

## Chapter 6

### Exploration and Practice of Community Governance Innovation: “Qinghe Experiment”<sup>1)</sup> as an Example

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#### Abstract

Innovation of social governance is inevitable requirement of improving socialist market economic system in China, and it is practical need to meet the challenges and risks of the process of rapid urbanization in China. Furthermore, community governance innovation is the main starting point of social governance innovation. This paper puts forward that the innovation of community governance should be based on consultation shared with the government, the market and the community, and argues that it aims to improve the well-being of community residents. We have an intervention approach as “Qinghe experiment”. Sunshine community in Qinghe Street as an example, we elected the members of community consultative committee and established a participants meeting system. “Qinghe experiment” shows that: First, this mechanism of community consultative committee effectively builds a bridge of communication between the residents and other governance main bodies. Secondly, it is necessary for a platform to arouse the vitalization of the community. Thirdly, local government especially Street office should change governance view. Finally, in the process of power game, property management companies are still mainly for the purpose of profit but not for the people’s interest. This paper suggests that, street office, residents’ committee, property management companies, and residents should consult with governance to achieve the innovation of community governance. The stakeholders should be based on the same goal that is to put people first and improves the well-being of the community residents.

Consultative governance should put people first and improve the well-being of the community residents.

**Key words:** community governance innovation, Qinghe experiment, community consultative committee.

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1) Beijing-Tsinghua University grassroots social governance innovation, Professor Li Qiang, the Academy of Social Sciences, Tsinghua University, is the director of the subject.

2) The main executor of “Qinghe Experiment”.

## **I. Community governance innovation and the significance of innovation**

The innovation of social governance is the inevitable requirement to improve China's socialist market economic system; also it needs to meet the challenges and risks during the process of rapid urbanization in China's rapid developments. To certain extent, there is no suitable reference system for China's social development and social governance, because social development and social governance is based on historical cultural, institutional change and people's different production and life styles in China, which determines that China's social governance model and the governance system only can evolve in practice. The party on the fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee “CPC Central Committee on economic and social development of the thirteenth five years plan proposal” put forward, “to construct social governance pattern of co-construction and sharing”, obviously China government pays more attention to social governance innovation than before. However, social governance is not only words, practice speaking, it expresses the need to implement the way to the grassroots society. That is, whether the governance approach is appropriate or not, the needs require the community to go through the inspection of grass-roots social governance. The society is always in certain area, the basic concept of social and community is similar, community is actually regional community. Although there are different types of community, including industrial community, science and technology community, residential community and so on, in academic, more scholars' emphases are turning to residential community. The main research object of this paper is the residential community. In China, the community is not only living space for residents, but also an administrative management system, which carries the function of daily management. Since community is the basic unit of society, community governance is the foundation of social governance; community governance innovation is the main starting point of social governance innovation.

What is “governance”? In 1995, the global governance committee pointed out that governance is the integration of many ways of all public or private individuals and institutions management in common things. It makes conflicts between different interests in harmony and it is a continuous process that takes joint action.

In Chinese context, original meaning of “governance” is water. “Shuowen Jiezi” said: “governance, water.” Richard: “governance, jade, from the sound of jade.” “Governance” is intended to ease the construction of the dam, according to the direction of the river, river governance, which is to flood control, agricultural irrigation. From the Chinese context, we can understand the “governance”. The first question, who will govern? Everyone; the second question is how to govern? Consultation; the third question is what is the purpose of governance? The purpose is for the people's interest.

Both in the western context of “governance” and Chinese context of “governance”, “governance” is different from “management”, “management” is a top-down control, and “governance” emphasizes pluralistic participation and consultation process. In other words, governance is that the bodies of governance consult carrying out public affairs to improve people’s well-being. Community governance innovation is community stakeholders’ participation in multi-consultative governance. At present, what are the main problems of the community governance? Who are the community stakeholders? How can community stakeholders perform the consultative governance? This third problem is the main question for discussion in this paper, and has been investigated also in the “Qinghe experiment” in the aspects of exploration and practice.

