

Fragmentation and Unity of Rural Public Governance: A Case Study on Lin'an City in China

ZENG Zhihong^{[a],*}; ZENG Xiaoying^[b]

^[a]School of Political Science and Public Management, Southwest University, Chongqing, China; In the post-doctoral stations of Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China.

^[b]School of Political Science and Public Management, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

The township, as the most basic political system in China, a head of which is connected to a city, and the another head connected with the countryside, is the foundation of national economic and social development. In the face of strong intervention of economic globalization, the gradually weakening of local township government, and the increasingly tense of national finance, agricultural and rural development policy, which is presently ubiquitous in the rural area of China, stressed from top to bottom, expert guidance, government-dominated promoting, will face the serious challenges of rural governance under the background of globalization. The rural governance is that the national institutions and other authorities based on the village government provides public service activities to the village society, in order to maintain rural order, promote rural development, according to the laws, regulations, customs and traditions. And rural governance is the process of multi subjects' collaborative management of rural village. Rural governance quality reflects the ability of government's rural social mobilization and management, and relates to the stable development and prosperity of rural society. The current problems of township governance, mainly are not the "township" problems of its own, but the "institutions and mechanisms of government" problem. This article takes

the Lin'an city of Zhejiang province as the research object, through the development of villages and towns work rules in the process of tracking, puts forward a good example of rural governance in china.

Key words: Rural public governance; Fragmentation; Unity; Lin'an

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INTRODUCTION

Since China implemented the policy of reform and opening to the outside world, there have been the two most conspicuous changes in China's rural areas: economically, the implementation of the household contract responsibility system with remuneration linked to output; politically, the institution of self-governance among villagers. In recent years, the township reform has achieved remarkable results in many aspects such as the transformation of government functions, optimization the organizational structure, reinforcement staffing administration, improvement public undertaking station system, innovation of the rural working mechanism. Especially in 2006, the abolition of agricultural tax is a historic event. The abolition of agricultural tax and the strategy of new countryside construction industry feeding agriculture, rural area with city, which mean that Chinese history has entered a new stage. As for the rural areas, the abolition of agricultural tax means not only the end of national main revenue sources of agricultural tax lasting two thousand years, but also means the beginning of a new modernization period when China has completed the industrialization stage of introverted accumulation.

However, there are several restricted factors in the current township governance.

1 FRAGMENTATION: THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS OF RURAL GOVERNANCE IN CHINA

The rise and influence of global governance, Chinese rural areas emphasizing from top to bottom, expert guidance, and government-oriented to promote agricultural and rural development policies for a long time, will be faced with the challenges of rural governance. With the rapid development of the rural social reform and the villagers' autonomy, the state power system has failed to carry out adaptive changes, the relationship between the state power, and the village society tends to be intense. The most direct expression of this tension is the disconnection of township government and village governance. This makes the "township government and village governance" mode facing many realistic problems.

1.1 The Imperfect Rural Governance System and Weak Sense of Legality

From the policy perspective, the lack of normative rules of procedure, the leadership conference always tends to become "a be-in-touch meeting" or "only one man's words count". From the implementation point of view, the lack of standard operational mechanism, some leaders are accustomed to make decisions by their feeling, relationship, or by individual ability, some villages and towns are accustomed to the "campaign style" or "random style", in order to push the work forward. From the supervision aspect, the lack of effective accountability system, grass-roots cadres do not care about farmer's live but leader's face. The "reverse accountability" is the root of omission or negligence of the township government.

The basic systems of township governance, such as the electoral system, decision-making system, management system, supervision system, have a mere formality in a large part and have not been implemented conscientiously. In some cases, rural governance is not in accordance with the rules of statutory from the form; in some cases, there is only the form without any practical effect; in some cases, the provisions of the legal system in the implementation process have been seriously distorted. Causes of the actual results, are partly the imperfect villager autonomy system, the reality gap, and difficult to carry out; but the main reasons, are the weak legal, democratic and responsibility consciousness of local government officials and the village cadres, the lack of concept of democracy, rights, participation enthusiasm and governance ability of villagers.

