

# The Realistic Dilemma and Reconstruction of Basic Grid Social Governance

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**Keywords:** Grid, Basic social governance, Grid governance, Community autonomy

**Abstract:** From the perspective of social governance innovation, grid governance as an exploration path to promote good governance of urban and rural communities, it caters to the state's directional shift in pushing the focus of social governance to the basic level and the way of governance from management to both management and service. However, judging from the actual operation effect, the functions and confusions of grid governance are mixed, there are still some problems in grid governance, such as imperfect participation mechanism of multiple subjects, the Abstraction of grid staff responsibilities, the bureaucratization of grid governance system, and the poor integration of grid governance information platforms. Therefore, in order to promote the modernization of national governance system and governance capacity, it is necessary to expand the channels for various social entities to participate in grid governance, enrich the professional grid governance team, clarify the power boundary between the government and grassroots social organizations, realize the systematization, democratization, and diversification of grid governance, which is in depth with governance modernization.

## 1. Introduction

In 2013, at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, “grid management” first appeared in the party’s highest-level document: Adhere to governance at the source, address both the symptoms and the root causes, and focus on the root cause, with grid management and socialized services as the direction, improve the grassroots integrated service management platform, and timely reflect and coordinate the interests of the people at all levels and appeals. With the development of information technology, grid management has increasingly become a new social governance model. In 2019, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China proposed to “accelerate the modernization of urban social governance”, “Build a new pattern of basic governance, improve the institutional channels for people to participate in basic social governance, improve the urban and rural basic governance system under the leadership of Party organizations that combines autonomy, law and morality, improve the community management and service mechanism, and implement grid management and service”. Through the experience of fighting the COVID-19, we found that the community, as the basic unit of the social governance system, adopts a grid-based governance method. In the epidemic prevention and control, the terminal power of community management has been integrated, so that the government and social forces can be effectively combined, the precise prevention and control of the epidemic has been realized, and the delicacy of social governance has been promoted. But at the same time, problems such as imperfect participation mechanism of multiple subjects, the abstraction of grid staff responsibilities, the bureaucratization of grid governance system, and the poor integration of grid governance information platforms. Therefore, how to optimize the basic grid social governance model, innovate grid social governance mechanisms, and standardize the grid-based social governance system has become an important topic for the modernization of basic social governance in the new era.

## 2. The Overall Situation of Basic Grid Social Governance

Grid management is produced by the new concept in management practices, refers to the “by means of digital, information-based, streets, communities, grid for area coverage, to urban

components, event management, responsible for disposal of the unit, through the urban grid management information platform, implementing the resources sharing of urban linkage, a new mode of city management.” Its biggest feature lies in relying on information technology to transform the original passive and decentralized management model into the current horizontal-to-side, vertical-to-bottom, all-round management mode, which improves the delicacy, informatization, diversification and efficiency of basic social governance. As a way of social governance, grid management originally originated from the “New Model of Ten Thousand Meter Unit Grid Management” created in Dongcheng District, Beijing in 2004. Subsequently, grid social governance was gradually promoted nationwide. For example, Shanghai adopts the grid governance model of “cooperation and co-governance”, the Shenzhen Taoyuan model of “one pattern and three members”, and the Zhejiang Zhoushan model of “grid management and group service”. So far, the grid-based social governance model has gradually become the development trend and basic consensus of innovative social governance.

## **2.1 Elaborate Governance**

Basic grid social governance, that is, grid division is carried out on a community basis, with no gaps, no intersections, and full coverage between grids. Grid staff use information technology to manage the areas in the grid in a unified way, covering the blind areas and blind spots of grassroots social governance in an all-round and three-dimensional manner, and realizing the precise management of small areas. As the terminal of social management and service, the community is closely connected with the people and can respond to the needs of the people in a timely manner. Broaden the scope and types of public services at the grassroots level, while improving the quality and level of public services.

## **2.2 Shared Governance Information**

The grid-based social governance information management system has the basic population information in the grid, and at the same time docks with the professional information systems of public security, environmental protection and other functional departments, integrates scattered information, and realizes horizontal information exchange and collaboration between departments. It is helpful to overcome the shortcomings of “fragmentation” and “information isolated island” in the traditional social governance model. For example, during the prevention and control of the COVID-19 , in order to prevent the spread of the new crown virus and maintain the health of the public, real-time management of external personnel is required. As a service terminal in the grassroots social management, the community actively implements information collection and accurately grasps the information of outsiders.

