

# Not Collaboration But Dependence: Understanding Collaborative Governance of Community Cultural Services in China

HU Yanlei, SUN Yahui  
University of Jinan, Jinan, China

With accelerating urbanization, China's urban population is increasing rapidly. As such, how to improve the supply of cultural services has become an important subject. Recently, collaborative governance came to be one of the important instruments used in supplying cultural services to urban communities in many countries. This article analyses the collaborative system of the cultural services of 107 communities of six Jie Dao Bans in China. This was done via face-to-face interviews with the officials of Jie Dao Bans and community committees, residents, and the workers of social organizations and cultural enterprises. Some kinds of collaborative inertia problems are found, including policy dependence, information dependence, power dependence, and ability dependence, particularly with regard to public agencies, cultural enterprises, and social organizations, as well as the residents who rely on the collaborative governance of cultural services in urban communities. This decreases the effectiveness and efficiency of the collaborative governance of community cultural services.

*Keywords:* community cultural service, collaborative governance, dependence, collaborative inertia

## Introduction

Community cultural service is an important component of urban public service in modern society. Collaborative arrangements and partnerships are increasingly being used by local governments (Kenis & Provan, 2009), due to their “networked polity” (Durose, 2009; Matthews, 2014), and the cross-sector nature of culture policy (Gugu & Mollin, 2016). As such, collaborative governance has been an important approach in the field of urban cultural service supply since 2000. However, collaborative governance is increasingly faced with many new contradictions and problems, such as collaborative inertia in the collaborative governance process of cultural services in urban communities in China. In addition, with those contradictions and problems, the efficiency and effectiveness of collaborative governance are weakened.

Since the 1950s, most public cultural services in developed countries have been supplied by the respective national governments. For instance, the Culture Department of France was established in 1959 (Ministere de la Culture, 2011). This was the first public management agency to be established and controlled by a central government (Jeffery, 1980). However, “government failure” emerged in the early 1960s, with the rise of intellectual

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HU Yanlei, professor, School of Politics and Law, University of Jinan, Jinan, China.  
SUN Yahui, Master candidate, School of Politics and Law, University of Jinan, Jinan, China.

and political criticism of government regulations. This criticism was advocated by economists, who argued that government interventions in markets were costly and tended to fail (Orbach, 2013). Collaborative governance then came to be an important approach in the field of urban cultural service supply at the beginning of the 2000s. The definition of collaborative governance was first proposed by D. C. Wood and B. Gray. Specifically, the study defined collaborative governance as a governance model in which multiple stakeholders come to an agreement in accordance with the same topic with regard to public institutions (Wood & Gray, 1991). Since then, collaborative governance has been widely applied in the fields of air pollution governance (Khademian & Webes, 1997), the governance of ecological systems (Karkkainen, 2002), and other fields of public affairs governance. For instance, Rosemary O’Leary et al. argued that collaborative governance was a brand new concept in the 21st century, and defined collaborative governance as a tool used to control the impacts of joint decision making and behavior processes among the private sector, public sector, and citizens’ groups. Ansell and Gash (2008) proposed a comprehensive and widely applicable collaborative governance model. The study distilled by 137 empirical cases in different policy domains, and defined collaborative governance as “a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative, and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets”. This model is well accepted as a theoretical framework of collaborative governance. For example, Silvia Gugu and Martina Dal Mollin (2016) studied the function system and inter-relations of collaborative local cultural governance, using the above model, based on the case of cultural districts in Italy. The paper’s aim was to understand how actor diversity affects governance dimensions in a cultural district in Italy. The study found that there are “two types of partnerships responsible for decision making and goal implementation” in the case of Italy. Two sources of actor diversity were highlighted, namely within-sector diversity and cross-sector diversity, each of which was shown to have different effects on collaborative governance. Therefore, collaborative governance is tending to become an important governance tool in the field of the supply of cultural services from a city to a community. In recent years, collaborative governance has progressively been used in practices of the provision system of public cultural services in Mainland China.

