

Dilemma and Path Optimization Faced by Grassroots Governments under the Perspective of Multi-center Governance

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, network governance has been a frontier topic in public management research in Western countries. As a new governance model, network governance is an attempt by the government to cooperate with private organizations, non-governmental organizations and citizens in the face of an increasingly complex environment, in order to better provide public services to the public. In particular, with the interdependence, contingency and uncertainty of social, political and economic changes, the governance process is no longer limited to the formal structure of the government. The formulation and implementation of public policies need to be completed through a large number of formal and informal institutions, mechanisms and processes. Therefore, this paper intends to study the difficulties and performance of grassroots government management in my country, as well as the root causes of the difficulties, from the perspective of multi-center governance theory; and in connection with the actual situation, it proposes improvement methods and suggestions from the aspects of positioning the functions of grassroots governments, creating consensus and trust in grassroots government network governance, and cultivating and integrating the network structure of grassroots governance, so as to enhance the practical significance of this model of network governance for my country.

KEYWORDS

Polycentric Governance Theory; Network Governance; Grassroots Government.

1. INTRODUCTION

At a time when network governance theory is gaining increasing attention, the role and challenges of grassroots governments in public management have also become more prominent. Especially under the framework of multi-center governance, [1] compared with the traditional government-centrism model, grassroots governments need to negotiate public affairs with a variety of social entities to achieve resource sharing and decision-making coordination. The characteristics of diversified governance entities, decentralization of power, and transparency of information transmission make grassroots governments more flexible and efficient in implementing public policies. However, in the actual operation process, grassroots governments also face problems such as decentralized resources, unclear rights and responsibilities, interest games, and low decision-making efficiency. In view of this, it is crucial to conduct targeted dilemma diagnosis and path optimization to enhance the coordination and service capabilities of grassroots governments in the multi-governance system. In view of the problem of resource dispersion, improving the resource allocation capabilities and decision-making power of grassroots governments is the focus of improvement. The key lies in establishing a cross-departmental collaboration and information sharing mechanism to integrate resources distributed in various departments and regions and achieve optimal resource allocation. In

view of the problem of unclear rights and responsibilities, it is necessary to clarify the boundaries of responsibilities of governments at all levels and relevant departments, and to achieve matching of responsibilities and clarification of rights and responsibilities of all parties through the establishment of a sound system. In terms of decision-making efficiency and coordination difficulties, by improving the transparency of decision-making and establishing an effective feedback and evaluation mechanism, the efficiency of coordination can be greatly improved and the problem of interest game can be alleviated. In addition, with the assistance of scientific and technological means, such as the construction of an information platform, it can also provide support for information flow and interactive collaboration in grassroots governance. In addition, when dealing with interest game issues, formulating a fair and reasonable interest coordination mechanism and using legal means to ensure the fair implementation of policies is a key step out of the predicament. For the phenomenon of shirking responsibility, grassroots governments should clarify task indicators and assessment mechanisms, and strengthen responsibility awareness and law enforcement through a combination of accountability and incentives. In summary, the multi-center governance theory provides a new perspective for grassroots government management, and also provides a theoretical and practical reference framework for solving the dilemma of grassroots governance.[2]

2. POLYCENTRIC GOVERNANCE THEORY

2.1. Overview of the Polycentric Governance Theory

With the in-depth development of globalization and social economy, the complexity of social governance faced by grassroots governments has increased significantly. The traditional single-center governance model can no longer adapt to the diversified and dynamic needs of modern society. The polycentric governance theory proposes an innovative thinking path, emphasizing the joint role of government, market and multiple social forces in public governance, and synergistically promoting the effective allocation of resources and the effective solution of social problems. Specifically, the polycentric governance theory breaks through the limitations of the power center of the traditional governance model, and attempts to build a broad network covering government, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society, responding to complex challenges with flexible and changeable organizational forms, and improving governance efficiency and quality. Scholars have been exploring this governance model endlessly. For example, Ostrom[3] has deeply explored the application of polycentric governance theory in practice and its challenge to traditional public administration theory[4] through multiple case analysis. In China's governance practice, grassroots governments are the key carriers for the transformation of theory into practice, but their roles and functions under polycentric governance have not yet been fully clarified. For grassroots governments, how to position their own roles in the polycentric governance structure, recognize their own environment and limitations, and then transform their governance strategies and capabilities are urgent challenges they face. At present, grassroots governments often lack clear governance goals and models in the implementation process, resulting in improper resource allocation, multi-party coordination problems, etc. These problems not only affect the government's credibility and execution, but also restrict the overall effectiveness and efficiency of social governance.[5] Therefore, the dilemma of grassroots governments under the multi-center governance model has become a major issue that needs to be solved urgently by academics and policymakers.

