The Improvement of Grid Management in Rural Community from the View of Social Governance-Based on the Investigation of Menglian

Shu-wang ZHANG*, Can GUO and Jeff WANG

School of Public Administration, South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, China
School of Social Work, Rutgers The State University of New Jersey
*Corresponding author

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Abstract. Since 2004, grid management has been the main idea of innovation of rural community governance in Chinese. However, with the transformation of thought from social management to social governance in the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the CPC, grid management, as an achievement of the thought of social management, needs to be relocated and developed. As an ideal sample, the rural grid management in Menglian county, Yunnan is thoroughly discussed in aspects of the management structure, management cost and the effect of management in this paper, drawing a conclusion that grid management cannot straighten out the relationship between society and politics and promote the social construction with a extremely-highly cost. The paper puts forward the reform of grid management, a method of centralized management, to meet the requirements of the modernization of governance system and governance ability. The value of this paper is to promote the research on grid management theory under the view of social governance.

Grid Management: Result of Rural Community Governance

The idea of grid management originated from the management of waterpower and electric power, so the concept “grid” stemmed from the split the word “Power Grid”. In 1998, Foster and Kesselman proposed that the grid is an emerging infrastructure built on the internet, and by integrating high speed Internet, high performance computer, large database, sensor, remote equipment, the resources of computing, storage, communication, software, information, knowledge can be flexibly shared. Inspired by the two-way interaction in the application of waterpower and electric power, the core idea of grid management is the convenience of users submitting their requests and the accuracy and swiftness of grid’s response. On a whole, the grid management mainly includes these elements: reasonably separating grid units according to the regional division, constructing the internet platform with the modern information technology, the awareness of public service focusing management on providing services, and the collaboration of service teams.

Rural community (Village) is a basic unit of service management in rural grass-root society and a community of village life. After reform and opening, with an extensive implement of the household contract responsibility system in the countryside, the pattern of “township’s government and village’s governance” which takes villager autonomy system as a core replace the people's commune system whose administrative power is highly centralized. Under the planning of “township’s government and village’s governance”, township government is grass-root unit of political power and villager community is the most grass-root self-government organization of the mass in the rural area. The combination between township government and villager community has formed a political pattern in our rural grass-root organization, so that the governance mechanism of rural community has got new development.

Since Dongcheng district in Beijing first comprehensively implemented grid management in 2004, the model of grid management has been popularized around the grass-toot government. In 2008, Zhoushan city in Zhejiang province spread the urban grid management experiences to the rural areas with the idea of “grid management, group service”. The Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the CPC explicitly pointed out the principle “with the direction of grid management
and social service, perfect the comprehensive platform of grass-root service management, timely reflect and coordinate the peoples’ various interests appealing”, and took the revolution of grid management as one of the exploring direction of social governance. However, it has been ten years that the grid management is implemented as the main idea of our grass-root social governance, so it is the time for us to check the efficiency of its theory and experiment.

Case of Menglian: the Ideal Sample of Grid Management in Rural Community

Dai-Lahu-Va Autonomous County of Menglian, located in the south of Pu’er city, Yunnan province, bordering on Burma, is a significant gateway to southeastern Asia. The county has jurisdiction over 6 towns, 39 villages, 3 communities, 615 village groups, with a total population of 138000. The 90% of the financial revenue relies on the transferred payments brought by senior government. In 2008, the country was shocked by the incident called “Menglian event”, which occurred in Menglian. After that, Menglian County broke the functional division with the re-construction of party committee and the government by using the theory of grid management. The county also established a responsibility area covering the whole county along with a five-level grid system which reorganized the function of grid and afforded the public service for the masses with overall direction in grids. It can be said that the Menglian case is a typical case of reconstructing government as required by the grid theory of “up to the horizontal and vertical boundaries”. It is the extreme practice of grid management and a rarely ideal sample for studying rural grid management.

Main points of constructing the system of grid management include the following five aspects.

