The CCP's Reform Strategy on the Innovative Management of Social Organizations: A Case Study on Beijing

(Chou Mu-Yi)

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Abstract

This paper is based on China's reform strategy on the social sector to show how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) exercises its authoritarian resilience. Differing from western experiences of the state-society relations mainly characterized in competitive and contradictory forms. What has happened in current China may provide us an alternative way to understand the state-society relations, that is, the complementary and cooperative forms of state-society interactions. In practice, such forms of state-society relations can be observed in public governance issues and termed as governance inclusiveness. Such arrangement enables societal actors to get involved in the process of policy making and policy implementation. This paper will introduce one of the mechanisms of the CCP's authoritarian resilience by analyzing Beijing's reform strategy on the management of social organization. With governance inclusiveness mechanism, the authoritarian regime can respond to the social needs and to some extent assuage bottom-up challenge. The CCP's authoritarian resilience is only shown in the public governance dimension, which does not directly challenge the existing political power. In conclusion, I argue that although an authoritarian government adopts the reform with some democratic traits, it does not necessarily lead to democratization. Instead, such reform strategy can be utilized to sustain authoritarian survival.

Key Words：authoritarianism, authoritarian resilience, authoritarian survival

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I. Literature Review of Authoritarian Survival

The focus on institutions that pervade in analyzing democracies is now increasingly applied to the study of nondemocratic regimes. Institutionalization has been viewed as a favorable precondition for democratization. However, such a view has been challenged. Many authoritarian regimes have adopted institutional designs to achieve elite coalition by power-sharing or resources allocation, which results in authoritarian survival rather than democratization. Thus, the function and the purpose of existing reforms or institutions with democratic traits in authoritarian regimes should be met with scrutiny. Confronted with social challenges, a state can choose among three responses, i.e., repression, cooptation, and democratization. Authoritarian regimes do not necessarily transition to democracy. Some of them survive and persist. How do authoritarian regimes maintain its rule and legitimacy in the context of current Chinese society? What is the logic behind its authoritarian rule? How is the state-society relations defined and displayed under the CCP's authoritarianism?

Institutional reform with democratic traits does not necessarily lead to democratization and can be utilized by authoritarian rulers to ensure authoritarian survival. Diamond (2002) proposes the concept of "hybrid regimes", i.e., regimes are in the intermediate spectrum between fully democratic and fully authoritarian. His typology is based on different degrees of elections. Levitsky and Way's (2002) competitive authoritarianism and Schedler's (2006; 2002) electoral authoritarianism adopt a similar scheme. This group of scholars has shown that the openness of the election can persist authoritarian rules since the incumbents have privileged access to resources, media, and rule setting to generate a favorable condition for the incumbents to remain in office. It by no means, means that the opposition has no chance to win but the chance is very little due to the uneven playing ground set by the incumbents (Levitsky and Way 2002, ch.1). However, these typologies rely on only one dimension, (i.e., the degree of election) which may overestimate the tendency toward democratization and thus overlook alternative factors that are essential to authoritarian regimes to survive. Moreover, election is one of the essences of democracy but it is not a necessary condition for authoritarian regimes. If we focus only on the election dimension to observe the variation of state-society relations, we may lose some crucial insights from other perspectives that may be more central to authoritarianism than the election is. Most literatures explain authoritarian survival based on the elections, saying elections can be a mechanism to achieve power-sharing and elite-coalition. However, how does the authoritarian regime survive in China without elections? What kinds of mechanisms make non-competitive authoritarian regimes' survival possible? In this paper, I intend to fill this gap by "governance inclusiveness"

dimension suggested by Hsu and Chou (2012). Governance is essential to all regimes to maintain stability. By using governance inclusiveness, the mechanism of how authoritarian government absorbs social energies and transforms them into the state's need can be shown. As a result, the interaction of the authoritarian government and social forces creates the institution that both parts can benefit from it but do not directly challenge the political power of existing authoritarian regime.

Regarding institutions in authoritarian regimes, what is the role of institution in a political system? According to Huntington (1968, ch.1), the institutionalization is applicable to not only democracies but also non-democracies. However, the institutional designs in non-democracies are usually viewed as window-dressing without substantive functions.

However, a group of scholars does not view institutions as ornamentation but as a part of the liberalizing process that may generate favorable conditions to democratization. The interaction between the state and society paves the route of institutional formation. The state's tolerance and people's civic competence and culture can be developed by increasing participation in public and political affairs in the process of liberalization. Although it is not the only outcome, if it is a case, the institution does play a role and have its function in facilitating greater liberalization and even democratization.

