A Study on the Collaborative Governance Mechanism for the Renovation of Old Communities in Chengdu

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ABSTRACT

As China's urban development shifts from the era of increment to the era of stock, urban development gradually changes to the implementation of urban renewal, focusing on quality improvement. The renovation of old communities has become an important issue in China's urban development. Based on the practice of old community renovation in Chengdu, this paper adopts stakeholder theory and collaborative governance theory, taking use of literature study and interview to investigate the collaborative governance of multiple subjects in the renovation of several old communities in Chengdu, to analyze the current situation of collaborative governance of multiple subjects in the renovation of old communities, and the problems and reasons, so as to construct a realization mechanism for collaborative governance of multiple subjects in the renovation of old communities.

Keywords: Renovation of old communities, collaborative governance, realization mechanism

1. INTRODUCTION

As the basic unit that makes up society, the community is the most basic organization of social governance. China attaches great importance on community governance. The effectiveness of community governance is closely related to the happiness, sense of access and security of residents, and is also an important factor affecting the modernization process of social governance in China[1]. The successful renovation of old communities is conducive to improving the construction of China's people's livelihood and satisfying the growing needs of residents[2].

Although domestic scholars have conducted a wide range and a large number of studies on the governance of old communities, while, there are fewer studies on the synergistic relationship among the subjects in the renovation of old communities, and the synergistic mechanism of the subjects in the transformation of typical old communities is not sufficiently revealed. Therefore, based on stakeholder theory and collaborative governance theory, this study analyses the behavior of multiple subjects in the renovation of old communities through field research, and actively explores the realization mechanism of collaborative governance of multiple subjects in the transformation process of old communities. In order to enhance the effectiveness of community governance, provide a basis for government to formulate relevant policies and provide a reference for urban development to solve bottlenecks.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE SYNERGISTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MULTIPLE SUBJECTS IN THE RENOVATION OF OLD COMMUNITIES

2.1 Government and Residents

There are two relationships between the government and residents in the renovation of old communities. One is the entrusted-agent relationship between the government and residents. The government, as an agent, exercises the public rights entrusted by the residents. By transforming the public space of the old community as well as the private space of the residents, the government satisfies the needs of the residents of the old community to improve the community environment and ultimately safeguards the fundamental interests of the community residents. On the other hand , there is a supervisory and supervised relationship between the government and residents. Community residents monitor government actions. The street office will take the lead in organizing the establishment of an old district industrial committee

or yard committee, pooling residents' views on renovation and proposing community renovation project motions. Relevant government departments at the district level formulate implementation plans and prepare funding budgets based on the community transformation assessment projects proposed by the street offices. The whole process is based on the basis of residents' voluntariness. Residents can raise about the project proposal and the project implementation process, and the relevant departments should explain or correct the relevant questions[3].

2.2 Community Committees and Residents

Firstly, residents and neighborhood committees in old community renovation work are in a delegated agency relationship. From a legal point of view, community neighborhood committees are grassroots mass self-governance organizations, and community neighborhood committee members are elected by Residents' Representative Assemblies, who represent the general interests of community residents. Community committees propagandas the reform policies by sweeping buildings and holding dam meetings before renovation. The community councils can collect residents' opinions on the renovation in these ways and give them to the street office. With the residents' mandate, they monitor the implement of the project during the renovation process and mediate any disagreements that occur. Secondly, there is a cooperative relationship between the community committees and residents. The community committee guides the residents of the community or compound to set up an industry committee and a yard committee to collect and summarize the residents' opinions at the early stage of the formation of the program, and at the same time play a supervisory role in the construction process, so as to alleviate the contradictions between the community and the residents and reduce the sense of alienation by means of self-governance.

2.3 Social Organizations and Residents

The relationship between social organizations and residents is one of service provision and supervision. Social organizations undertake community projects to provide various services to residents, including community atmosphere creation, community social organization cultivation and micro-renovation project implementation. The community project focuses on enhancing the details of the community. Community social organizations have good communication with residents in terms of policy promotion and opinion collection on the renovation of old communities. Many residents are also part of the community social organizations and are actively involved in the projects, while they also play a supervisory role over the social organizations[4].

In summary, the definition of multiple subjects in the renovation of old communities and their interrelationships are shown in Figure 1.
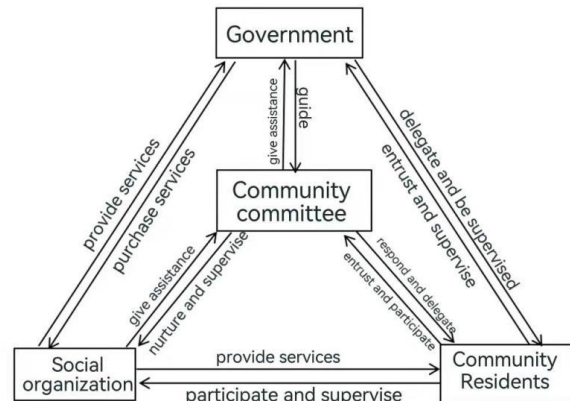

