

Chinese Community Governance Under COVID-19: Grid Governance

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes the grid governance under China's epidemic prevention and control as the research object, and through reading literature and news reports as well as visiting some communities on the spot, it summarizes the operational mechanism of the grid response to the epidemic from four aspects: top-level design, subject coordination, technical support, and transaction processing. In addition, it also analyzes the shortcomings of grid governance under the COVID-19 epidemic, so as to explore the improvement strategies of grid governance in emergency.

Keywords: Grid governance, Community governance, COVID-19.

1. INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic in December 2019 has caused disastrous consequences all over the world, not only plundering hundreds of millions of people's lives, but also causing serious economic shutdown. The control of the epidemic should not only rely on the medical and health means of vaccination, but also require the government to change the form of governance in the community. Different from community governance in most countries, China has adopted grid governance, a unique governance method in the COVID-19 epidemic, and achieved remarkable epidemic prevention results. What is grid governance? How does grid governance work in the epidemic? What problems have arisen in the process of governance? This paper will focus on the above content to explore the epidemic grid governance in China, with a view to providing ideas for other countries that are suffering from the epidemic.

2. THE CONNOTATION OF GRID GOVERNANCE: ORIGIN AND CONCEPT

Grid governance originated from the development of Internet technology in the 1990s. With the Internet distributed system, the grid

integrates high-speed Internet, high-performance computers, large databases, etc. to realize the comprehensive sharing of computing resources, storage resources, information resources, knowledge resources, etc., and eliminate information isolated islands and resource isolated islands.[1] Its essence is to coordinate all parties to realize the idea that the sum of parts is greater than the whole. Grid governance extends to the field of social management by using this concept, including both a set of advanced information technology and a new management thinking, that is, using information technology to integrate all resources to form a huge organic management system.

Before grid governance, China's grass-roots governance level was "two-level government, three-level management, and four-level network", that is, a community neighborhood committee was set up under the municipal government, district government, and sub-district office for residents' autonomy. As the most grass-roots organization, the neighborhood committee plays a dual role: it should not only undertake a large number of administrative affairs and party building activities, but also deal with internal contradictions among the masses. The heavy task makes the neighborhood committee have no time to spare. In order to reduce the burden of the neighborhood committee and improve the management efficiency, China has set up a first-level grid unit under the neighborhood

committee to assist in governance with the emerging Internet information technology. There are three key points of grid governance. The first is to refine the scope of jurisdiction. The network map technology takes the size of space or the number of residents as the dividing standard, and forms a grid to form a management unit, which greatly reduces the scope of management. The second is to advocate multi-party autonomy. Grid governance advocates the co-governance of government, society and market. Each grid is equipped with a management team, whose members include the directly responsible grid members and the connected neighborhood committee members, residents' representatives or members of the owners committee, and the property manager appointed by the property management company. The contradictions in the grid are discussed and decided by the management team to achieve the goal of "minor matters don't go out of the grid, big events don't go out of the community". The third is to be driven by big data. With the support of Internet information technology, grid members upload the collected information and data to the cloud computing center, which can monitor potential social risks and develop data application products, so that community residents can dynamically understand the community situation. Dongcheng District of Beijing initiated the practice of grid governance, dividing the entire urban area into 1539 grid units with a unit of 10000 square meters, equipped with 350 grid members to monitor the urban components in the grid under its jurisdiction, and established the urban management command center and the urban management supervision and evaluation center to carry out resource allocation and operation supervision.[2] If the grid governance in Dongcheng District of Beijing is the management of "things", then the grid governance in Zhoushan City of Zhejiang Province is the service of "people". Zhoushan City divided 100-150 households into a grid based on families, and the city altogether divided 2360 grids. Each grid was equipped with a service team, and residents could also query services on the information management system to achieve "grid management and group service".[3] In addition to the above two models, China has also formed typical community grid governance models such as "一本三化 (people-oriented, grid management, information support, and whole-process service)" of Yichang in Hubei Province and city and countryside integration of Qixia in Nanjing.