From another perspective, Gandhi and Przeworski (2007), Brownlee (2007), and Boix and Svolik (2013) also think institutions in authoritarian regimes do matter. They think the institution is meaningful but not in contributing to democratization. Rather, it is a useful tool for authoritarian rulers to expand their support and neutralize grassroots grievances and challenges. This group of analyses argues that adopting "institutions with democratic traits" (i.e., parties, legislatures, and advisory councils) is conducive to the authoritarian survival. Gandhi's (2008) finds that the nominally democratic institutions (e.g., legislatures and political parties) under authoritarian regimes do matter but in ways that differ from those in democracies. Under authoritarian regimes, these nominally democratic institutions serve as instruments of co-options to broaden regime's support and they are very limited in the way of improving representation and accountability to citizens (Gandhi 2008, xxiv). Boix and Svolik (2013) also argue that the dictatorship can utilize institutions such as legislatures, parties, and advisory councils to alleviate the information asymmetry in authoritarian rule and facilitate power-sharing of elites and thus consolidate ruling coalition. Focusing on different degrees of election or various institutions with democratic traits, all of these analyses are feasible only in authoritarian regimes with to some extent of elections. This also implies that the societal forces are able to be self-organized as oppositions to pressure and even challenge the authoritarian

government by elections.

To sum up, regimes are institutional arrangements that define state-society relationship and access to political power. Most of the existing types of authoritarian regime are identified by the degree or the quality of "elections" (Schedler 2006; Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way's 2002). In line with this logic, many relevant studies tend to define state-society relations as competitive or contradictory forms. However, these analyses are limited in explaining how non-competitive authoritarian regimes maintain stability and retain in power like current China. Focusing on elections may overlook other essential dimension in defining state-society relations. We may overestimate the competitive and contradictory forms but neglect the cooperative and complementary forms to define state-society relations. Regarding the current political situation in China, we do not perceive much change in electoral openness but we do observe lots of dynamic variation of state-society relations in public governance. Thus, we should take public governance into consideration when depicting the route of regime change.

The main research question of this paper is as follows: Under an authoritarian regime, does the reform or institution with some democratic characteristics facilitate democratization? In turn, how does such reform or institution function and influence the state-society relations? I will answer these questions by the case study on the development and management of social organizations in Beijing. I will show the mechanism of such reform and how it influences state-society relations.

In this section, I have briefly reviewed literatures of authoritarian survival and propose the theoretical gap in explaining the authoritarian survival in non-competitive regimes. In the next section, I will introduce the analytical concepts and how I apply them to the context of current China without stretching these concepts too far. Then, I will use the case study on Beijing's innovative management of social organization to illustrate how governance inclusiveness mechanism functions. Finally, I will conclude that although there are reforms or institutional designs with some democratic traits, they serve as an instrument to maintain social stability rather than facilitate the development of autonomous civil society. By governance inclusiveness mechanism, the CCP authoritarian regime can respond to the social needs and to some extent assuage bottom-up challenge. The CCP's authoritarian resilience is only shown in the governance dimension, which does not directly challenge the existing political power. As a result, its governance can be improved by including social forces into the process of public governance and sustain authoritarian survival without yielding to the pressure of democratization.

II. Theoretical Framework

In this section, I will first introduce the analytical concepts and analytical approach of state-society relations. Then I will further clarify how I apply the concept of governance inclusiveness to an authoritarian regime, especially in the context of current Chinese society. It is meant to pave the way to the context of the case study for the later section.

1. Analytical concepts

Nathan (2003, 1-2) suggests the authoritarian resilience to explain how the authoritarian CCP maintains in power by showing the CCP regime's institutionalization in succession politics, in the way of promoting political elites, in differentiation of institutions, and in establishing channels to the public to deliver grievances. However, Nathan does not further explain the mechanisms of these reforms in practice and how they influence the state-society relations. In this paper, I seek to use the reform strategy of social organizations in Beijing as a case study to depict one of the possible mechanisms of authoritarian resilience and how such reform influences state-society relations. In Nathan's (2003, 11) analysis, he concludes two main features of the existing "demand- and complaint-making channels, that is, "individual rather than group-based inputs" and "targeting at local-level officials and abuses" are encouraged by the CCP regime to diffuse aggregating challenges against the central government accordingly. In the similar vein, I argue that governance issues are so diverse that it is feasible for an authoritarian regime to cope with bottom-up challenges separately and case by case. By doing so, the large-scale collective movement becomes less likely (Hsu and Chou 2012).

Moreover, this paper wants to show one of the mechanisms of authoritarian resilience in non-competitive authoritarianism. It implies that the variation of state-society relations may hardly be observed in the change of political power, but rather can be observed by dynamic interactions in public governance processes. With this in mind, I will apply Hsu and Chou's (2012) "governance inclusiveness" to the case study on Beijing's management reform of social organizations to show such dynamic interaction of the state and society. The concept of governance inclusiveness refers to including social forces into the process of policy making and implementation in public governance issues (Hsu and Chou 2012, 11). The analytical core here is to show governance inclusiveness is one of the mechanisms of authoritarian resilience in non-competitive authoritarian regimes. I argue that with appropriate governance inclusiveness may be able to neutralize the bottom-up

pressure and encourage authoritarian survival. Such governance inclusiveness mechanism is characterized with a democratic façade, but serves to maintain social stability rather than facilitating civil society and political reform. Repression is not abandoned by the state and the control is still dominant but carried out by various forms with different degrees. With proper and in-time responses to the public demands through governance inclusiveness mechanisms, the administrative accountability of an authoritarian government is to some extent improved. As a result, the ruling legitimacy of such an authoritarian regime can be maintained and conducive to regime survival.

