

Policy Idling within the "Fuzziness-Conflict" Framework: A Case Study of the Funeral Reform in City Z, Gansu Province

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ABSTRACT

In the field of public policy research, policy idling is closely related to funeral reform and holds great research value. Currently, the academic community has achieved certain results regarding policy idling, delving deeply into its concept, causes, impacts, and coping strategies. However, there is still room for improvement in existing research, such as in the perfection of the policy evaluation system and the analysis of differences in policy idling across different regions. As a crucial issue in the process of modernization, funeral reform faces distinctly different yet equally complex problems in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, farmers have a low acceptance of the modern funeral system, and the reform has triggered group conflicts, resulting in poor effectiveness. In urban areas, traditional funerals conflict with urban management, and the marketization of the funeral industry brings new opportunities and challenges. Taking the funeral reform in City Z, Gansu Province as a starting point, this paper uses Matland's "Fuzziness-Conflict" model to conduct an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of policy idling. The study finds that the ambiguity of policy objectives is one of the important factors leading to policy idling. In the funeral reform of City Z, although the general objectives such as saving land resources and protecting the environment are clear, there are many ambiguous areas in the implementation details. For example, regarding the illegal act of reburying ashes in coffins, there is a lack of clear and accurate definition standards, and there is no strict punishment mechanism, making it difficult to stop such illegal acts. As a result, the core goal of saving land through the cremation reform is difficult to achieve. In terms of changing the funeral customs, the policy also lacks a systematic plan and specific implementation paths, making it difficult to guide the public to change their traditional funeral concepts. At the same time, implementation conflicts have exacerbated policy idling. In terms of interest conflicts, there is a sharp contradiction between the local traditional concept of "the deceased should be respected and laid to rest in the soil" and the funeral reform policy, and the public has a strong resistance. Cemetery contractors and managers pursue their own interests and ignore the public welfare objectives of the funeral reform. In terms of resource conflicts, the funeral infrastructure is located in remote areas with inconvenient transportation, which does not meet the public's demand for convenient funeral services. The unreasonable cemetery planning leads to low land use efficiency and fails to achieve the goal of saving land resources. In addition, the insufficient policy fit makes it difficult for the policy to be effectively implemented, further increasing the risk of policy idling.

KEYWORDS

Policy Idling; Funeral Reform; "Fuzziness-Conflict" Model; Policy Fit Degree.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the evolutionary process of human civilization, death rituals have always been a crucial component of the cultural system. China, adhering to the concept that "the great affairs of the state lie in sacrifice and war," has seen the inheritance and development of its funeral culture over thousands of years, which has been deeply embedded in the lives and spiritual worlds of the people. From the traditional

mourning attire system, sacrificial rituals to the specifications of tombs, each element carries rich cultural connotations and social significance, maintaining family affection, passing on social values, and embodying the living people's wishes for the continuation of life and the prosperity of the family.

Entering the stage of rapid modernization, the social structure, values, and lifestyle have undergone drastic changes. To meet the development needs of the new era, the state has carried out a systematic reform of funeral ceremonies and introduced a series of policies. For example, advocating ecological and frugal funerals aims to achieve the goals of sustainable resource utilization and environmental protection; promoting civilized and frugal funerals is to abandon feudal superstitions and extravagant funeral customs; and carrying out the campaign to rectify tombs for the living is to standardize the funeral order and save land resources. These policies have positive starting points and long-term significance, committed to promoting the healthy development of the funeral industry and the progress of social civilization.

However, during the implementation process of these policies, different regions have shown distinct reactions. In some areas, the funeral policies have been smoothly implemented, and the public has actively cooperated, with new funeral concepts and methods gradually taking root in people's hearts. But in some other places, there have been obstacles in policy implementation. On the surface, the policy documents are followed, but in reality, the old sacrificial methods are still used, and even group incidents such as "the living people snatching coffins" have occurred. Behind this significant difference lie complex social, cultural, economic, and other factors that urgently need in-depth analysis.

This study selects City Z in Gansu Province as an example, aiming to deeply explore the root causes of the huge contrast in the implementation effects of funeral policies in different regions under the same policy background. Through a detailed evaluation of the entire process of implementing funeral policies in City Z, this study conducts an in-depth analysis from multiple dimensions, such as the rationality and feasibility of the policies themselves, the implementation capabilities and methods of local governments, the public's awareness and acceptance, and the local social and cultural traditions. It attempts to reveal the internal mechanisms of the differences in the implementation of funeral policies, provide accurate and targeted suggestions for optimizing the funeral reform policies and improving the policy implementation efficiency, and promote the scientific, stable, and orderly development of the funeral reform nationwide.

2. RELATED STUDIES AT HOME AND ABROAD

2.1. Policy Idling

In the field of public policy research, the phenomena of policy idling and partial policy idling have always been the key focuses of academic attention. With the rapid development of society and the continuous advancement of policy practice, the impacts brought about by these phenomena have become increasingly significant, prompting numerous scholars to conduct in-depth and extensive discussions from different theoretical perspectives, research methods, and practical cases.

