

A Research on Grassroots Social Governance Mode Based on Multi-level Cooperation —Taking Wuxi County of Chongqing (China) as an example

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Abstract:

It is very common for NGOs to effectively participate in social governance in some countries (Salamon, 1995, 1999). However, this is not the case in China. Social conflict is often inevitable and becomes plays an impetus to social transformation. Multi-level cooperation and development with NGO's participation not only helps to solve social conflict, but also prevents social conflict from arising in the first placehappening, cultivates civil society and improves social governance.

The Chinese academia is not unfamiliar with relevant such theories such as participation theory, social conflict theory and social development theory (Fei, 1947; and Wang, 2009). But it is rarely seen that local practice of such theories has been effectively promoted through multiple cooperation with NGOs' involved in designing and advocating. What is happening in Wuxi County of Chongqing Municipality offers an experimental exploration in this regard.

The author, taking an empirical approach in investigation and research, went to Wuxi County of Chongqing Municipality in summer 2011 and conducted interviews with four kinds groups of people.

The paper explores the source of “grid governance mode” (wang ge hua zhi li) in Wuxi County. The grid governance mode not only addresses existing conflict caused by resource scarcity or resources allocation, but also wards off potential conflict. Moreover, it also creates and collects more resources. The grid service management system of Wuxi County is characterized by its horizontal and vertical coverage as well as its service orientation. The grid mode is also a grassroots social governance mode featured by a common goal, multipl participation and cooperation. The common goal is the Lehe Homeland, and the participating stakeholders include NGOs, government leaders, government organs, state-owned enterprises, community organizations, communities, and “grids”(Wang ge). The NGO named Global Village of Beijing is the main designer of the common

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goal. The paper also analyzes the advantageous conditions, in particular the participation of NGOs, of Wu Xi in which the grassroots social management mode based on multi-level cooperation runs effectively. Firstly, Wu Xi is the hometown of Ms. Liao Xiaoyi, and Ms. Liao hopes to repay her hometown. Secondly, Global Village of Beijing has strong professional competence and mobilization capability. As to the construction of ecological rural and urban areas, Global Village of Beijing not only has a theoretical system, but also plays multiple roles as designer, participant, supervisor, mobilizer as well as promoter, with the integration of thinking, advocacy and action. However, the grassroots social management mode based on multi-level cooperation also faces a series of challenges such as resources problems, sustainability and diversification of NGOs.

The paper comes to three conclusions. Firstly, social conflicts promote better social governance in Wuxi county. The way in which Wuxi County prevents and resolves social conflicts, integrates resources to achieve mutual development and cultivates civil society is an inspiring example. However, the practice in Wuxi County is just in its initial stage and has a long way to go. Secondly, NGO such as Global Village of Beijing has played an important role in Wuxi's social governance. However, NGOs' capacity building and variety still is a great challenge when they participate in social governance. Thirdly, social governance, as economic development does, goes through different stages. It's possible and practical that different parts in one country are in different development stages. China is very large country with development gaps among different regions. It is therefore unnecessary and impossible to adopt a unified mode in grassroots social governance in China. The key lies in cultivating civil society in accordance with local economic and social development.

Keywords Multi-level cooperation; grassroots social governance; “grid governance mode”; Wuxi County

1. Research Question

Social conflict is a universality and a necessity, it is also a driving force for social transformation. As Lewis A. Coser put it in his *Functions of Social Conflict*, “Our concern is mainly the functions, rather than the dysfunctions, of social conflict, that is to say, with those consequences of social conflict which make for an increase rather than a decrease in the adaptation or adjustment of particular social relationship or groups”. (Coser, 1989 Foreword). With the accelerated process of industrialization and urbanization ,China has been witnessing frequent social conflicts during its transformation period. Under such circumstances, what are the functions

of social conflict at China's grassroots level? The paper takes the above-mentioned question as its research question and explores how social conflict promotes grassroots social governance by means of a case study on Wuxi County of Chongqing Municipality.

As Lewis A. Coser put it, "before the 'facts' can speak, they have to be arranged through some conceptual scheme. Concepts may be thought of as being neither true nor false; they are apt or inept, clear or vague, fruitful or useless. They are tools designed to capture relevant aspects of reality and thus 'constitute the definitions (or prescriptions) of what is to be observed'. For the purpose of this study, it will provisionally be taken to mean a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals" (Coser 1989). Ralf Dahrendorf, a representative of the dialectical conflict theory, believes that the modern social conflict is a kind of antagonism between provisions and entitlements, between politics and economy, or between wealth and citizenship (Dahrendorf, 2000).

