

Practical Reflection on the Participation of Social Organizations in the Innovation of Grassroots Social Governance: Based on the Investigation of the "Liede Renjia" Social Work Service Project in Tianhe District, Guangzhou

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Abstract

As an important platform and carrier guided by the government, co-constructed by the masses, and participated in by all the people, social organizations have unique advantages in the practice of grassroots governance. In the process of practical promotion, social organizations inevitably face many difficulties and pain points. Solving the "peripheral dilemma" of grassroots governance and optimizing the social governance model of "one-yuan leadership and multi-yuan coordination" are of great significance in realizing the modernization of the national governance system and governance capabilities. Taking the "Liede Renjia" social work service project in Tianhe District, Guangzhou as a case, this study delves into the core role of social organizations in the process of grassroots social governance innovation from the dimensions of governance concepts, social resources, institutional mechanisms, multi-subject collaboration, and professional talents. It summarizes the current problems and challenges faced by social organizations participating in grassroots social governance, and further proposes improvement suggestions such as strengthening community autonomy, innovating service models, promoting information construction, strengthening multi-party cooperation, and cultivating professional talents, to provide a useful reference for promoting the efficient participation of social organizations in grassroots social governance innovation.

Keywords

Social organization, Grassroots social governance, Social work service, Community social organization, "Liede Renjia".

1. Introduction

In the wave of China's vigorous economic and social development, grassroots social governance is like a giant ship sailing in the ocean of change. At present, China is at a critical juncture of social development. While the rapid economic growth has brought prosperity, it has also posed many new challenges to grassroots social governance. As a key force in the field of social governance, social organizations play an important role in the process of innovation in grassroots social governance. Since 2012, Guangzhou has focused on deepening the reform of social organization registration and management, improving the system of nurturing and supporting social organizations, and perfecting the comprehensive supervision system of social organizations, blazing a "Guangzhou-style path" for the development of social organizations. However, at this stage, social organizations still face difficulties in the process of development, such as uncertainty in participation, difficulty in gaining social recognition, operational difficulties, and a single source of project funding. For social organizations to participate in the innovation of grassroots governance, it is necessary to strike a balance between the

authoritative guidance of policies and their own autonomous growth, and to explore more efficient and benign development paths. This is not only the key pain point for social organizations to overcome in the new era, but also an inevitable demand to promote the construction of a new pattern of grassroots social governance featuring joint construction, joint governance, and sharing[1].

As the first renovated urban village in Guangzhou, Liede Community is now surrounded by high-rise buildings and thriving businesses, significantly improving the living standards of its residents. Through the "Liede Renjia" social work service project, Liede Street has introduced professional social workers and volunteer service forces from third-party social organizations, successfully making up for the shortcomings of grassroots governance in the street and community, meeting the needs of community services, crossing the "last mile" of serving the masses, and promoting the rooting and development of social organization social work profession in the local area. The "Liede Renjia" social work service project has established an innovative model for grassroots governance of community services that highlights the trend of community culture, and has achieved certain results and influence in grassroots governance innovation.

2. The Current Situation of Guangzhou's Social Organizations Participating in the Innovation of Grassroots Social Governance

2.1. Social Organizations are Flourishing and Entering a New Era of Standardized Development

As of December 2023, the total number of registered social organizations in Guangzhou is close to 8000, with a total of 245 registered and recognized charitable organizations. Among them, the number of social organizations registered at the local level in Guangzhou reached 1627, the number of social organizations registered with 11 district level civil affairs departments reached 6337, the number of community social organizations registered and managed by streets reached 27000, and there are about 10 community social organizations in urban communities and 5 community social organizations in rural communities[2]. Social organizations are based at different grassroots levels and widely distributed in urban and rural communities. Taking the paradigms of "Five Society Linkage" and "Guangzhou Neighborhood" as reference, they have developed a new path of grassroots governance with distinctive Guangzhou characteristics.

