

The Different Types of Residents and the Precedence Order of Community Mobilization

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Abstract: Community development is inseparable from the residents' participation. However, in the post unit society of China, community mobilization often encounters the dilemma of insufficient participation. Methods to put forward targeted community mobilization strategies according to the types of residents and their participation levels is the aim of this paper. The findings show that there are four types of residents: red armbands, masked men, followers and sarcasm men. Different types of residents have different participation level. Community mobilization needs not only targeted strategies that depends on the types of residents, but also a precedence order.

Keywords: Residents' participation; Community mobilization; The precedence order

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1. Introduction

In China, community is a familiar word which refers to the jurisdiction of the residents' committee which governs communities elected by residents. It emphasizes the regionality of community, and every community has a specific geographical scope. That is very different from the original meaning of the concept of community proposed by Ferdinand Tonnies which means a community of people with common interests or needs. When discussing the concept of community, this paper also refers to the jurisdiction of the residents' committee, because this is the most common use of the concept in China, and this means that the residents in this paper are only living in the same region, and they may not share a common sense of community.

Community is not only the basic unit of society, but also the center of residents' daily life. Community development is inseparable from residents' participation in community's public affairs. Although living in the same area itself can not directly produce the shared emotion and common action in the community, but needs to go through the transformation process of persuading people to believe and participate in the community development movement. That is what community mobilization is all about, since it is a way to arouse the enthusiasm of residents and to organize residents to actively take part in the common action. Mobilization is a bridge between the macro structure of community and the joint action of micro individuals. From the reality of community structure to the transformation of common awareness and the transformation from joint awareness to joint action is not direct naturally, the common variable that affects the two processes is mobilization ^[1].

However, when mobilizing residents to participate, promoters often encounter the dilemma of

insufficient participation, even at the level of recreational participation in public cultural life of community, which is the most accessible to residents, according to a survey of 51 communities in 17 provinces and cities in 2017, as high as 40.8% of the residents said that they had never participated in activities and had never been to the community service center^[2].

There are at least two important reasons for this. First, this is related to the changes of the governance mode of community. After the founding of new China, in order to integrate urban residents and ensure social stability, China set up a system of “unit” to govern the society, and the unit system came into force. The consequences of this were the “unit community,” that is, the unit and community exist in the same field at the same time, and the unit runs the society, that means the function of the unit replaces the function of the community. At this time, the residents’ committee was completely attached to the unit. As the residents’ various demands were all met through units, the units have the compulsory binding force on the individual. The mobilization of the residents’ committee at that time can also be guaranteed by such force. Yet, after the reform and opening up, the unit system no longer met the needs of social development, and gradually moved towards disintegration. The cultural tradition and behavior habits of the original “unit man” changed, and the “unit man” became an atomized individual that is not embedded in the unit system, which reduces the collective identity within the community. In the post unit system era, the status of community rose and the society integrated by community ever since. But the residents’ committee lost the binding force on individual residents at the same time.

The second reason was due to the different initiatives of residents. Residents have different sense of belonging and identity to the community. Thus, they have different motives to participate in community public affairs. It is difficult to let the residents participate in the mobilization in levels. This paper tries to put forward some suggestions for improving the effectiveness of community mobilization according to the analysis of the types of residents.

2. The Basic Content of Community Mobilization

In China, there were few academic researches on what is the meaning of community mobilization, and an accepted definition has not yet been formed^[3]. This paper defines community mobilization from the perspective of participation, whereby there are quite a number of affairs in the community needed to be solved by relying on the collective action of the residents together since such affairs are difficult to be overcome by national administrative means. Community mobilization influences and changes residents’ thinking through various ways, guides and mobilizes residents to participate, thus dealing with the affairs. National researches on community mobilization mainly include the following aspects:

- (1) First, there are some researches focused on the mechanism of community mobilization. This includes two types. One type cares about the institutional conditions, especially the influence of structural differentiation and changes on the potential of mobilization,^{[1][2]} the other one pays more attention to micro analysis on individual, reveals the dynamic mechanism of individual level in mobilization^[4].
- (2) Second, some researches lay special stress on the role of emotion in the development of collective action, try to find the important relationship between emotion and mobilization^[5].
- (3) Third, some researches were interested in reconstructing the cognitive framework of the individual, believe that the construction of meanings plays an extremely important role during community mobilization^[6].