Therefore, Chinese local scholars generally believe that grid governance is to divide social governance objects into several basic units according to certain standards, and use modern information technology to conduct fine governance of people, places, objects and things in the grid, so as to achieve the goal of governance subject coordination, resource integration, information sharing and seamless government process reengineering.[2] This paper agrees with this view and constructs the analysis framework of the following article based on it. The essence of grid governance is to delegate administrative power to the grass-roots level, but also to curb administrative power through multiple subjects, improve management efficiency through information technology, and better conduct social control and social services. Therefore, grid governance is more like the administrative game in China, which is embodied in the power division of traditional sectors and the integration of information management platforms, and the unilateral decision-making of traditional grass-roots governments and the collective decision-making under the co-governance of multiple entities. Besides, China's various practices in combating the COVID-19 have clearly demonstrated the advantages of grid governance and gradually reflected the public's awareness of co-governance.

3. RELATED RESEARCH

Most of the existing studies focus on the common governance space from the perspective of grid daily management. For example, Jean CM of Harvard University examined the possibility of grid people's autonomy from four aspects: the study of the central leaders' discourse of the Chinese government, the recruitment criteria of grid members, the tasks of grid members and the evaluation of grid members' work. He believed that the current grid governance is invisible government control. "The premise of providing services is that residents should abide by the control of the government".[4] Lena Y once combed the community governance in China and believed that the essence of multi-party regulation is still the control of the government.[5] Luigi Tomba pointed out that the multi-stakeholder advocated in China has increased social contradictions.[6] However, Thao Nguyue[7] and Yousun Chung[8] conducted a field survey of the community management system in Shanghai, China, and both believed that the current community management power was increasingly delegated to the society and the market,

and the neighborhood committee was gradually decentralized, which not only enhanced the people's sense of participation, but also freed the neighborhood committee from cumbersome affairs. Beibei T conducted a field survey of 145 communities in Shenzhen, Suzhou and Guangzhou, China, and believed that the grid governance model has gradually become the main way to mobilize residents for political participation and resolve community conflicts.[9] After reviewing the strength of community governance in China, Read has successively published articles claiming that with the rise of closed communities in China, the people's power of autonomy will gradually increase.[10][11][12] Many other studies also believed that this measure could enhance social cohesion[13] and improve residents' sense of identity[14]. China's localization research also noted the above advantages of daily grid governance, but also recognized the problem of unclear functional separation between government management and mass autonomy in practical operation, and called for the reconstruction of the relationship between government and society, and the clarification of the boundary between management and autonomy.[15][16][17]

Since the outbreak of the epidemic, grid governance has shifted from routine management to emergency management. At present, scholars have introduced China's grid governance measures under the epidemic. For example, Chen Ling has been calling for the necessity of grid governance at the beginning of the epidemic.[18] Later, Yujun Wei summarized the main measures of grid governance in China under the epidemic situation, and took two living communities and two student dormitories as examples to present the case.[19] Tianke Zhu combed the development process of grid governance in China and believed that its advantages were the inevitable choice to deal with the epidemic.[20] On the whole, the current research on China's grid governance focuses on the normal daily governance, while the research on COVID-19 epidemic, an unusual public event, is rare. The only little literature is just a superficial review of governance means, and has not yet explained the overall operating mechanism and its shortcomings. However, a large number of studies in China have shifted from everyday life to emergency, deeply reflecting on the advantages and disadvantages of grid governance in response to the epidemic, and seeking improvement measures.[21][22][23] Therefore, paying attention to the latest grid governance under the COVID-19

epidemic in China is not only conducive to mastering the development and change forms of grid governance, but also can understand how China carries out co-governance under the epidemic, and explore the space for co-governance.

This paper focuses on the grid governance under China's epidemic prevention and control, summarizes the operational mechanism of grid response to the epidemic through literature search and field visits, and explores the common governance space of grid governance in the emergency. In addition, through in-depth interviews with grid residents and grid members, this paper also understands the shortcomings and causes of grid governance, and attempts to reflect on its negative consequences.

4. OPERATION MECHANISM OF GRID GOVERNANCE UNDER THE COVID-19

The operation mechanism of grid governance under the COVID-19 is like a running train, which is composed of three parts: locomotive pulling, wheel support, and carriage connection. The locomotive corresponds to the top-level design, the wheel corresponds to the subject coordination and technical support, and the carriage corresponds to the transaction processing groups in the community grid. These three parts have promoted the continuous progress of China's epidemic prevention work and achieved remarkable success.