With the accelerated process of industrialization and urbanization and the transformation from planned economy to market economy, social conflict is on the increase in China. However, social conflict is not the only terminology used in China; such words as contradictions among the people (*ren min nei bu mao dun*), mass incidents (*qun ti shi jian*) and protests (*kang yi huo dong*) are used as synonyms for social conflict. There are several manifestations of social conflict in China, such as the simplest complaint, discussions in secret, individual or collective petitions and large-scale violent conflict. Wang Xiaoyi, a Chinese scholar, defines the social conflict in China's rural areas as "a means by which the rural residents express their discontent and try to find a method so that things work out the way they want (Wang, 2009, pp27)." Wang Xiaoyi's definition of social conflict in China's rural areas applies equally well to social conflict in China's urban areas. The descriptive definition is essentially the same as Dahrendorf's abstract definition, except that Wang's definition refers to a feature of social conflict in China: the objective of social conflicts by rural or urban groups is to express their dissatisfaction and try to find a proper solution to local problems. This argument is different from Coser's definition that "the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals." Currently, most of the social conflicts in China are related to interests and mainly manifested by the antagonism between provisions and entitlements, or between wealth and citizenship. This paper adopts Dahrendorf's definition of social conflict and absorbs several terminologies peculiar to China, such as contradictions among the people, mass incidents, protests and violent conflict.

2. Literature Review

In the West, classical social conflict theories have evolved into modern ones. On the basis of varied views on the origin, process, essence, form and functions of social conflict, there are different theory schools, such as Karl Marx's materialistic social conflict theory, Max Weber's multi-dimensional social conflict theory, Georg Simmel's mild social conflict theory, Lewis A. Coser's functional social conflict theory and Ralf Dahrendorf's dialectical conflict theory. Since the foundation of People's Republic of China in 1949, China has experienced several social transformations including the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the reform and opening-up period, the preliminary establishment of market economy and the gradual initiation of social system reform. In alignment with historical development, there is also exploration of social conflict theories in China. Various theory schools have emerged, such as Mao Zedong's conflict theories of contradictions among the people and class struggle during the Cultural Revolution, conflict theory of material benefit (represented by Zheng Hangsheng, Yang Min, Sun Liping, Li Jingpeng and Li Tianfang, etc.), stratum conflict theory (represented by Zhu Guanglei, Li Peilin and Huang Haixia, etc.) and conflict theory of social consciousness (represented by Li Peilin) (Pu, 2009, pp26-51).

Western classical conflict theories are represented by Karl Marx, Max Weber and Georg Simmel. Karl Marx divided social conflicts into economic conflict, political conflict and class conflict, and emphasized the important role of class struggle in social development. To be more specific, class struggle plays a very important role in promoting the alteration of social formation and the fundamental change of social system, and in the quantitative development of the same social formation (Marx and Engels, 1972, pp250). Karl Marx and Max Weber were both of the view that social conflict would lead to a change in social structure. Karl Marx was optimistic about the prospect of social conflict and believed that the development of social conflict would enable one class, or society, to replace another. While Max Weber was pessimistic about the future of social conflict and of the view that social conflict is less likely to occur if new social hierarchy is established on a fair system of law and regulation, and if the flow of talent is determined by their performance and capability. Under such circumstances, human society would be more and more willing to accept the administration by hierarchical forces, and hierarchical forces would confine social conflict and thus leave the entire society in a state of strong inhibition. Different from Karl Marx's view that violent revolution and overthrow of social structure were the consequences of social conflict, Georg Simmel believed that social conflict could lead to positive results, for conflict made boundaries between different groups more clear, centralized the authority, strengthened control over deviant behavior and different opinions and enhanced internal unity of the groups involved in conflict (Turner, 2001, pp168).

As continuation and development of classical conflict theories, modern conflict theories emphasize conflict in social activities and use it as explanation of social transformation. Among the

main representatives of modern conflict theories are Lewis A. Coser and Ralf Dahrendorf. A number of basic propositions had been distilled by Lewis A. Coser from Georg Simmel's theories of social conflict; these propositions are in turn extended by being related to other findings of theoretical or empirical nature (Coser, 1989). Coser focused mainly on the functional aspects of social conflict. Social conflict may fulfill a number of determinate functions in groups and other interpersonal relations; it may help to unite groups or serve as a "safety-valve" in the maintenance of the groups. Conflict within a group may help to establish unity or to re-establish unity and cohesion where it has been threatened by hostile and antagonistic feelings among the members. Conflict frequently helps to revitalize existent norms; or it contributes to the emergence of new norms. Conflict ensures the centralization of the internal structure of relevant groups so that common criteria can be accepted and fulfilled. Conflicts may produce associations or coalitions with others (Coser, 1989). Dahrendorf is of the opinion that as long as conditions permit, every single element of the society may cause social conflict and consequently lead to social transformation or even social disintegration. Social conflict, in particular conflict between interest groups, poses a direct threat to the one group which is in the dominant position. Social conflict changes the authority structure, consequently leading to social transformation. Social conflict, which is ubiquitous, constitutes the fundamental driving force for social transformation (Dahrendorf, 2000).