Figure 1 Interrelationship of multiple subjects

3. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS AND REASONS OF COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE OF MULTIPLE SUBJECTS IN THE RENOVATION OF OLD COMMUNITIES

3.1 Problems of Collaborative Governance of Multiple Subjects in the Renovation of Old Communities

3.1.1 Subject Lacking

In the renovation of old communities, some community residents are not highly motivated to participate in and their participation effectiveness is limited. Regarding the renovation of public space, residents are indifferent to renovation that does not involve their own personal interests, but if it is related their own interests, such as the setting of rubbish bins and the installation of lifts, it will bring great resistance to the renovation. In addition, as many of the tenants in old communities are not house-owners, they have no time to care or are unwilling to participate in the renovation of old communities. There are also many residents who believe that the responsibility for renovation lies with the government and have a free-rider motivation, so the absence of residents' subject is more common.

3.1.2 Imbalance of the Power Structure Among Subjects

After the reform and opening up, the management method has changed from the traditional "unit management" to "community governance", with community governance taking over a large number of management and service functions previously undertaken by the government and units. However, in the actual process of community governance, the street offices hold

the power of appointment and dismissal and the financial power of the neighborhood committees. The government has the final decision right in the renovation of old communities, while the neighborhood committees have become the medium for carrying administrative power and cannot fully exercise their autonomy. Chengdu started the renovation of old courtyards from 2015, but the government set the conditions for applying for the renovation of old communities, resulting in many old communities not being able to start the renovation because they could not meet the conditions. This power setting, where the government sets the policy from the government end and ignores the actual power of the residents in the neighborhood, has resulted in a weak voice for the residents in the center of the local transformation and an imbalance in the inter-subjective power structure[5] .

3.1.3 Insufficient Inter-subject Communication and Synergy

The renovation of old communities is a systematic project, and the renovation process involves many functional departments. However, in the actual renovation process, different subjects are only responsible for their own work, and there is insufficient linkage between subjects. Policies on the renovation of old communities need to be handed down from the government to the community, and there is a problem of information asymmetry between different levels of government. There are certain biases in the communication and exchange of policies within the government. If policies from higher levels are not communicated properly or are even missed, this can directly affect the effectiveness of old community transformation. There is also a disconnect between the community committees and the government, as residents' suggestions are not fed back to the government through the community in a timely manner, thus creating a time barrier in communication and resulting in opinions not being conveyed in a timely manner.

3.2 Reasons of the Above Mentioned Problems

3.2.1 Insufficient Construction of Relevant Subjects

In the actual transformation work of old communities, the participation of social organizations and community residents is very limited. As far as social organizations are concerned, the social organizations in the community are mainly incubated by the community, and there are fewer professionally trained community workers, who lack the support of professional knowledge and play a limited role. Furthermore, the residents of old communities are mostly elderly people, who have very limited participation awareness and understanding of the transformation of old communities. At the same time, due to the rapid population movement and unstable personnel structure in old communities, residents generally lack a sense of community identity and belonging.

3.2.2 Lack of Communication Platform for All Subjects

On the one hand, the synergistic mechanism between the various functional departments within the government involved in the renovation of old communities has not yet been established, leading to independent actions by different departments of different projects involved in the renovation of old communities, resulting in poor communication. On the other hand, the implementation of policies and the communication of information is top-down, and the transmission of policies on the renovation of old communities passes through multiple levels, resulting in poor transmission of policy information. There is a lack of regular communication between the residents' committee and the residents, and the information that the residents learn about is fragmented, and the residents' supervision of the renovation project can be somewhat restricted. In the renovation process, a communication platform between different subjects has not been established, and there is a lack of a communication platform where multiple subjects can participate together.

3.2.3 Insufficient Policy and Legal Protection

No special legal documents have been formed in China regarding the transformation work of old communities. Although relevant provisions involving the transformation of old communities can be found in property management regulations, urban and rural planning laws, property rights laws and other laws and regulations, they are not systematic, and the laws are not clear about the subjects, the renovation modes, funding sources and post-management. The work of old community renovation is often based on relevant policies, which are weak legally binding, and so lead to difficulties in supervision and control. At the same time, due to the lack of laws, regulations and relevant systems for the collaborative governance of multiple subjects in the community, there is a lack of legal basis for the supervision of the subjects, and residents' rights to participate and supervise in the process of old community renovation are not guaranteed.

4. CONSTRUCTION OF A COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE MECHANISM FOR MULTIPLE SUBJECTS IN THE RENOVATION OF OLD COMMUNITIES

4.1 Establish a Mechanism for Participation Motivation

Firstly, raise the awareness of participation of multiple subjects. The government and the community should actively guide and provide good support in terms of institutional and social environment. Cultivate residents' sense of ownership, increase their voice in decision-making on the transformation of old communities, and enhance their sense of community identity and belonging as well as their sense of participation. Secondly, establish and improve incentive mechanisms. Government should provide financial subsidies and incentives to communities with outstanding results. Establish a mechanism for coordinating the interests of multiple subjects. Old communities should be transformed with the public interest in mind and with as little self-interest as possible. Establish a mechanism for the expression of interests, build a platform for the expression of demands and, when conflicts of interest are inevitable, resolve disputes between subjects through diverse means.

