

Research on the Risks of Community Service Cooperative Production and Its Aversion Strategies

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Abstract: As an innovative way of service supply, cooperative production of community service helps to accurately meet the needs of consumers, and improve the efficiency and satisfaction of service supply. Also, this model is not perfect. In practice, this model faces the risk of uncertainty in instrumental rationality and the lack of value rationality. In order to avoid risks in the cooperative production of community service, the following strategies can be adopted: building a cooperation platform and optimizing the cooperation environment; improving the cooperation mechanism to ensure the effectiveness of cooperation; disseminating the public spirit and advocating value rationality.

1. Introduction

Community governance is the foundation of state governance. From the practice of community governance in China for many years, providing community service is the basic means of community governance. The term “Community Service” originated from the United Kingdom and refers to a welfare and public welfare social service that is limited to the community, which is similar to the “club products” in Public Product Theory proposed by Buchanan. In modern society, with the development of community and the diversification of community residents’ needs, the scope of community service is no longer limited to public or welfare service in the community, and gradually includes some commercial or private service which has great public needs characteristics. On June 12, 2017, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued the “Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Strengthening and Improving Urban and Rural Community Governance” and for the first time proposed the goal of promoting the modernization of urban and rural community governance systems and governance capabilities. Community service is the main content of the modernization of urban and rural community governance ability and governance system. Guided by policies and driven by reality, providing high-quality and efficient community service is a requirement to enhance the ability of community governance, a micro-reflection of the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity at the grassroots level.

The concept of cooperative production originated in the 1970s and 1980s and was mainly proposed by scholars such as Ostrom, Parkes, Kensser, and Perth. It refers to the process in which a product is manufactured or a service activity is effectively carried out. In this process, the producer and the producer as a consumer work together, and both invest a certain amount of resources, time, labor, or technology. According to the theory of cooperative production, the government is the “regular producer” and citizens are the “consumer producers”, public service production requires both of them to invest certain resources. As to cooperative production of community service, it means that governments (service agent), community enterprises, non-profit organizations and individual citizens (service users and consumers) all participate in the service decision-making, service production and service supply, and through effective cooperation to achieve the effective supply of community service. Taking the community elderly care service as an example, by opening the elderly care service market, the community build a diversified elderly care service

system consisting of government, non-profit organizations and enterprises to meet the needs of the community's various types of elderly care. The government is mainly responsible for basic elderly care service. The non-profit organizations are the main force of community elderly care service. The enterprises are responsible for providing market-oriented and high-level elderly care service. This mode of joint participation in service supply is cooperative production. Different from the "customer" role of new public management, in which citizens are only consumers, citizens and enterprises etc., which traditionally serve as consumers, begin to have the dual roles of service producer and consumer in the process of cooperative production of community service, and there is no clear boundary between producers and consumers. Meanwhile, in the cooperative production mode, the role of the government is not only a response to the demand, more importantly, it should develop citizens into cooperative producers. The role of citizens is also changed from demand expresser, service consumer and evaluator to service creator. So, cooperative production of community service is an innovative public service supply mode which is different from the traditional service supply mode.

2. Risks of Cooperative Production of Community Service: Uncertainty of Instrumental Rationality and Absence of Value Rationality

Although co-production of community service is so popular, it also has some potential risks. Based on Marx Weber's instrumental rationality and value rationality, the risks of the cooperative production in community service are as follows:

2.1 The Uncertainty Risk of Instrumental Rationality

Marx Weber believes that instrumental rationality is "the goal of achieving the outcome that one strives for and considers in accordance with rationality through the expectation of external things and the behavior of others and using such expectation as a 'condition' or as a 'means'". The choice of behavior under instrumental rationality does not value the value of the behavior itself, only value the effectiveness of the behavior for the purpose of realization. Instrumental rationality in cooperative production of community service refers to the goal of achieving the most efficient supply of community service, the least cost and the greatest benefit through cooperative production mode in community service. However, this instrumental rationality may also face the risk of backfire. Firstly, motivation induces behavior. The first thing that induces the motivation of community service cooperation production is the interest. Whether it is citizens, government or enterprises, they have their own interests, not just the public interest. They are willing to participate in the production process only when they are convinced that the benefits are greater than the costs. For community commercial service, it is understandable to achieve profit through user payment, while for community public or welfare service, how to guarantee the participation willingness of suppliers without the incentive of interest is the primary problem. Secondly, the main attraction of the community service cooperative production model is its optimization of resource allocation and high quality of service provision. However, due to the diversity of participants in cooperative production, any one of them will be faced with the problem of how to get along with other partners harmoniously. From the perspective of collective action, the cooperative production of multi-participants may lead to the dilemma of collective action due to the inconsistency of opinions among the participants, information asymmetry, conflicts of interest, etc., which are not conducive to cooperation. Thirdly, cooperative production should not only attach importance to cooperation, but also attach importance to responsibility sharing. It is also an important requirement of cooperative production to regulate multi-participants' behavior with responsibility. However, in practice, cooperative production is often faced with the risk of ambiguity and loss of responsibility. Because it is difficult to make a clear or specific division of the responsibility of each subject in the cooperative production, it often leads to buck-passing problems and no one is accountable.