2.2. The Role and Positioning of Grassroots Governments in the Multi-center Governance Framework

Under the theoretical framework of polycentric governance, the positioning and role of grassroots governments present unprecedented complexity and challenges. With the parallel and diversified development of the governance system, the power distribution and functional evolution among the government, the market and the society tend to be dynamically balanced, and the status of grassroots

governments as the core of governance has been increasingly valued. Under this framework, grassroots governments are no longer unilateral transmitters of the will of higher-level governments, but need to collaborate with other governance entities in the process of policy formulation and implementation to jointly promote the effective management of public affairs. Due to its location advantage closest to the people, grassroots governments need to re-examine and clarify their roles in social and economic development and public service provision, which is not only a reshaping of their functional positioning, but also a key prerequisite for the application of polycentric governance theory. At present, in order for grassroots governments to play an active role in the governance network, they must first establish a new role positioning that can reflect the interests of multiple parties, coordinate multiple demands, and effectively respond to social problems. On this basis, by strengthening their functions, grassroots governments can better exercise their powers, assume responsibilities, and realize the integration and optimal allocation of various resources inside and outside the region. Specifically, this requires grassroots governments to fully play their role in social security, environmental protection, public health, etc. while promoting regional economic development, so as to achieve the goal of social harmony and stability. From the perspective of role transformation, grassroots governments need to transform from traditional power institutions to service-oriented and participatory governance entities, which not only reflects the core essence of multi-center governance, but also adapts to the development trend of modern social governance. In practice, this transformation is not achieved overnight. It requires grassroots governments to adopt a more open and flexible attitude when implementing policies, actively communicate and cooperate with social forces such as civil organizations, non-profit organizations, and social activists, and jointly participate in public affairs such as community management and environmental governance, and continuously broaden the channels and methods of governance participation. At the same time, grassroots governments should strengthen information communication and policy coordination with higher-level governments so that governance activities can form effective vertical linkage and horizontal communication. It cannot be ignored that the increasingly diversified roles of grassroots governments also face a series of challenges, such as how to balance various social interests, how to improve governance efficiency[6] and response speed, and how to innovate governance mechanisms and methods. These require grassroots governments to constantly explore and innovate in practice in order to solve them.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE DILEMMA OF GRASSROOTS GOVERNMENTS

3.1. Dispersed Resources and Unclear Responsibilities

Under the guidance of the polycentric governance theory, the primary problem faced by grassroots governments in the process of resource allocation and management is the dispersion of resources and unclear rights and responsibilities. The problem of resource dispersion is mainly reflected in three aspects: financial investment, information transmission and human resources. In terms of financial funds, grassroots governments are often affected by the slow progress of funding allocation and uneven distribution of funds from higher authorities, resulting in the failure of resources to be in place in a timely manner, or imbalanced distribution between different regions and departments, thus affecting the implementation of various public services and projects. In terms of information transmission, due to the lack of communication mechanism construction and the lack of an effective information sharing system, information flow is not smooth, and there is a disconnection between the decision-making level and the execution level, resulting in inaccurate decision-making and inadequate policy implementation. In terms of human resource management, due to the lack of professional and stable talent teams at grassroots governments, the allocation of human resources often seems to be beyond their ability, especially in some key positions, where work with high professional requirements is difficult to carry out effectively due to the lack of corresponding professional talents. On the other hand, in the actual governance process of grassroots governments,

the vague definition of rights and responsibilities has led to overlapping responsibilities between departments, administrative divisions, and between the government and the market and society, making it difficult to clarify responsibilities and powers. This phenomenon not only affects management efficiency and complicates the mediation of various problems and conflicts, but also causes the overstepping of authority or lack of responsibility in internal management.[7] More seriously, unclear responsibilities may also lead to the failure of the accountability tracing mechanism, forming a potential hotbed for corruption and reducing the government's credibility and execution efficiency.

