Community Governance and Old Community

The emergence of community governance can be traced back to the application of governance theory within the realm of community studies. Conflicts of interest within community governance have primarily revolved around interactions between owners' committees, community management organizations, and frequently property committees acting on behalf of residents.

1. Introduction

People's living and health standards, as well as medical standards, are constantly improving as the social economy grows, resulting in an increase in average life expectancies all over the world. However, the unprecedented phenomenon of population aging has introduced many unknown factors into human life and future development. The focus of global attention has shifted to providing safe and healthy life security to the elderly in basic support fields such as living environments and nursing [1]. As communities are the basic units of cities, developing age-friendly communities has become an important issue for policymakers [2].

Built-up areas are the main components of many countries, and it is not easy to build a good, standard, age-friendly community. In this sense, age-friendly community regeneration has been an important issue in urbanization from developing to developed countries. Since China's reform and opening-up policies were implemented, many communities have been built, given the acceleration of industrialization. Due to poor construction standards, old communities and residential buildings have become inhabitable. With a functional decline, living conditions have been unable to reach a "livable" level. The lack of elevators is now a major problem in societies with rapidly aging populations. Due to previous construction standards, many elderly people living in old residential buildings have reported that a lack of access to an elevator has a significant impact on their daily lives, and they are likely to reduce their frequency of going out in order to avoid the inconvenience of going up and down stairs [3][4]. Although installing elevators in old residential buildings has a small economic impact, it provides a social benefit to an aging population [5].

Based on the definition of an age-friendly community, two dominant forces are of great concern—an age-friendly physical environment that is convenient for elderly people and an age-friendly social environment that makes it convenient for elderly people to participate in social affairs [6]. Age-friendly physical environment regeneration works by linking urban design, architecture, public space regeneration, and related perspectives to support the needs of people as they grow old [7][8][9]. Age-friendly social environment regeneration means that a community provides a supportive opportunity for inhabitants to grow older actively, with numerous chances for older people's participation in community regeneration, which are related to older people's needs [10][11].

2. Characteristics of Community Governance

Community-level governance stands out as fundamentally distinct from the conventional mechanisms of the state or market. The three forms of governance—the state (characterized by a system of command), the market (defined by voluntary exchange), and community governance (based on cooperation)—seldom exist in complete isolation from one another [12]. Yet, the intricacies and subtleties of demands at the community level are such that a specific institutional framework is required to allow ample space for collaboration among community members. As per the insights of [13], for example, community governance encompasses "the collection of small group social interactions that, alongside the market and state, influence economic results". This is pertinent to both the self-interest and altruistic aspects of human nature, as well as the social capital within a community. The unique characteristics of communities necessitate a specific form of institutional arrangement tailored to local conditions [14]. Nevertheless, a shared attribute among all effectively operating community governance institutions is the perpetuation of continuous and reciprocal cooperation among

community members. This approach offers the most efficient and cost-effective means of achieving sustainable development within a community [15].

3. Community Governance in an Old Community

Old communities, representing a distinctive category within the transformation of Chinese urban grassroots governance, pose challenges due to their complexity and unique characteristics [16]. The obstacles preventing the revitalization of older communities are primarily rooted in a dearth of government oversight and insufficient financial support. Moreover, the absence of active resident participation in the regeneration process contributes to a limited understanding of the regeneration efforts, leading to residents attributing their dissatisfaction solely to the regeneration process [17]. Several factors, including the behaviors and attitudes of community governance organizations, residents' subjective norms, and participation barriers, play significant roles in influencing residents' engagement in the governance of communities [18]. Regarding community governance, the success of public affairs strongly correlates with the methods and characteristics employed in community management. Owners' committees and community management organizations play a pivotal role, particularly concerning residents' trust in these community entities [19]. From the institutionalist perspective, which analyzes the governance of old communities, efficient community-level institutions require clear insider–outsider distinctions, adaptation to local conditions, the channeling of public opinions into decision-making, and the preservation of local discretion against external pressures [20].

Current research on the regeneration of old communities in China lacks depth, relying solely on the institutionalist perspective, which inadequately explains complexities. Resources are insufficient, and sustainable old communities involve diverse service deliveries and cooperative interactions. Sustainability in the regeneration of old communities hinges on coordinating natural and social capital, spanning economic and social activities [21][22][23]. Community governance analyses must include service delivery and self-organized resource management.

4. Explanation of Community Governance

In a community, a common interest is an important basis of community governance according to group theory and policy networks in the majority of the literature [24]. A common interest is gained in a community itself by means of the public policy discourse right. The rediscovery of the public policy discourse right is based on the background in which states and markets are losing legitimacy [25]. The public policy discourse right is based on a new relationship between the state, the market, and civil society, which emphasizes the utilization of people's voluntary capacity to solve their own problems [26].

Based on this new discourse, community governance is considered a "normative construct", and it is promoted as the best tool for satisfying local needs [26]. The reasons for this are as follows: Firstly, there are underlying assumptions that communities have a "sense of place", which means that they are homogeneous. Secondly, it makes for sustainable social capital with natural organizational forms that can easily relate to governments and markets, which are accountable and can plan, manage, deliver, and coordinate better than governments or markets [27].

There are two factors at play when attempting to comprehend community governance: governance as a structure and governance as a process. Firstly, governance as a structure focuses on the organizational and institutional arrangements of state and non-state groups. The role of the public sector has shifted significantly, and there is now a variety of formal partnership arrangements between the public and private sectors [28][29]. Whereas traditional governance involves only the state, new governance includes both the state and civil society [30]. With its hierarchy and power, the government's public sector is now involved in networks and partnerships with the commercial and voluntary sectors. In government, governance is concerned with outcomes, rather than just organizational structures. Secondly, governance as a process underlines processes that involve both government and non-government organizations. Community governance generally means that, in order to achieve community development goals, the dynamic process of a series of decisions and actions that deal with public affairs within a community is implemented. Those who believe that governance is a dynamic product of social and political groups, and thus that the dynamics must be addressed, challenge the premise that modifying structures will get governance "right". However, the interaction mechanisms of different types of social groups may vary according to the types of community members [31]. Insufficient attention has been paid to the interaction between different social capital and community development concepts for marginalized people, so there is a need to take into account the community governance mechanism in diverse neighborhoods, such as old residential communities in China.

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