2.2. Significant Cross Disciplinary Contributions, Highlighting New Responsibilities in Social Governance

Social organizations in Guangzhou are not only active forces in grassroots governance, but also key driving factors for social development in multiple fields. According to relevant media reports, in the past decade, social organizations in Guangzhou have gone to Xinjiang, Xizang, Guizhou and relevant counterpart areas in the province to successfully implement more than 2900 assistance projects in the field of poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, with a cumulative investment of more than 1 billion yuan in funds, materials and assistance[3]. In addition, in terms of optimizing the business environment, social organizations in Guangzhou have led or participated in the development of 38 local standards, which have been publicly announced on national platforms. In addition, more than 150 group standards have been registered and filed with the Guangzhou Market Supervision Bureau. At the forefront of grassroots governance, social organizations also play an indispensable role, closely building a grassroots autonomous service network, a stable guarantee grid, and a mutual aid and warmth platform, promoting high-quality and effective community governance, and promoting neighborhood harmony. For example, creating local innovative brands such as "Time Bank",

"Guangyi Joint Fundraising", "Renyi Huimin Love in Yangcheng" not only demonstrates the innovation and action power of social organizations participating in grassroots governance, but also becomes an important symbol of social governance innovation in Guangzhou, leading grassroots governance innovation to become a new trend of urban civilization.

3. Pain Points and Challenges of Social Organizations' Participation in Grassroots Governance Innovation

3.1. The governance Pattern Lags Behind

At present, when most social organizations in China participate in grassroots governance, they still continue the traditional management model of government led and social organizations only serving as supplements. This model lacks innovative thinking and is difficult to meet the development requirements of modern society. It not only constrains the autonomy and independence of social organizations in their own development, but also reduces the effectiveness of grass-roots governance. The backwardness of governance concepts has constrained the positive role of social organizations in grassroots governance innovation, manifested in the following aspects: firstly, there is a bias in the understanding of the role of social organizations, which still tends towards the traditional government led model; Secondly, there is a lack of cooperation and win-win ideas among various governance entities, which fails to fully leverage the unique advantages of social organizations; Thirdly, there is a lack of innovation drive and a lack of willingness and ability to actively explore new models and methods; Fourthly, the level of public participation is relatively low and the channels for participation are limited[4]; Fifthly, the sensitivity to community needs is insufficient, and the understanding of the actual needs of community residents is not deep enough[5].

3.2. Shortage of Social Resources

In the current social governance system, when social organizations participate in grassroots social governance, they are often constrained by resource factors such as funding, manpower, and technology, which greatly hinders the promotion of their innovative practices and the achievement of results. For example, there is a lack of funds to support the development of projects, the provision of services, and innovative practical activities; The shortage of professional talents and volunteers makes it difficult to meet the needs of governance innovation; Lack of necessary technical support and training in areas such as information technology application and data analysis; Insufficient supply of material resources such as public spaces and equipment has a negative impact on the progress of work; The channels for obtaining and sharing information are not smooth enough, making it difficult to fully utilize relevant data and knowledge resources; The cooperation network with other organizations, government departments, etc. is not yet perfect, and the ability to integrate resources is relatively limited. The shortage of such resources is highly likely to limit the role of social organizations in grassroots governance innovation and needs to be addressed through various means.

3.3. Shortage of Social Resources

The specific manifestations are as follows: firstly, the registration and registration process of social organizations is quite complex, with high thresholds, which greatly limits their opportunities for legal participation in governance; Secondly, the lack of clear and precise policy guidance and support has led to various difficulties and pain points for social organizations in the process of participating in governance; Thirdly, the channels for raising funds are not smooth, and there is a shortage of funds, which limits their ability to carry out activities and enhance projects; Fourthly, there is poor information flow between departments, making it difficult for social organizations to access necessary information resources, which has

a negative impact on their decision-making and actions; Fifth, the channels and methods for participating in social governance are relatively limited, and there is a lack of effective participation mechanisms; Sixth, the lack of incentive mechanisms for social organizations to participate in grassroots governance has affected their enthusiasm and initiative in participating. The above obstacles in terms of systems and mechanisms urgently need to be properly addressed and optimized in order to enable social organizations to participate more actively and effectively in grassroots governance innovation.