2. Analytical approach: state-in-society approach

There are three main approaches in explaining China's current state-society relations. The first approach is a state-centered approach focusing on ideology, norms, and institutional creations that reflect the power origins and exercise. The main analytical subjects include the state's autonomy, capacity, and initiative of policy-making and policy implementation. The second is society-centered approach focusing on bottom-up grassroots forces which can be observed by collective actions, social associations and pervading culture and some society initiative activities, e.g., protest, self-relief (i.e., receiving assistance from society rather than from the state), etc. The third is a state-in-society approach proposed by Migdal (2001; 1994) focusing on the mutual embeddednesse of the state and society. The institutions are generated by a series of state-society interactions. Both the state and society cannot be viewed as a whole but as multi-dimensional spaces and experience the continuing struggle over the legitimate principles of division of the field (Migdal 2001, 22). This approach emphasizes on, instead of a result, but the continuing process, "becoming" (Migdal 2001, 23; 1994). Since the "public governance" is the analytical core of this paper, I think the state-in-society approach is more appropriate than the other two approaches to provide explanation. This approach focuses on mutually embedded state-society relations in practice. In modern society when we deal with governance issues, neither the state nor society can implement public governance independently (Chhotray and Stoker 2009; Stoker 1998). The interactions of the state and society show the process of public governance. Although the state is still relatively dominant in power over the society in current China, it cannot arbitrarily exercise its power without taking the public opinions into consideration. What I want to emphasize in this paper is this subtle variation of state-society relations displayed in the process of public governance. In such a context, the behaviors of the state and society are mutually constructed.

3. Governance in authoritarian regime

Governance can be understood as a juncture to display various combinations of the state-society interactions and relations. According to Stoker (1998, 17), "the essence of governance is its focus on governing mechanisms which do not rest on recourse to the authority and sanctions of government." This argument implies that the traditional way i.e., imposing authority and coercion to the public for policy implementation, has its limitation so the multiple tools and networks are proposed to facilitate governance. Moreover, the concept of governance denotes a structure or an order, which is not preexisting or imposed from outside but is generated by the interplay of multiple agencies at stake (Kooiman and Van Vliet 1993, 16). Since the governance concept emphasizes on the interaction of involved officials and societal actors, it is "with time and spatial limitation" and must be cautious if we want to generalize it to other cases (Stoker 1998, 26). With this in mind, this paper focuses on specific issue in a specific region to provide a possible way of functioning inclusiveness mechanism. I will explain the limitation of generalization of such mechanisms in the later discussion. In order not to stretch the concept of governance originated in democratic political system, I will explain how I use governance concept in authoritarian regimes. What essences of governance concept that I single out? What are the main differences between the governance in democracies and non-democracies?

When applying the concept of governance to analyze state-society relations, I should mention in advance that there are five propositions summarized by Stoker as follows:

> 1. Governance refers to a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond government. 2. Governance identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues. 3. Governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action. 4. Governance is about autonomous self-governing networks of actors. 5. Governance recognizes the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide (Stoker 1998, 18).

Furthermore, governance also provide a possibility for change through the governing process (i.e., the process of the interactions of multiple agencies), including new methods, changed conditions and updated mainstream values, by which the society is governed (Rhodes 1996, 653). Accordingly, governance contains not only governmental institutions but informal, social and cultural mechanisms as well (Rhodes 1996, 657-658). In sum, governance is not a fixed term, but rather a dynamic

and interactive process of social and political forms of governing (Rhodes 1996, 657-658). In western literatures, the concept of governance has emerged in a democratic system in order to compensate the insufficiency of representative democracy. Since governance is assumed to exist in a democratic system, it also presumes a condition that an autonomous civil society is already there. To avoid concept stretching, I will explain the condition and limitation of using the concept of governance in the context of authoritarianism. In explaining current context of Chinese state-society dynamics, Hsu (2011, 24) has tried to define "autocratic governance" as follows:

> Autocratic governance" refers to a type of management of public policy or public affairs. For a modern authoritarian regime to successfully manage public policy issues or public affairs in a complex industrialized society, both the state and the society in an authoritarian regime will need each other's interaction, cooperation, and consenting support in the process of policy making and policy implementation. However, compared to democracies, the autocratic state is not accountable to the society since its power is not from popular votes. Moreover, in the process of policy interaction, the autocratic state and the society are not equal as in democracies, nor can the authoritarian state totally dominate the society. The autocratic state still enjoys domination in coercion, policy agenda setting, monopolization in political organization, and resource mobilization. But the society is not entirely submissive either. It has certain space for self-organized and relatively autonomous social networks that enjoys certain level of autonomy. Media also enjoys certain degree of autonomy due to market competition as long as the reports are not politically sensitive (Hsu 2011, 24).

