six dimensions of resilience discussed above to make specific and effective governance initiatives. Many of the above problems not only exist in the S community in Suzhou, but also limit and affect the resilience governance of many transitional communities. Transitional community city government, community residents, neighborhood committees and other multi-party subjects in the physical level must strengthen the maintenance of facilities, materials; in the institutional level to improve the response system, system innovation; in the cultural level to create community warmth, the formation of community awareness. The efforts of many parties can promote the construction of resilient governance in transitional communities and promote the construction of urban renewal.

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