Collaborative inertia originates from the description of the conflict tension between collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia in the construction of collaborative advantage theory. Collaborative inertia refers to the tendency that collaborative activities have extremely inefficient output results, or those activities create a large number of intolerable conflicts (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). The collaborative inertia of public services is also known as collaborative conflict (Waardenburg, Groenleer, Jong, & Keijser, 2019; Noble, Charles, & Keast, 2018) or collaborative paradox (Duque et al., 2005; Ran & Qi, 2018). The term usually refers to the collaboration dilemma in the process of multi-agent discussions on how to build a problem-solving mechanism with multi-agent participation through dialogue and negotiation. Most previous literature reviews have focused on the latter two kinds of collaborative inertia.

Some literature focused on those collaborative inertia problems that were evident in the results of co-production, or those which emerged in the efficiency (or lack of efficiency) of collaboration. For instance, Ricardo B. Duque et al. (2005) found that the social environment in the field of knowledge production caused the problem of collaboration paradox among scientists in developing countries. David Noble et al. (2018) did a comparative study on the inertia of industrial university research policy collaboration, based on the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) in Australia.

Other studies have focused on collaborative inertia or examples of collaborative paradox in the process of collaborative governance. For instance, Bing Ran and Huiting Qi (2018) proposed seven theoretical propositions by establishing a theoretical analysis framework of the interaction between power and trust in collaborative governance. For example, the blind trust between participants may cause the loss of some collaborative advantages and collaborative risks. On this basis, the study analyzed the impacts of power imbalance, blindness or lack of trust, and other interactions on collaborative governance, including both the effective collaboration and the paradox of collaboration. Maurits Waardenburg et al. (2019), in a quasi-experimental study on the collaboration of eight departments dealing with criminal acts in the Netherlands, found that conflicts of collaborative needs exist in the three types of challenges. Examples include the substantive problems that need to be solved, the collaborative process, and the responsibility of multilateral relations. In addition, the study found that, only by taking an inclusive attitude towards contradictory needs, rather than an either-or attitude, can we promote the progress of collaborative behavior.

Collaborative governance theory is commonly acknowledged to provide a new theoretical perspective and action strategy for modern national public affairs management. This new strategy is conducive to solving the problem of public service fragmentation caused by the new public management reform movement. However, multiple governance goals of equal participation and negotiation of multiple subjects are advocated by the theory to reach a consensus and jointly promote the fairness, justice, efficiency, and effectiveness of public service governance. These goals are faced with different degrees and types of collaborative inertia in some developing countries. For example, in China, a positive incentive mechanism for collaborative governance among multiple subjects has been established. This was achieved by strengthening the construction of policy guidance, system design, organizational structure, social environment, and other aspects of the collaborative governance of public services. Meanwhile, due to the collaborative relationship between those subjects based on dependence (rather than trust), negotiation dialogue and collaborative participation cannot be truly and effectively realized. Many studies have reported on the wider domains of collaborative governance and collaborative inertia. However, to our knowledge, no study has yet been conducted on the expression of collaborative inertia in the process of implementing collaborative governance reform and its collaborative mechanism in developing countries with an insufficient concentration of public power, insufficient independence of social organizations, and an increasing awareness of citizen participation. One example of such countries is China.

Based on the analysis of relevant academic research literature, and in connection with the problems faced in the practice of collaborative governance reformation in China, this study argues that the collaborative inertia of collaborative governance of cultural service (CGCS) is a kind of collaborative governance relationship. This relationship, however, is not based on equality, mutual trust, dialogue, and negotiation, but rather is based on dependence that is caused by asymmetric information, unequal power, the lack of a trust mechanism, an imperfect collaborative system, and other factors in the reforming process of CGCS. This results in unequal and ineffective information communication, negotiation dialogue, and collaborative behavior among those subjects of CGCS. Other problems also arise, such as ineffective policy communication, information asymmetry, power imbalance, trust dilemma, and insufficient leadership. Finally, collaborative inertia emerges, including policy dependence, information dependence, power dependence, and ability dependence.

This paper presents a case study of the roles played by central government, the local governments, Jie Dao Bans (Jie Dao Ban is a dispatched agency of a district in China), and non-government organizations in the

collaborative governance of cultural services (CGCS) in 107 communities of six Jie Dao Bans in Shandong Province, China. Through interviews with citizens, social workers, members of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), communities, and Jie Dao Bans, this study addresses how dependence is the collaborative inertia of public cultural services supply in China.