2.2 The Absence of Value Rationality

Marx Weber believes that value rationality is "the pure belief in the unconditional intrinsic value

of a particular action -- ethical, aesthetic, religious or otherwise interpreted -- consciously, regardless of achievement”^[3]. The behavior under value rationality only values the behavior itself, regardless of whether the means can achieve the goal. Value rationality in cooperative production of community service means that, on the one hand, producers must adhere to the intrinsic value of community service itself, such as welfare and publicity, on the other hand, they should uphold professional ethical values and social moral values, such as trust, cooperation and responsibility. Value rationality provides behavioral motivation for cooperative participants and drives them to pursue values such as democracy, fairness, public benefit and responsibility in community service. Different cognition of value rationality leads to different behavioral choices. Practice has proved that the absence of value rationality in the cooperative production of community service is inevitable. For the government, cooperative production often means transferring or partially sharing the original public service production rights to private enterprises, non-profit organizations or individual citizens. Corruption and rent-seeking of power transfer occurs sometimes. It not only violates the administrative ethics of the government, but also undermines the public interest. For non-profit organizations, the public welfare of some non-profit organizations is difficult to guarantee. In recent years, the scandal of non-profit organizations accumulating wealth has exacerbated the crisis of their social trust, which is bad for cooperation in community service cooperation. For enterprises, their profit-chasing nature sometimes makes them only choose those profitable service or even turning into “unscrupulous merchants” in service delivery, which will do harm to social fairness and violate the original intention of cooperative production of community service. For individual citizens, limited by the consciousness and ability of participation, cooperative production is often faced with the dilemma of collective action. Also, due to the prevalence of free-riding psychology, it is difficult to form an atmosphere of cooperative production.

3. The Risk Aversion Strategy of Community Service Cooperative Production: Dual Rational Coupling

The success of human social practice depends on the harmony and unity of value rationality and instrumental rationality. Value rationality and instrumental rationality are logically related as follows: value rationality is the spiritual power of instrumental rationality, instrumental rationality is the practical support of value rationality, and they are unified in human social practice. To avoid the risk of cooperative production of community service, it is necessary to achieve the coordination of instrumental rationality and value rationality. On the one hand, value rationality, such as fairness, justice and responsibility, should set up the direction of action for instrumental rationality, such as benefit and efficiency; on the other hand, the positive effects of instrumental rationality should be made full use of. Specifically speaking, strategies are as follows:

3.1 Building Cooperation Platform and Optimizing Cooperation Environment.

The cooperation platform and environment refers to the opportunities and possibilities for NGOs to participate in and provide community service. Because of its dominant position in community service provision, the government is the key to build a cooperation platform and optimize the cooperation environment. For the government, it should streamline its administration, delegate authority and formulate some necessary regulatory policies. On the one hand, it is necessary for governments to reduce the access barriers, expand the scope of cooperative production of community service, and provide opportunities for various participants to participate in cooperative production. Specifically, a list can be established to clarify the issues of cooperative production of community services such as the list of government powers. The list should specify the types of community service that are suitable for social organizations and community enterprises. On the other hand, it is necessary for governments to formulate some necessary regulatory policies to optimize the policy environment for cooperation. For example, the government should improve the supporting policies and regulations for cooperative production, introduce preferential policies to encourage cooperation. In this respect, some foreign experiences are worth learning. For example,

in Canada, the government provides tax relief for the fund raised for social service to support the participation of NGOs.

3.2 Improving the Cooperation Mechanism to Ensure the Effectiveness of Cooperation.

In order to avoid the risks of low production efficiency, confusing accountability and rent-seeking corruption in cooperative production, it is necessary to establish a scientific and perfect cooperation mechanism to ensure the effectiveness of cooperation and the instrumental rationality. From the perspective of process, these cooperation mechanisms should at least include the selection mechanism of participants, the supervision mechanism of cooperation process, the performance evaluation mechanism and the accountability mechanism. The quality of service can be ensured by selection mechanism; the rent-seeking corruption in cooperation can be prevented by supervision mechanism; the service efficiency and quality can be monitored by performance evaluation mechanism; the accountability can be strictly implemented by accountability mechanism. Take Houtai community of Zhongbei town, located in Xiqing district, Tianjin, as an example, in order to beautify the public environment of the community, the “green space claim” activity organized by the community and participated by community residents is a cooperative production of community service. This activity lies mainly in the participation mechanism inspired by interests and the specific responsibility mechanism.

3.3 Spreading the Public Spirit and Advocating Value Rationality.

In the cooperative production of community service, the enthusiasm for participation and cooperation of the multi-participants cannot be separated from the guidance of value rationality, which originate from public spirit. First of all, through the education and dissemination of the public spirit, the social responsibility of the participants can be cultivated and the enthusiasm of participation can be enhanced. Specifically speaking, the government should set a good example that public interests come first, enterprises should be trustworthy and become a “conscience seller”, non-profit organizations should maintain the characteristic of public welfare, and the individual citizens should be active citizens and actively participate in community service. When the governments, enterprises, non-profit organizations, and citizens all internalize the public spirit, the cooperative production of community service has a common value foundation, and the operation of the cooperation mechanism has spiritual support. Secondly, the dissemination of the public spirit can promote the construction of social capital and establish mutual trust, mutual benefit and cooperation among diverse participants. As an embedded relational resource, social capital can effectively enhance the cooperative effect by its stable structure composed of trust, norms and network. In the cooperative production of community service, all participants are encouraged to participate in the process of service supply on the basis of voluntary and mutual trust, all producers are required to establish mutually beneficial cooperative relations with new service producers with an inclusive and open mind. All these belong to the category of social capital construction.

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