From 1949 to the Cultural Revolution, Chairman Mao Zedong was one of the main representatives of Chinese social conflict theories. The past several years since China's reform and opening up has witnessed the emergence of various conflict theories including interest conflict theory, stratum conflict theory and social consciousness conflict theory. After the People's Republic of China was founded, Chairman Mao Zedong believed that contradiction was universal and that "contradiction exists in the development process of all things and runs through the entire development course of everything (Mao, 1991, pp299-340)." Contradiction (*mao dun*) was regarded as a useful feature; it was a sign of development when contradiction was successfully resolved. Chairman Mao distinguished contradictions among the people from contradictions between us and the enemy (*di wo mao dun*). He believed that contradictions between us and the enemy should be solved by means of dictatorship, while contradictions among the people should be solved by means of democracy. From 1963, Mao Zedong developed a wrong understanding of class struggle, and believed that once the theory of class struggle is grasped, all problems can be solved (Xu, 1999, pp154-157). Class struggle was enlarged and universalized, which formed the class struggle conflict theory peculiar to the period of Cultural Revolution. Social interest groups have diversified since China's reform and opening up, particularly after China entered into its social transformation period. Conflict caused by differences of interest between social groups has become the main social

conflict. Zheng Hangsheng and Yang Min believe that “in the process of social transformation, problems rooted in economic development have always been a focus for social contradictions (Zheng and Yang, 2006)” and “the society stays stable if contradictions of social material interests are properly dealt with and handled.” It is also believed that “mechanisms of expression and response should be established so that interest request of the general public ought to be expressed in a rational and lawful manner (Zheng, 2006).” Sun Liping believes that “contradiction and conflict resulted from interest have been the major cause of social conflict, which ought to be resolved by means of institutions and mechanisms (Sun, 2006; Sun, 2004).”

In 2006, a research team from the Party School of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee on harmonious society conducted a questionnaire survey on the prominent social contradictions and problems. Nearly 300 government officials of bureau level or above participated in the survey. The results showed that 51% of the officials believed that material interest contradiction was the most prominent. Li Peilin and other scholars, from the perspective of social stratum, believe that if conflict between social stratum is properly handled, negative factors in society will be turned into positive ones and social integration will be enhanced (Li, 2002, pp13-14). Li Peilin and other scholars put forward social consciousness theory on the basis of social stratum conflict theory. They believe that it is of great benefit for social stability and social harmony to rediscover and reanalyze new social conflict and contradictions arising from value recognition in the course of China’s transformation, to further reveal the formation mechanism of contradictions and to explore a method to resolve this kind of contradiction and conflict (Li, 2005, pp31).

Western classical conflict theories have evolved into modern conflict theories. In China, the conflict theory of “contradictions among the people” and class struggle theory have developed into the material interest conflict theory, the social stratum conflict theory and the social consciousness conflict theory. There is a common logic behind the theoretical development in the West and in China that social conflict does not necessarily lead to drastic social transformation and may produce positive results – if social conflict is properly handled. Various social conflict theories put forward by Chinese scholars, without exception come to the conclusion that, if properly handled, social conflict will have positive functions, which is closely related to social conflict and its settlement in China. The remainder of this paper explores how social conflict promotes the improvement of social governance by studying the case of Wuxi County of Chongqing Municipality. The case study on Wuxi County constitutes a kind of application and enrichment of social conflict theories.

3. Formation of Wuxi’s grid promoted by frequent occurrence of social conflicts

Wuxi County is located northeast of Chongqing Municipality. It covers 4030 square kilometers, 93% of which are mountainous areas. The population of Wuxi is 536,000, of which rural residents account for 80%. Due to its inconvenient traffic and backward economy, Wuxi is one of the key counties in Chinese national development-oriented poverty reduction program and an immigrant county which has many immigrants from the Three Gorges Reservoir area.