3.4. Difficulties in Coordinating Multiple Subjects

In the process of participating in grassroots governance innovation, social organizations will involve numerous stakeholders, but due to the difficulty of coordination and cooperation among them, it will have an impact on the collaborative effectiveness of governance. Taking the "Liede Renjia" social work service project as an example, the direct party of this project belongs to the relevant functional departments of the street. At the same time, this project is not only a district level brand comprehensive service body, but also a key brand project under the jurisdiction of the entire street. It is also within the scope of responsibility of the Liede Community Party Committee and Neighborhood Committee. When organizing events or visiting the public, this project will involve many stakeholders. Due to the diverse interests and demands of each entity, the implementation of the project will inevitably have an impact on the development, planning direction, and implementation effectiveness of third-party activities. Different entities often have different interests and demands, resulting in differences in resource allocation, decision-making, and other aspects. The lack of timely and sufficient information exchange between various parties can easily lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. The power relations are complex and intricate, and the power relations between multiple subjects are ambiguous, which may lead to power struggles and conflicts[6]. The allocation of limited resources among various entities may lead to competition, which in turn affects coordination and cooperation. The lack of consensus among all parties on governance goals, methods, etc. makes it difficult to form a strong synergy for collaborative action. To address these challenging issues, it is necessary to establish effective coordination mechanisms, strengthen communication and trust, clarify power and responsibility, optimize resource allocation, etc., in order to promote collaborative cooperation among multiple stakeholders and ensure the smooth progress of grassroots governance innovation.

3.5. Lack of Professional Talents

In the process of social organizations participating in grassroots governance innovation, there is a problem of extreme scarcity and high mobility of professional talents. For example, the lack of talents with professional knowledge and skills in social organizations, such as social work, public management, event planning, etc., has limited the quality and depth of innovation in grassroots social governance. Many members of social organizations lack practical experience in grassroots governance, making it difficult to address more complex practical issues in projects; Leaders and managers of social organizations may lack effective management and teamwork skills, leading to biases in the direction and understanding of innovation in grassroots social governance; The limited use of social organization funds, limited training and development funds for members, and imperfect systems have resulted in limited opportunities for talent quality improvement and training; Due to factors such as salary and job development opportunities offered by social organizations, there are difficulties in attracting and retaining talent.

4. Improvement and Suggestions on Social Organizations' Participation in Grassroots Governance Innovation

4.1. Strengthen Community Autonomy

Social organizations participate in grassroots governance innovation, organize and plan community activities during project service implementation, attract and support community residents to actively participate in governance, and strengthen the self-management ability of the community. One is to increase residents' participation and mobilize their initiative to participate in community autonomy through various channels. For example, the "Liede Renjia" social work service project provides a public welfare platform and opportunity for community residents to serve the community, participate in the community, and showcase their talents through public welfare markets, public welfare courses, specialized teaching, and intangible cultural heritage inheritance. Secondly, promote diverse community participation, encourage businesses, merchants, individuals, institutions, and government departments in and around the community to participate in self governance, and form a diversified community self governance participation pattern through forms such as activity collaboration and project cooperation.

4.2. Innovative Service Model

Social organizations participating in grassroots governance innovation need to continuously explore new service methods and mechanisms, and meet the diverse needs of community residents through innovative activity planning and service models. For example, the government adopts a project-based operation model to refine grassroots governance tasks into specific projects, which are implemented and managed by different professional social organizations in the form of project purchases, public welfare venture capital, etc., to improve the pertinence and efficiency of services; With the help of the "5G" information age, build the "Internet plus community service" model, build a community information sharing platform, provide convenient online services and resource sharing, enhance the transparency and convenience of governance, and improve the convenience and intelligence of community services; Cleverly utilizing cross-border cooperation models, collaborating with institutions in other fields of the community, integrating community resources, and achieving complementary advantages; Adopting a community project cooperation model, consensus is reached and agreements are signed with community neighborhood committees, property management companies, etc. in areas such as community elderly care, community education, community life, etc., to improve community services and entertainment experiences, and enhance the level of community services and residents' satisfaction.

