

# The Practical Dilemmas and Paths to Relief: The Role of Community Social Organizations in Community Governance

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## Abstract

The development of community social organizations to participate in community governance can meet the needs of China's political system and development, which is also an important aspect of the Chinese modern governance model. During the investigation of M Street, it was discovered that community social organizations mobilized community resources to meet the needs of residents through a project system and actively participated in community governance. Despite limited support, a lack of community capital, and imperfect construction, community social organizations still have a significant amount of development space. This paper is based on the coordination theory, using government support, collaborative mechanism construction, and the social organization itself as three rescue paths to promote the vitality of community social organizations to participate in community governance and improve governance efficiency.

## Keywords

Dilemma and Relief, Community Social Organization, Community Governance

## 1. Introduction

Community is the cornerstone of national governance, and also the most significant expression of building a social governance community and the modernization of Chinese style. As the leader of modernization, the government finds it challenging to address many public problems on its own. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the Party and the government have begun to adopt diversified

governance methods to deal with increasingly complex social problems, encourage and regulate the participation of social organizations and social forces, and give full play to the role of social organizations in community governance. As grassroots organizations, social organizations provide various services and support and play the role of social supervision and social mediation. This can provide more comprehensive and practical services for community governance, enhance effective government work, reduce government burden, and improve governance efficiency. As a result, social organizations have been fully recognized and have become an essential and crucial component of the governance model. However, with the change in the community governance structure and concept, there are still some problems in grassroots community social organizations in community governance, such as “administrative attachment” (Wan, 2022), “Lack of social trust” and “imbalance of internal development” (Hu & Cao, 2022). And the lack of benevolent norms for participating in community governance. These problems limit the efficiency of community social organizations in participating in community governance. To address this issue, the academic community has initiated a comprehensive discussion on the role of social organizations in community governance. First, with the optimization of the participation mechanism as the core, it emphasizes “delegating power,” “integrating resources (Wang & Wang, 2014),” and “changing social and cultural habits” (Zhou, 2018) on the practice path. Secondly, the development of social organizations as the center, from “internal management, talent team, professional quality” (Huang & Liu, 2022) to improve the ability of social organizations. In the past, research focused on “how social organizations function” and the analysis of “how the government operates” was lacking. This paper focuses on how community social organizations can transform from passive adaptation to active integration in the grassroots autonomous space and the difficulties they face in doing so. M Street is in the early stages of urban and rural integration, and the management and development of its community social organizations hold significant representative significance. This paper aims to clearly explain the above problems through the observation of M Street, using the perspective of synergy theory, and propose the appropriate practice path for rescuing community social organizations to participate in community governance and improve the efficiency of social governance.

## 2. Literature Review

The synergy theory, founded by German physicist Hermann Haken, aims to explore how different systems create organized structures through synergy. The theory defines synergy as “the cooperation between parts of the system to create new structures and features” (Hermann, 1988). Collaborative theory focuses on the changing law of the interaction between systems, among which synergistic effect is one of the core concepts. According to the synergy theory, through the synergy effect, the organization system and its subsystems can work together and connect to realize the overall amplification effect. As social problems become more complex,

it is difficult for the government to meet all its needs alone, so the theory of coordination has been introduced into social governance research, emphasizing the cooperation, consultation, and joint decision-making between multiple stakeholders (government, market, social organizations, and the public), and committed to solving social problems. The participation of social organizations in community governance, emphasizes the interaction between subjects and resource integration and pays attention to common goals and interests. Taking synergy theory as a theoretical analysis framework is important for social organizations to participate in community governance. First, to promote the integration and optimization of resource allocation. The theory of synergy emphasizes strengthening the synergy between different systems or subsystems. By strengthening the cooperation between various subjects, social organizations can integrate all kinds of resources, rationally plan and arrange them, and ensure that resources are effectively invested in key areas and promote resource utilization efficiency, service quality, and efficiency. Secondly, to enhance the system's cooperativity and stability. Collaborative theory requires internal parts of the system to form synergy. Efficient community governance requires the establishment of information sharing and business collaboration mechanisms, reducing internal conflicts, and maintaining service continuity and stability. Then, to promote service innovation and continuous improvement. Synergy theory encourages innovation and change and believes that synergy can bring new ideas and methods. Social organizations participate in community governance, and the innovation is reflected in the service mode, content, and means. Finally, to improve governance efficiency and social influence. The synergy theory improves the effectiveness of grassroots governance in community governance, promotes the transformation of government functions, realizes the optimization and integration of processes, strengthens the cooperation between social organizations and government departments, social organizations and community residents, forms an efficient governance mechanism, and jointly solve the questions.