3.2. Decision-making Efficiency and Coordination Difficulties

Under the background of polycentric governance theory, grassroots governments face many challenges, among which low decision-making efficiency and insufficient coordination ability are one of the most prominent difficulties.[8] Specifically, the low efficiency of grassroots government decision-making is often manifested in two aspects: slow response to sudden social events and long policy-making cycle. Problems in the coordination mechanism between departments should not be ignored. Especially in the processing of affairs involving cross-departmental collaboration, the lack of effective information communication mechanism and unified coordination platform often leads to frequent information islands, which aggravates the difficulty of decision-making implementation. Taking urban traffic management as an example, the fields of road construction, traffic planning and daily traffic operation management often involve the cooperation of multiple departments[9] such as planning departments, transportation departments and urban management. However, due to the dispersion of resources and disorderly coordination between them, project progress is often delayed and resources are wasted. Furthermore, there is a lack of vertical integration and horizontal connection in government internal decision-making, which leads to inconsistent instructions between superior and subordinate governments during policy implementation, unclear identification of local government responsibilities, and sometimes even the situation where the implementation of policies affects the effects of other policies.

3.3. Gambling Over Interests and Shirking Responsibility

Under the theory of multi-center governance, the difficulties encountered by grassroots governments in the process of promoting public affairs are becoming more and more obvious, among which interest games and shirking of responsibilities highlight the weak links of the governance system. Among the many participating entities, due to the diversity of interests and differences in goals, different institutions and groups are prone to form a complex network of interest relations in the process of collaboration. The inconsistency of goals makes it difficult for grassroots governments to form a unified promotion force in actual operations, and it is common for each to act independently. This situation is particularly obvious in fiscal expenditure, project contracting, resource allocation, etc. The problem of mismatch between power and responsibility has always been a distress for grassroots governments. In addition, according to field survey data, when grassroots governments implement upper-level policies, they are affected by local protectionism and departmental interest barriers.[10] Individual departments often pay more attention to maximizing their own departmental interests, while their obedience and promotion of local overall development goals are greatly reduced. In the uneven distribution of power and responsibility, grassroots governments often bear too much responsibility and obtain less decision-making power, resulting in a shirking attitude in conflicts of interest to reduce their own obligations and responsibilities pressure.

4. OPTIMIZING THE PATH OF GRASSROOTS GOVERNMENT UNDER THE PERSPECTIVE OF MULTI-CENTER GOVERNANCE

4.1. Strengthening Cross-departmental Collaboration Mechanisms

Under the background of polycentric governance theory, grassroots governments have encountered many challenges and difficulties in coordinating multiple governance entities and improving the efficiency of public services. Based on the re-examination of the roles and functions of grassroots governments in the current environment, it can be seen that it is urgent and feasible to optimize their governance paths. Therefore, this section will focus on the optimization methods of grassroots government paths in the polycentric governance framework, starting with strengthening the cross-departmental collaboration mechanism. First, it is necessary to introduce a dynamic evaluation and feedback mechanism to regularly monitor and evaluate the effects of cross-departmental collaboration, and to create an improvement mechanism with timely feedback and dynamic adjustment based on KPI,[11] and to reconfigure resources and power accordingly. Secondly, in the collaboration process, each department needs to establish a joint meeting system, formulate shared goals and supporting policies, and clarify their respective rights and responsibilities to improve the coordination of decision-making and the efficiency of execution. Through institutionalized communication channels and regular review meetings, the integration of policy formulation and implementation, as well as the timely discovery and resolution of problems in the collaboration process, can be promoted. In addition, by introducing third-party evaluation agencies to participate in the evaluation of the collaboration process, a neutral and objective perspective can be brought, which can contribute to improving the openness and transparency of the collaboration mechanism. Finally, the importance of information sharing must be emphasized as a technical guarantee for strengthening the collaboration mechanism. The government needs to increase investment in the construction of grassroots information facilities, formulate standardized and systematic data sharing processes and platforms, and improve the timeliness, authenticity and availability of information sharing. Through the implementation of the above measures, it can effectively motivate and regulate the cross-departmental collaboration of grassroots governments, improve their collaboration capabilities and service efficiency under the multi-center governance framework, and continuously optimize and improve the path selection under multi-center governance.[12] This will not only help solve the difficulties faced by grassroots governments, but also promote the efficient and harmonious operation of the entire social governance system.