3.1 Reasons for Social Conflicts in Wuxi

Before 2007, Wuxi County was famous in Chongqing Municipality for petitions caused by frequent social conflicts. Those conflicts mainly involved interest expressions, public resources, social justice, values, and so on. For example, in Daping Village of Bailu Town, a famous petition village, in order to solve problems caused by the failure of the local ginger industry in 2002, land seizure for the construction of the Wushi highway and compensation for demolition in 2004, local villagers signed collective petitions to Bailu Town, Wuxi County and Chongqing Municipality 29 times in total. Local villagers also blocked traffic twice, and there were even more individual petitions. Since the problems had not been solved for years, some villagers, when they heard that one of the political leaders of Wuxi County was going to pass Daping village, even threatened to jump off the cliff together with the leaders. They were willing to sacrifice their lives for the resolution of problems. Due to frequent social conflicts, many residents from Wuxi chose to move to neighboring county.

Social conflicts in Wuxi were closely related to social transformations which were mainly caused by the contradiction between oversimplified administration and the diversified interests of local farmers. In 2007, a new session of the leading group of Wuxi County took office, and they determined to face those social conflicts squarely. Through investigation, they found that reasons for frequent social conflicts were fourfold. Firstly, the channel through which the local government communicates with local residents was not smooth. Decision-makers could not hear the voice of the public or accurately know what they wanted. Secondly, resources were severely 'filtered'. Resources of the Communist Party of China and the government could not be fully delivered to the grassroots communities. Thirdly, service consciousness of local cadres was relatively poor. Fourthly, local government was inefficient and could not meet the needs of the general public. James C. Scott, in his book *Seeing like a State*, criticized that modern states, in order to achieve one single objective, tend to select simplified administration means and neglect the complexity of social phenomena (Scott, 2004). Social conflicts in Wuxi were mainly caused by contradiction between simplified administration and diversified interests of farmers.

3.2 Concept of Grid and Division of Wuxi's Grid

In view of the reasons for social conflicts, Wuxi County government changed their way of administration, subdivided its administration units into grids, encouraged multi-participation and gradually formed the grid governance mode.

The word of “grid” first appeared in the middle of 1990s when the Information Wide Area Year (I-WAY)¹project proposed the concept of grid computing in 1995. The concept of grid is closely linked with the development of computer technology. It has been constantly developed, enriched and improved by the promotion of problems and application, but so far there is no unified definition. Some Chinese scholars believe that the grid, as an emerging technology based on the Internet, integrates high-speed Internet, high performance computers, large-scale databases, transducers and remote devices to provide science and technology staff, administrators and the general public with more resources, functions and interactions, sharing resources and solving problems jointly among dynamic multiple virtual machines (Chi and Wang, 2008, pp42-43). Grid computing in the I-WAY project integrates various information and resources on the Internet. In sociology, the grid indicates grid governance which aims to save materials, avoid energy waste, increase efficiency and realize the quickest, most effective, most economic and most convenient management through integration of various social resources and efficient use of information transmission. Grid governance in China was first introduced into the public security system as “grid patrol” in Beijing and Shanghai. With the development of communication technology, its application has been extended to such fields as urban management, community management, business administration, market supervision and construction of party organization and government. The implementation of grid governance in the field of urban construction proved the most successful. Dongcheng District of Beijing first established a grid governance unit covering a 10,000 meters in China in 2004 and continued to expand grid governance to such aspects as personnel, place, objects, things, organizations and public opinions (Yang, 2012, pp135-136). Therefore, grid governance is not a new concept in China, but the innovation in Wuxi is that it pays great attention to refinement in management, without use of too much information, and emphasizes the transferring of resources to the lower levels of society and the mobilization of multi-participation.

Wuxi divided the grids in accordance with the units of urban community and rural village. The division of grids started from the urban areas and then moved to the rural areas. The grid division in Wuxi was conducted in such a sequence: 1st. main streets in urban areas; 2nd. backstreet lanes and villages in urban areas; 3rd. rural-urban fringe zone; 4th. rural areas. Since 2007, grid division has been adjusted four times (see Table 1). The first adjustment happened in May of 2007,

¹ See http://www.globus.org/alliance/publications/papers/iway_overview.pdf, visit on 2012/9/10.

taking main streets of the rural areas into the grid. Backstreet lanes and villages in the urban areas were brought into the grid in March of 2008. The rural-urban fringe zone was taken into the grid in 2009. In 2010, rural areas were incorporated into the grid. Currently, there are totally 408 grids in Wuxi, including 109 urban grids and 299 rural grids. Each one of the 109 county governmental departments and state-owned enterprises and public institutions in Wuxi has been assigned to take responsibility for one urban grid and several rural grids. The grids were assigned to government departments or enterprises in light of the grids' features and typical problems to be resolved.