## **II. The theoretical basis and reality**

The sociologists believe that the government, market and society are three important governance bodies, and the harmonious relationship in three aspects is the foundation to realize the harmonious and healthy development of the society, which is also the innovation perspective of community governance theory. In China, before the reform and opening up, the main problem in the development of China’s market was weak. After the reform and opening up, and the socialist market economic system gradually improved, China’s economic vitality was stimulated by the market reforms, which is mainly due to the majority of people participating in market opportunities. The social mechanism is similar to the market mechanism. That, the characteristic of China society is that the government is the leading and dominant position and the social vitality is relatively lack. Especially in the community, stakeholders of community governance are the street office, Property Management Company and community residents. But the real problem is that the community committee is administrative. From the text system, the residents’ committee belongs to the grassroots autonomous organization. But in fact, now residents’ committee mainly completes administrative tasks assigned by the superior government, for example, the director of Xiang community committee received 447 letters from various sections of street office in 2015. In QH Street, there are 28 community committee and 200 residents’ members, but only less than 20 of the residents are living in the community. In certain extent, the residents’ committee is the government’s leg, our survey showed 28 leaders of the residents’ committee consider the residents’ committee as the government. In this sense, the community residents’ committee is in the community on behalf of government. Property Management Company is an important market subject of community governance. With the commercialization of housing reform, the quantity of commercial housing is increasing, and supply and maintenance of many things

related life, including water, electricity, coal, gas, public security, health and environmental and other aspects should be afforded by the Property Management Company, so the Property Management Company plays more and more important role in the community. However, our survey of 2015 showed that service situation of Property Management Company and community residents for the evaluation of community well-being were correlated positively. That is to say, the main governance bodies in community include street office, residents’ committee, Property Management Companies and community residents, governance mode is that the main governance bodies consulate, and governance goal is to improve the well-being of the community residents. This is the starting point of community governance innovation.

It is necessary to understand how the reality of community governance works in order to achieve the goal of community governance innovation. From the government, market and community perspective, the aspects are as follows: Firstly, the residents’ committee is administrative, which resulted in no the expression of platform and the lack of communication platform between residents’ committee and community residents. Secondly, the relationship between Property Management Company and the residents is not harmonious; a survey in 2015 showed that only half of the residents fund satisfaction with the service for Property Management Company. Thirdly, community is complex, and the needs of community residents are in multi-level. With rapid urbanization, a large number of rural people live in the city. According to statistics, from 2010 to 2030, China urban population will increase from 630 million to 990 million, in 2050, the urbanization rate will exceed 80%<sup>3)</sup>. Except that, people’s life style, mode of production, way of living, and social culture have changed a lot, without doubt, the community governance is confronted with a big challenge. After the reform and opening up, the highly centralized planned economy system has changed to be market economy system, the function and the position of the “danwei” has been weakening, “unit person” has become “social man”, so it is necessary to establish the community governance to be independent of enterprises and institutions of the social security system and the social service network. At same time, with the improvement of people’s living standard, community residents have multi-level and diversified requirements. In general, the government, the Property Management Company and the community relations are not harmonious. The issues are stated as the government plays an authoritarian role, and the relations between the Property Management Company and the residents are strained. Beyond that, there is anemic in the community.

“Qinghe experiment” is a kind of exploration and practice in the above

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3) Data sources: <http://www.eeo.com.cn/2013/0926/250258.shtml>

theoretical and practical basis with intervention method.

### **III. Qinghe experimental approach**

#### **1. Basic introduction of “Qinghe experiment”**

Qinghe Street is located in northeast of Haidian District, Beijing City, north to the northwest Wang, South to North Fifth ring; area under administration is 9.37 square kilometers. The reasons why choose Qinghe Street to carry out community governance innovation experiment are three aspects: firstly, the elder generation sociologist, Yang Kaidao and Xu Shilian had a similar experiment in 1928, however, the experiment was interrupted because of the war in 1937. Secondly Qinghe is representative, there are 28 communities in Qinghe, both city and rurality are here now. Today, in certain extent, Qinghe is a microcosm after decades of change, almost all, the problems met in Chinese reform and social changes can be found in experimentation area of Qinghe. Thirdly, Qinghe is near Tsinghua University, teachers and students are more convenient to Qinghe.

“Qinghe experiment” mainly includes two aspects: one is the election of community consultative committee members, which is community governance structure of the stock reform. There is an innovation of a consultation mechanism of Property Management Company, residents’ committee and residents; the other one is stimulating the vitality of the community, and every inhabitant has fair opportunity to participate to improve the well-being of the community residents.

#### **2. “Qinghe experiment” approach**

(1) Select three typical communities as the experimental community

During June to November, in 2014, the research group conducted comprehensive survey for 28 communities in Qinghe Street, and then selected three typical communities to carry out experiments, including Xiangshuwang community, South wool community and Sunshine community. Xiangshuwang community is regarded as the high-grade commercial housing community in Qinghe Street, but is a non-acquaintances community; South wool community is the staff quarters of original SANYO wool woolen company, it is a typical “danwei” community, about of 65% residents are wool spinning factory workers, and there are about total 10000 people, where about 3000 people are over 60 years old; Sunshine community is a mixed community, there are total of six small residential areas. Below this paper will take Sunshine community as an example to introduce the experiment.