The central aim of this study is to explore the presentations and mechanism of the collaborative inertia of public cultural services of communities in developing countries. Specific attention is given to countries with relatively concentrated power, weak independence of social forces but increasingly strong citizen consciousness of public participation. As a result, this study may provide some useful lessons for the reformation of the collaborative governance of public cultural services in countries all around the world with similar political, economic, and social environments. The study also aims to fill the gap in current academic research with regard to the collaborative inertia of public cultural services in those countries.

This paper is organized as follows: We first review the theory of collaborative governance and collaborative inertia and its important role in CGCS. Next, we briefly review the history of the CGCS of the 107 communities. The internal relationship of each CGCS stakeholder of those communities is then presented, and the collaborative structure is outlined. Finally, the patterns and causes of the dependence inertia of the CGCS of communities in China are discussed.

### **CGCS of the 107 Communities in China**

By reviewing the public policies and actions of urban cultural service in Mainland China, from 2005 to the present, this study finds that central and local governments are playing a leading role. This year, the Communist Party of China adopted *The Proposal of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy and Society in the Fifth Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee*. The government stated the aim is “to establish a relatively complete public cultural service system” (CPC, 2005). As a consequence, the supply of urban cultural services increased sharply in China. The question of how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of cultural services through various supply measures is also increasingly drawing the attention of researchers and scholars. Currently, central and local governments are examining the subject of the supply of public cultural services. This focus is also affecting the efficiency of cultural service supply. The supply model of cultural service needs to be changed from the current single-subject governance form to one of multiple-subject governance. In 2015, *Suggestions on Public Cultural Service of Government Purchasing of Social Forces* was issued by the Cultural Department of the Central Government of China (GOSCC, 2015). However, local governments are still playing a leading role in the supply of urban cultural services. In addition, many problems are being encountered, such as the low satisfaction of citizens with those cultural services, the relatively low utilization rate of urban cultural services, and the severe lack of urban cultural services for low-income classes, such as migrant workers or citizens who live in marginalized communities (Xu & Song, 2015). For instance, the Liangnan Community of the 107 communities is one of the typical groups confronted with the abovementioned collaborative problems in Jinan City, China.

The problems of the shortage and unbalanced supply of cultural services have been aggravated substantially by the rapid urbanization in Mainland China. For example, the quantity and quality of public cultural services in eastern provinces are much better than in middle and western provinces, based on a comparison of the data pertaining to both areas in 1999 and 2009 (Wang, 2012). However, with the economic performance caused by

the decentralization of finance, as well as the relatively limited public finance, local governments are being urged to collaborate with enterprises and social organizations to provide cultural services in their communities.

A community neighborhood committee is the basic unit of grassroots urban authority in China. Through face-to-face interviews with residents of 107 communities in six Jie Dao Bans, a multiple collaborative network of cultural service supplies was found to exist in the community (see Figure 1 below).