1.2 The Asymmetry of Power and Responsibility of the Township Government

"Above one thousand lines, below a needle", the superior authorities decomposition target indicators to the township by territorial management, they exert pressure

on township through the performance appraisal and the "one vote veto". This leads to the township government in the "unlimited power, unlimited liability" situation. In practice, law enforcement powers, such as production safety, environmental protection, and traffic accidents, are charged by the higher authorities, but the responsibility belongs to the township. The township can find the mistakes but out of its reach and the department owns its rights but invisibility of the mistakes. The Department's "seven stations eight bureaus" each one goes his own way. Therefore, the township government is difficult to effectively integrate the resources and strengths within the region, to collaborative governance, which reduces the administrative efficiency.

1.3 The Financial Difficulties of the Township Government

The tax-for-fee reform in rural areas has reduced farmers' burdens to a great extent, but virtually the fiscal burden has been grown in two levels of villages and towns. The main reasons are as following aspects: firstly, the single source and gradually reducing of township financial revenue and income; secondly, the township institutions expansion and too many dead men; thirdly, blind investment and irrational, redundant construction costly capital waste; fourthly, the big daily expenses and serious waste of township government; fifthly, the demanding apportion or matching requirements from the superior, heavily financial pressure; sixthly, the imperfect financial and taxation reform supporting system, small proportion locally-retained portion of township or less transfer payments. In practice, part of the township finance showing empty shell, heavy debt burden, and service function atrophy, are unable to develop rural public utilities.

1.4 The Low Villager Autonomy Level, and Too Much Extensive Government Intervention

The core of the reformation of modern rural governance is democratic autonomy of villagers, that is, village affairs are managed by the villagers themselves. But in the village governance practice, villagers' self management functions are seriously weakened, and the village government intervention become too much over. In many cases, the village authority organization become into district office of higher levels of government in the village, it reflects more intent to higher levels of government, rather than the desire of farmers. In addition, the local government also sent government officials and other methods to the village to step in village governance directly. The rural governance in the "strong administrative", seriously undermine the autonomy of villagers, and the "strong administrative" with only "weak autonomy".

Because of the system environment, system and mechanism, the rural culture and other reasons, the township government and the villagers' autonomy are difficult to connect effectively and interact benignly, and

appear either this or that development tendency. Formally, the control of rural areas from township is strengthened gradually, but in fact the township government and village society continues to disconnect. Grassroots autonomous organizations of a mass character have fallen into an embarrassment with a strengthening administration and weakening actual function. Meanwhile, the township governments are shortage of effective means to regulate village affairs and incentive village cadres. They believe that the democratic construction at the grassroots level is not going too slow but too fast. In addition, the growth retardation of other social organizations of the township is far behind the internal demand of township governance, uneven, some good and some bad, lack of self-discipline and effective supervision.

2. THE FEATURES OF RURAL GOVERNANCE IN LIN'AN CITY

Although the villagers' autonomy as the core of the reformation of rural governance, had filled once and is facing many severe challenges and difficulties, and even today there are still many people who hold opposed attitudes, however, no one can stop the pace of progress. Because rural governance represents the developing direction of modern Chinese rural democratic politics, and rural governance has great positive significance for the progress of rural society. This paper summarizes some experiences and the basic characteristics of the township governance, and takes the practice in Lin'an city of Zhejiang Province as the research object.