4.1 Top-level Design

At the level of prevention and control deployment, Chinese leader Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized "weaving a tightly knitted community prevention and control network and implementing strict grid management". He also went to the grassroots to conduct "a dissected sparrow" research and made successive deployments on community prevention and control and grid management, emphasizing that communities should play a major role as the "last line of defense and control" of the epidemic. [24-28] On January 20, 2020, the country established the Central Leading Group for Epidemic Response, and the National Health Commission led the establishment of a joint epidemic prevention and control mechanism. There are 32 departments in the member units, including divisions of epidemic prevention and control, medical treatment, scientific research, publicity, security and other

working groups. On January 26, 2020, Premier Li Keqiang of the State Council presided over a meeting of the Central Leading Group on Epidemic Response again, stressing that "we should attach great importance to the prevention and control of rural epidemic, give full play to the role of grass-roots organizations and village doctors, and strengthen mass prevention and control." [29] Each grass-roots community quickly established epidemic prevention and control working groups as required to form a vertical epidemic prevention system of province-city-district-street-community-grid, and established the epidemic prevention and control management mechanism based on the community. Since then, China has gradually formed an emergency management mechanism from the central government to the grass-roots level, from the government to the people, with joint prevention and control by the government and group prevention and control by the grass-roots community complementing each other.

In addition to the prevention and control deployment, governments at all levels have also successively issued relevant policy notices, clarifying the community as the primary link of prevention and control. The central joint prevention and control work mechanism requires "to effectively implement community-based comprehensive epidemic prevention and control measures, fully mobilize community organizations, and implement grid and carpet management" [30]; the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the National Health Commission have repeatedly reaffirmed that "we must give full play to the basic role of community prevention and control in epidemic prevention and control", and "further improve the epidemic prevention and control work in urban and rural communities". [31] and have issued the Precise and Refined Guidance Program for Community Prevention, Control and Services for the COVID-19 Epidemic, listing different levels of prevention and control strategies according to different epidemic risk levels. [32] Many local governments have also issued policies related to regional economic growth, resumption of work and production, and education and teaching. They also require all communities to strictly implement epidemic prevention measures, strengthen the management of floating population, implement traffic health quarantine, organize residents to learn the laws and regulations related to provincial public health events, and carry out mass prevention and treatment.

4.2 Subject Coordination

Under the requirements of the group prevention and control mechanism, it is an inevitable trend for the community to cooperate in epidemic prevention, which also distinguishes the community epidemic prevention in China and other countries. In other countries, the community epidemic prevention model that residents can directly feel is "consciousness + police patrol", which assists local charitable organizations. The community shows the characteristics of less governance subjects and decentralized governance power. But in China, on the contrary, there are at least three forces of "government, market and society" working together in a grid, which stems from China's housing commercialization reform. Before the end of the 1990s, urban housing was uniformly distributed and managed by work units. [33] However, with the full implementation of market-oriented reform in China, the State Council also tried to establish the urban housing system. At the end of the 1990s, China implemented the "commercialization of housing" in stages, changing the system of building, distributing, maintaining and managing housing by the state and units into a socialized and specialized operation system. Since then, the management of residential housing has shifted from the work unit to the joint management of neighborhood committees, residents and property companies. A grid can contain several closed communities, forming the management level of neighborhood committee — grid — closed community. The neighborhood committee is responsible for the overall planning. On the one hand, it strengthens the service of the property company, and on the other hand, it strengthens the management of residents. [20]

In the fight against the COVID-19, the sub-district offices and neighborhood committees, on behalf of the government, are responsible for reading out policies and guidelines, collecting household data, inspecting the quarantine situation, etc. to the grid personnel and cadres of government departments. The property management company, on behalf of market forces, is responsible for environmental disinfection and sterilization, gate sentry duty, material transportation, etc. The owners committee and residents' representatives represent the social forces, listen to the people's voices and feelings, and report them to the neighborhood committee and the property management company in a timely manner, serving as a communication bridge. Unlike the management

of other political affairs, public health security incidents involve a wide range of subjects and need to be solved by the public. This is also why the community, as the basic unit of China's social management, plays a huge role in "external prevention of import and internal prevention of proliferation". Therefore, the three main forces are evenly distributed in each governance link. If any of them is missing or suppressed, the effect of grid governance will be greatly reduced.

4.3 Technical Support

Grid governance is carried out with the support of big data and Internet information technology. In response to the epidemic, community grid has fully established an information platform integrating epidemic dynamics, electronic access, epidemic prevention reporting, and home quarantine, which has greatly improved the efficiency of information reporting and service delivery. First of all, in areas with severe epidemic, each community grid is equipped with a "community network", which is used to detect fever patients and carry them point-to-point. In addition, grid members can handle residents' reports and issue announcements through this program, and the secretaries and street leaders can also receive data reports every day. Moreover, Internet enterprises have participated in the development of prevention and control applications and launched free community intelligent epidemic prevention programs. For example, Aliyun has launched an intelligent applet nested in multiple apps under Alipay and others. Community workers can complete various tasks online. In terms of government service, many governments have launched scientific and technological prevention and control measures, expanded the functions of government service platform, launched the epidemic prevention and control service section, opened up green channels in time, and "reduced the burden" on community workers.