Table 1 Wuxi County Grid Division and Adjustments (2007-2011)

Grid Division	Time	Division Standards	Total Amount
1 st time	2007	Main streets	112
2 nd time	2008	Main streets + backstreet lane + villages in city	118
3 rd time	2009	Main streets + backstreet lane + combination area of city and country	109
4 th time	2010	Main streets + backstreet lane + combination area of city and country + rural villages	408

Source: Author's data based on interviews and documents from Wuxi County.

4. Multiple Subjects and Their Behavior Patterns in the Grid Governance Mode

4.1 Chinese Party of Communist Wuxi County Committee: improving grassroots Party organizations and promoting links between Party members and the masses

Firstly, Party groups were established in the grid. A Party group is set up in each grid. County-level leaders, department heads and cadres were absorbed as members of the Party group. Besides, a Party joint committee was established based on different grid Party groups that the same county-level leader is responsible for. The Party joint committee took the lead in convening grid Party groups, grid responsible institutions, resident autonomous organization, the Lehe Mutual Aid Association, public welfare organizations and others to organize joint meeting on grid governance and solve problems within grids. Institutions were put in place that leading Party members should regularly take part in three level Party organization activities. Relevant leading members of Party organizations were requested to lecture in Party classes and conduct field investigation to the masses living in the grid area, so that they could have effective interaction through the “three

levels”, namely the government organs and community level, leaders and the masses level, and Party members and Party organizations level.

Secondly, Party and government officials were organized to attend social practices in their hometowns. Around 2000 officials were organized annually to return back to their hometown to attend social practices for one week. By doing this, officials have chances to communicate face to face with the grassroots masses and provide better service to them. In rural and urban communities, three institutions were put in place, namely, reception by the Party branch secretary, interview of Party members and provision of feedback. These institutions were of great help in knowing what the masses want, solving specific problems and resolving social conflicts. Party and government officials were also requested to undertake activities to increase the income of local residents.

Thirdly, an inspection system and a performance assessment system were set up to assign grid responsibility to Party and government officials. In Wuxi, the Mass Work Department, together with the Supervision Office, Efficiency Inspection Office and Assessment Office, set practical periodical objectives in line with local conditions and implemented inspection and performance assessment measures which are fourfold: comprehensive on-site inspection, rating by community cadres, rating by social inspectors and satisfaction rating. The implementation of grid responsibilities was inspected weekly, reported monthly, evaluated quarterly and assessed annually, the results of which were linked to the appointment and dismissal of cadres.

4.2 Wuxi County government: coordinating resources, focusing on the needs of the people, and establishing relevant systems

Firstly, resources have been coordinated and integrated according to the grid units. Rural and urban communities were divided into 408 grid units, each of which was assigned a responsible entity to coordinate and integrate resources. By doing this, all kinds of resources could be interacted with and merged in public affairs.

Secondly, systems have been set up to investigate and analyze the needs of the public. Such systems are established as biweekly communication, monthly grid joint meeting, quarterly opinion polls and satisfaction surveys, county-level leader quarterly visits to residents in responsible grid units, grid units responsible entity biannually visiting all residents in the grid area, periodical statistics and analysis, and so on.

Thirdly, Wuxi County government cooperates with NGOs and cultivates local NGOs. Wuxi County government hired Ms. Liao Xiaoyi, the founder of Global Village of Beijing which is one of China’s first-generation grassroot environmental NGOs, to be a government adviser. Global Village of Beijing has also been invited to participate in grid governance in Wuxi and construct Lehe

Homeland. NGOs are managed accordingly. Those NGOs that did not fulfill their legal obligations were punished by administrative penalties. For example, 57 NGOs lost their qualification as legal person in 2011. Those that made special contributions were rewarded. In the meantime, based on the platform provided by the college for the aged, local government provided free offices, operating fund and training base to the local NGOs, so as to promote their development.

4.3 NGOs: depicting the vision of Lehe Homeland (Le he jia yuan), participating in and supervising grid affairs

Firstly, Global Village of Beijing, as an external NGO, utilizes its professional strengths and practical experience to optimize grid governance and integrate it into the vision of Lehe Homeland. Meanwhile, Global Village of Beijing brought in more public welfare resources, such as from the Youcheng China Social Entrepreneur Foundation, to make investments in Wuxi. Global Village of Beijing also entered into the community, established contacts with community elites, encouraged and guided the foundation of Lehe Mutual Aid Associations, and conducted training programs. It selected volunteers to participate in grid joint meetings and to supervise the operation of grid governance.