2.1 The Basic Situation of Lin'an City

Lin'an city is located in the northwest of Zhejiang Province, is nearest from Shanghai, Hangzhou metropolis in the mountain city, for many years among the top 100 Chinese basic competitiveness of county economy. Lin'an city has the total area of 3124 square kilometers, jurisdiction over 298 administrative villages and 5 Street 13 townships, 520 thousand of the population, the urban built-up area of 20 square kilometers, and 150 thousand of population. In 2012, Lin'an has realized the GDP of 38 billion yuan, up 10%; the ten industry added value of 15.29 billion yuan, up 14%. Total fiscal revenue is 4.42 billion yuan, local fiscal revenue is 2.37 billion yuan, up 12.6% and 12.1% respectively. Urban residents' per capita disposable income of 30890 yuan, per capita net income of rural residents was 15764 yuan, increased by 11.9% and 13.2%. The revenue growth of rural residents is more than urban residents' income increase for three consecutive years.

2.2 The Development of Rural Governance in Lin'an City

In recent years, Lin'an city of Zhejiang province has completed the scale adjustment and township

administrative division adjustment. At present, the city is composed of 26 villages and towns to 18 towns (streets), 662 administrative villages to 298 by merging. Township (Street) is the main battlefield to develop Lin'an country domain economy development, bear important task to speed up transformation and upgrading, push the balanced urban and rural development. But due to historical inertia, limitations of system and mechanism, common problems of the township governance mentioned above, Lin'an also exists more or less. These problems are associated with the closely related to the lack of canonical and operational regulation. To this end, Lin'an City is according to the requirements of the pilot from Zhejiang province and Hangzhou City to establish a set of effective guidance for the town street, in order to pay attention to the basic unit, standardized management, streamlined and efficient to achieve breakthrough.

The drafting of "Lin'an town (street) work rules», is a gradual understanding, deepening, improving and upgrading process. It mainly experienced four stages: (1) Drafting. Based on the discussion, investigation and study, the exchange forum, practice study, first draft finished at the end of March 2013. (2) Modification. In April, the main task is modification based on absorption study experience, the views of all parties and with the help of academic research strengths guidance. (3) Optimizing. Two presentation content of the organization department and politics research centre was optimized the integration of refining and absorbed experience Qing Lingfeng town. On this basis, the draft was solicited for the opinions of leaders of the city and Town/ Street and relevant departments, and ultimately discussed the determination by the Standing Committee. (4) Going and trying beforehand. In June 19th, deployment conference was held in Lin'an City, the implementation of "town (street) work rules" was deployed for training and mobilization.

2.3 The Basic Characteristics of Rural Governance Procedures in Lin'an City

Lin'an city town (street) work procedures have been set up a total of 7 chapters, 37 articles, focusing on the town governance rules and processes in detail. On the whole, regulation has the characteristics as following aspects.

2.3.1 Focusing on the Top-Level Design, Highlighting Overall Planning

Rural governance of Lin'an city pays attention to systems designed of the province and city, and puts emphasis on the equal economic and social development in urban and rural areas. Which consists of two aspects: firstly, the target dominates many factors of rural governance of Lin'an city. Combined with and carried out the spirit of the communist party's 18th national congress, and of the the cadre troop construction conference of Zhejiang province, the latest requirements of the "five building" and the "five good service township" include the town street work objectives, to enhance the sense of the times and

authority. Secondly, governance structure is combined with the unified and decentralized. Rural governance was adopted the structure: the party Committee's broad vision; the National People's Congress reviewing decision; the government carrying out its official duties according to laws; Disciplinary Inspection conducting supervision and inspection; and citizens' participation in political affairs in an orderly way.

2.3.2 Focusing on the Grass Roots Initiative, Highlighting Practicality

Firstly, respect the grass-roots practice. In addition to the law clearly stipulating, the content of rules and regulations comes from the grass-roots practice and survey, fully reflects the provincial manners. It is conducive to the cadres easy to understand and use. For example, the procedure and decision-making of the township conventionally use "Leading Bodies Conference". Although there is no clear evidence, the trade-off is still retained. Secondly, reflects Lin'an elements. The government applied the good practices and experience of Lin'an municipal level and township level to sections in terms of rules almost immediately, curing the brand of Lin'an, providing specific of Lin'an. For example, in the "implementation" chapters, the core content is the work method of Lin'an "three systems, three styles", namely, the daily work post responsibility system, the key work project propulsion system, the emergency work centralized treatment system, and group, hot wire, one-stop service. The regulation is the work experience summary and promotion of Lin'an city for many years.