Hsu's "autocratic governance" distinguishes the condition of governance from democracies to non-democracies. In a non-democratic system, the state still enjoys absolute coercive power and is able to repress societal challenges that the state perceives as a threat. The rank and file of autocratic government is accountable to the higher ranking officials rather than the society. In a non-competitive authoritarian regime like China, people cannot remove the incumbent by votes so the autocratic government is not accountable to society. It creates a grey zone regarding the different standard of evaluating governance performance, meaning that what the higher ranking officials perceive as good performance may be not so for the public. Many reforms have turned out to be a bureaucratized procedure at the expense of the quality of essential functions (Chu and Lee 2013). As a result, the efficiency of a reform can be weakened by bureaucratization or becoming an indicator to be pursued.

Moreover, after China's economic reform, the decline of the "work unit" (*danwei* 單位) system had crucial impact on the party-state's political control over and the

delivery of social welfare to people. With the new economic conditions, many *danweiren* (people in danwei 單位人) become *shwhuiren* (people in society 社會人) so the old governing system can no longer maintain its control over the society. The community reform and construction becomes the main task for the local government and opens many spaces and opportunities for the grassroots social organizations (SOs) (Ma 2006, ch.2). With a market economy, there are more and more pluralist interests, social conflicts are inevitably encountered and become a potential challenge to social stability. The CCP regime does not possess the capacity of totalitarian rule anymore. It cannot deliver public services and policies all by itself without some extent of popular support and participation. Thus, for the betterness of public governance, both the authoritarian government and society have motivation to pursue cooperation. What makes the cooperation more likely to be achieved by the authoritarian government and society in current China? Authoritarian governance in current China can be characterized with the following three conditions. First, the CCP regime is not accountable to the society. Second, it has a market economy, which generates a group of economic elites. The social stability for pursuing economic growth is an overlapping goal for both political and economic elites, which makes their coalition more preferable than risking pursuing uncertain democratization. Third, many intellectual elites are willing to accept the authoritarian rule due to the expedient consideration. Harsh repression is never given up by the CCP regime to deal with political dissidents. However, policy dissidents are to some extent tolerated by the authoritarian government and can play a crucial role in improving the quality of public governance. Thus, most intellectuals are still satisfied with current situation and enjoy advantages out of economic development and thus have little motivation to challenge the current stability (Kang 2005, 53-88). If the authoritarian government and the social forces cooperate without threatening each other, then public governance can be improved under authoritarian governance (Hsu and Chou 2012, 10-11). In this paper, my analytical object is grassroots social organization (SO). I will use examples to illustrate what role SO plays in local governance at the community level and how it influences the state-society relations. Local governance at the community level is the basis of the social construction and rife with subtle changes of state-society relations even with many institutional constraints under the CCP's authoritarian rules.

III. Case Study on Beijing's Reform on the Management of Social Organizations

In this section, I will first of all briefly introduce the methodology and then use the example of a social organization, the CA, to show how the governance inclusiveness

mechanism functions based on the Beijing's policy reform on the management of social organization.

1. Methodology

I adopt a qualitative method to provide the narrative explanation based on in-depth interviews with SO's founders and staff and scholars. I also interviewed relevant officials who have frequent involvement with SOs to know the attitude and perspective from the government's side toward the development of SOs and social construction at the community level. Moreover, by being a volunteer in a social organization "CA" in D district (*qu* 區) in Beijing, I have a good chance to conduct participant observation to gain a closer insight of CA's habitual practices, motivations and cultures and to know how the CA exactly functions. By working with the CA, I know more about how it applies to the project; how it communicates with the officials, foundations, and residents; how it interacts with other SOs and involved stakeholders. Working in the CA was a precious experience for me to have close observation of a SO's operation characterized by dependent autonomy[3] under an authoritarian regime (Lu 2009, 26-27). Both the regime and SOs have their resilience to make things work and get things done. Their strategic interactions are full of diverse modes and so far it is unlikely to make a bold generalization due to authoritarian governance, which still relies more on rule of man rather than rule of law. But it does provide some insights on what conditions encourage or discourage the development of SOs and civil society; how SOs influence, or change, the state-society relations in practice. This case focuses on the local governance at community level which coheres with the current policy in promoting social construction based on community construction. I will explain the CCP's reform strategy of innovative management of social organizations in Beijing by using the case of the CA to show the variation of state-society relations in public governance in some communities of D districts.