## **2.3 Diversified Governance Subject**

In the traditional social governance model, the level of governance subject is too high. After the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed to “accelerate the formation of a social management system featuring party committee leadership, government responsibility, social coordination, public participation, and legal protection”, basic grid governance moves the governing body down, decentralizes resources, and moves the tentacles of social governance forward to the grid. In terms of governance mechanism, it emphasizes the coordination and interaction between the state and the society, and forms a grid governance model with the Party committee as the leader, the government as the dominant player and multi-subject participation. The market and social organizations should be guided to actively participate in social governance and services at the basic level, so as to truly form a grid governance pattern in which multiple subjects cooperate and co-govern, thus eliminating the disadvantages of the single subject in the traditional social governance model.

## **2.4 Efficient Governance**

The purpose of the grid governance model at the beginning of its establishment is to form a centralized command, departmental parallel, seamless connection, and effective emergency

management process system by reconstructing the government's public affairs management structure. In the grid management concept, management objects must be divided into several management units according to certain standards, and modern information technology and the coordination mechanism between each grid unit should be used. In the horizontal dimension, it promotes information exchange between grids, sharing organizational resources, and achieving resource integration. In the vertical dimension, timely feedback information, reduce communication costs, and improve management efficiency. The management level is compressed, and the traditional pyramid vertical management system is transformed into a flat network governance pattern.

### **3. Problems Exposed in the Basic Grid Social Governance**

The realization of basic grid social governance has enriched the theory of social governance with Chinese characteristics, and provided a practical basis for the modernization of national governance systems and governance capabilities. Based on the complexity of basic social governance issues in the new era and the social governance pattern of co-construction, co-governance and sharing, the current basic grid-based social governance still has a series of problems.

#### **3.1 The Duties of Grid Members Are Abstracted and the Assessment Standard is Unreasonable**

In May 2020, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of China issued the “Notice on publishing information on the proposed new career in publicity”. It is clearly mentioned that the community grid operator is a person who uses modern urban network management technology to inspect, verify, report and deal with problems of municipal engineering (public) facilities, city appearance and environment, social management affairs, and collect, analyze and deal with relevant information. At the same time, the six responsibilities of the community grid members are defined. It can be seen from the above duty scope of grid members that the duty scope of grid and grid members is too broad and abstract, and it is difficult to distribute and distinguish them collectively in practice. For example, for the work of social management affairs, there are no relevant provisions on the work content and scope of specific responsibilities. Therefore, it is necessary to formulate corresponding specifications for the specific duties of grid members, and clarify the specific content of community grid work, so as to prevent community grids from falling into traps.

In grid-based social governance, because the social phenomena faced are complex and diverse, the specific responsibilities of grid staff will also be differentiated, and the intensity and intensity of work will also be different. However, due to the unreasonable assessment standards at present, no one is willing to undertake some grid work with high work intensity. At the same time, the salary of grid employees is generally low, and the salary standard is too low to mobilize the enthusiasm of grid employees. In addition, the unclear promotion mechanism reduces the career expectations of grid employees. These phenomena are prominently manifested in the assessment standards at the town and village level. Because there are no functional departments at the town and village level, the assessment is carried out as a whole, and the assessment results do not reflect the actual work performance, and it is easy to stifle the enthusiasm for work over time.

#### **3.2 The Multi-Participation Mechanism of Grid Social Governance is Fragmented**

The modern governance system emphasizes the weakening of administrative power and strengthening the civil rights of “citizen governance and citizen enjoyment.” Based on common needs, multiple subjects should actively participate in the governance process. However, in the actual process of participation of various subjects, there are still some difficulties, which are manifested in the overlapping of functions, poor coordination between the neighborhood committee and the property company, and the narrow participation channels of the public and organizations. The neighborhood committee is a grassroots mass autonomous organization, but in practice it still relies mainly on the administrative power granted by the government. In grid-based social governance, the grid leaders and grid members in many areas are transformed from residents’

committee staff. Therefore, the grids in some areas are actually grids managed by the neighborhood committees. As a service enterprise, the property company has independent legal personality. In the development stage of the grid, the property company is often the main body to undertake part of the grid work responsibilities, so in practice, the scope of the two responsibilities is difficult to distinguish. The masses of society and social organizations are the indispensable participants in the grid-based collaborative governance mechanism, mainly because the masses and social organizations themselves are born at the grassroots level and are active in the community. However, in actual work, the masses of society and enterprises are mostly in a passive position and have less right to speak, which makes their participation effect not obvious. The main reason is that the social masses have a weak sense of community and the grid-based social governance coordination mechanism is not sound. There is no clear stipulation on how to participate and the scope of participation. Based on this, it is urgent to improve the collaborative participation mechanism of multiple entities in grid-based governance to protect the rights of various entities in society to participate in grid-based social governance.