4.3. Promote Information Technology Construction

Social organizations should introduce information technology based on the needs and characteristics of grassroots governance, formulate information construction plans, and clarify the goals, tasks, and measures of information construction; Vigorously strengthen the cultivation of information technology talents, comprehensively enhance employees' information literacy and professional skills. At the same time, we should be adept at utilizing and leveraging information technology to vigorously promote innovative development in grassroots social governance. For example, the Wangjing Street Community Service Center in Chaoyang District, Beijing has achieved the goal of information management for community services by building an information platform, thereby improving the efficiency and level of community services; The Community Affairs Acceptance Service Center in Zhangjiang Town, Pudong New Area, Shanghai has established an information platform to facilitate online handling of community affairs, providing convenience for residents and improving the efficiency and level of grassroots governance.

4.4. Strengthen Multi-Party Cooperation

Actively promote multi-party cooperation and collaboration among the government, social organizations, enterprises, and residents to build a new pattern of multi-party collaborative governance. When social organizations engage in grassroots governance innovation work, it is necessary to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in cooperation, in order to avoid confusion caused by unclear responsibilities; Maintain smooth communication channels among all parties in order to timely coordinate and handle emerging issues and conflicts during the cooperation process; By signing activity agreements, key elements such as cooperation goals, methods, rights, and obligations are clearly defined, effectively ensuring the smooth progress of cooperation; Jointly implement targeted projects, enhance mutual understanding among all parties, deepen trust, and improve cooperation effectiveness; Building a harmonious and inclusive community cultural medium, inspiring all parties to actively participate and contribute their own strength; Regularly evaluate the results of cooperation, timely summarize and generalize experiences and lessons learned, and provide strong reference for further optimizing cooperation. The government should issue relevant policies to provide more sufficient support and guarantee for social organizations to participate in grassroots governance innovation; Enterprises can establish cooperative relationships with social organizations through various forms such as donations, sponsorships, collaborative projects, and providing support (including technical support, market support, and management support) to help social organizations improve their work execution capabilities and skill levels; Social organizations can strengthen cooperation between each other, enhance organizational level, and improve cooperation efficiency through effective means such as joint action, resource sharing, experience exchange, forming alliances and federations.

4.5. Cultivate Professional Talents

Social organizations participating in grassroots governance innovation need to strengthen training for team members in grassroots governance and other aspects, enhance their professional qualities and abilities, cultivate professional talents through industry course training, cooperation with universities in talent cultivation, domestic and international exchange and learning, and improve incentive mechanisms. For example, closely monitoring activities and training related to social governance, actively encouraging employee participation, and enhancing employees' social awareness and understanding; Strengthen cooperation with universities to jointly cultivate talents in public management and related majors. Universities can provide professional teachers and teaching resources for social organizations, while social organizations can provide practical platforms and employment opportunities for universities, achieving mutual benefit and win-win results; Establish a talent training base that can develop corresponding training plans and curriculum systems based on the needs and characteristics of social organizations, in order to enhance the quality and effectiveness of talent cultivation; Social organizations can strengthen international exchanges and learning, draw on the experience and practices of grassroots governance innovation abroad, and improve their professional level and competitiveness; Social organizations should establish sound incentive mechanisms to attract and stabilize outstanding professional talents through measures such as increasing salary and benefits, providing career development opportunities, etc.

5. Conclusion

Social organizations, as one of the key entities in grassroots social governance, play a pivotal role in the innovation process of grassroots social governance. The practical exploration of the "Liede Renjia" social work service project in Tianhe District, Guangzhou provides experience and reflection for social organizations to participate in grassroots social governance. In the

future grassroots social governance, it is necessary to fully leverage the strengths of social organizations, strengthen their own construction, integrate various resources, innovate service models, cultivate professional talents, enhance community participation, and jointly promote innovation in grassroots social governance.

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