2. Untying or co-opting the newly emerging social organizations?

Generally speaking, the authoritarian regime is strict to the emergence of autonomous associations and social organizations. In the totalitarian regime, there is no society. The state penetrates into society so deeply that any autonomous association is unlikely. However, in the post-totalitarian regimes like current China, the state can no longer control society due to the change in economic system and the

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[3] According to Yiyi Lu (2009, Ch. 4), under the CCP authoritarian regime, Chinese NGOs depend on the state for legitimacy and protection, resources, project implementation, and knowledge and information but be able to enjoy substantial autonomy.

composition of social structures. For the regime itself, the differentiation of departments means the state can no longer be viewed as a whole. Different departments may represent diverse interests which are not always consistent. The inconsistency between different departments generates some spaces for the social forces to wriggle in the policy-making and implementation process. Lieberthal and Oksenberg (1988) and Mertha (2009) emphasize that the state cannot be viewed as a whole and term this phenomenon as "fragmented authoritarianism." And Mertha further suggests that not only different departments of the government are involved in the policy making process, but also some active social forces find fissures to insinuate into the process due to the inconsistency of policy-relevant bureaucratic units. Such a phenomenon can be observed in public governance. For example, Peter Ho (2001, 917) observed that "green social organizations are increasingly courting government approval and influence in policy-making, rather than seeking a potentially dangerous confrontation with the national state." The CCP's strategy is to allow "policy oppositions" (not political opposition) and to neutralize them by including them into the process of policy or public governance.

Confronted with the increasingly diverse social interests and forces, the CCP modifies its attitude towards SOs from heavy control to resilient in some ways and in some issue domains. Recently, the CCP government has promulgated several relevant documents[4] related to the innovative management of SOs. Since 2008, several official documents of social construction (i.e., a series of 1+4 documents) were promulgated by the Beijing municipal government.[5] There are three crucial aspects regarding the innovative management and development of SOs in recent years. First, the untying restriction on SO's registration provides more social spaces for SOs. Many SOs can have a legal status now. Second, the government procurement of SO's services provides more resources and funding for developing SOs. Third, the government creates a "hub" system based on "people's organizations" such as the Communist

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[4] In 2011 according to "The Twelfth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China" 《國民經濟和社會發展第十二個五年規劃綱要》, the CCP government proposed that the registration regulation of social organizations is going to change from dual registration to single registration. Literally, it is viewed as a reform that lower the threshold of registration and may be conducive to the development of social organizations. Sources from: 21ccom.net(共識網), http://www.21ccom.net/articles/zgyj/ggzhc/article_2012050859207.html (Accessed on May 28, 2013)

[5] A series of 1+4 documents are as follows. "Outlines of Enhancing Beijing Municipal Social Construction Implementation" 《 北京市加強社會建設實施綱要》, "The Trial Measures for Beijing Municipal Community Management" 《 北京市社區管理辦法（試行）》, " The Trial Measures for Beijing Municipal Community Social Workers" 《 北京市社區工作者管理辦法（試行）》, "Opinions on Enhancing the Facilitation of the Reform and Development of Social Organizaions" 《關於加快推進社會組織改革與發展的意見》, "Opinions on Further Enhancement and Improvement of the Construction of Party-branches in Social Sector" 《關於進一步加強和改進社會領域黨建工的意見》. The Central Government of the PRC.
http://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2008-09/27/content_1107627.htm (Accessed on May 28, 2013)

Youth League, All-China Federation of Trade Unions, Women's Federation and some governmental organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs). These hub social organizations function as a bridge between the party-state and grassroots SOs. On the one hand, they keep close ties to the party-state and serve as the "professional supervising units" for grassroots SOs. On the other hand, they are responsible for incubating and guiding grassroots SOs and facilitating the state-SO collaboration to include controllable SOs into its big tent. The above-mentioned discussion is from the policy side. In the next part, I turn to the practical side to evaluate the effect of this reform.

3. Case study on Beijing's community participatory governance

With the rapid development and urbanization in Beijing, society has become more and more diversified and there are many new challenges in public governance such as environmental pollutions, social welfare provision, access to social services, social conflicts and etc. Such social tension can be easily observed in community governance. The local government also seeks to find innovative methods to assuage social conflicts and maintain its governance. However, with the collapse of work-unit system, the local government needs to find out a new method compatible with the increasingly pluralized society to detect existing problems and deliver social services, welfare, and policies. The overly bureaucratic way of service delivery cannot satisfy residents' real need, which creates huge gaps between what the government provides and what the residents want (Saich 2007). In order to deal with it, there are some spaces and opportunities for SOs to step in and work on. I will use the case of the CA, a grassroots social organization promoting participatory method in dealing with public affairs in community, to illustrate a workable type of model that can facilitate the state-SO collaboration to improve local governance at the community (*shequ* 社區) level.

In the current situation of a community in Beijing, the director of the construction division of the Beijing Social Affairs Committee (*shehui gongzuo weiyuanhui* 社會工作委員會) says that there are four main problems regarding community governance - the subject is unitary, the mechanism is bureaucratized, the participation is immature, and the self-governance is incompetent. Thus, the aim to reform community governance is to pluralize the subjects, promote interactions between relevant stakeholders, increase horizontal networks, and internalize the goal for establishing sustainable institutions.[6] This reform task cannot be implemented by the

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[6] Sun, zhixiang孫志祥， "The New Practice of Community Governancez: The Construction of Beijing Municipal Community Normalization" (社區治理新實踐：北京市社區規範化建設) www.paticipation.cn. http://participation.cn/a/zhutiwenzhang/yanjiuwenzhang/2012/0714/1465.html

government alone. It needs to cooperate with social forces. Here I focus on the collaboration between the local government and SOs and use the CA as an example to show their cooperative pattern.