Construct the five-level grid of “county-town-village-village group-team”. Menglian County broke the function of original administrative region to divide the whole county into 6 town-level grid responsibility areas, with 42 villages-level grid responsibility areas, with 388 village group-level grid responsibility areas, and divide the village groups into teams with the idea of “joint construction of teams and families”. It re-organized the scattered rural households by grids, building the service team on the responsibility areas of team-level grid. The county has 1960 teams and 1810 service teams. In the grid there are five-level service center of “county-town-village-village group-team” to provide service for people. Based on these centers, the county established a comprehensive service platform of all-covering functions. It realized a service net connecting cities and villages with the idea of “up to the horizontal and vertical boundaries” and “point-line combination” and achieved “seamless information, comprehensive working, overall service” in every grid in the county.

Establish bottom-up and four-level joint conference in grids. Above the grid of counties and towns, there are grid leaders’ joint conference, which has permanent leadership group and offices. It appointed the all-level party committees as the main chargers to hold the bottom-up and four-level joint conference and solve the different kinds of questions delivered from the lower departments in the grids. The joint conference formed a closed circuit for collecting, recognizing, solving and feeding back the events to make sure that we can accurately know the masses’ wills, quickly respond to the masses’ demand and timely solve the masses’ difficulties.

Full-featured service group in grids. After the division of the responsibility areas of grids, there must be a qualified service group. The county appointed 45 cadres from county-level grids down to the town-level grids, and selected the best cadre as the leader of town-grids. Each party committee of towns were equipped with a deputy and a organization officer, who are specially working in grids to improve the quality of coordination and response of the town-level grids. The cadres of county put their work center down to town-level grids and focus on constructing the village-level grid groups. Taking the construction of party organization in the village as the core, the village-level grids organized service team which takes standing secretaries, police officers, instructors of new rural construction and college students as the backbone. According to the functional requirements of village-level grids, 513 personnel from departments, institutions and enterprises of the county were assigned to village-level responsibility areas.

Integrated and network-based service facilities in grids. According to the work requirements of the grid area and the needs of the team, in accordance with the idea of integration, the village constructed
service office of village-level grid, the masses reception room, mass studio, mass kitchen and other comprehensive office buildings. In the case of well-prepared office services, the village constructed the service network of the whole county, strived to build the grid network, and promoted the online service station. The mode of "three screen in one " (computer + mobile phone + TV) ensures the affairs like the policy promotion within the grid, the service of government affairs, the services for the people and the information services into each villager's vision.

Promote participatory and responsive assessments in grids. In the farmer-centered work system, in order to make the information of government management and farmers’ demands flow in bi-direction, Menglian has carried out the evaluation mechanism of service performance. It is an organic combination between the organizational evaluation of "two description, three reviews, one examination" and masses’ evaluation. The chargers of the grid team at all levels carry out the work of "two description" to the upper-level party committee leaders and the party members or representatives of the masses around the work ideas, the main measures, the effectiveness and innovation. This makes the masses know well about the team work and evaluate the grid team, in order to reach comprehensive evaluation of "organizational evaluation, leadership comments, mass appraisal" (Figure 1).

Problems and Perfection of Grid Management in Menglian

Menglian’s grid management has been awarded by the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee, Yunnan Provincial Party Committee and Yunnan provincial government, however, at the same time, there are still some space to perfect in a certain degree.

First, the grid management cannot fit the social nature of rural communities.

The innovation of rural community governance must be based on the social structure of region, the traditional characteristics and the development characteristics, in order to develop a long-term governance system according with the development of rural community. This is the consensus of research groups about the rural governance in China. Professors like Xu Yong, He Xuefeng and Wu Yi, from the practice study, recognize that the exogenous variables which not fit the rural society cannot build a effective governance system in rural areas. As a result, Professor He Xuefeng and other scholars put forward the research consensus of rural governance: "The shift from the attention on rural political focus to an understanding of the non-ritualistic modality of everyday village life
must be proposed”. Although the above point of view is aimed at the study of the villagers' autonomy, is the rural grid management not a "political focus events in rural areas”? Indeed, the case of grid management in Menglian reflects this tendency. In the process of establishing the grid management system, the government did not take the rural community characteristics, enterprises, social organizations, agnation and other factors into consideration to making them play a positive role in social governance and social construction. On the contrary, regardless of the characteristics of rural communities, the government dealt with all governance affairs in rural community. According to the lessons of rural governance in the past, this is likely to result in "two skins”—governance system and the rural community's society, leading to a series of governance failures.

