The Analysis of the Connotation of "Social Governance" Based on Active or Passive Relationship of "Governance"——Discuss the Distinction Between "Social Governance" and "Governing the Society"

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Abstract: This paper discusses the controversy over two concepts of social governance in China: "social governance" and "governing society". The author believes that both views are incorrect because they do not properly understand the meaning of "governance". The author points out that in the western context, the term "governance" is exotic and deviates from its original meaning, which is based on Chinese culture. The author suggests treating society as an organic being similar to life and redefining the concept of social governance, which means that it should focus on promoting harmony and balance within society rather than simply managing it. The article emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural context when discussing complex topics.
Keywords: Governance; Society; Culture

1. Introduction and Preliminary Thinking

Is it "social governance" or "governing the society"? The discussion of the general concept of "social governance" has been a controversial topic for a long time. In historical research, there are views that the two are opposed from the perspective of subjects of "governance", arguing that "social governance" is equivalent to "civil governance", and "governing the society" is equivalent to "national management". There are views that treat the two concepts equally without distinction as well, arguing that in terms of the significance of working, "social governance" refers to "governing the society". The so-called "social governance" refers to the management of social implementation by specific governance entities [1].

The author believes that both are not correct and have lost appropriate understanding of the meaning of "governance" itself. The term "governance" is exotic and deviates from its original meaning based on Chinese culture when being used in the Western discourse system. In Chinese, "zhì" and "lǐ" both have the meaning of regulating and guiding. From the perspective of word formation, "social governance" is a endocentric phrase (also understood as a subject-predicate phrase), while "governing the society" is clearly a verb object phrase. In these two different phrase, the noun "society" has different usages. In "social governance", "society" stands for the subject of "governance", which is a positive and active relationship; In "governing the society", "society" exists as the object being governed, and is in a negative and passive relationship.

"Society" must be a macro existence that encompasses all aspects. "society" should not be seen as a mechanical combination of homogeneous individuals, but rather as an organic existence similar to life. Under this premise, the question arises: since "society" already encompasses all aspects of real life, who is the governing body in the term "governing the society"? If a society can be governed by a specific behavioral subject, then this behavioral subject must be higher than "society" at the conceptual level. Apart

from the concept of existence, it is difficult to find a larger concept to include "society", but using an empty and philosophical concept of existence as the governing behavioral subject is obviously absurd behavior. Therefore, the author denies the concept of "governing the society" and ponders over the connotation and extension of "social governance". [2]

2. Journals reviewed

Some scholars have pointed out that "social governance" aims to establish a state of governance in which multiple entities such as the state and society, government and non-governmental organizations, public institutions and private institutions coordinate and interact. It is a social development process that emphasizes the active participation of various actors under the guidance of scientific and standardized rules and regulations[2]; Some scholars also believe that "social governance" is an aspect of modern governance concepts, introducing governance concepts and basic perspectives into all aspects and processes of the transformation of government administrative functions and the effective management of social and public affairs[3]. Regarding the "governance concept" referred to in modern times, the most representative view is that "governance is the sum of many ways in which various public or private individuals and institutions manage their common affairs. It is a continuous process of reconciling conflicting or different interests and taking action[4]"; Other scholars believe that "social governance" involves multiple subjects, mainly including governments, various social organizations, markets, and citizens. It is a governance structure and method that combines top-down social management with bottom-up social demands and interactions, and its operation is two-way and collaborative[5]. From the analysis of "social governance" by many scholars, it can be concluded that the so-called "social governance" must be a means of promoting social development with the active participation of multiple subjects, full of enthusiasm and vitality, and emerging with the process of modernization. Based on previous research results, this article will differentiate and analyze the concept of "social governance" from three aspects: subject participation, power allocation, and social vitality.

2.1 Subjective participation in "social governance"

Unlike traditional "governing the society" or "society management", in the practice of "social governance", public power is dispersed from the government to various social organizations and grassroots institutions, making the traditional unitary subject become a pluralistic subject. The newly added entities play different roles in the governance of social public affairs, forming a three-dimensional cross network of "social governance" through the division of labor, collaboration, communication, and cooperation between them[6]. To enable this governance network to function properly, it requires active participation, clear division of labor, and positive interaction among various entities, in order to improve governance efficiency and share governance results. However, it is worth noting that the premise for the healthy functioning of "social governance" mentioned above lies in the active participation of social organizations or individuals, rather than the forced driving of task assignment during the commune period. The purpose of implementing multi subject participation in "social governance" is to respond to the rising civic sentiment since the reform and opening up, effectively resettle and play a role in an increasing number of social organizations, and thereby achieve social integration.