All of these studies revealed beyond a possible doubt that community mobilization effectiveness may be increased in a variety of ways, but few studies had argued the sequences of community mobilization, which is what this paper aims to reveal. The structural elements of community mobilization include the following contents:

2.1. The subject of community mobilization

In China, generally speaking, the promoter of community mobilization is usually the residents' committee. The community mobilization promoted by residents' committee is encouraged and supported by the government ^[5] also the residents' committee plays dual functions of social control and interest appeal, but mainly focuses on social control ^[7]. However, this does not mean that the residents' committee is the only promoter of community mobilization. Elite mobilization led by residents' leaders can also be referred to as community mobilization. These leaders rely on their own prestige rather than administrative power, such as the residents' committee. This study is concerned on community mobilization supported by the residents' committee, which is very common in China. When the promoter is mentioned, it simply refers to the residents' committee.

2.2. The target people of community mobilization

For the target people, that is, whom to be mobilized, it can be all of the residents living in the community, or a certain of them. Obviously, the larger the scope of target people, the higher the heterogeneity of it, and the greater the difficulty of mobilization.

2.3. The object of community mobilization

The object can be divided into resources mobilization and action mobilization ^[8]. Resources mobilization is a process of integrating various resources in the community to meet the needs. Action mobilization refers to various processes and behaviors for launching specific actions.

2.4. The form of community mobilization

The form includes emergent mobilization and daily mobilization ^[9]. The emergent mobilization is also called crisis mobilization, which is in response to natural disasters, accidents and other emergencies. The daily mobilization deals with the affairs closely related to residents' daily life. Due to the incidence rate of the daily mobilization has a much higher frequency in communities, and it is an indispensable means of community governance, which this paper discusses mainly.

3. The Common Types of Residents in Daily Community Mobilization

In daily community mobilization, the promoter often encounters four types of residents, which are as follows:

3.1. Red armbands

“Red armbands” is a metaphor that refers to the front-line staffs who wear red armbands on their arms. The red armband is an identification of the staff who is easy to be recognized by the public, and the work the staff is engaging are often a kind of volunteer services. Therefore, the red armbands represent the type of residents who have the highest level of social spirit, they are enthusiastic and concerned about others, they have a sense of responsibility for social public affairs and can consciously participate in community development. Members of the owners committee, a leader of a residential building, activists and volunteers in the community may all be red armbands.

3.2. Masked men

“Masked men” refer to the type of residents whose attitude of participation are not clear enough. They may understand the significance of participation and have a certain willingness to participate, but their willingness is not as strong as the red armbands, also they are not willing to contribute to the community. Masked men seem to be wearing a mask, which makes the promoter unable to accurately judge their real

ideas. Although masked men seem to be full of enthusiasm and easy to communicate, they always expressed “good,” “OK,” “they will consider about this” or “they are sure to participate” to show their support when asked to participate, but they may not keep to their word in reality. The final decision often depends on the comparison of their gains and losses.

3.3. Followers

During the community mobilization, the vast majority of residents are followers. Like masked men, this type of residents do not have a high level of public spirit and a strong awareness of participation as the red armbands have. Although, different from the vague attitude of masked men, but they tend to be indifferent to participate in community affairs. Even if the community affairs are in line with followers’ interests and hobbies, the degree of participation are still not high. That may be because they have no sense of belonging or identity with the community, or they want to avoid the risk of decision making, or they have no time to participate. Therefore, there is a strong heterogeneity in the interior of the followers.

3.4. Sarcasm men

There are also a very small number of residents in the community who can be classified as sarcasm men. The characteristic of this type of residents is that they always evaluate the work of the residents’ committee and the development of the community from a negative perspective. Similarly, their expressions are always full of complaints or derogations. They deny the value of participation, as they can’t admit the significance of community mobilization, and are very difficult to participate in the mobilization. Once a promoter encounters a sarcasm man, he or she will likely to have a greater work pressure.