4.2. Establishing an Information Sharing and Communication Platform

In the face of the increasing complexity of grassroots governance, it is particularly important to build an efficient information sharing and communication platform. As an important support for grassroots government work under the framework of multi-center governance, the information platform can not only promote data interoperability[13] between government departments, enhance the uniformity of resource allocation and policy implementation, but also enhance mutual trust and cooperation between the government and citizens by improving information transparency.[14] In order to break the information island and promote information interconnection between grassroots governments and between the government and all sectors of society, several key factors that need to be examined when building an information sharing platform include: the accuracy and timeliness of information collection, the security and privacy protection of shared data, and the flexibility and reliability of the information flow mechanism. At the technical implementation level, it is imperative for grassroots governments to use modern information technology means such as cloud computing, big data, and the Internet of Things to establish an information sharing platform that is both flexible and reliable. At the same time, in order to ensure the compliance of information sharing under the legal framework, the platform design needs to focus on data protection regulations and establish strict data management and security strategies to ensure the security of user information and the reliability of the platform.

This two-way interactive information communication model has spared no effort to promote the improvement and optimization of social public services, enabling multi-center governance to truly play a positive role in building bridges and filling gaps in practice, and providing a practical path to solving the difficulties of grassroots government governance.

4.3. Standardize the Definition of Rights and Responsibilities and the Accountability Mechanism

With the increasing complexity of social division of labor, the governance tasks faced by grassroots governments are becoming increasingly arduous and complex. After fully analyzing the reasons for the fuzzy definition of grassroots government powers and responsibilities, this article puts forward the following improvement suggestions, hoping to improve the governance efficiency and credibility of grassroots governments and enhance the overall welfare of society by optimizing the roadmap. First, clarifying the boundaries of power is the key to reducing conflicts between departments and improving the efficiency of collaboration. On this basis, it is recommended to formulate a comprehensive list of powers and responsibilities, covering multiple aspects such as finance, environmental protection, and urban planning, to ensure that the powers and responsibilities of various functional departments of grassroots governments are clear and their operations are standardized in their daily work. Secondly, strengthening the supervision and constraint system is the guarantee to ensure that responsibilities are implemented in place. It is necessary to build a scientific supervision and accountability system,[15] while tracing responsibilities, increase information disclosure, enable the public to track the progress and results of government work in real time, and enhance social participation and transparency in governance. In addition, strengthening the combination of accountability and incentives is also critical to improving administrative efficiency. It is recommended to design institutionalized reward and punishment measures, such as improving performance appraisal standards and publicizing results to provide sufficient incentives for the enthusiasm and innovation of grassroots government personnel, and at the same time impose strict penalties on dereliction of duty. In this way, the enthusiasm of grassroots government workers can be mobilized to prevent and reduce governance errors at the source.

4.4. Improving the Governance Capacity and Efficiency of Grassroots Governments

Measures to improve the governance capacity and efficiency of grassroots governments are particularly urgent from a multi-center perspective. As an important level that directly provides services to the public, the strength of grassroots government's governance capacity directly affects the quality and efficiency of its services. Multi-center governance promotes cooperation between the government and social forces to achieve co-governance; however, how to enhance the management efficiency of grassroots governments themselves has become a key issue. First of all, the core of improving the governance capacity of grassroots governments is to strengthen the professional training and skills improvement of grassroots civil servants. Regularly carry out training in the form of case analysis, simulated operations, etc. to increase civil servants' response strategies and handling capabilities for various social governance issues. Secondly, in line with the concept of multi-center governance, grassroots governments should build an effective internal decision-making mechanism to improve the transparency and scientific nature of decision-making. Use modern information technology to establish a data-driven decision support system to enable rapid response to various social governance challenges based on the collection and analysis of public data. Governance informatization can significantly improve work efficiency and reduce unnecessary waste of time and resources. In addition, while improving governance capabilities, grassroots governments should also emphasize improving efficiency. By implementing performance management, closely integrating with policy guidelines at all levels, and introducing target management and result evaluation mechanisms, we can ensure the quality of task completion. Through the above measures, grassroots

governments will surely make substantial progress in improving service quality and promoting governance innovation under the background of multi-center governance.