In his research, Zhu Chun expounded on the logic and significance of the metabolism of public policies, clearly pointing out that in order to adapt to the dynamic changes of the social environment and meet the needs of social development, public policies must undergo metabolism in a timely manner. Among them, the dynamics of policies, the variability of the social environment, and the logic of function realization together constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions for the metabolism of policies. However, upon in-depth analysis of his research achievements, it can be found that although he has a clear understanding of the necessity of policy metabolism, at the macro-research level, there is a lack of detailed analysis of the action mechanisms at each stage of the policy metabolism process, and he fails to fully reveal the evolution laws of policies at different development stages. There are obvious gaps in the research on shelved and compensatory public policies. For

example, in the classification of the shelved state of policies, it is simply divided into situations such as indecision after discussion, shelved implementation, or not reaching the effective time, etc., but there is no in-depth exploration of the deep-seated influencing factors such as the political interest game, economic cost considerations, and social and cultural concepts behind the shelving of policies. Especially in terms of policies for long-term social planning and response, regarding the specific mechanism of policy precipitation and optimization, such as how to judge the necessity of policy precipitation through a scientific evaluation system, and how to dynamically adjust and improve policies during the precipitation process, sufficient demonstration and definition of the scope of application have not been provided.

Cui Jing pointed out that under the current administrative system, the continuous increase of requirements at each level and hierarchical integration have led to the continuous downward transfer of administrative power to the grassroots level. In this process, grassroots governments are often overwhelmed when facing an increasing number of new policies, resulting in the policies being implemented having to be shelved or suspended. The scholar attributes the root cause of policy shelving to the competition between the symbolic national authority and the de facto local authority. However, this view is somewhat one-sided. In fact, whether the coordination mechanism within the administrative system is smooth, for example, the degree of information sharing and collaborative cooperation between different departments during the policy implementation process, will have an important impact on the promotion of policies. Uneven distribution of policy resources is also a factor that cannot be ignored. When grassroots governments implement policies, the lack of sufficient human, material, and financial support will inevitably affect the implementation effect of policies. Differences in grassroots governance capabilities will also lead to the occurrence of policy shelving. Due to reasons such as insufficient professional qualities and lack of management experience of some grassroots government staff, it is difficult to effectively implement policies. Against the backdrop of the transformation of social integration methods and diversified development, various emerging social forces and interest groups are constantly emerging, and the influencing factors of policy shelving are more complex and diverse. However, Cui Jing's research has not formed a comprehensive and systematic explanatory framework to comprehensively analyze the impacts of these factors on policy shelving.

Ren Jie proposed that the objective reason for "partial policy idling" lies in the unreasonable design of the system, and the subjective reason lies in the subjective factors of the implementation subject. However, her analysis only stays on the surface. Regarding the specific manifestations of the unreasonable design of the system, such as setting the policy objectives too high or too low, the cumbersome and complex policy implementation process, and the imperfect supporting measures of policies, etc., there is a lack of in-depth exploration and detailed elaboration. In terms of the subjective factors of the implementation subject, there is no further exploration of the influence of the internal driving mechanisms such as the value orientation, professional qualities, and personal interest demands of the implementation subject on policy implementation. When expounding on the impacts of "partial policy idling" on the local economic and social development, the promotion of comprehensive deepening of reforms, the public credibility of the government, and the normal operation of the national governance system, there is a lack of specific empirical data support, and the discussion appears rather empty and lacks persuasiveness. For example, when explaining the impact on local economic and social development, there are no specific data and cases to show the problems such as the slowdown of economic growth and the waste of social resources caused by policy idling.

Tang Lei defined policy idling as a situation where there are clear instruction requirements on the input side when a policy is implemented, but the implementation system only operates superficially and rarely implements the policy, and attributed its root cause to formalism and bureaucratism. However, this definition is too simplistic and fails to fully consider the complex organizational behaviors in the policy implementation process. In the actual policy implementation, the differences

in objectives, power structures, and communication and coordination mechanisms among different organizations will all have an important impact on policy implementation. Interest game is also a key factor. Different interest subjects may take various means to influence the implementation of policies in order to maximize their own interests, and may even lead to the ineffective implementation of policies. Information transmission obstacles cannot be ignored either. During the policy implementation process, due to problems such as unsmooth information channels and information distortion, policy implementers may have deviations in their understanding of the policies, thus affecting the implementation effect of policies. The five measures proposed by Tang Lei, including strengthening the positive incentives for the official team, strengthening policy coordination, strengthening the overall planning of the implementation departments, broadening the information communication channels, and relieving the burdens of grassroots officials, lack pertinence and operability. He did not refine and make specific implementation plans for these measures in combination with the characteristics of different policy types, such as economic policies, social policies, environmental policies, etc., and different implementation scenarios, such as urban and rural areas, developed and underdeveloped regions, etc.