In 2008, the CA was invited by the J sub-district (street *jiedao* 街道) of D district government to work on a project about introducing community participatory governance to promote social development. The CA not only delivered social services and helped residents deal with conflicts, but also provided the community organizations, social workers, and local cadres with training program of participatory methods. There were seven communities in J sub-district. The compositions of residents were so diverse that the old one-fit-all model could not satisfy residents' different needs. The D district government provides public welfare fund and it is devolved on the sub-district office (*jiedao banshichu* 街道辦事處) for community affairs. Each community can apply for this grant for community use but most applications were about holding celebrating activities or giving souvenirs. These activities were characterized with top-down mobilization and one-time consumption. The residents' committees (*jumin weiyuanhui* 居民委員會) were responsible for organizing and mobilizing residents to join these activities. However, such activities were neither sustainable nor helpful to solve the residents' real needs. It seems that there is a huge gap between what the residents' committees provide and what the residents want. Thus, the J sub-district office collaborated with the CA to explore the innovative working model to fill this gap and improve community governance.[7] Participatory governance is meant to facilitate the collaboration between the government, community and social forces. Each of them has its role in dealing with community affairs. The community residents are encouraged and able to participate in the process of decision-making, management, implementation, supervision, and interest-sharing of community construction. Participatory governance encourages residents' bottom-up participation in the decision-making and implementation process. By the state-society cooperative model, the local governance should be based on delivering demand-oriented community services.[8]

3.1 The case on renovation of activity room in Z community of J sub-district

In 2008, the public activity room was shabby and needed to be renovated. The J sub-district office invited the CA to do this pilot project in Z community. First, the CA organized relevant local cadres and residents and provided them with basic training of participatory methods. Second, the CA and local cadres held several open space

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(Accessed on May 28, 2013)
[7] Interview with the leader of Z residents' committees, Beijing, February, 2013.
[8] Interview with the director of the CA, Beijing, October, 2013.

meetings to collect residents' opinions and figure out the current situation i.e., resources and capacity of the community. Participants include J sub-district cadres, Z residents' committees, the CA, and community residents, totalling around 60 people. During the meeting, all residents can express their opinions regarding the renovation plan and communicate with each other. Then, present residents were separated into several groups according to different concerns. Each group made discussion and summarized its conclusion and then presented its idea to everyone. After presentation, each participant had three votes and everyone voted for his or her favorable issues. The top five most popular proposals were selected. And then all participants were separated into five groups. Each group discussed about how to carry out one of these five proposals. Afterwards, each group presented its vision to everyone. Third, after the first meeting, the J sub-district office, relevant local officials, the CA and some experts got together to discuss the feasibility of residents' demand. The local government invited a company to make a renovation rendering based on residents' needs and evaluate the price which was approximately 600,000 RMB. Fourth, all participants were assembled to discuss the renovation rendering and gave feedback. As a result, the revised version of renovation plan cost only about 200,000 RMB. During the renovation construction, there were some conflicts between the local cadres and residents regarding the disturbance and mess around the construction site. The CA and the local government held a coordination meeting and invited residents to come to deal with the problems together. Through the discussion and communication, residents showed their understanding and even volunteered to supervise the construction. Finally, the activity room was renewed according to residents' needs and did not cost a lot. Residents decorated the activity room together and made the rules of using this activity room. Since residents' ideas were adopted and their needs were satisfied so they had more willingness to use this shared activity room and maintain its order. The obvious change here was that the residents thought the activity room was "their shared" public space rather than a place that had nothing to do with them.[9]

This pilot project was successful. In order to sustain it, the CA concluded the principle of such working model i.e., transforming the residents' needs into a program. The CA guided and trained the community cadres about how to design and write program proposal for community services based on the residents' demands. Compared to holding festival or entertaining activities like before, these programs are more sustainable and can meet the residents' needs. Since the residents' demands are satisfied, the policy-implementation and service delivery become smoother. Through this pilot project, the trust relations between the local government, the CA, and the community residents were built and strengthened, which made the further cooperation

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[9] Interview with the CA's project manager "H", Beijing, November, 2012.

in community governance more likely. In 2009, the J sub-district kept purchasing the CA's services and carried out several projects in communities by participatory methods. The procedures of these projects were similar, that is, conducting the participatory method to deal with conflicts and disputes about community affairs. The project in general includes several steps like the case I have introduced. According to the CA's director, the aim of participatory governance is to achieve consensus and maintain a harmonious community accordingly.[10] They used intensive communication and deliberative discussion to facilitate mutual understanding and thus made the achievement of consensus more likely. This is a working procedure that can be applied to community affairs but it is limited to apply to larger areas since it is difficult to hold constant meetings and have deliberative discussion with large amount of people. It will then have another problem, that is, how to select representatives if gathering all stakeholders in a meeting is impossible. From the government's perspective, selecting representatives is so sensitive and risky that such participatory governance nowadays is only available at the community and sub-district level. In this case, due to the successful experience of the state-SO cooperation, the self-governance of community social organizations is encouraged and has more and more spaces to function in Z community.