4. The Levels of Residents’ Participation and the Priority of Community Mobilization

Different types of residents have different degrees of motivation and different levels of participation. Since it is difficult for the promotor to mobilize all the residents in the first time, it is very important to arrange the precedence order according to the residents’ participation levels which can be divided into four levels from high to low: leadership participation, active participation, passive participation and non-participation. The number of leadership participation is the least, and the number of non-participation is the most. So that the levels of residents’ participation are distributed in the form of a pyramid (see **Figure 1.**)

4.1. Leadership participation and active participation

Residents belonging to active participation are not only able to respond to the call of mobilization quickly, but also willing to take certain responsibilities and show strong initiative. A red armband may become a resident leader if he possesses not only exceptional qualities but also a high level of community influence. Residents, resident committees, local government, and other various subjects can all benefit from resident leaders’ communication and coordination skills.

Therefore, the red armbands, including the resident leaders, are the easiest to be mobilized and suitable to be the first kind of targets of the community mobilization. As they are always concerned about political issues and frequently watch the news, mobilization strategies should emphasize the political significance of the mobilization, using phrases such as “in order to fully implement the Communist Party of China’s (CPC) decision-making and deployment,” “respond to the CPC’s call,” “national needs,” “instructions from the CPC,” etc. This can not only increase the legitimacy of the mobilization, but also promote the political emotion and a strong sense of responsibility of red armbands.

4.2. Passive participation

Masked men mostly belong to passive participation, as they take part in the mobilization, but they refuse

to undertake the specific voluntary work in the action. This is mainly because for masked men, the decision of whether to participate is usually the result of weighing the gain and loss, and isn't based on the concern for the public or the community development. However, since masked men are generally enthusiastic and can understand the significance of participation, they are suitable to be the second kind of targets of the community mobilization. Strategies suit for mask men should strengthen the links between the significances of participation with mask men's personal interests, this could help them weigh the gain and loss.

4.3. Non participation

Sarcasm men and followers both belong to the level of non-participation. Since sarcasm men are the most difficult people to be mobilized, they should be the last kind of targets to mobilize, or, even give up mobilizing while followers could be the third one. As followers usually do what others do, the first strategy for them is to guide them with the help of the exemplary behaviors of participants; second, to enhance their awareness of the necessity and urgency of participation from the perspective of creating community environment atmosphere, to encourage them to join the action.

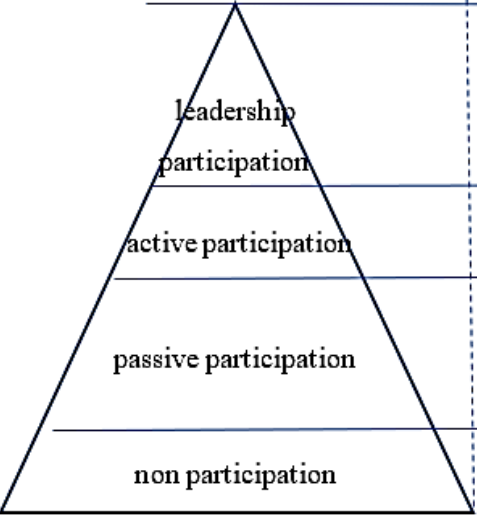
Levels of participation	Types of residents	Aims of mobilization	Strategies of mobilization
 leadership participation	red armbands	participate in the front-line work	emphasize the political significance of the mobilization, use the expressions like "instructions from CPC", et al.
active participation	red armbands	participate in the front-line work	
passive participation	masked men	support front-line workers/ play the role of example	strengthen the links between the significances of participation with personal interests
non participation	followers/ sarcasm men	cooperate with the work of mobilization	use the role of examples /creating a environment atmosphere

Figure 1. The participation levels of different types of residents and their mobilization aims and strategies

5. Conclusion

In the post unit society of China, the community mobilization promoted by the residents' committee often encounters the dilemma of insufficient participation since the committee lost the binding force on residents and different types of residents have different degrees of motivation and different levels of participation. In daily community mobilization, the promoter often encounters four types of residents: red armbands, masked men, followers and sarcasm men, whereby the red armbands should be mobilized first, masked men should be the second one, and the sarcasm men should be the last one according to their levels of participation. However, although we can determine the priority of community mobilization, we still need to pay attention to five points.