Chen Peng classified partial policy idling into symbolic governance, selective governance, flexible governance, and evasive governance, and this classification method has a certain degree of innovation. However, in the analysis of the causes, regarding the specific manifestations of the insufficient effectiveness of the institutional system, such as the problems existing in the adaptability, stability, and effectiveness of the system, as well as the problems such as the imbalance between power and responsibility and the frustration of work enthusiasm caused by the mismatch of the grassroots power and responsibility mechanism, the discussion lacks sufficient depth and breadth. The countermeasures proposed at the macro, meso, and micro levels are mostly general statements. For example, at the macro level, it is proposed to strengthen the construction of the institutional system, but there is no specific explanation of how to improve the formulation, implementation, and supervision mechanisms of the system; at the meso level, it is proposed to implement effective communication, but there is no elaboration on the communication subjects, channels, and methods; at the micro level, it is proposed to establish and improve the fault-tolerance mechanism, but there is no clear definition of the fault-tolerance standards, scope, and procedures, etc., and there is a lack of specific implementation paths and action plans.

Overall, although existing research on policy idling has achieved certain results, there are still many deficiencies in aspects such as concept definition, cause analysis, impact assessment, and coping strategies. Future research should be committed to constructing a more perfect policy evaluation system. It is necessary not only to pay attention to the final implementation results of policies but also to conduct dynamic monitoring of the entire policy implementation process, and promptly discover and solve the problems that occur during the policy implementation process.

2.2. Funeral Reform

As an important issue in the field of public policy, funeral reform has exposed many complex and thorny problems in the process of modernization. These problems involve multiple fields such as society, culture, economy, and law, triggering in-depth explorations from multiple dimensions in the academic community.

Wu Fei emphasized that the complexity of funeral issues in modern China far exceeds that of the family planning issue. The core lies in how to construct a way of life that is in line with the development of modern society. This process not only involves knowledge and theories from multiple disciplines such as law, economics, and sociology but also touches on deep cultural contents such as traditional ritual studies and religious studies. In rural areas, farmers have a low acceptance of the modern funeral system. The cremation and cemetery system implemented by the civil affairs department has encountered strong resistance, and even a series of group conflict incidents have been

triggered. For example, in some rural areas, the government has taken tough measures such as exhuming graves for cremation and confiscating coffins to try to promote funeral reform. However, this simple and rough approach not only failed to make farmers truly recognize the modern funeral system but also led to the deterioration of the relationship between the government and the masses, and the prestige of the civil affairs department and the government has been seriously damaged. Moreover, the effect of the funeral reform is minimal. In many places, the situation quickly returns to the original state after the reform, and even the phenomenon of secondary burial has occurred. Some areas have tried to promote the reform in the way of welfare guidance, such as giving certain economic subsidies to families that choose cremation. However, farmers' acceptance only stays on the surface, and the problem has not been fundamentally solved. In this process, not only the expected goals of saving land and changing the etiquette and customs have not been achieved, but also negative impacts have been caused on the inheritance of traditional culture, the trust relationship with the masses, and the harmony and stability of the village. In addition, the respect for the funeral customs of ethnic minorities in the funeral regulations has also triggered extensive discussions on whether the funeral customs of other ethnic groups should be equally respected. However, Wu Fei's research only described these phenomena. There is a lack of in-depth analysis of the deep cultural roots behind farmers' resistance, such as the influence of traditional family concepts and ancestor worship on farmers' thoughts, economic factors, such as the burden of funeral costs on farmers' family economies, and defects in institutional design, such as the lack of flexibility and pertinence of policies. In terms of the analysis of the minimal effect of the funeral reform and the subsequent negative impacts, there is also a lack of systematicness and forward-looking, and the future direction of the funeral reform has not been discussed from the perspective of the macro social development trend and cultural changes.

In the urban environment, the funeral problem is also severe. With the accelerated urbanization and the increasingly strict urban planning and management, traditional funeral customs such as the setting up of mourning halls, funeral processions, and burning of paper money in traditional funerals have clashed fiercely with the requirements of urban management. Urban residents have to adapt to stricter management regulations. Mourning halls are restricted to indoors, funeral activities are gradually reduced, and behaviors such as burning paper money are also subject to many restrictions, resulting in the retreat and deformation of the forms of traditional funerals. However, the practice of folk funerals still persists tenaciously, and new etiquette and customs that adapt to the urban environment have emerged. For example, new sacrificial methods such as centralized sacrifice in specific places and online sacrifice have appeared in some cities. After the reform and opening up, the marketization process of the funeral industry has led to the rapid rise of private funeral enterprises, providing residents with more diversified choices. While this change promotes the renewal of funeral concepts and meets the diverse needs of consumers, it also triggers a fierce collision between traditional culture and modern culture. Taiwanese businessmen entering the mainland funeral market have brought the funeral service model of Taiwan region, which has had an impact on the mainland funeral industry and promoted the gradual formation of new etiquette and customs. However, marketization has also brought the problem of the use period of the cemetery behind the refined and diversified construction of the cemetery, that is, the contradiction between the shortage of cemetery resources and sustainable utilization. In addition, urban funeral problems also involve multiple levels such as law, society, and culture, such as the definition of the right to use the cemetery, the protection of the dignity of the deceased, and the inheritance of traditional culture. These problems are intertwined, making urban funeral problems more complex and thorny.