3.2 What has changed?

Through participatory governance project, the local government can realize what kind of techniques and capacities it does not possess but is available from the SOs. Moreover, SOs can serve as a bridge between the local government and community residents to mediate conflicts between them. The introduction of participatory methods into community governance provides an alternative and a better way of delivering social services. Furthermore, the government officials and residents can understand and learn the new techniques and ideas of participatory method from the CA by collaboration and the mutual trust can be aggregated accordingly. The residents can practice how to deal with conflicts by participation based on rational discussion and gradually generate the sense of expressing its own idea, listening to other opinions, efficient communication, and caring about public affairs. What is more important here is, in the beginning the local government had doubts about the residents' competence to participate in solving problems but the result has changed the government's original view. By participatory discussions, community disadvantaged groups become the active agencies to promote community construction. They begin to realize they are the subject of community development. They can

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[10] Interview with the CA's director, Beijing, October, 2012.

contribute to improve community governance. After being aware of that, their attitudes have changed, that is, from passively being served by the government like before to actively participating in the process of community governance like now. Meanwhile, the local government has also changed its attitude towards the community social organizations from viewing them as a threat to as a helper in community construction.[11]

In this case, the local government, the CA, and residents all have incentives to get involved in public governance. For the local government, it can achieve its task in a more efficient way with the assistance from the CA and residents. For the CA, it can realize its project and establish good relationships with the government and residents, which is beneficial to the reputation and further development of the CA itself and winning more trust and opportunities to carry out its work. For the residents, through participating in the process of community governance, they can deliver their demands and be answered by the local government. Compared to before, using participatory method to some extent can alleviate the gap between the local government and residents, which is conducive to the community harmony and construction. If this is a workable pattern to solve community conflicts and problems and it does work in this case, residents will be less likely to pursue radical way to express their needs and discontents. In this case, the government provides more social spaces and tolerates issue-opposition. However, this reform in governance does not weaken the political power of the local government. Rather, the inclusiveness of public participation in governance activates the function of residents' committees and the sub-district office in guiding and facilitating self-governance in community affairs. As a result, the local government can maintain stability without weakening its political power and its legitimacy is to some extent strengthened by improving the quality of governance.

3.3 Limitations

In this part, I will evaluate the effect of this reform especially from the perspectives of registration and government procurement. Regarding the registration process, the CA was a lucky case. Since the CA had received some foreign fund to carry out projects in 2003, it required a legal status to open an account. Thus, it has registered as a company in the Bureau for Industry and Commerce in Beijing since 2003. At that time, it was very difficult to register in the Bureau of Civil Affairs (BOCA). In 2008 and 2009, there were a serious of documents mentioning the importance of developing SOs and the opening up for SOs to register in the BOCA. The CA had a collaborative project with the D district government so the D district leader helped the

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[11] Interview with the leader of Z residents' committees, Beijing, February, 2013.

CA register in the BOCA in D district. Only the SO with legal status that is registered in BOCA can it receive the government procurement. This was the main reason that the D district leader was willing to help. After registration in the BOCA, the CA has to be checked by annual inspection to renew its license. Thus, the working areas are to some extent being limited in the registered district. According to a CA's staff, "it is not that strict; it depends on your relationships with the district government."[12] The uncertainty still remains. If the familiar leader is transferred to other regions or positions, the already set cooperation can be terminated anytime. The successor is usually not willing to keep on the original plan. So everything has to restart.[13] This is the main challenge for the CA to implement its work.

Moreover, the policy of enhancing government procurement of the SO's services seems conducive to the development of the SOs. However, the real practice has many difficulties. In the past, not so many people knew about NGOs or SOs, when a local government came to consult the CA, it implied that it accepted and recognized the professional capacity of this SO. The cooperative relations are relatively equal like partners. The working pattern is as follows. The CA made a plan based on the government's needs. After communicating with each other to achieve consensus, the CA could carry out the project without much interference by the officials. The local government still had a final say but it did not interfere the process of implementation.[14]

However, in recent days the development of SOs becomes the focal point of social construction, many local government officials seek to cooperate with the SOs to do something innovative, which may be conducive to their achievement for promotion. The cooperative model between the local government and the SOs becomes more sophisticated in current context. Since the government procurement is out of fiscal budget. Using this money is restricted by administrative procedures and bureaucratized manners. According to the CA's experience of implementing the government procurement, "it seemed that we were hired by the local government to do its job that it cannot implement by itself," said by a staff of the CA.[15] The local government worried about any uncertainty during the process so there was an official sticking to the project. Moreover, the local government also hired another grassroots social organization "NI" to supervise the CA's working progress. As a result, one project was carried out by the CA, but the CA was heavily interfered by the official and the NI during the process. Each of them had different way of thinking and expectation regarding the project. Such complex situation increased lots of cost on