Secondly, there would be at least one Lehe Mutual Aid Association in any rural and urban communities where Lehe Homeland is built. Their chairman, deputy chairman, secretary general and Lehe representatives are elected openly. As of May of 2012, Lehe Homeland had been implemented in 100 rural communities and 20 urban communities in Wuxi County, where 150 Lehe Mutual Aid Associations have been established with nearly 220 thousand members in total.¹ Representatives from Lehe Mutual Aid Associations take part in grid joint meetings to express residents' needs and interests. They effectively solved some disputes such as deciding which families do need government subsidies that the government has not been able to solve for years.

Thirdly, there are only few NGOs that gained their qualification as legal person in Wuxi County. As to the end of 2010, 162 NGOs gained the qualification as legal personal, accounting for 1.8% of the total number of 9057 NGOs registered in Chongqing. However, since 2011, heads of NGOs have been requested to address annual work reports. Assessment activities among NGOs are conducted in terms of team-work spirit, lawful operation, contribution to society, contribution to the grid, public welfare, and so on.

¹ According to statistics of Wuxi County Mass Work Department in June 8, 2012.

4.4 The public: preventing or resolving conflicts in their own way and participating in decision making

First of all, local folk custom have been guided and refined by setting good examples. A series of assessment activities, such as ‘ten-star civilized family’, ‘five-virtue family’, ‘the most beautiful lane’, ‘Lehe family’, ‘Lehe entity’ and ‘Lehe community’ have been conducted in the grid to show core values and citizen’s moral standards to the public. Learning from the examples could help to raise the legal awareness, sense of responsibility and civic awareness of the public, and create civilized and happy folk custom.

Secondly, community elites are helping to resolve conflict and organize activities. Civil community celebrities such as moral exemplars, economically successful persons, community leaders and heads of associations have built up a “mediation committee” (he shi tang) to resolve social conflicts by the principle of “open facts, fair evaluation and equitable result.” In the meanwhile, the general public actively took part in community activities like Tai Qi Quan, line dances, drum teams, dragon/lion dance teams and organized various cross-regional group events, during which affective commitments were formed.

Thirdly, the public can express their interests and participate in decision making. The public can participate in or influence decision making by expressing their opinions in the respective unit of the grid. From important plans such as the 12th Five-Year Plan and the Ten Livelihood Projects to specific affairs such as the sculpture design and farmers market transformation, the public, through online and on-site investigation and research, participated in the decision making process by selecting the most concerned and supported construction projects which concerned people’s livelihoods.

4.5 Setting the goal of governance and creating a common dream

Grid governance is a grassroots social governance mode characterized by a common dream, multi-participation and multi-cooperation. The common dream refers to Lehe Homelands, which involves participation from the Party, the government, the market and the society. The representatives include leaders from the Party and government, the Party committee and government departments, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), NGOs, community organizations, communities and grid units. Global Village of Beijing is one of the main designers of this common dream. It should be mentioned that Wuxi County mainly relies on agriculture, and its economy and market are underdeveloped. The SOEs, as major governance subjects, are actively participating in the grid governance.

What distinguishes the Wuxi grid governance from others is that governance goals have been set and a common dream was created. The objective of initial-stage grid governance was to prevent and resolve various conflicts and problems. Since Global Village of Beijing was introduced into Wuxi County in 2010, grid governance in Wuxi County had a new vision, that is, to construct Lehe Homeland and to achieve the goals of “social justice and equality, common prosperity and a happy and harmonious life.” The concept of Lehe is inspired by LOHAS which means Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability. LOHAS, from western society, is a lifestyle emphasizing environment, health, hope, and self-sufficiency. Ms. Liao Xiaoyi, the founder of Global Village of Beijing, used to study and teach philosophy. She utilized her years of practice and thoughts on environmental protection, abandoned western elements in the concept of LOHAS, introduced traditional Chinese factor of harmony and formed a new Lehe concept covering governance, mode of productivity, life style and morality (Lan, 2012, pp54). Lehe Homeland, designed by Global Village of Beijing, has conducted the first experiment in post-disaster reconstruction of Daping Village, Pengzhou County in Sichuan after the Wenchuan Earthquake. Lehe Homeland consists of five elements, namely Lehe governance, Lehe livelihood, Lehe inhabitants, Lehe morality and Lehe health. It aims to achieve goals of social justice and equality, common prosperity of the people, and a happy and harmonious life. Therefore, Lehe Homeland soon became the common dream of local residents in Wuxi.