First, we need to improve the motivation framework which is necessary for all types of residents when mobilizing. In this regard, Benford pointed out four aspects could be used to persuade people to take practical action: the seriousness of the problem, the urgency of action, the effectiveness of action and the moral appropriateness of action ^[10].

Second, the purpose of mobilization is not to let all residents participate in the front-line work.

Therefore, the promotor needs to clarify the purpose of mobilization of different types of residents. The red armbands are the most important force among the four types of residents, which can engage in front-line work with promotor. The purpose of mask men's mobilization could be support red armbands at any time, and play the role of example for the followers around him. For the followers, the purpose of mobilization is to let them understand the importance of action and consciously cooperate with the work of the mobilization.

Third, we also need to focus on mobilizing professionals. There are many professionals in a community. They may also fail to actively participate in community affairs in their daily life for various reasons, but professionals cannot be ignored. This is because professionals are usually highly educated and can understand the significance of the mobilization, and their professional knowledge, technology and relationship network may bring more resources to the mobilization. Professionals can often undertake the tasks that ordinary residents cannot do, such as hold a publicity lecture, carry out statistics and analysis of survey data, etc. During the period of COVID-19 prevention and control, 73 social workers were given full attention to their advantages of visiting and investigating, and helped two local communities in Chengdu completed the investigation of residents.

When mobilizing professionals to participate, an important lesson learned is that the community should assign them tasks that allow them to fully utilize their professional skills, such as psychological counselling, medical support, data statistics, and network publicity, rather than tasks like posting leaflets and measuring body temperature. This can cultivate the enthusiasm of professionals to participate, and can effectively avoid the loss and waste of community resources. To develop these tasks, the promoter needs to quickly distinguish the work content of the action, which is also a challenge for the promoter.

Forth, we need to watch out for the stigmatization in the process of mobilization. Stigmatization refers to the process in which a group imposes some negative and inferior behavior characteristics on another group, and regards them as the inherent characteristics of another group. Once a group is labeled with these characteristics, it will be separated and excluded by other groups, suffer unfair treatment, and that would affect the harmonious neighborhood relationship of the community. At the beginning of COVID-19 outbreak, the Wuhan people were once regarded as synonyms of diseases by some netizens, and were subjected to many "attacks" and "insults." At that time, the community mobilization should not only pay attention to the expressions of mobilization, avoid using sarcastic words and adjust all kinds of stigma and exclusion, but also care for the diagnosed patients in the community and the residents in isolation. This is so important that the State Council of China had issued special documents for the purpose to create a caring environment.

Stigma is a negative self-defense mechanism. If the public is unable to dispel their growing worries and troubles by grasping the instant authoritative information, they will stigmatize the others according to their own understanding and label the others as "dangerous," thus to achieve the purpose of self-protection. Therefore, in order to enhance trust among neighborhood, avoid the occurrence of stigma, and maintain the stability of community order, promoters need to use a variety of media platforms to timely release the latest dynamics and other reliable information to community residents. Only in this method can help residents of a community to re-understand and re-interpret the epidemic prevention affairs, and rationally treat those groups who may be stigmatized.

Fifth, the community mobilization also needs to avoid the involution of mobilization, which is the mobilization effect stays at a certain stage, and it is difficult to achieve qualitative change in-depth and understanding. The involution of community mobilization cannot be formed in a short time, but once it appears, it will have a significant impact on the effectiveness of community mobilization. The "overuse" of community residents' leaders and activists, as well as the "insufficient mobilization" of ordinary residents due to not paying attention to expanding the community base, will cause the phenomenon of

mobilization involution^[9].

To sum up, to do a good job in community mobilization, the promotor must be an understanding person who can identify different types of residents and master targeted mobilization strategies. To turn a group of “negative participants in public life” into active ones, community mobilization still has a long way to go.

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