2.3.3 Focusing on the Institutional Procedure, Highlighting Maneuverability

On the one hand, cure the terms of reference and decision-making procedures. Important organizations, important meetings and leadership member functions have been defined. The five steps in the decision process including the committee introduced, investigations and research, formulating plans, discussion and decision, and forming minutes are configured. It is in favor of locking the power in a cage. On the other hand, strengthen the system design and the system of accountability. The regulation which refers to more than 20 rules about important affairs adheres to the system of disposing of person and steward. Regulation has acted in a quantifiable principled manner, for example, a government functionary should arrange at least 2/3 times for investigation and a coordinated work every year, etc. At the same time, ascertaining the responsibility for violations of the behavior of the system, the accountability runs through the whole accounting process consisting of such links decision-making, execution, supervision.

2.3.4 Focusing on the Township Authority, Highlighting Autonomy

Firstly, expand the law enforcement authority. The municipal authorities delegate the permission by

direct power, according to law authorized, entrust law enforcement, joint law enforcement to strengthen ability of overall coordination, autonomy decision-making, administration according to law and public service. Secondly, broaden management authority of accrediting stations. The personnel management such as turnover, appointment and disqualification, evaluation of the head of accrediting stations should request the party committee of township for advice. Thirdly, enlarge the suggestion right of organization structuring and cadres providing. The party committee of township can give some suggestions for comprehensive institutions according to work needs, and it has the suggestion right to members of the leadership team appointment, disqualification, and adjustment.

2.3.5 Focusing on the Information Retrieval, Highlighting Systematicness

The "1+X" framework is adopted in the regulation of township. "1" is the work regulation itself, "X" represents for the corresponding accessories. Accessories include mainly four aspects: (1) The members of the leadership responsibility; (2) The basic operating system; (3) The practice examples of township; (4) The associated file system. "1+X" system based on the compilation of documents issued form, is easy to learn systematically and retrieval rapidly. Therefore, the regulation becomes the encyclopedia of township affairs.

3 THE PRACTICE OF PERFECTING RURAL GOVERNANCE IN LIN'AN

For a long time, because of difficulties of town finance, reversed transmission of the pressure system, abnormal administrative ethics, the weak concept of public service, and lack of supporting systems, many township governments have fallen into regime operators. Lin'an city of Zhejiang province has improved rural governance through developing work regulations, and it gradually makes the township government into "social governance". Generally speaking, the features of township governance in Lin'an mainly include as following.

3.1 The Township Governance Requires a Combination of Top-Level Design and Primary Practice

The township governments are easy to appear the "Involution" phenomenon of route locking, that is, the government operation mode and mechanism always in the condition of repeated regeneration and eking out. It will result in dysfunction of government agency and difficulties in real political development. The experience of Lin'an city shows that, with the top-level design and primary practice, can promote the rural governance continuous evolution. The township regulation is issued from the county (city) level, which is the top-level design

for towns and countries, but is a grass-roots practice for the whole country, province and city.

3.2 The Township Governance Requires A Combination Of Macro Guidance And Handy Practice

These phenomena, such as system shortcoming, system suspension, system displacement and system fission, often appear in the rural governance. The regulation of Lin'an City has macro requirements and principle opinions, rigid requirements and quantitative standards, simple and practical, convenient operation. It makes up for the lack of system of township governance. At the same time, it avoids the system suspension because of its simple and practical; avoids the system dislocation because of its accurate position; avoids the system fission because of its endogenous power.