5 Conclusion

Grid governance in Wuxi has been proved effective. A total of 408 grids have been established in Wuxi County since 2008. A multi-dimensional grid public service system has been put in place which covers the rural and urban areas in Wuxi. In Wuxi County, the number of social conflicts has declined, and petitions have been on the decrease. Public security sense in Wuxi has been greatly enhanced. For example, from January of 2010 to May of 2011, the resolve rate of long-pending petition cases assigned to Wuxi County by Chongqing Municipality remained 100%, and the resolve rate of long-pending petition cases from Wuxi County itself was 95%. Over the same period, more than 1500 difficult problems have been solved, and 460 long-pending petition cases have been resolved. According to the statistics from Wuxi County, in 2011, the number of collective petition cases has declined by 53% compared to that of 2010. The number of collective petition cases and petitioners from Wuxi County to Chongqing Municipality has declined by 71.4% and 75%, respectively. In the meantime, the index of public security sense has increased by nearly 10%. ²The above-mentioned Daping village, used to be famous for petitions, but has become a village with no

² See materials regarding how Wuxi County promotes social management innovation by the construction of Lehe Homeland from Wuxi County Mass Work Department, June of 2011, pp48.

petitions being organized nowadays. The “petition celebrity” who claimed to jump off the cliff together with the county leaders has become the secretary general of Lehe Mutual Aid Association. Villages have reunited with each other under the shared dream of “social equality and justice, common prosperity and happiness and harmony”. The general public and the party cadres have been energized and inspired. Morality and harmony, the quintessence of traditional Chinese culture, have been revitalized, disposable incomes of residents in Wuxi County have increased. Wuxi has been awarded such titles as “civilized city”, “sanitary city” “garden city” and “forest city”. Many residents who had moved out of Wuxi County are gradually returning back to their homeland.

The grid governance mode is running effectively in Wuxi due to the following reasons. Firstly, the leaders of Wuxi County have changed their conceptions of social conflict. They not only figured out the cause of social conflict through research and investigation and changed their oversimplified management mode, but also invited NGOs to participate into designing and implementation of solutions. Secondly, Global Village of Beijing is of great professional competence and mobilization ability. Global Village of Beijing not only has a theoretical system regarding the construction of Lehe Homeland in rural and urban areas, but also plays additional roles as designer, participant, supervisor and promoter of the concept and dream. Thirdly, Wuxi County is the hometown of Ms. Liao Xiaoyi, the founder of Global Village of Beijing. Ms. Liao is the offspring of revolutionary martyrs and hopes very much to repay her hometown. Fourthly, Wuxi County is a national-level poverty-stricken county and a revolutionary base. The people there are simple, honest and unspoiled. Wuxi County also boasts a relatively rich cultural heritage and a good foundation for mass mobilization.

The grassroots social governance mode based on multi-cooperation in Wuxi County is faced with such challenges as resources, sustainability and the diversification of NGOs. Participation of diversified NGOs promotes long-term and sustainable social governance. The participation of Global Village of Beijing standardized the grid joint meetings and spurred other public welfare organizations such as Youcheng China Social Entrepreneur Foundation to participate. The participation of Global Village of Beijing also promoted the establishment of Lehe Mutual Aid Association and other local associations such as an association of culture and sport and an association of livelihoods. Local residents’ enthusiasm for participation was well motivated. The teams composed of intellectuals from urban areas provided great assistance to the Wuxi county-level government. These teams broadened the channel through which the local government could effectively communicate with local residents. However, the development of NGOs in Wuxi is still not very smooth. Until now, no foundation in Wuxi has been granted the status as a legal person. There is a lack of NGOs with professional competence in Wuxi. As an external NGO, Global Village of Beijing is playing a leading role in Wuxi County’s social governance. Although Global

Village of Beijing has been continuously cultivating endogenous organizations, cultivation of professional competence cannot be completed overnight. The secretary of CPC Wuxi County Committee and the head of Global Village of Beijing have been working closely in a coordinated manner. By its expertise and strong execution ability, Global Village of Beijing plays various roles, such as guide, trainer and supervisor in social governance of Wuxi County. If Global Village of Beijing were to quit Wuxi County, would the local endogenous organizations in Wuxi County be capable of taking on the roles that Global Village of Beijing has been playing? Would local endogenous organizations in Wuxi County be capable of professionally guiding and supervising the grid joint meetings? Would local endogenous organizations in Wuxi County attract the well-trained urban volunteers to dedicate themselves to the social governance of Wuxi County?