5. CONCLUSION

In the context of global governance complexity and power decentralization, the challenges faced by grassroots governments are particularly prominent. The polycentric governance theory has attracted widespread attention from the academic community for its practical value in understanding and designing modern public management systems. This study aims to explore the operational dilemma of grassroots governments and their path optimization methods under this theoretical framework. The analysis shows that resource dispersion and unclear rights and responsibilities are the key factors leading to the dysfunction of grassroots governments. Grassroots governments are often interfered with and restricted by different governance entities in the process of decision-making and implementation, which in turn affects the consistency and efficiency of policies. In addition, the information island phenomenon and interest game behavior between departments have aggravated the coordination difficulties in the governance structure and led to the increasingly serious phenomenon of shirking responsibility. In response to these problems, this study proposes a series of optimization measures: strengthen the cross-departmental collaboration mechanism, improve the cooperation relationship within the government and with all sectors of society; establish an open and transparent information sharing and communication platform to improve the transparency of decision-making and the participation of the public; standardize the definition of rights and responsibilities and the accountability mechanism, and clarify the scope of functions and responsibility boundaries of each executive entity; enhance the governance capacity and public service level of grassroots governments, and promote the optimization and improvement of government functions; explore flexible and adaptive decentralization and autonomy models to meet the diverse needs of social governance. These path optimization measures will help improve the governance efficiency of grassroots governments under the multi-center governance framework and better adapt to the development trend of public management in the new era. In the future, with the deepening of theory and the enrichment of practice, the network governance capacity of grassroots governments is expected to be further enhanced, providing citizens with better services and achieving harmonious and sustainable development of the community.

This paper takes the group of people with broken housing loans as the research object, and systematically discusses the construction path of the social assistance mechanism for broken housing loans based on the framework of "government-bank-individual" shared responsibility. The study concludes that the problem of housing loan defaults is not only a manifestation of individual credit risk, but also a result of multiple factors such as economic fluctuations, policy adjustments and insufficient social security. The traditional single-principle rescue model has the defects of fuzzy responsibility boundary and insufficient coordination, and it is urgent to build a tripartite linkage of responsibility sharing mechanism. At the government level, it is necessary to strengthen the policy to cover the function of optimizing the housing security system (e.g., shared ownership housing, guaranteed rental housing), and improve the unemployment assistance and re-employment training policies to alleviate the pressure on the survival of the group of people who have cut off their mortgage payments; at the same time, strengthen the construction of laws and regulations, and make clear the relationship between the financial institutions and the rights and responsibilities of the individual, so as to avoid the transfer of risks. At the bank level, it should establish a differentiated loan risk assessment and dynamic adjustment mechanism,[12] implement flexible treatment such as loan extension and interest rate preference for groups with temporary difficulties, and explore innovative financial tools such as "debt-to-equity conversion" to reduce systemic risks. Individuals should raise their awareness of risk prevention, enhance their risk-resistant ability through financial planning and credit education, and take the initiative to fulfill their contractual responsibilities to avoid malicious defaults. The study further suggests that the tripartite responsibility-sharing mechanism should be

based on an information-sharing platform that realizes the interconnection of government, bank and individual data, and ensures the flexibility and sustainability of the policy through regular evaluation and dynamic adjustment mechanisms. In addition, social welfare organizations, communities and other parties should be introduced to form a multi-level assistance network. Through tripartite coordination, the basic rights and interests of groups that have cut off their mortgage payments can be safeguarded, while financial market stability and social harmony can be maintained, providing a theoretical basis and practical reference for resolving the risk of housing loans and promoting the goal of common prosperity.

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