Second, grid management has a negative impact on the village committee, social organizations and the market in rural community. According to the relevant laws and regulations, the village committee is an autonomous organization of the masses, implementing "self-management, self-education, self-service." The village-level grid is different from the autonomous organization in nature. It is a hierarchical organization of the government, which accepts the superior leader’s instruction, and its staff is also financially supported. The strong and full-coverage government organizations have inhibited the development of villagers' autonomous organizations and social organizations. It has played a negative role in fostering villagers' self-management consciousness and hatching social organizations, hindering the long-term effective mechanism of rural social governance. In modern social governance, the market factor is also an indispensable part of governance, in Menglian case, because the grid is too small, the market (especially the public service market) is too fragmented, leading to the barriers between system and market, so that the system cannot be included in public service enterprises. In other words, the grid management in Menglian is neither integrated with social endogenous organizations nor directly connected with modern market factors, blocking the path for government to provide public services through the power of the market and society. Therefore, the substantial increase in the investment of personnel and funding is inevitable, and the “centralized” social management situation is inevitable.

Third, the original government departments conflicts with grid organizations. In Menglian County, within Party and government system, one-third of people are assigned down to the village grid all the year round. The grid management adds a bottom-up mode of operation to the top-down operation of the permanent government organization. The two-way operation, which is very effective for the resolution of emergency events, can correct the defects of original and bureaucratic organization to meet personalized public service needs of the masses. In a state of emergency, grid organizations must have a crowding-out effect on permanent government agencies. However, if the permanent agencies of government and grid organizations co-exist for a long time, the following problems will arise: First of all, the division of jobs under the existing personnel system inevitably resulted in confusion. The government staff assigned down to the grid need to balance the two aspects and its workload will inevitably increase, which means that the cost of government organizations increased significantly and the work incentives of staff become more difficult. Secondly, according to the principle of “problem delivering up to higher layers”, when the personnel and management center go down to the grass root, the problem may be dealt with at a lower level, so the senior permanent organization has nothing to do, resulting in human waste of the upper grid team. It also causes equal pay for different work within the government and the unfairness becomes dominant.

Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform pointed out that the social governance should "adhere to the systematic governance, strengthen the party leadership, play a leading role, encourage and support the participation of all sectors of society, achieve the virtuous interaction among government governance, social self-regulation and residents' autonomy”. Decision makes the transformation from “social management” to “social governance”. Although it changed only one word, the based theoretical system is very different. It is the embodiment of "national governance system and governance capacity modernization" in grass-root social governance, and it is a transition from “one governance” to “multiple co-governance”.

First of all, as a product of the period of social management, grid management should be
repositioned in accordance with the instructions of the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee. It is no longer a basic theory of social governance at the grass roots, but a new approach and specific measures to "sound comprehensive service management platform, timely reflect and coordinate the people’s various interests demands at all levels ".

In addition, the grid management should take a breakthrough in multi-governance with rationalizing the relations among government, society and market. So far, governance theory has proved that social governance is completed by three elements together: the government, the society and the market; and the emphasis on any single one may lead to failure of governance. However, the basic impression of grid management in the academic field is that the government annexed the society and delayed the social construction. It cannot meet the needs of “speeding up the formation of modern social organization system, including separation of politics and society, a clear mandate, and autonomy by law”, which is proposed by Report to the Eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China. This requires that, on the way of management, it is no longer top-down and one-dimensional management and reorganization for social and public affairs through the policy-making, but an implementation of the governance of public affairs in rural areas through cooperation, consultation, partnership, common goals with other social organizations within the grid. Only in this way can the management play a basic role on "healthy and orderly development of social organizations, the inclusion of mass participation into the social management.”

It is worth mentioning that the author found that the grid management has prevailed popularly in rural governments of eastern and western underdeveloped rural areas, and many areas still take grid management as an advanced rural community management methods to promote. Since 2015, "People's Daily" and "Guangming Daily” have reported about the positive role of the new elites on the rural governance. This indicates that the state attaches more importance to the endogenous development of governance system within the rural community, rather than the old ideas of exogenous governance like the grid management. This is a new policy pressure to accelerate the transformation of exogenous governance like grid management to adapt to the new formulation of social governance.

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References