Social organizations carry out various missions, such as providing civil affairs services, promoting grassroots governance, and addressing the needs of residents. This necessitates the high-quality realization of the government's procurement of social service mechanisms and the means of government-social coordination. However, in practice, there is often a conflict between the government and social organizations, between administrative requirements and professional services. Many literary works view professionalism and bureaucracy as opposing forces, leading to political and social instability and the lack of effectiveness in grassroots society. This study argues that social organization services can be considered an extension of government services and that social organizations and their professionalism are the keys to high-quality services. This paper proposes an analytical framework for party building and the coordination and co-construction of government and society, as well as an analysis of social organizations' involvement in grassroots governance.

### 3. Challenges: The Real Dilemma of Community Social Organizations Participating in Community Governance

Cultivating and developing community social organizations and promoting their involvement in community construction is crucial in promoting the social governance pattern of joint construction, joint governance, and sharing. M Street in Houston is undergoing urban-rural integration, which means that social organizations in the district face challenges such as a lack of specialization and a weak team. M Street has attempted to speed up the development of community social organizations. These organizations often exist, such as “initiative dependent community,” “lack of stable leader and core members” and “service scope is not clear” characteristics, lack of community public affairs continuous attention and participation in consciousness and ability, in addition, community lack of effective means to support the incubation, lead to community social organizations to participate in grassroots governance endogenous power. To this end, M Street has successively set up social organization service centers and social workstations, serving as an important carrier and professional platform for cultivating community social organizations and serving community residents. Since 2017, M Street has launched a public welfare venture capital project, advocating the village (community) to collect and select people’s livelihood needs through multiple channels, and operate with project-oriented branding, so that community social organizations can constantly refine themselves in service and fully mobilize residents to participate in the project operation mechanism, to achieve the purpose of sustainable development. The project answers the doubts of the community residents who have implemented targeted supply, stimulated social forces, cultivated social capital, and standardized the order of deliberation. However, the conflict between pluralism and administrative management, as well as the conflict between diversified demand and service supply, are also evident in the process of social governance within the jurisdiction.

#### 3.1. The Government’s Cultivation and Support Efforts Are Limited

The “single source” of community social organizations tends to prioritize the government’s intention or the donor’s unilateral enthusiasm over listening to community needs and addressing community issues (Li & Liu, 2012). There is insufficient support for community social organizations in M Street, hindering their role in community governance. The field investigation found that the M Street community social organizations mainly obtained funds in two ways. First, the street’s public welfare venture capital projects. Due to the limitations of full-time personnel and financial qualifications, most community social organizations can only apply for small-scale micro public welfare venture capital projects, and each project can only receive about 3000 yuan in financial support. Secondly, each village (community) entrusts or invites community social organizations to participate in important community activities and provides a small amount of funding. Due to limited operating funds, community social organizations lack motivation

for continuous operation, which limits their improvement in service capacity. As a result, the number of community services and activities is decreased, the quality of services is decreased, and the impact of these services is weakened, severely affecting the impact of community public services. Participating in community governance work carried out by the government may become complicated and tedious for community social organizations. When limited by resources and capabilities, when launching and promoting relevant activities, they are more inclined to prioritize their interests or activities, making it more challenging to actively integrate into community governance.

### **3.2. There Is a Lack of Development in Social Organizations Themselves**

The team of community social organizations on M Street is facing multiple challenges. Currently, most community social organizations are established through administrative directives, and the heads of these organizations are typically community workers. Due to the division of work and the fact that workload is not included in the performance appraisal scope, the community staff lacks enthusiasm for work. Furthermore, there are only a few full-time staff members in community social organizations and most of the members are part-time or volunteers. Despite their desire to participate in community public affairs and serve the residents and public welfare spirit of dedication, they also lack professional working methods and skills. In this context, community social organizations typically only meet the basic needs of residents and it is challenging to address deeper problems. Furthermore, community social organizations lack standardized management systems and restraint methods, and instances of individual will and inconsistent organizational ideas occur from time to time, which to some extent affects the service capacity and credibility of community social organizations.