Through the field investigation of the funeral ceremony in Fucun Village, southern Anhui Province, Zhao Xudong and Zhang Jie used the "differential mode of association" theory proposed by Fei Xiaotong and the self-created TSCS framework to deeply analyze the rural social order. The "differential mode of association" theory vividly depicts the characteristics of interpersonal relationships in traditional Chinese society, which are centered on the self and form different social circles according to the degree of closeness. The position of each person in this relationship network

determines the rights and obligations between them, reflecting obvious hierarchy and differential order. The TSCS framework comprehensively analyzes the construction and reproduction process of the "differential order" in rural society from four dimensions: time (Time), space (Space), culture (Culture), and system (System). Among them, the time dimension focuses on the time clues of each stage of the funeral ceremony and the dynamic performance of the actors; the space dimension focuses on the physical space layout in the ceremony and the distribution of the actors' spatial actions; the culture dimension emphasizes the influence of the cultural beliefs and etiquette and customs of the rural society on the construction of social order; the system dimension focuses on exploring the role of external institutional forces, such as the funeral system reform policy, in the reconstruction of rural social order. They believe that the funeral ceremony is not only an important carrier for inheriting culture but also a key process for the reconstruction of rural social order. Through the practice of the ceremony, the rural society has realized the reconstruction and continuation of the "differential order" order. However, when explaining the impact of the funeral reform policy on the rural social order, they failed to fully consider the dynamic changes in the policy implementation process, such as the adjustment of the policy at different stages and the changes in the implementation effect, as well as local characteristics, such as the differences in rural culture and economic development levels in different regions, on the implementation of the policy.

Wang Changzheng and Peng Xiaobing focused their research on the phenomenon of the public's "negative response" in the funeral reform. They pointed out that in the process of mobilization governance, local governments try to guide the public to participate in and support the funeral reform policy through ways such as policy mobilization, control mobilization, and rational mobilization. However, the public often shows a "negative response" attitude of indifference, resistance, or opposition. Most of the existing studies start from the perspective of the "authoritative system", emphasizing the mobilization methods of local governments and the passive participation of the public, and there is a relative lack of in-depth discussion of the public at the micro level. Their research shows that the public's "negative response" is essentially the result of the disharmony between the values and interests of local governments and the public. When facing government mobilization, the public often expresses dissatisfaction in the form of "daily resistance", such as feigning ignorance and pretending to be obedient. Through the analysis using the frame alignment theory, it is found that in the mobilization initiation stage, local governments communicate with the public on the frame, trying to make the public identify with the policy, but the public's response is flat and vague, and an effective frame match has not been formed; in the mobilization promotion stage, in the face of the public's "negative response", local governments turn to control mobilization and rational mobilization methods, which trigger stronger resistance from the public, resulting in poor mobilization effects; in the mobilization result stage, local governments adopt flexible mobilization strategies and reach temporary compromises with the public. This phenomenon reflects that local governments ignore the public's emotions and interests in the mobilization process. Further analysis shows that the main causes of the public's "negative response" include interest disharmony, value injustice, and political mistrust. However, in terms of exploring the public's emotions and interest demands, their research is not deep enough, and they have not fully understood the specific emotional needs and interest expectations of the public in the funeral reform. In terms of the application of the frame alignment theory in the mobilization of the funeral reform, there is a lack of empirical testing, and the effectiveness and applicability of the theory have not been verified through specific cases and data.

Guo Lin conducted an in-depth analysis of China's funeral services and pointed out that there are currently problems such as lagging concepts, unclear positioning, incomplete systems, and ineffective governance. These problems directly lead to insufficient guarantee of funeral services and chaos in the funeral field, which in turn trigger a series of social problems. Among them, the imperfect financing mechanism of funeral services, such as the lack of diversified funding channels, mainly relying on government financial investment and funeral service fees, and the lack of a system to ensure the public welfare of funeral services, such as the unsound supervision mechanism for funeral