(2) Basic situation of Sunshine community

There are more than 1700 household, also more than 300 migrant households live in this community, specific circumstances are shown in Table 1 as follows.

**Table 1 Sunshine community situation**

quantity	area	Type of community	quantity of buildings	Type of building	population	Property Management Company
1	Sunshine South	old buildings	11	demolition, commercial housing	1600	Property developers company
2	Sunshine north	old buildings	4	demolition, commercial housing	1800	Property developers company
3	No.20 Middle school Dormitory	old buildings	2	Haidian school dormitory	300	no
4	Fire company tower	Unit courtyard	2	Fire dormitory	400	Property developers company
5	Qinghe street one three street	one-storey house	35	local residents	300	no
6	traffic team dormitory	one-storey house	2	Traffic team dormitory	200	no

source :the author of this paper

**Table 2 the age structure willingness to participate**

age	frequency	percentage
under 18	2	0.37%
19-30	62	11.81%
31-40	117	22.29%
41-50	76	14.48%
51-60	116	22.10%
More than 61	152	28.95%
total	525	100%

source : the author of this paper

(3) Investigation conditions of Sunshine community residents' willingness to participate

Before experiment, we did home survey questionnaire of participation conditions in face-to-face; there are 525 valid samples among 540 questionnaires. Men are 53.58%, women are 46.42%.

The survey showed 40.91% of residents said they are willing to participate in the community consultation, the residents who are adequately and more willing to participate account 15.37% and 29.22%, and 40.87% of residents answered they are willing to participate in the volunteer activities, also 21.78% and 26.97% of residents are adequately and more willing to participate volunteer activities. Totally about more than 90% of residents are willing to participating community consultation and the volunteer activities. When asked why not willing to participate, 70.13% of the residents behave so because they are busy doing work or have no time to participate activities. Generally speaking, it is very high proportion of willingness to participate in Sunshine community.

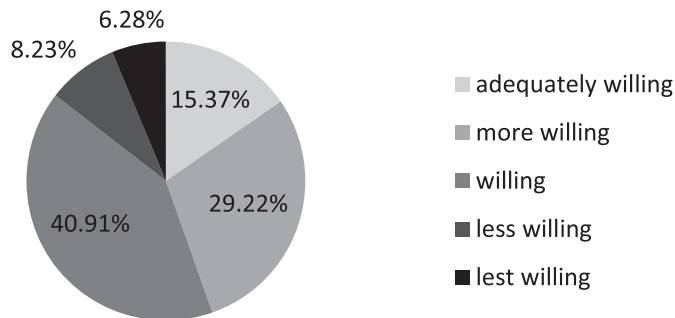


Figure 1 pie chart of residents participation willingness in community consultation  
source : the author of this paper

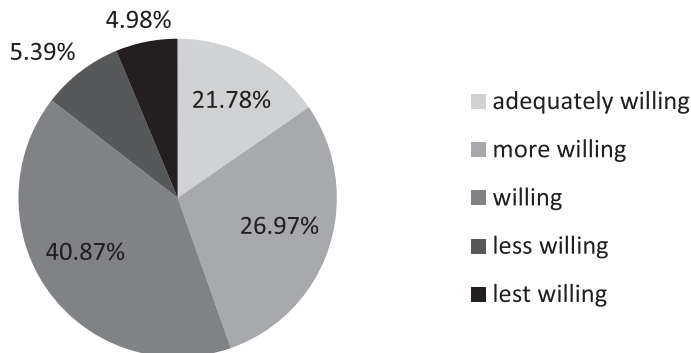


Figure 2 pie chart of residents to participation willingness in community volunteer activities  
source : the author of this paper