3.3 The Township Governance Requires a Combination of Accordance With Laws and the Reformation and Innovation

The township governance is always carried out on the constraint of a series of laws and regulations and rules, but the reformation and innovation don't form necessarily substantive tensions with established law systems. The consideration factors of the regulation of Lin'an city include both in accordance with the relevant provisions, and fully with respect to the actual work. The town and street especially the town center should reserve some room to carry out active exploration for reformation and innovation, and provide fresh experience to enrich and improve the rules. Moreover, the regulation itself is a combination of the results in accordance with the law and regulations and the fruits of reformation and innovation.

3.4 The Township Governance Requires a Combination of Institutional Constraints and Cadres' Protection.

The township governance needs effective institutional constraints, so that the power can be caged in the system, the work performance can be upgraded in the system implementation progress, and the work style of cadres can be changed well in the system specification progress. The regulation of Lin'an city is experience institutionalization and defect standardization of the township governance. It not only reflects the specifications and constraints on the work of the township, but also reflects the protection cadres of the village and township in accordance with regulations. The grassroots cadres consider the regulation as a guide to rural governance. They believe that if they follow the established rules, they can get the corresponding protection in the rules and procedures. And so it is, the cadres give a high evaluation to the regulation, actively implement, and formulate personalized details of the regulation.

3.5 Summary

This chapter leads a specific case study on rural governance in Lin'an city of Zhejiang province. Through the tentative analysis of the developmental model, the paper holds that rural all in this zone is a coexistence of achievements and problems, which means a vast space for further optimization. Under the analytical framework, based on the practical, the current achievements for rural governance have made: focusing on the top-level design, highlighting overall planning; focusing on the grass roots initiative, highlighting practicality; focusing on the institutional procedure, highlighting maneuverability; focusing on the township authority, highlighting autonomy; focusing on the information retrieval, highlighting systematicness. The practice of perfecting rural governance in Lin'an shows that: the township governance requires a combination of top-level design and primary practice; macro guidance and handy practice; accordance with laws and the reformation and innovation; institutional constraints and cadres' protection.

4. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Since the late 1990s, the concept of governance has taken center stage on the development agenda. Governance is the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels (UNDP). Majority of the world's poor live in rural areas. Local governances play a major role in the rural development of China. China's rural governance centering on self-governance among villagers originated during the period of the Republic of China, but it has truly laid an actual foundation since China implemented the policy of reform and opening up. The rural democratic governance is a basic embodiment of democratic politics with Chinese characteristics in rural areas and represents the orientation for the political development of China's rural areas. The reformation of rural governance centering on self-governance among villagers that was carried out in China's rural areas in the 1980s, is a breakthrough in China's grass-roots democracy and an important part of China's political restructuring. In the 21st century when social, political and economic climates are undergoing tremendous changes, the rural democratic governance faces opportunities and challenges for another breakthrough both in depth and width. To meet these challenges, we should take the initiative to prudently promote the reformation of rural democratic governance. This will vigorously promote progress in China's rural society and even the whole country as a whole.

Improving rural governance is a systematic and complicated project. From the historical logic perspective, it is an essential part to national governance and national construction. Especially when the modern state is not fully established and farmers are not over yet, the nation should

deal with the decentralized peasant. We must rely on the grass-roots governments to organize farmers to develop countryside, and constantly improve the path of rural governance. Once the grass-roots organizations withdraw from countryside, many projects which are useful to the people such as the land circulation management and the rural cooperatives would be difficult to realize. Then, the pace of rural development will become difficult. Therefore, the current emphasis on dealing with the relationship between state and peasants, increasing the rights of farmers, expanding their development space, also need to constantly sum up experience and improve grass-roots governance mode. The rural development will become relatively easy. Rural governance institution and mechanism should be reformed and improved to a good state by the leading role of government and the integration function of kinds of resources and means of integration function, as the political basis will be laid a wonderful foundation for construction of new countryside.

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