service prices, leading to high funeral service prices, and the poor practical effect of funeral services, etc., are particularly prominent and urgently need to be solved. Based on this, Guo Lin proposed the development ideas of China's funeral services: first, promote the linkage between social insurance and social assistance, and improve the financing mechanism of funeral services, including establishing a mechanism for endowment insurance to pay funeral expenses and a survivor insurance mechanism to provide basic funeral expense funds for vulnerable groups; second, adhere to both socialization and public welfare, optimize the delivery mechanism of funeral services, improve the overall level of the funeral industry, enhance the public welfare of funeral services, and give full play to the role of rural autonomy in funeral services; third, promote the coordination between formal and informal systems, and construct a humanistic care mechanism for funerals, properly handle the relationship between the formal funeral service system and the informal funeral service system, and achieve the organic combination of rigid institutional arrangements and flexible funeral ethics. The ultimate goal is to incorporate funeral services into the social security system and form a "trinity" funeral service system to relieve the public's worries about funerals. However, in terms of improving the financing mechanism of funeral services, optimizing the delivery mechanism, and constructing the humanistic care mechanism, he lacks specific implementation paths and supporting policy recommendations. When discussing the coordination between formal and informal systems, there is a lack of in-depth thinking and practical guiding significance on how to balance the relationship between the two, such as how to formulate appropriate coordination strategies in different regions and different cultural backgrounds.

Although existing research on funeral reform has revealed the complex current situation of funeral reform from different angles, there are obvious deficiencies in aspects such as exploring the differences in funeral reform in different regions, exploring the effective participation model of the public, and balancing the public welfare and sustainable development of funeral services.

The research on the correlation between funeral reform and policy idling is of great significance that cannot be ignored. From a theoretical perspective, in-depth exploration of the relationship between the two can fill the existing research gaps, enrich the theoretical system of public policy implementation, and provide a new perspective for understanding the practice of policies in complex social and cultural fields. By analyzing the specific manifestations and internal mechanisms of policy idling in the funeral reform, it is helpful to further improve the policy idling theory and clarify its action laws in specific policy scenarios. In terms of practice, funeral reform is related to people's livelihood and social civilization development, and policy idling hinders its effective promotion. Revealing the correlation between the two can provide accurate decision-making references for policy makers, help optimize the funeral reform policy, improve the scientificity and effectiveness of policy implementation, reduce resource waste, and ease social contradictions. At the same time, it also helps implementers grasp the key points of policy implementation, coordinate the interests of all parties, and promote the funeral reform to find a balance between respecting traditions and pursuing modern civilization, effectively promoting the healthy and orderly development of the funeral industry and improving the efficiency of social governance.

3. FUNERAL TRADITIONS AND POLICY REFORMS IN CITY Z

City Z has complex and diverse geographical features, mainly consisting of plateaus, mountains, deserts, gobi deserts, and danxia landforms. City Z governs Ganzhou District, Linze County, Gaotai County, Shandan County, Minle County, and Sunan Yugur Autonomous County. Ganzhou District serves as its political, economic, and cultural center.

The total area of City Z is approximately 42,000 square kilometers. According to the latest data, the permanent population in 2024 is 1,104,600 people, and the population density of City Z is about 26.94 people per square kilometer. The population of City Z is mainly distributed in the urban area and several large county towns around it. Due to its vast territory and complex and diverse topography,

the population distribution is relatively scattered. Compared with the Sixth National Population Census, the population of City Z has decreased by a net of 68,499 people in the Seventh National Population Census, with an average annual decline of 0.59%.

City Z has a profound and complete system of traditional funeral culture. In terms of funeral preparations, family members usually prepare shroud clothes and coffins in advance, namely the "elderly clothes" and the "elderly house", and select a burial site for the deceased under the guidance of a feng shui master. In rural areas, there is a relatively high degree of emphasis on family burial clusters. The funeral ceremony has a complex procedure. Starting from the arrangement of the remains, to the construction of the mourning shed, and then to Taoist rituals for releasing the souls of the dead such as "summoning the soul", "breaking through the purgatory", and "crossing the bridge" presided over by Taoist priests, the entire process lasts for 3 to 4 days and includes dozens of folk custom links, such as "crying over the paper money" and "examining the coffin". In City Z, the concept of "let the deceased rest in peace in the soil" is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. Burial is regarded as a way to maintain the dignity of the deceased, and the integrity of the remains is closely linked to clan ethics. In terms of funeral traditions, there are only slight differences among the one district and five counties in City Z.

The release time of the documents on funeral reform in China can be traced back to the "Regulations on Funeral Management" passed by the 60th Executive Meeting of the State Council in 1997, and this regulation has been revised several times.

For the current funeral reform policies in China, reference can be made to the "Guiding Opinions on Further Promoting Funeral Reform and Promoting the Development of the Funeral Industry" (Min Fa [2018] No. 5) jointly issued by 16 departments including the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Central Office of Spiritual Civilization, and the National Development and Reform Commission.