4.2 Establish a Communication and Coordination mechanism

First, improve the communication mechanism within the main body. Rationalize the responsibilities and authority of city departments, planning bureaus and city management committees, etc. In the renovation work of old communities, strengthen communication and cooperation, and establish an internal governmental linkage mechanism. Secondly, improve the communication mechanism between multiple subjects. Establish a platform for communication and deliberation between multiple subjects such as the government, community committees, social organizations and community residents. Effective communication between different subjects can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the transformation of old communities. Vertical and horizontal information channels within government departments should be kept open up, and top-down policy communication and exchange of information between different levels of government should be symmetrical, with particular emphasis on bottom-up information feedback from grassroots community workers. Full use can be made of big data and Internet technology to build an intelligent information sharing platform to improve the efficiency of information transmission.

4.3 Establish an Operational Guarantee Mechanism

First of all, a perfect legal system is a guarantee to promote the smooth implementation of the transformation of old communities in China. The rights and obligations of multiple subjects in the renovation of old communities should be clarified through laws and regulations. In addition, the law should clearly stipulate the content, participation methods and the process of carrying out projects for the participation of multiple subjects in the renovation of old communities, so as to provide a legal basis for the collaborative governance of multiple subjects. Secondly, the behavior of the plural subjects should be supervised and restrained. The duties and powers of the plural subjects in the transformation of old communities can be defined in the form of laws and regulations or institutions, and their behavior can be supervised. In addition, the transformation of old communities concerns the vital interests of community residents, so the supervision and restraint of community residents on other subjects is the most direct and effective. Finally, a funding mechanism for the renovation of old communities should be established. The government should increase its financial support for old communities and give full play to the government's support and underwriting role. At the same time, social funding should be promoted, and existing community resources should be used to expand the sources of funding; enterprises and charities should be encouraged to set up funds for the transformation of old communities, thus building a funding mechanism that includes multiple forces such as the government, communities, enterprises and charitable organizations.

5. CONCLUSION

With the development of China's economy and the acceleration of the urbanization process, community governance in China is facing major challenges. The previous monolithic governance model of the government has failed to adapt to the current community development, and the collaborative governance of multiple community subjects is different from the previous monolithic governance model of the government, as the subjects of community governance include the government, community social organizations, community residents and community residents' committees, and other multiple subjects, while more emphasis is placed on democratic consultation and friendly cooperation among multiple subjects.The governance of old urban communities is a difficult but crucial part of community governance. Based on the practice of old community renovation in Chengdu, this paper adopts stakeholder theory and collaborative governance theory, taking use of literature study and interview to investigate the collaborative governance of multiple subjects in the renovation of several old

communities in Chengdu, to analyze the current situation of collaborative governance of multiple subjects in the renovation of old communities, and analyse the problems and causes of these problems, so as to construct a realization mechanism for collaborative governance of multiple subjects in the renovation of old communities. The following conclusions can be drawn.

First, collaborative governance of multiple subjects is a new choice of community governance. This paper defines the multiple subjects involved in the transformation of old communities, which include the government, community committees, social organizations and community residents. Improving the participation capacity of the main actors and promoting cooperation and exchange among them will not only help to better promote the renovation of old communities, but also improve the current situation of old community governance and enhance the overall governance capacity of the community.

Secondly, through the study of relevant policies and the use of interviews to understand the participation of multiple subjects in the transformation of old communities in Chengdu, this paper defines the multiple subjects involved in the transformation of old communities and summarizes the relationship between multiple subjects in the transformation process of old communities. It is found that there are problems such as the absence of subjects, the lack of communication and coordination between different subjects, and the imbalance of power structure between subjects in the transformation of old communities. At the same time, the causes of the above problems were analyzed, including the lack of construction of multiple subjects and their own capacity, the lack of communication platforms and poor communication channels between multiple subjects, as well as the inadequacy of the legal system and insufficient institutional protection.

Thirdly, by analyzing the problems and causes of collaborative governance of multiple subjects in the process of old community renovation, this paper argues that a mechanism for collaborative governance of multiple subjects in old community renovation should be constructed to promote the participation of multiple subjects in old community renovation, strengthen the friendly cooperation among them and ultimately promote the realization of collaborative governance of old communities. Specifically, this paper argues that the mechanism should be constructed from three aspects, namely, the motivation mechanism for the participation of subjects, the communication and coordination mechanism and the operation guarantee mechanism.

This paper attempts to promote the renovation process of old communities and improve the effectiveness of the renovation work by constructing a collaborative governance mechanism for multiple subjects in the renovation of old communities. However, there are certain limitations in the study, and it is hoped that this issue can be further studied in depth in the future.

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