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[12] Interview with the CA's project manager "H", Beijing, November, 2012.
[13] Interview with the CA's project manager "X", Beijing, November, 2012.
[14] Interview with the CA's project manager "H", Beijing, November, 2012.
[15] *Ibid.*

communication and implementation and was very time-consuming to make a progress. Furthermore, the cooperation out of the government procurement is more like an employer and employee relations rather than cooperative partnership. For the CA staff, the experience of the government procurement did more harm than good. They felt exhausted in dealing with administrative affairs such as writing proposals and reports every month but had little time to do what they were good at i.e., delivering community services and communicating with residents to collect their needs. It kind of deviated from the right track and their professional, said the staff of the CA.[16]

In sum, the new policy that seeks to develop the SOs has its limitation. Although the registration of SOs becomes easier and more resources are put to fund SOs, at the same time the government creates other methods to control SOs (e.g., annual inspection, evaluation by the third party) and many functions of SOs are interfered by the bureaucratized manners and administrative procedures especially in the context of implementing government procurement. Furthermore, although the policy seems untying for the SOs, not all kinds of SOs are beneficial from it. Only SOs in the discipline of industrial and business associations, charity, social welfare, and community social service are encouraged to establish and develop. In order to shape the social construction for the government's need, it has incubated and nurtured a controllable SOs and used them to meet social needs by hub organization system. The CCP government also creates some semi-official SOs or known as government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) for achieving some specific purposes and managing other grassroots SOs in the same professional category. Furthermore, the CCP government utilizes people's organization (*renmin tuanti*) to co-opt compliant grassroots SOs and transform them into core model SOs in its category. This strategy is meant to create hierarchical structure among all SOs in the same category. Thus, the CCP government can maintain corporatist type of control over SOs. With such strategies, the kind of SOs that uphold rights advocacy, political demands, and religious belief are still repressed. Consequently, most existing SOs have only "operation autonomy" but rely on the government for legal status and resources (Teets 2013, 4). The autonomous association that is independent of the state control remains unlikely to exist in current China so there is no organized driving force to challenge the political power from bottom-up. Thus, we can only see many subtle variations in "public governance" dimension but cannot see much progress in political power.

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[16] Interview with the CA's project manager "H" and "X", Beijing, November, 2012.

IV. Conclusion

On the basis of the case study on Beijing's reform on the management of social organization, I have found that although the policy seems to untie the restrictions on social organizations, the real practice is not so. The authoritarian CCP provides more incentives for social construction and the development of SOs. However, it does not mean that all kinds of SOs are allowed to form nor the government loosens up its control over the society. Instead, the government withdraws from some fields, but at the same time creates new institutional mechanisms for the SOs to get involved and absorbs SOs' energies accordingly. Only the purposes for the following categories are encouraged to establish i.e., industrial and business associations, charity, social welfare, and community social services. For the rest kinds of social organizations, the CCP manages them in different ways with different degrees of control, according to SO's different functions and purposes (Kang and Han 2011).

The CCP government utilizes several tactics to facilitate the cooption and the cooperation between the local government and SOs. For example, the CCP government allocates part of fiscal budget to purchase the SO's services for the purpose of delivering social services and welfare. Only legal SOs can apply for government procurement. Thus, it is an incentive for SOs to register and obtain a legal status to function. However, with a legal status, it implies that the government can control the SO through resources allocation and the regulation of renewing the license. Such control can be realized by annual inspection and other official-prone SOs' routine supervision. The CCP authoritarian regime resorts to creating institutional arrangements (i.e., governance inclusiveness mechanism) for providing incentive to absorb the energy of social forces by either cooperation or cooption strategy. The resilience of the CCP government reflects on its utilization of different combination of carrot and stick strategies in dealing with public governance and responding to popular demands. In the case of Beijing's Z community governance, we can see how the public governance can be improved by expanding inclusiveness without loosening control over society; how the local government absorbs the social energy for its use. If there is a workable channel to solve community conflicts and problems and it does work in my case, people will be less likely to pursue radical way to express grievances. In my case, the local government provides more social spaces and tolerates issue-opposition. However, this reform in public governance does not weaken the political power of the local government. Instead, the inclusiveness mechanism of public participation in governance triggers the function of residents' committees and the sub-district office in facilitating self-governance in community affairs. As a result, the local government can maintain stability without weakening its

political power. Its legitimacy is to some extent consolidated by improving the quality of governance.

With my first-hand materials from the field work, I have shown that although there is no obvious change in the allocation of political power, the state-society relation does not remain invariable, especially from the perspective of public governance. Moreover, due to the current policy on social organization, the political association that is independent of the state control remains restricted. The emergence of cross-border-organized social forces remains difficult.

To sum up, this paper shows that the "governance inclusiveness" mechanism can absorb and transform social forces into government's needs and to some extent neutralize bottom-up pressure, which is conducive to authoritarian survival. Although such kind of reform characterized with some democratic elements, it is only displayed in public governance but not in competing political power. Consequently, the CCP regime becomes more inclusive on the surface but still remains authoritarian in essence.

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