In accordance with Min Fa [2018] No. 5 document, Gansu Province issued Document Gan Zheng Ban Fa [2018] No. 16 to deepen the reform of the funeral system. This document clearly defines the existing problems in funeral management, and puts forward the overall requirements and basic principles. The goal is to achieve full coverage of the cremation areas by 2020, establish a basic funeral service system, and increase the proportion of ecological burials. Specific measures include promoting cremation, ecological burials that save land, and changing the funeral customs. The document also emphasizes the importance of establishing a public funeral service system, standardizing the management of institutions, and innovating management methods, and ensures the implementation of the policy from aspects such as organizational leadership, departmental responsibilities, the leading role of Party members and cadres, supervision and evaluation, etc., so as to meet the needs of the masses, promote environmental protection and social civilization.

Based on Document Gan Zheng Ban Fa [2018] No. 16, City Z issued the "Notice of the Office of the People's Government of City Z and the Office of the People's Government of Zhangye City on Designating the Scope of the Cremation Areas in the Whole City". The policies in this document focus on the following points: First, designating the scope of the cremation areas; Second, promoting the cremation reform within the scope of the cremation areas in the whole city, getting rid of the long-standing problems in the past, and Party members, cadres and those supported by public finance should play a leading role in this reform; Third, taking the cremation reform as an opportunity to change the customs, improve the infrastructure construction of funeral services, and meet the requirements of saving land and ecology; Fourth, establishing a long-term mechanism for joint law enforcement by departments, strengthening the supervision of funeral services, adhering to the people-oriented principle, conducting in-depth investigations and research, and avoiding social conflicts, so as to form a good situation where the whole society jointly promotes the funeral reform.

During the implementation process of the funeral reform policy in City Z, many problems have been exposed. The infrastructure construction lags behind. The funeral service centers in each district and county are far from the urban area. The condolence halls implement the responsibility contracting

system, resulting in uneven service quality. Especially, public welfare facilities such as public toilets have long lacked maintenance. Cemeteries such as Wusanling and Heihe Bajitan are located in the gobi deserts. The roads are poorly maintained, and the theft of sacrificial offerings occurs frequently.

There are many difficulties in promoting cremation. In order to avoid policy punishments, those supported by public finance all choose to "rebury the ashes in coffins", which actually still occupies land resources. The non-public-finance-supported groups directly choose burial. The grid-like planning of cemeteries, with each household divided into dozens of square meters, to a certain extent, encourages the behavior of coffin burial.

The change of customs only stays on the surface. Although temporary mourning halls are prohibited in the urban area, the tradition of setting up mourning sheds in rural courtyards still remains. In the urban area, wreaths are changed to flower baskets, while in the towns, wreaths are still used. Taoist rituals for releasing the souls of the dead and the seven-day memorial ceremony in traditional rituals have not changed so far.

In terms of costs, the cremation fee and the urns with prices ranging from 1,000 to 8,000 yuan bring additional economic burdens to the families that choose cremation, which is inconsistent with the concept of "respecting the living and giving simple funerals". Moreover, the charging for cemetery management is not transparent, and the service quality does not match the charging standards, which intensifies the public's dissatisfaction.

At the cultural level, the "one-size-fits-all" policy ignores the ethical values of local customs such as "the three-day mourning period" and "burning paper money on the 35th day after death". The educational function of Taoist priests in the rituals has been replaced by administrative means, making the legitimacy of the policy questioned.

The case of the funeral reform in City Z shows that the policy ambiguity, such as unclear goal definition and the lack of operability of implementation tools, and the conflicts in the implementation process, such as cultural resistance and interest games, are superimposed on each other, causing the policy to fall into a vicious cycle of "document coercion - behavior evasion - resource waste", highlighting the urgency of seeking a balance between cultural adaptability and administrative rigidity in the formulation and implementation process of funeral policies.

4. THE MECHANISM OF POLICY IDLING UNDER THE INTERACTION OF "FUZZINESS-CONFLICT"

In the case of the funeral reform in City Z, this paper uses Matland's "Fuzziness-Conflict" model to analyze the causes and logic of policy idling, which can deeply analyze the internal mechanism of the problems that occur in the policy implementation process.

Matland's "Fuzziness-Conflict" model is an important theory in the field of policy implementation. The model points out that the effect of policy implementation is jointly influenced by the ambiguity of policy objectives and the degree of implementation conflict. The ambiguity of policy objectives refers to the unclear expression of policy content, objectives, means, etc., making it difficult for implementers to accurately grasp the direction and easily causing ambiguity in implementation. The degree of implementation conflict covers interest conflicts and resource conflicts, etc. Interest conflicts stem from the differences in the demands of different interest subjects. For example, all parties involved in the policy have differences in policy implementation due to their own interest considerations. Resource conflicts are reflected in the mismatch between resource allocation, utilization, etc. and the needs of policy implementation. When the policy objectives are ambiguous and the implementation conflict is high, policy implementation will face great obstacles and it will be difficult to achieve the expected results; conversely, if the objectives are clear and the conflict is low, the implementation will be relatively smooth.