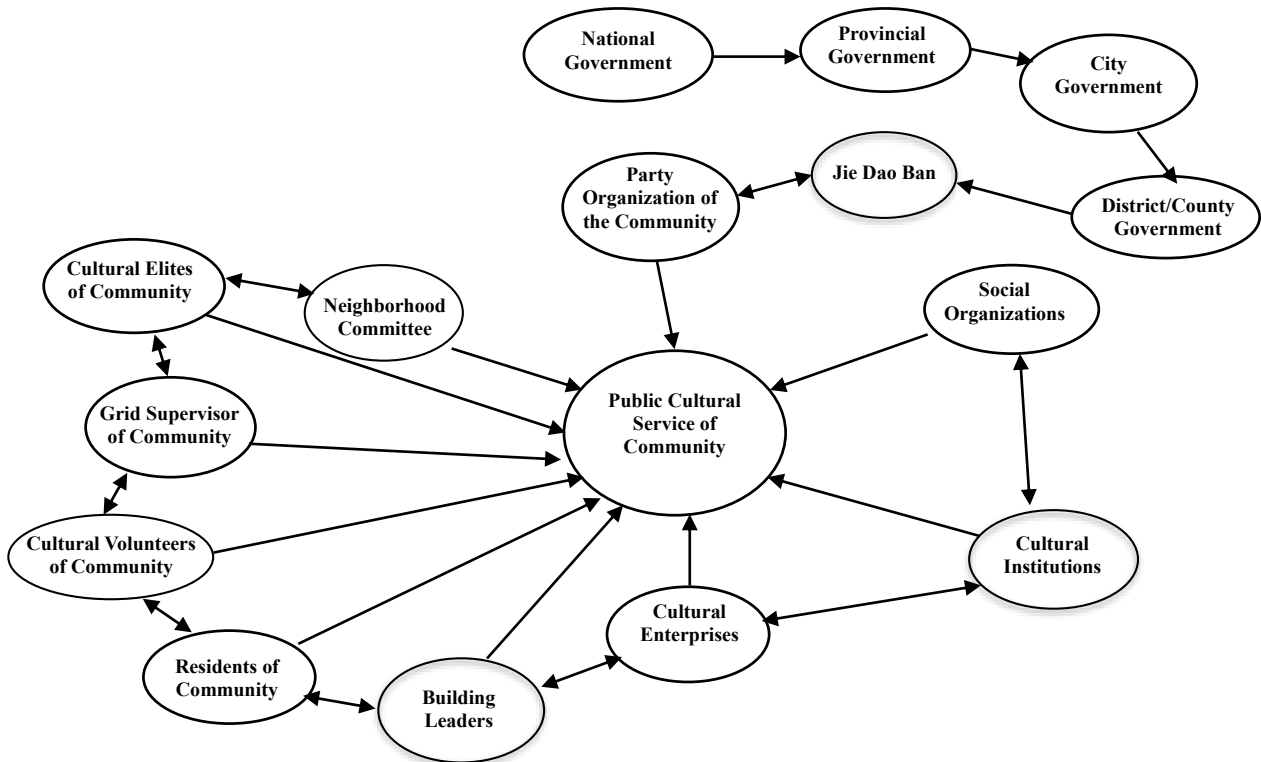


Figure 1. The collaborative governance network of the cultural services of the 107 communities.

## Method

This section briefly summarizes the study's research approach and data collection method. The research is designed as an embedded case study, with qualitative data collected both from primary and secondary data sources (Yin, 1984). Also, an embedded case study design occurs when many multiple units of analysis are contained within the same case study (Yin, 2003). And the secondary-sourced data were obtained via extensive archival research, including yearbooks, Internet news, and internal reports regarding the supply of cultural services to those communities, as well as former research literature. Based on the secondary-sourced data, this study identified came up with semi-structured interview questions and visited 12 officials of the six Jie Dao Bans, 107 officials of those community neighborhood committees, as well as 36 managers and social workers of a cultural NGO, and more than 200 residents who live in those 107 communities. For Jie Dao Ban, interviews were conducted with the manager or the vice-manager and one staff member in charge of community cultural services. For those 107 community neighborhood committees (a community neighborhood committee is a self-governance office of the community in China), interviews were again conducted with the manager or the vice-manager, and one staff member.

In addition, for the community's cultural NGOs, the managers of 36 such cultural NGOs were interviewed. These NGOs included, for example, the Cultural Performance Association, Arts Group, Paper-cut Association, and the Calligraphy and Painting Lovers Association. The interviews were conducted with a sufficient variety of knowledgeable informants in those agencies and associations, in order to ensure the provision of multiple perspectives (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The citizens were interviewed randomly. In the interviews, the actual roles and the ideal roles of the communities in CGCS of those 107 communities were analyzed, according to the respondents' perspectives. Interviewees were asked how they perceive the current problems of CGCS and the reason for those problems, as well as the different roles of local governments and NGOs in CGCS. In particular, they were asked about the role of the Social Workers Organization, and what types of incentives and limitations they saw as being related to CGCS. The interview material provided a subjective account of developments, which could then be compared with the initial "objective" data obtained from the secondary sources (such as news reports from the Internet). Subsequently, some of the stories about the CGCS of those 107 communities were shared with and checked by the interviewees. During this study's primary data collection process, the Chief Manager or the vice-manager of the six Jie Dao Bans were interviewed, which provided a comprehensive introduction of the mechanism of cultural service supply. Some key issues related to the collaborative governance mechanism between NGOs and Jie Dao Bans were interpreted and discussed. The innovations of CGCS in those 107 communities were also covered, as well as the various cultural projects and the current situation of CGCS in those 107 communities.