It is worth mentioning that the "health code" is popular throughout China. Hangzhou Data Resources Management Bureau of Zhejiang Province took the lead in establishing a development team and jointly developed the "Hangzhou Health Code" with Alibaba and technology companies. The user can fill in the information and scan QR codes only to display the risk level of the place he has visited in the past 14 days, and a corresponding page will pop up: the green code is passable, the yellow code is restricted, and the red code needs to be quarantined

immediately. The number of applications for "Hangzhou Health Code" exceeded 1.3 million on the first day of its launch, and then it was embedded in Alipay, WeChat and other apps used by Chinese residents, and quickly promoted to all provinces and cities across the country, playing an irreplaceable role in checking the identity of residents and monitoring the safe flow of personnel.

4.4 Transaction Processing

Transaction processing refers to the establishment of an epidemic prevention leading group at the community level in accordance with the relevant requirements of the top-level design, with the cooperation of multiple subjects and the support of Internet information technology, to divide the affairs that the grid needs to be responsible for into several small pieces, which is the concrete embodiment of the top-level design, subject coordination and technical support in the grid. According to the needs of epidemic prevention, the community epidemic prevention leading group is divided into propaganda and education group, epidemic situation monitoring and reporting group, logistics management group, environmental improvement group, fund management group and other departments. In general, the leader of the epidemic prevention leading group is usually the cadres of the community party committee and the neighborhood committee, and the grid members under the group should act as both the liaison and the supervisor. The specific number of grid members is determined by the number of grids in the local community and the number of quarantined people, which overlaps with the staff of each group. The number of team members is not fixed, but they are basically composed of neighborhood committee members, grid members, owners committee members or resident volunteers and property managers.

The epidemic prevention propaganda and education group is responsible for interpreting epidemic prevention policies and requirements, guiding residents to pay attention to authoritative information, improving residents' awareness of prevention, reporting community epidemic prevention news, and spreading relief channels. The epidemic situation monitoring and reporting group is responsible for comprehensively mastering the flow of community personnel, recording the flow information, including the time of going out, the reason for going out, and the serial number of bus run, and updating and reporting in real time. The

epidemic prevention logistics management team is responsible for ensuring the material needs of the quarantined residents, supervising the residents to comply with the quarantine regulations, collecting opinions and accepting supervision. The epidemic prevention fund management group manages the epidemic prevention fund, counts the donated materials, publicizes the purpose of the fund, and realizes the specialization and transparency of the fund.

5. DEFICIENCIES OF GRID GOVERNANCE UNDER THE COVID-19

In theory, the above mechanism can fully guarantee the life safety and living needs of community residents, but in practice, in the face of the epidemic prevention requirements and the service needs of residents issued by the country, the supporting technology and personnel of the community grid can not quickly keep up. At the same time, there are too many hard political tasks and indicators in the grass-roots community, and the management measures are taken too quickly, which has aroused the dissatisfaction of the residents in the process. This part summarizes the common problems of community grid governance in the epidemic through typical news reports, local research in China, and the author's field interviews with some risk communities.

5.1 Lack of Supporting Mechanism and Arbitrary Governance

The first is the lack of regulatory mechanism. Chinese local scholars generally believe that "urban grid social management must take legal management as the premise, and regulate, restrict, adjust and overcome legislative deficiencies and arbitrary law enforcement through legal means." [34] This also reflects that there is no standard regulation to be used for reference. Under the epidemic situation, the urgency of epidemic prevention has caused many human factors to interfere with grid governance and undermine the institutional construction. Moreover, many community workers are "entrusted with a mission at a critical and difficult moment", inexperienced and untrained, resulting in the coexistence of excessive intervention and lack of intervention. The second is the lack of plan mechanism. The grid management lacks an emergency plan to deal with major public health and safety events, so the grid has not prepared a long-term response mechanism

in advance and has the situation of rolling with the punches in this epidemic control. The third is the lack of evaluation mechanism for grid governance. The existing evaluation mechanism is only for the performance evaluation of grid members and neighborhood committee staff, but not for the performance evaluation of each grid and the whole community. In the process of "looking back", more work reports or promotional materials are written, and complete evaluation indicators and processes are not established.