### **3.3. Lack of Government and Social Coordination Mechanisms**

Most of the community social organizations in the jurisdiction of M Street were established through a joint government-community effort. Community workers also serve as leaders of community social organizations, which strengthens control over community social organizations but also limits their autonomy. Due to the limited resources and personnel of community social organizations, they are often unable to operate independently and must be connected to the community to thrive. For example, for community social organizations to provide services, determine service targets, and provide venues and facilities, they usually need to first make suggestions to the community and only after approval can they be implemented. Surveys have indicated that this phenomenon is widespread. A member of the Community Security Patrol Association told me, our work is organized based on the needs of the community, and security patrols are organized based on community groups. The dual dilemmas of insufficient access to resources and limited community resources lead to increased competition among community social

organizations, which in turn affects the collaborative ecology of social governance in the jurisdiction. For instance, in the F community's project to secure evening programs, there is a conflict between competing organizations vying for rehearsal space, which hinders the progress of the project and the rehearsal process.

### **3.4. Lack of Understanding of Governance Concepts**

In the realm of social governance, responsibility, rights, and incentive mechanisms are considered a natural unity (Yu & Ren, 2020). The "strong tube" still exists, and the significance of community social organizations in community governance has not been fully understood to some extent. Furthermore, the residents of the organization did not consider it to be a significant aspect of community governance, which hindered the development of community social organization functions. The implementation of the "one size fits all" management policy for professional social work service agencies and community social organizations creates many difficulties for community social organizations, hindering their desire to participate in community governance and growth. Improving trust and promoting resilience are the keys to promoting a community of social governance (Liu, 2020). Residents' involvement not only ensures a fair distribution of community residents to enhance the community power structure but also ensures their basic rights and interests, promoting the formation and improvement of a diverse governance pattern for communities.

## **4. Rescue: A Practical Approach for Community Social Organizations to Become Involved in Community Governance**

Community social organizations face numerous complex challenges when participating in community governance. In solving problems, we should not only start from the perspective of social organizations, but also actively involve the government, community, and social organizations in improving the mechanism, solving problems, and promoting the role of community social organizations.

### **4.1. Let the Government Policies Play a Full Role and Maximize the Soil for Organizational Cultivation and Development**

The key to developing community social organizations and community governance is the guidance of government policies. The guiding function of multiple governance modes and party-building leading measures can enhance the social recognition of community organizations to participate in grassroots community governance (Liu & Du, 2022). Grassroots governments should recognize that social organizations play a role in community governance alongside the government and market and that their characteristics of autonomy, non-profit, and public welfare have unique advantages in community governance. A grass-roots government can start by cultivating community social organizations through project purchases. When social power development is insufficient, the government can

use administrative resources to establish an organizational framework. In the area of community social organization promotion, they can also use mature community social organizations to support the weak foundation and implement “joint construction” measures to promote the development of community social organizations. In this process, the government plays a lead role and leads the implementation. The government supports the development of community social organizations through party-building projects, public welfare venture capital projects, and financial support and resource provision. Secondly, the government can implement policies to support organizational growth. Social organizations exhibit a “shunt trend,” professional social work institutions are gradually becoming specialized, while community social organizations are more localized. For two development trends, the grass-roots government in the management system should focus on cultivating ways and incentives, while also encouraging community social organizations to change their identity, and providing performance rewards. Furthermore, ginseng community social organizations that are involved in governance need stable financial support, and the government funds usually have a limited time frame. Therefore, expanding social funds and establishing a diversified fund pool are crucial for the sustainable development of community social organizations. Finally, focus on monitoring and evaluating service projects. Project supervision and evaluation are important ways to monitor the impact of community governance and promote the growth of community social organizations. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance the supervision of community social organizations that receive government purchase services or public welfare venture capital projects.