Based on the qualitative data, the key problems and explanations of CGCS in those 107 communities were identified, as well as their countermeasures. More specifically, the key issues examined in this study are as follows: (1) What kind of roles can Jie Dao Ban or the community neighborhood committee play in terms of the CGCS in the community? (2) What do you think about the current cultural services of the community? Also, do you have some suggestions on how those services could be improved? (3) What do you think are some advantages or limitations of NGO participation in CGCS? (4) What incentives, in terms of enhancing NGO participation in CGCS, should be established by the local government? In Table 1, some selected excerpts from the interviews are presented.

Table 1

*Selected Excerpts From Interviews*

	(1) What kind of role can Jie Dao Ban or the community neighborhood committee play in CGCS?	(2) What do you think about the current cultural services of the community? Also, do you have some suggestions on how those services could be improved?	(3) What do you think are some advantages or limitations of NGO participation in CGCS?	(4) What incentives should be established by local government to of enhance NGO participation in CGCS?
Officials of Jie Dao Ban	"Hmm, Jie Dao Ban and the community neighborhood play a very important role in CGCS. For example, we designed the mechanism of CGCS to invest in many cultural projects." "...They must play a leading role in CGCS. Furthermore, they can assist those cultural NGOs with good policies or fiscal aid."	"You know, we did lots of jobs on the supply of cultural services in the community. Now, we have had great achievements with various cultural activities." "...we prepare to enhance the participation of NGOs or enterprises to supply many more cultural services for the residents in the future."	"Hmm, I think the scale and ability of NGOs in China are the greatest obstacles to NGO participation in CGCS." "...and, the funds are limited, the number of members is limited and unstable, the management system needs to be developed, and the ability is relatively lower than other organizations."	"You know, we already have some effective measures to incentivize NGOs' participation. For example, government purchasing projects give some aid to NGOs to help them engage in cultural activities. In the future, we will strengthen the above measures to enhance their participation."

Table 1 to be continued

Officials of community neighborhood committee	<p>“Jie Dao Ban is the leader of CGCS in the community, but as a self-governance department, the community neighborhood committee can play a media role among Jie Dao Ban, NGOs and citizens.”</p> <p>“We try our best to assist with the affairs of Jie Dao Ban.”</p>	<p>“Frankly speaking, the current situation of cultural services in this community is much better than some other communities in Jinan.”</p> <p>“...Enn, there are fewer kinds of cultural service. It is quite a serious problem that needs attention.”</p>	<p>“...there are lots of limitations, including the internal and external factors of NGOs, such as ...”</p> <p>“Frankly speaking, I think the Jie Dao Ban and upper governmental office paying little attention is another limitation.”</p>	<p>“Hmm, I think Jie Dao Ban should pay much more attention and give much more aid to NGOs, so that they could play a greater role in the community.”</p> <p>“...local government enhances them by assisting them with policies, special funds, professional training, etc.”</p>
Members of cultural NGOs	<p>“They are the policy maker and community manager.”</p> <p>“Hmm, they can give us a much greater opportunity to participate in cultural services in the community.”</p>	<p>“Enn, I think there are fewer kinds of cultural services in the community, and the numbers of participants in the community is even fewer.”</p> <p>“...Jie Dao Ban may increase fiscal investment to enhance the diversity of cultural services.”</p>	<p>“...lack of funds and having few members are the main limitations of NGOs participating in CGCS in this community.”</p> <p>“...our funds are totally invested by Jie Dao Ban or other government agencies, so as you know, we did not have many choices. Also, we are dependent on government agencies.”</p>	<p>“...if local government, especially Jie Dao Ban, did not pay so much attention to their achievements but rather to the significance of the actual works of NGOs, this would be quite a big incentive.”</p>
Citizen lived in the 10 communities	<p>“Jie Dao Ban and the community neighborhood committee can play a leading CGCS role in the community.”</p> <p>“Enn, I think they should be a participator, and try to create a catalyst effect.”</p>	<p>“Enn, it sounds good. But I have never participated in those cultural activities” (from a youth) “Pretty nice! Very good!” (from an elder).</p> <p>“...I think the demands of the youth and full-time workers should be a concern. The mechanism should be more flexible.”</p>	<p>“NGOs...I think most of them are small in scale and have limited funds. These are the main limitations of their participating in CGCS in the community.”</p> <p>“...I think NGOs may be small and unstable.”</p>	<p>“Hmm, I think local government should give many more opportunities to NGOs, so that they can do many more useful CGCS jobs in the community.”</p> <p>“...money is the most important incentive.”</p>