Table 3 numbers of consultative committee nominated

No.	name	gender	age	political status	work (original)	note
1	Peng*	female	64	Party member	worker	resident representative
2	Li**	male	76	Party member	security officer	resident representative
3	Jiang*	male	75	Party member	chief executive	resident representative
4	Chen*	female	67	Party member	Discipline inspectors	resident representative
5	Yang*	female	50	masses	Qinghe street labor assistant	resident representative
6	Wang*	male	63	Party member	worker	resident representative
7	Ma**	female	65	Party member	teacher in a Middle school	backbone of sing team
8	Gong*	female	58	masses	committee secretary	backbone of dance team
9	Luan*	female	62	Party member	original leader residents' committee	resident representative
10	Wang	female	62	Party member	worker	resident representative
11	Zhao*	female	62	Party member	original leader residents' committee of anjie	resident representative
12	Wang*	female	52	masses	Workshop director	resident representative
13	Bai*	female	63	masses	worker	resident representative
14	Wang*	female	71	Party member	director of trade union women	resident representative
15	Ding*	female	58	Party member	worker	back bone of dance team
16	Ly**	female	56	masses	film projector	floating population
17	Feng**	male	53	DAP party	manager	resident representative of haidian
18	Li**	male	76	Party member	soldier	resident representative

source : the author of this paper



(4) Community reorganization: elect members of consultative committee and establish related mechanism

It is necessary for information communication mechanism to realize the premise of multi-cooperative governance. “Qinghe experiment” exhibits the reform of community consultation mechanism, and could be reform of the governance structure as starting point. Douglass C. North pointed out that the “structure” refers to system framework. Jose Lopez believes that the “system mode is regarded as those defined human behavior expectations and cultural or normative model, through these expectations, actors can grasp each other’s behavior and organization between the lasting relationship.”

In January 2014, ten consultative committee members were elected publicly, for the 38% of difference between the proportions of procedure. The elected members are residents with certain prestige or the backbone of community residents in the community, in Table 3 as follow, bold part is residents elected as the members of the residents committee, the other is the defeated candidate. The consultative committee is one of members of community residents’ committee; the consultative committee members are the community residents (tenants living more than half year can also be elected); residents congress elect; the main duties of consultative committee include collecting public opinion, the formation of community service project proposals, participation in community public projects decision-making and participation discussing and forming community etiquette; but they have no wages, excepting subsidies.

After election of the members of Community consultative committee, they were trained, involving with collecting residents demand method, consultative conference method etc.; then formed a series of system, such as soliciting residents demand information system, reception resident system, and participants meeting system. There are two consultative meetings, consultative committee meeting, and a joint meeting between residents’ committee, property management companies and community consultative committee. In order to concentrate the scattered residents’ demands, open space technology conference is applied for collecting residents demands, but the rules of procedure of Sunshine community, discussed by the consultative members, are used for the decisions of the conference, based on book “Preliminary civil rights” proposed by Sun Yatsen. The rules of conference of Sunshine community are: the host should not be member of the committee; the conference should be hosted by other person who is not committee member; before statement you must first raise your hand, the first one who raised their hands should speak first; please don’t interrupt; do not stray from the point; do one discussion for one project; do not be overtime; do not attack each other, take turns speaking; maintain the neighborhood unity as a priority, the resolution process is not open to the public.

#### IV. Experimental findings

##### 1. Community consultative committee system effectively built communication platform for residents and other community bodies: Community governance mode gradually has changed from traditional top-down mode to multiple structures.

After this stage of the experiment, we found from community consultative committee system, that the effective communication platform is built among several interest bodies, including residents’ committees, consultative committees, property management companies, and street office. In certain extent, the interests of the residents of the community and the needs of residents were expressed fully, also the relationship between the residents and property management companies gradually were changed better. The manager of Property Management Company, Mr. Zhang said “before we did lots of things, however the residents were not always approve. We didn’t know what people think.” several committee said: “Property Management Company had so many things.....”. On the other hand, neighborhood quality has been further improved; the community consensus has been gradually formed. The following is views of consultative committee members.

*Zhao Shuxiang said that the consultative committee is a good solution to the popular opinion, and it should be adhered to the permanent support of community residents.*

*Bai Chenjiang said, I feel after the establishment of the consultative committees, our Sunshine community has great change, the relationship between residents, residents’ committees and property management companies is better than before ,if there are problems, we could discuss, such as planting green, building parking spaces I think we sunshine district each project will be better in the future! Environment will be more beautiful.*

*Wang Xiuzhen said, wide public opinion, wide accumulate wisdom. I believe that the community will be a harmonious and democratic, civilized, safe and happy home.*

*Chen Xuemin said, joint procedure is good thing, the governance costs are decreased, and residents are more satisfactory.*

*Li Jianming said, the consultative committee is from the masses, to the masses, it scientifically solves many problems; the majority of residents start to realize the dream.*

*Li Zhiliang said, the consultative committee is a good form of self - management.*

*Ma Wenzhi said residents of autonomy, build a harmonious home.*

*Bai Qiuxiang said, for each procedure, everyone is enthusiastic on scrambling and brainstorming, I believe our Sunshine community will be getting better and*

*better, clean, beautiful, happy, warm!*

In certain sense, the consultative committee member of the system is endowed with the residents' power to participate in community governance, the original government and community top-down structure is slowly changed to be the multi power structure of government, community, and property management companies, gradually form the benign interaction situation.