In addition to the correlations between policy idling and aspects such as policy implementation, institutional design, and public attitudes, the policy fit is also a key issue. Taking the 2018 policy requiring the conservation of land resources as an example, the planning of the burial areas in City Z had already been completed before that. This temporal mismatch makes it difficult for the policy to be effectively implemented in the funeral reform of City Z. The completed planning of the burial areas may not have fully considered the subsequent policy orientation of saving land resources, resulting in the difficulty of achieving the goal of saving land resources by adjusting the layout of the burial areas and other means during the promotion of the funeral reform, causing the policy to be divorced from the actual situation. This not only highlights the lack of effective connection between policy formulation and local actual planning but also reflects that in the complex system of funeral reform, the insufficient policy fit will further increase the risk of policy idling, making it difficult for the policy to play its due role and unable to effectively promote the funeral reform.

4.1. Policy Idling Caused by the Ambiguity of Policy Objectives

From the perspective of Matland's "Fuzziness-Conflict" model, the ambiguity of policy objectives is one of the important causes of policy idling. The ambiguity of policy objectives is one of the key factors leading to policy idling. In the funeral reform of City Z, the ambiguity of policy objectives mainly stems from the lack of sufficient preliminary research and precise planning in the policy formulation process. On the one hand, when formulating the cremation reform policy, the relevant departments failed to comprehensively consider the local actual situation and various possible implementation problems, resulting in the lack of a definition and punishment mechanism for the behavior of reburying ashes in coffins. Judging from the policy formulation process, opinions from grassroots implementers and the public were not widely solicited, making the policy lack operability in actual implementation. On the other hand, the ambiguous objectives of the policy of changing funeral customs reflect the insufficient understanding of the complexity of traditional funeral culture by policy makers. Traditional funeral concepts are deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and changing these concepts requires long-term and systematic guidance. However, the current policy lacks guidance strategies from multiple disciplinary perspectives such as cultural psychology and sociology, leaving both implementers and the public at a loss. To fundamentally solve these problems, policy makers need to conduct in-depth research in the early stage, widely solicit opinions, and use multi-disciplinary theories to formulate clear and specific policy objectives and implementation rules. For example, when defining the behavior of reburying ashes in coffins, detailed judgment standards should be formulated in combination with actual cases, and corresponding punishment measures should be formulated; in terms of changing customs, a phased cultural guidance plan should be formulated, starting from multiple aspects such as education and publicity to gradually change the public's concepts.

In terms of changing funeral customs, the policy also shows ambiguity. Although the location of the mourning ceremony has been unified and the sacrificial supplies have been replaced on the surface, in terms of the key objective of guiding the public to change their funeral concepts, there is a lack of systematic planning and specific implementation paths. There is no clear plan to gradually change the public's traditional concept of "the deceased should be respected and laid to rest in the soil", and there are no clear steps to promote the deep integration of traditional customs and modern civilized funeral methods. Implementers do not know what specific actions should be taken to achieve this goal, and the public does not know how to cooperate. The guiding role of the policy is greatly weakened, making it difficult to promote substantial progress in the work of changing funeral customs, and thus causing policy idling in this field.

4.2. Policy Idling Triggered by Implementation Conflicts

Value conflicts are another important factor leading to policy idling. In the funeral reform of City Z, there are significant interest conflicts between the local traditional concepts and the funeral reform

policies. The concept of "the deceased should be respected and laid to rest in the soil" is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, carrying the people's deep emotional sustenance for the deceased and a long cultural inheritance. These emotional and cultural factors make the people instinctively resist cremation and related reform measures psychologically. When the people do not identify with the reform policy in their hearts, they will passively treat or even resist it in action, making the policy face great resistance during the implementation process. For example, the family members of those not supported by public finance directly choose burial, which makes the cremation reform policy unable to be effectively implemented, resulting in the phenomenon of policy idling.

At the same time, there is a contradiction between the interest demands of cemetery contractors and managers and the public welfare objectives of the funeral reform. Under the private contracting mode of the condolence hall, contractors take the pursuit of economic interests as their primary goal, which may lead them to ignore the service quality in order to reduce costs and increase profits, and they cannot fully meet the needs of the public. And the dereliction of duty of cemetery managers in aspects such as service charging and cemetery management reflects that in the process of pursuing their own interests, they completely ignore the overall objectives of the funeral reform and the public interests. Such interest conflicts make the policy hindered by multiple parties during the implementation process and unable to be smoothly promoted, further intensifying the degree of policy idling.

During the implementation process of the funeral reform policy, the problem of the adaptability between the top-level institutional design and local characteristics has become prominent. From the original intention of the policy, the funeral reform aims to save land resources and promote ecological environmental protection and sustainable development, and this starting point undoubtedly has far-reaching strategic significance and social value. However, when it is specifically implemented in City Z, Gansu Province, obvious mismatches are revealed.