#### **4.2. Establish a Coordination Mechanism between the Government and Society and Strengthen the Foundation of Co-Governance in Grassroots Communities**

Promoting community social organizations to play their role in community governance is closely linked to promoting grassroots governments. As the backbone of community governance, community-level governments should provide special support to community-based social organizations. In the social governance community, although community social organizations are established with the community serving them, they are not subordinate to the community. The relationship between the two is not superior and subordinate, but rather, the main stakeholders who work together to effectively govern the community. Communities must link internal and external resources, coordinate roles, conduct detailed resident demand surveys and activities to provide support and services, improve community democratic decision-making mechanisms, give social organizations in community public affairs governance consultations and decision-making participation, promote social organization effective participation in decision-making, and promote the linkage between members’ mechanisms. Social organizations should also enhance their organizational structure, enhance their service capacity,

and reduce dependence on their communities. The growth of community social organizations requires active involvement from residents and community mobilization can lead to better development. Institutional incentives and community activities that are based on residents' needs and interests can attract "joint participation" from young and young people, optimize the organizational structure, establish a virtuous circle, and strengthen everyone in the community. Orderly participation and solidify the foundation for community building.

### **4.3. Promoting Organizational Competence and Increasing Organizational Participation in Capital**

Community social organizations should support their initiatives, adhere to reform and innovation, continuously improve management level, efficiency, and standardization, and establish a healthy and sustainable management and operation system. To achieve sustainability and stability, it is necessary to enhance the transparency and credibility of the organization, improve internal training, exchange, and learning, optimize the talent structure, and allocate resources. Firstly, the structure of the talent team is crucial. Unlike professional social work agencies, community social organizations cannot attract talent solely through compensation. Therefore, community social organizations should focus on discovering talents with appropriate age, volunteer awareness, and love, to become the reserve force of the organization. The role of local emotions and interpersonal networks is an essential factor, and at the same time, attention should be paid to fostering emotional connections between the top dog of the organization and the community residents. Secondly, the community service resource base is crucial. Rich community social capital and informal networks are the most valuable resources for community social organizations, and they are also the main drivers of their growth. Most community leaders in social organizations are also "community elites," well aware of the importance of community social capital and informal networks. Based on existing resources, community social organizations should enhance organizational management and project management, and integrate the use of existing resources to support community services. Finally, it's crucial to enhance collaboration between organizations and establish a distinctive project brand. Currently, most community social organizations are still in a state of decentralization and there is the issue of "doing their own thing," which can effectively promote cooperation between organizations and realize collective interests. Furthermore, the development of community social organizations must clarify their position, expand in favorable areas, establish a distinctive brand, win the support and recognition of the government, the community, and the public, and ensure the sustainable development of the organization.

## **5. Conclusion**

Community-based social organizations face significant difficulties in building a social governance community, such as limited government support, a lack of

development within the organizations, a lack of a mechanism for collaboration between the government and society, and a lack of understanding of governance. To overcome these challenges, grass-roots governments need to work together with social forces from all walks of life to create an environment that is more conducive to the development of social organizations, to enhance their influence and credibility. In this process, the grassroots government should actively explore and experiment with the system and policy, advocate for wider civil participation, and involve community social organizations in starting specific problems, giving full play to their advantages, and continuously innovating to promote community governance in a more benign direction. First, adhere to the leadership of the party building and emphasize the political attributes of social organization services. The basic principle of social organization services is to rely on the residents, encourage their participation, enhance community services, and be responsible for promoting the development of grassroots social governance and maintaining social stability and harmony. Secondly, deepening the synergy between the government and society and highlighting the professional barriers is crucial to the high-quality development of social organizations. The involvement of social organizations in community governance requires the support of necessary social resources. The government, as the main organization responsible for purchasing services, has significant authority and advantages in mobilizing social resources for grassroots social services. The government can provide necessary policies, funds, and personnel support for the construction and development of social organizations. When providing social services, social organizations should fully utilize the professional and social aspects of social work, adopt professional and diverse service strategies to meet the needs of grassroots people, strengthen the interaction and collaboration between the government and social organizations, and jointly promote the optimization of the grassroots social governance system. Thirdly, enhancing talent training and conducting performance evaluations are crucial in ensuring high-quality services. The government and social organizations provide professional and psychological support to social workers through ongoing education and training, focus on talent development, establish a supervision mechanism to meet the growth needs of local social work talent, and introduce third-party assessment agencies to conduct performance evaluation, support social organizations in their internal control and management work, and maximize the effectiveness of social services.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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