### **3.3 The Grid-Based Social Governance System Presents a “Bureaucratic” Trend, Weakening Community Autonomy**

The original idea of grid governance is from “all-round management and control” to “multi-effect service”, promote the “flatness, refinement and integration” of community management and services, emphasizing the direct sinking of municipal and district administrative powers and social governance resources and power to neighborhood communities and extending to the grid. The use of grids can be close to the characteristics of the masses, timely understand and grasp the community construction and management dynamics and the needs of community residents, so as to provide community residents with more convenient and efficient community services. However, in practice in some places, the functional scope of the grid has been continuously expanded, and there has even been a phenomenon that most of the basic-level government functions are included in the grid. Due to the backwardness of the grid internal management system, most of the grassroots have directly applied the bureaucratized management system. The development of grid-based social governance still relies on the unified deployment of the government. Secondly, the selection and training of grid staff are mainly coordinated by the street office and township government, which is not conducive to the development of community autonomy. In some areas, the social governance concepts of the administrative functional departments of the government have not yet changed, and they are used to highly centralized power in their own hands, which deviates from the concept of streamlining administration and decentralization. The neighborhood communities have fewer “substantial” powers, and they are all powers with high responsibilities and high risks. At the same time, the rights and responsibilities of the grid come from the authorization of the superior, and the grid members are nothing more than “more feet and finer nets” extending downward from the bureaucracy. Therefore, in the basic grid governance process, how to remove the administrative in the grid, and then achieve parallel grid governance has become an important issue.

### **3.4 Grid Governance Information Platform Has Poor Integration and Slow Integration**

The development of mobile Internet technology has provided the possibility for the efficient operation of government internal government affairs and basic social public services. However, the phenomenon of information barriers and information isolated islands in the basic data construction of grid-based governance information platforms is widespread, and information exchange and sharing have not been realized. The specific manifestations are that, first of all, there are problems of difficult information data collection, incomplete and irregular input. Although the functional departments within the grassroots government and social entities such as enterprises have established relevant data systems, they are based on the particularities and block settings of government agencies. Due to factors such as business secrets, departmental interests, and market interests, corporate entities have a large number of information barriers among various social governance entities, making information collection difficult. At the same time, due to the increase in

the number of floating population and greater mobility, it has become more difficult for the basic grid members to collect complete information, which also brings huge challenges to the basic grid governance. Although some places have relatively comprehensive basic information databases, since the key information data is not updated in time, real-time communication is not possible, and the timeliness and accuracy of information data are poor. Even if the information resources of some local government administrative functions are shared, there are technical obstacles in the use of information and data. Secondly, the information communication between grid centers at all levels is not smooth. The basic grid center of the street community needs to exchange and coordinate information with the district and city superior grid centers. The basic grid center receives a large number of grid cases every day, and the superior grid center's timely feedback information mechanism is not perfect. As a result, the reported information cannot be responded to and resolved quickly and effectively, which reduces the processing efficiency and results. In addition, problems such as untimely information update, information asymmetry, and different information registration paths also exist, which are not conducive to the effective development of grid-based governance services at the grassroots level, and even bring negative consequences to a certain extent.

#### **4. The Perfect Path for the Basic Grid Social Governance**

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed to “create a social governance pattern of co-construction, co-governance and sharing”, which constitutes the core connotation of the innovation of social grid-connected governance practices in the new era. Grid management and social services are the direction to innovate social governance methods and improve the level of social governance.

##### **4.1 Improve the Professional Quality of Grid Staff and Enrich the Professional Grid Management Team**

The grid-based social governance team is the backbone of social governance. Only more professionalism can make grid-based sustainable and efficient development. Therefore, improving the professionalism of grid-based social governance teams is a top priority to improve the basic social governance capabilities. To this:

First of all, clarify the recruitment methods and conditions of grid staff, and improve the professional quality of grid staff. As the main body of grid social governance, grid members are not civil servants or public institution personnel. Community grids are not government agencies, but a way of the basic social governance. So the recruitment of community grid members should be under the assistance of the government, the community neighborhood committee is responsible for unified recruitment. In addition to open recruitment for the society, the scope of recruitment can also be transferred by the staff of the neighborhood committee. Such personnel are generally familiar with the overall situation of the community and can quickly adapt to the grid governance model. The work of the basic community is complex and cumbersome, and grid members are required to serve the community public in an all-round and accurate manner. In addition to mastering necessary professional knowledge, grid members also need to be familiar with community management methods. These factors are directly related to the quality and effectiveness of the work. After the selection of grid member is completed, the contact information, service scope and office location should be publicized to community residents so that residents can handle and respond to problems. Secondly, to develop assessment standards for different objects to improve overall treatment. Grid-based social governance should introduce a competition mechanism, use performance as an evaluation standard, and classify and formulate performance processes, systems, and evaluation standards, so as to increase the enthusiasm of grid members. In addition, it is possible to commend and reward grid team members who are responsible for their work and have excellent performance through the evaluation activities of basic grid members, and to encourage the enthusiasm of grid team.