The case of Wuxi is an application of social conflict functional theory. The leaders of Wuxi County, overwhelmed by local social conflicts, were determined to reform the social governance pattern. The grid governance mode was introduced to deal with the frequent occurrence of social conflicts. Although the Party and the government are still playing leading role in social governance, they are not as omnipotent as they used to be. Enterprises have been invited to assume social responsibilities; Global Village of Beijing, also was invited to participate; moreover, many endogenous community organizations have been cultivated by Global Village of Beijing to resolve social conflicts in rural and urban communities and promote the harmonious development of these communities. Social conflicts lead to the emergence and development of the grid governance mode and exerted effect on social governance. The above-mentioned features can be regarded as a function of social conflict and also an institutionalized mechanism to resolve social conflict. As Simmel put it, in a highly-interdependent system, conflict of low intensity and high frequency may not necessarily intensify or lead to fundamental changes. On the contrary, conflict of that kind may relieve tension within the system and regulate conflict, and thus improve the relations between opposing conflict groups, facilitate the integration and stability of the social system and promote social unity and solidarity.

The case of Wuxi County is an experimental exploration of NGOs' effective participation in China's grassroots social governance. It is quite common in some countries for NGOs to effectively participate in social governance (Salamon, 1995, 1999), but it is not the case in China. Social conflict, out of universality and necessity, is a driving force for social transformation. Multi-cooperation and mutual-development with NGOs' participation cannot only help to resolve social conflicts, but also prevent conflicts, cultivate grassroots civil society and improve social governance. The Chinese academia is not unfamiliar with such theories as participation theory, social conflict theory and social development theory (Fei 1947 and Wang 2009). But it is rarely seen that local practice of such theories has been effectively promoted through multiple cooperation with NGOs'

designing and advocating. What is happening in Wuxi County of Chongqing Municipality is a start in this regard.

This paper comes to three conclusions. Firstly, social conflicts promote better social governance in Wuxi county. The way in which Wuxi County prevents and resolves social conflicts, integrates resources to achieve mutual development and cultivates civil society is an inspiring example. However, the practice in Wuxi County is just in its initial stage and has a long way to go. Secondly, NGO such as Global Village of Beijing has played an important role in Wuxi's social governance. However, NGOs' capacity building and variety still is a great challenge when they participate in social governance. Thirdly, social governance, as economic development does, goes through different stages. It's possible and practical that different parts in one country are in different development stages. China is very large country with development gaps among different regions. It is therefore unnecessary and impossible to adopt a unified mode in grassroots social governance in China. The key lies in cultivating civil society in accordance with local economic and social development.

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Interviewee list

The author made interviews in Wuxi County, from July 20 to August 10, 2011, with around 70 interviewees and times including NGO representatives, governmental officials, representatives from autonomous organizations and grid management team, and ordinary villagers.

NGO representatives

LXY the founder of Global Village of Beijing

DZQ the volunteer of Global Village of Beijing in Wuxi County

LJ secretary general of Lehe Mutual Aid Association in Daping Village, Bailu Town
CBT Representative of Lehe Mutual Aid Association in Daping Village, Bailu Town
YBM member of Lehe Mutual Aid Association in Daping Village, Bailu Town
WDW member of Lehe Mutual Aid Association in Daping Village, Bailu Town

Governmental officials

ZXD secretary of CPC Wuxi County Committee
LC magistrate of Wuxi County
LXS deputy magistrate of Wuxi County, head of Mass Work Department of Wuxi County
WSJ standing vice head of Mass Work Department of Wuxi County
LC office director of Mass Work Department of Wuxi County
HJH contact center director of Mass Work Department of Wuxi County

Representatives from autonomous organizations

CCS secretary of CPC branch committee of Daping Village, Bailu Town
ZBQ director of village committee of Daping Village, Bailu Town
LY chief of Agriculture Bureau in Wuxi County (representatives of grid responsible subjects)
DSC social inspector
XMD representatives of Lehe mutual aid Association in Daping Village, Bailu Town
LY volunteer of Global Village of Beijing in Wuxi County

Representatives of ordinary villagers

XJ vender in farmers market in Wuxi County
ZWC vender in farmers market in Wuxi County
LJY owner of farm tourism business in Daping Village, Bailu Town
LJ famous previous petitioners in Daping Village, Bailu Town

And many others of key members and participants of line dance, morning exercisers, ordinary villagers, and children left-behind whose names are not known.

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