## **2. Stimulating community vitality needs platform**

How to stimulate the vitality of the community, how to stimulate the participation of community residents, are the aspects, Qinghe experiment has always been concerned about. In the democratic consultative conference, consultative committee members proposed to improve the community environment. Then after painter association of Tsinghua University together with property management companies, consultative committees and residents' committees discussed, they designed wall paint plan; after public consultation, residents chose design, then the designer modified, finally residents painted the wall. This process had more than 500 people involved in total, even a lot of people participated with their children. Residents approved that this activity is very good, not only beautified the environment, but also purified the soul.

In order to improve the quality of residents and build the residents of long-term interactive platform, Sunshine school was open. The teachers were mainly from the community residents, the contents of classes were decided by the community residents. Now there are more than 10 classes, including English, calligraphy, weaving, dancing, chorus, Tai Chi, and so on. Through Sunshine school, residents are reorganized in the form of interest and hobbies.

During this year, thousands of residents participated community activities, including elder people, children and young people. Often, some residents expressed that Sunshine community has more sunshine, "we are family of loving each other". Undoubtedly, residents need to have a platform for participating community public affairs, and have a mechanism to give residents the right to choose. Amartya Sen, who got Nobel Prize in economics, explained that freedom is the ultimate goal and important means of development, he pointed out that we should emphasize the globalization of market mechanisms improve the standard of living of the people to make fundamental contributions, meanwhile we need the government and the society which have responsibility in the fields of human survival, health care and education. Necessarily more people as the main body of development should play active role in social interaction and change in overall.



Figure 3 public consultation activities



Figure 4 residents painting wall

source : the author of this paper

### 3. Local government should change governance view

Local government especially street officers should change governance view. In fact, street office mainly control community resources, the projects, involving use of community public welfare fund, must be agreed by all the streets leaders, otherwise the projects cannot be implemented, even which the community’s consultative committee members all agree. Take the improvement of the community’s Triangle Park as an example, in February 2014, the theme of the conference on democracy was “Do you think what community needs to change?” five demands were focused in total of 87 issues, one of which residents wanted have a room for public activities. The process is that first community consultative committee members put forward demand, then discusses the program at the joint meeting; if Street office approval, the project will be implemented. After investigation we found that dirty triangle area can be renewed as the outdoor space of community residents. Then members of Qinghe experiment, a professor of School of architecture, Tsinghua University, Tsinghua, consultative committees, property Management Company and residents discussed and participated in design together. Figure 5 is the former situation; Figure 6 is the effect picture after participatory design. Residents’ committee, Property Management Company and consultative members were satisfied with this result. But because a major leader didn’t agree the project, now it has not implemented. The leader said that the projects which were discussed in the community may not be right, in his opinions, that all the things of the community should be decided by him.

An American scholar, Richard C. Box, thinks that at the choice of community governance model, the key element is how the leaders choose community policy oriented and community development views. Ideology and its value system is the most likely to become the core elements of the system, and the next is rules and norms. In order to realize the multiple cooperation governance, the multiple governance subjects should have the same goal.



Figure 5 the former situation

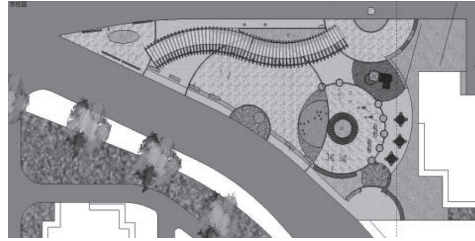


Figure 6 the effect chart of design

source : the author of this paper

#### 4. Property Management Company for profit in the process of power game

Property Management Company for profit is put under restraint of power game. The example is showed as follow, street office approved to build a public activates house for 40 square meters in Sunshine south community, but Property Management Company attempted to have 10 square meters. All members of the community consultative committee strongly disagreed, they believed that it is the right of the community residents, and Property Management Company shouldn't have it. Property Management Company and community consultative committee members had even conflict with bodies, although Property Management Company admitted it was wrong.

On the whole, to achieve the innovation of community, there must be consultation mechanism in governance, street office, residents' committee, property management companies and residents, but the common aim must be people first and improving the well-being of the community, otherwise consultation may be ineffective or inefficient.

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