##### **4.2 Transform the Governance Concept and Improve the Coordination and Linkage**

## **Mechanism of Grid-Based Social Governance**

High-quality social governance should form a management system led by the government and coordinated participation of diversified social actors. The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China also clearly pointed out that it is necessary to strengthen the construction of the social governance system and improve the social governance system of party committee leadership, government responsibility, social coordination, public participation, and legal protection. Through this management system, the government plays its leading role, formulates relevant policies, and provides smooth channels for enterprises, social organizations and other diverse subjects to participate in social governance, so as to maximize the level and efficiency of social governance. Based on:

First, promote the transformation and optimization of grid governance concepts and break through traditional management and control thinking. Relying on community grid management, changing the previous “focus on management and passive processing” to “focus on service and active processing”, and develop each grid into a management unit for discovering and dealing with social issues. The public provides public services, relying on grid cells to respond to work demands.

Second, the development of grid management must rely on full civic participation and multi-dimensional interaction of multiple social subjects. Improve the grassroots democratic consultation system, empower the social forces, organize the “atomized” residents, and enable the basic society to form a community with the ability to autonomy, mutual assistance, cooperation, and active participation in public affairs. Realize the joint construction, co-governance and sharing of social governance. While promoting citizens’ effective participation in grid governance, it is also necessary to absorb the orderly entry of different types of social organizations to enhance the ability of social organizations to develop themselves and serve the society. It can play its unique functions in different dimensions such as resident services, enriching residents' lives, and resolving grid conflicts. Create conditions for the people to “manage themselves, serve themselves and develop themselves” and cultivate the soil for community autonomy.

### **4.3 Clear Government Function Positioning and Clarify the Functional Relationship**

In view of the fact that the party and the government are still in a dominant position in the current grid-based social governance, the affairs within the community grid still need to be coordinated, handled, and resolved by civil servants, which is characterized by a prominent administrative-oriented orientation. First of all, the functional positioning of the party and government should be clarified. The fundamental goal of grid governance is to cultivate the ability of grassroots social autonomy and guide the growth of social autonomous organizations. If blindly managed by the government, it will seriously inhibit the development of community autonomy. Therefore, it is necessary to promote the sharing of community management responsibilities between social organizations and the masses, and realize the transformation of grid governance from the traditional “unary leadership” to “multiple co-governance”. Second, re-clarify the boundaries of rights, responsibilities, and interests between party committees, governments, enterprises, social organizations, and citizens, and build a platform-based government-society cooperation network. Define the scope of government powers and responsibilities, determine the boundary between government governance and community autonomy, avoid “omnipotent control” by government departments, and provide a strong guarantee for multiple subjects to participate in grid governance. Finally, strengthen the top-level design to provide legal protection. At present, grid governance still lacks unified and standardized legal documents. Some regions improve the standardization of grid governance by formulating grid civil agreements and autonomous regulations. The level of rule of law is the standard for measuring the ability of social governance. To establish a complete grassroots grid community, it is also necessary to formulate more detailed labor division rules and implementation norms based on the upper law.

### **4.4 Big Data Empowers Grid Governance and Realizes Intelligent Social Governance**

The social governance of big data technology is an important practice of my country's social

governance model innovation. The social construction theory of technological governance believes that the development of technology has its own law of development, but technology must refer to its social factors in order to develop persistently. Big data also needs to pay attention to the characteristics of this type of social governance model in the process of helping the basic grid-based social governance, to promote the optimization and improvement of grid governance model. Use big data to empower grid social governance. The first is to integrate fragmented and marginalized community affairs, strengthen collaboration and cooperation between departments, and provide a unified “export” for the collection, analysis and processing of community data. It allows the government to have a more detailed and comprehensive grasp of the basic situation of the community, optimizes governance methods, and improves governance efficiency. The second is to build a new channel for the community to express their demands, urge the grassroots government to respond to the problems of the masses in a timely manner, solve the problems of the masses in a timely manner, provide sophisticated and intelligent big data social services, and improve the transparency and feedback speed of government work. The third is to improve relevant laws and regulations to ensure the safety of citizens' personal information. The era of big data should realize the openness and transparency of data, but it does not mean that the data is completely and unconditionally disclosed. The privacy of the state, enterprise and personal information should still be protected by law. While collecting and managing grid information, it is necessary to ensure that the collected big data information is not leaked or stolen. In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of the grid information platform security system, formulate operating specifications for information collection, acquisition, and use in accordance with the law, and implement the main responsibility of grid information security at the same time, establish corresponding supervision and management and accountability mechanisms, and effectively protect citizens' personal information.

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