5.2 Poor Staffing and Fragmented Governance

The grid member is the link connecting the neighborhood committee, property management company and residents, and plays the role of coordinator, communicator and supervisor in the epidemic, and his importance is self-evident. However, in practice, the number of grid members is extremely short, especially in this epidemic, and their heavy work has to be transferred to the neighborhood committee staff and property companies. In addition, the power and responsibility of grid members lack adaptability. On the one hand, a large number of administrative affairs are shared from top to bottom, and the grass-roots grid is required to undertake too many social management and service functions. On the other hand, according to the territorial principle of "whoever reveals all the details, whoever is responsible", even if grass-roots grid members notice many problems, they dare not to report. In addition, the subject collaboration in emergency situations is prone to lead to fragmentation. The sinking force under the emergency mobilization of the grass-roots government is not fully familiar with the community situation, resulting in the low efficiency of grid operation. The Wuhan Municipal Commission for Discipline Inspection and Supervision informed five typical problems of cadres sinking into the community in the early days of the lockdown, including the unreasonable arrangement of sinking work, the poor performance of prevention and control responsibilities, and the absence of cadres without permission. [35]

5.3 The Data Link Is Insufficient, and the Governance Technology Needs to Be Strengthened

According to the Data Governance Framework of the International Institute of Data Governance, good data governance should ensure good results in

data standards, data quality, privacy protection and other dimensions. Although Chinese communities, enterprises and governments have developed intelligent programs for data collection and application in the process of anti-epidemic, there is still a large gap from this standard, as shown below. First of all, there are problems with the quality of basic data, and it is difficult to guarantee the uniqueness, consistency and integrity of data. In some areas, different departments issue collection forms to the community, and the information in the form design is very different. Community workers have to modify the format and fill in the form again. In addition, the information of the same resident also has the phenomenon of repeated collection and missing collection, which can not realize the large-scale use of community data. Secondly, government data sharing is not smooth, and data flow and mutual recognition are difficult. For example, there were hundreds of health codes in all provinces and cities across the country, which even are not the same or recognized among provinces, and residents must hold multiple health codes at the same time. For example, Mr. Li, who lives in Chengdu, Sichuan, but works in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, once said, "At least, you need to hold Sichuan Tianfu Health Code and Zhejiang Health Code, and you have to show your local health code everywhere you go. If you want to transfer, you should also show the health code of that place." Thirdly, the protection of personal information by community workers is insufficient. Some staff leak the collected information of close contacts of cases and residents living in high-risk areas into social media, causing a large number of transmission. In addition, the information about the published confirmed cases has not been desensitized, causing secondary injury.

6. CONCLUSION

The epidemic prevention effect of China is obvious throughout the world because of the establishment of a grid governance system with Chinese characteristics, that is, the use of information technology to connect the government, the market and the society to carry out community epidemic prevention. Starting from the operation mechanism of grid governance, this paper shows the whole picture of grid governance under the epidemic situation, and tries to explore the space and means of joint governance by all parties. Compared with the daily grid governance in the past, the epidemic grid governance pays more attention to co-governance. First, the proportion of

personnel structure has changed. Daily grid governance takes grid members as the core force. A grid is composed of grid members with different tasks. However, the epidemic has changed this situation, and the grid members alone are unable to cope with a large number of epidemic prevention work. Therefore, each grid is composed of neighborhood committee members and grid members, owners committee members or resident representatives, and property companies. Second, the boundary between administration and service is vague. Neighborhood committee members and grid members were regarded as the link of administrative forces to maintain stability in the past, but with the influx of others, the operational authority of government forces on specific affairs was diluted, and the government, society and market jointly undertook the administrative stability maintenance and service provision. Third, Internet information technology has improved the transparency and practicality of information and made it possible for co-governance. In the past, the data center of each grid was a black box, by which the grass-roots government found, solved and supervised problems. However, in the epidemic, data display and data application are both external, such as health code, government affairs applet, etc., in order to achieve information disclosure and sharing, and further facilitate the lives of residents. Therefore, although there are still problems in grid governance in the epidemic, it has gradually opened up space for co-governance and is a positive and steadily growing joint governance system. Any system is not perfect. What people can do now is to repair the system's defects, and promote its universal practice to the world, so as to mitigate the impact of the epidemic to some extent.

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