From a practical perspective, continuing to deepen the transformation of government functions, clarifying the power boundary between government and the society, making the government truly a public service type government, and providing sufficient institutional space and power space for the development of social organizations and the growth of social forces are the prerequisite and foundation for truly realizing the socialization of "social governance"[7]. On this basis, there are various ways to promote the participation of social forces in "social governance", but the most fundamental is to decentralize power. The government should organically combine the collective action advantages and public welfare orientation of various organizations in the society, the characteristics of benign market competition and efficiency orientation, as well as macro control functions and fairness orientation, to build a linkage and trust mechanism among the society, market, and government. [8]

2.2 Power Allocation of social governance

Under the premise of multiple subjects participating in "social governance", the issue of power distribution is inevitably involved. One of the key issues is how to allocate public power to each governance body and ensure its continuous and healthy operation. If the distribution is uneven or there are power intersections, it can lead to the dominance of the governance body alone, or make it difficult

to hold accountable for issues arising in the work. Regarding the practical path of power allocation, the author believes that the following aspects should be started.

First, it is necessary to consider the interests of various governance entities involved in "social governance" and achieve the expression and integration of different interests. This is because the main body of "social governance" is different interest groups, which are organizational systems formed by different interest groups to solve social and public issues[3]. Improving the distribution mechanism of public power is actually a process of seeking a balance point in the game of interests among all parties in accordance with certain rules and taking the maximum common divisor.

Secondly, it is necessary to promote the government to clarify its own positioning. It is not enough for the government to merely clarify the boundaries of power. It is necessary to accelerate the transformation of the concept of its own positioning, actively transfer some power to social organizations, and establish a relationship of mutual trust and cooperation with social organizations. The government should clarify that the relationship between other "social governance" entities and the government is equal and cooperative, not a relationship of obedience and command. Every governance body has the right to participate and speak in the implementation of social affairs and the formulation of social policies[8]. At the same time, accelerating the establishment of the government's administrative evaluation system, unblocking the channels for letters and visits, and enabling the public to effectively participate in the supervision of the operational process of administrative institutions are of great significance for stimulating the enthusiasm of social forces to participate in "social governance".

Finally, in terms of power allocation, the author wants to emphasize that because China's social government is still in the process of moving from a single government entity to a multi social entity, the government should still play its leading role in this process, promote the smooth transition of power, and avoid the chaos caused by excessive power decentralization at the same time. At the same time, it is necessary to provide high-quality and specialized counterpart talents for social organizations involved in social government, ensure the correct application of power, and avoid the disorder phenomenon of mediocrity in power.

2.3 The social vitality of "social governance"

In the context of social vitality, the question is still whether the main body of "social governance" actively participates. The main body of "social governance" that actively participates and has appropriate power must be full of social vitality and can promote social prosperity. It can also fundamentally solve the weak state of social organizations and broaden their living space.

From the perspective of practical path, cultivating healthy social organizations must change the previous negative cultivation policy of emphasizing quantity over quality, emphasizing political achievements over the needs of the public, while optimizing the treatment of employees in social organizations and attracting senior intellectuals to take up positions[10]; In terms of social concepts, it is also necessary to change the traditional public perception and publicize the importance of social government vitality. In addition, the way to stimulate social vitality is the content discussed in the power allocation section above[11], which will not be discussed again here.

3. Summary

Based on the active and passive relationship of "governance", it can be concluded that "governing the society" itself is a narrow concept, which is logically untenable in language. As for the discussion of the connotation of "social governance", the author is limited to the discussion space and the actual situation in China, which may be biased. However, how to understand the concept of "social governance" has a direct impact on the direction of policy making and changes in social sentiment in practice, and is of extraordinary significance. It is one of the theoretical propositions that we should adhere to for a long time.

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