City Z is located in the west, showing the characteristics of a sparse population in a vast area. Its unique geographical and population conditions are different from the universal requirements of the policy. The existing cemetery groups are located in the desolate gobi deserts far from the urban area. These areas themselves are rich in idle land resources, which is in sharp contrast to the tight demand for land resources in densely populated areas. In addition, the sale of cemeteries has become a part of the land financial revenue in City Z, and this economic reality has not been fully considered in the policy formulation process.

This disconnection between the top-level institutional design and the local actual situation makes it difficult for the funeral reform policy to be effectively implemented in City Z. The policy fails to accurately connect with the resource endowment and economic structure of City Z, not only hindering the achievement of policy objectives but also possibly triggering a series of negative effects, such as fluctuations in financial revenue and the public's resistance to the policy. Therefore, when formulating and implementing public policies, sufficient research should be conducted on local characteristics, the flexibility and adaptability of policies should be enhanced, and it should be ensured that policies can play a positive role in different regions and achieve the optimization and progress of social governance.

The causes and logic of policy idling in the funeral reform of City Z mainly stem from the ambiguity of policy objectives, as well as interest conflicts and policy matching conflicts in the implementation process. These factors are intertwined and act together, making the funeral reform policy deviate from its original objectives during the implementation process, unable to be effectively implemented, and resulting in the phenomenon of policy idling.

5. SUMMARY

In the historical development process of China, the concept of "small community-based" can be traced back to the Pre-Qin period. This concept is extremely prominently reflected in the social and cultural

phenomenon of funeral ceremonies. The procedures included in funeral ceremonies are extremely cumbersome and fragmented. It is very difficult for an atomized small family to complete such a complex ceremony process alone. In the traditional social structure, only with the help of the power of "small communities" such as clans and villagers can the funeral ceremony be held smoothly. The deep participation of these "small communities" in the funeral ceremony is not only a social cooperation behavior but also a vivid practice of the "small community-based" concept in daily life, which strengthens the emotional connection and social bond among community members.

However, in the process of the country's pursuit of modernization, especially when it is necessary to achieve the goals of modernization construction rapidly within a short period, the country faces the challenge of how to use all resources in the most efficient way. From the perspective of information processing, simplifying and compressing various complex information into several core data has become one of the key strategies to improve the efficiency of resource utilization. At the same time, reducing the bargaining costs and transaction costs associated with "small communities" in terms of resource allocation has also become an important demand of modernization construction. Against this background, pre-modern customs, traditions, and conventions, due to enhancing the cohesion among "small communities", have to a certain extent become obstacles to simplifying and abstracting information and efficiently allocating resources in the process of modernization construction. Taking the funeral reform in City Z as an example, the local traditional concept of "the deceased should be respected and laid to rest in the soil" makes the public resist the cremation reform, which reflects the contradiction between the concept of "small community" maintained by traditional customs and the modern funeral reform policy. Traditional funeral customs strengthen the internal connections within "small communities" such as families and villagers, but they increase the difficulty of implementing the funeral reform policy and raise the transaction costs of policy implementation.

However, it cannot be ignored that modernization construction is not just a cold mechanical development process. How to integrate humanistic care into the path of modernization to make it more humane and warm is an urgent problem to be solved. In the funeral reform, this requires policy makers and implementers to fully respect and understand the public's traditional emotions and cultural needs while considering the efficient utilization of resources and the achievement of policy objectives. On the one hand, through strengthening publicity and education, in the forms of cultural lectures, community activities, etc., let the public understand the important significance of the funeral reform for the country's modernization construction. At the same time, let policy makers have an in-depth understanding of the public's emotional dependence on traditional funeral customs and seek a balance between the two. On the other hand, in the process of policy implementation, establish a flexible communication mechanism, fully listen to the opinions and suggestions of "small communities", avoid simple and rough implementation methods, and let the modern funeral reform policy be promoted in an atmosphere full of humanistic care. In this way, while achieving the goals of modernization construction, it is possible to take into account the inheritance of social culture and the satisfaction of the public's emotions, making the road to modernization more stable and warmer.

From the perspective of collaborative innovation in social governance, it is proposed to establish a new model of funeral reform with the collaborative participation of the government, social organizations, and the public. The government is responsible for policy formulation and macro management. Social organizations give play to their professional advantages and flexibility, carry out the publicity of funeral culture, provide funeral service consultation, and other work. The public expresses their own needs and opinions through participating in community funeral reform discussion meetings and other forms, realizing the democratization and scientificization of the formulation and implementation of funeral reform policies. At the same time, use big data technology to establish an information management platform for funeral services, realize the rational allocation of funeral resources and the real-time monitoring of the quality of funeral services, and improve the efficiency and transparency of the implementation of funeral reform policies. Through these innovative measures, new ideas and methods are provided for the practice of funeral reform.

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