## Results

As is known, a great number of cultural services are supplied with the mechanism of collaborative governance in the 107 communities. However, some CGCS projects are not so welcome by residents, according to the results of this study's survey. This study finds that there are some basic characteristics of the collaborative mechanism of CGCS in China. The identified issues include the following:

### A Government-Attaching Model of CGCS

In those studied communities, the Jie Dao Ban, the agencies of grass roots government, plays a leading role in CGCS projects, according to both the interviewees and secondary-sourced data. This is a considerably different collaborative governance case in Chinese communities, compared with other cases, with regard to the leading role of local governments. For instance, in Liangnan Community, the Theatre of One Man Project was initiated by Jie Dao Ban, because the upper administrative office has some incentive measures for community cultural services. These measures include evaluating system reformation; specifically, the achievements of the cultural services of each community come to be one of the performance appraisal indicators. In addition, in 2015, the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China (MC) issued the “Opinions of Government Purchasing Public Cultural Services from Social Forces”. Then, the government compelled grass roots government to enhance the collaborative governance of cultural services. Hence, with the performance pressure and public

policy orientation, the Manager of the Erqi Jie Dao Ban decided to collaborate with NGOs to supply better cultural services in the community. The original plan of the Erqi Jie Dao Ban was to provide some interesting cultural activities for the elderly residents, especially those who were lonely, had taken ill, or had the problem of economic hardship. The Erqi Jie Dao Ban also invested six thousand RMB to the project per community, including the cost of presents for the abovementioned elderly and the performance fees of the Tianyuan Arts Group. The situation is similar (but not as good) in the other nine communities. In evidence, it is a government attaching mechanism of the CGCS of those community in China.

### **A Mediated NGO Role**

In 2012, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China (MCA) and the Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China (MF) issued *Guidance on Government Purchasing of Social Work Services*. Consequently, organizations of social workers were formed and have come to play an important role in society, and especially within the community. Compared with Shanghai, Shenzhen, or other developed cities, the government purchasing of social work services is just starting in Jinan. Few Jie Dao Bans pay attention to organizations of social workers; nor do they collaborate with them. According to the interviewees and some secondary-sourced data, this study finds that there is a kind of NGO that is just like the Qunyi Social Service and NGO Incubator. This is a social work organization that plays an important mediated CGCS role in the community. For example, some of the community CGCS projects were well designed by the Qunyi Social Service and NGO Incubator, including the Theatre of One Man Exhibition and the calligraphy and painting training classes. Other CGCS projects were initiated by the Qunyi Social Service and NGO Incubator, such as the "Exhibitions and Shows of Paper-cut" series and other folk cultures. In a word, the Qunyi Social Service and NGO Incubator is one of the important cultural service suppliers and the direct or indirect supplier of other social services. Specifically, with their professional experience and knowledge of social service supplies, the Qunyi Social Service and NGO Incubator acts as a mediator among the Jie Dao Bans or other public agencies, NGOs, and the residents of the community. On the contrary, social work organizations are also confronted with a great many problems when collaborating with local governments in China. During the interviews, the general secretary of the Qunyi Social Service and NGO Incubator complained several times about the neglect of Jie Dao Bans and other grass roots agencies. Grass roots government still has some maladies of bureaucracy, to the extent that they tend to think of social workers as affiliated personnel.

### **Not Trusting But Dependent on Grass Roots Government**

Trust is one of the important variables of the collaborative governance model of Ansell and Gash (2008). Only if each stakeholder trusts each of the other stakeholders can they communicate frequently and deeply, in such a way that the collaboration will be effective. However, when analyzing the 107 communities, this study found that, not trusting, but dependence on grass roots government is one of the typical characteristics of other subjects of CGCS. For instance, a Qunyi NGO social worker reported that they want to do some cultural activities for various kinds of community residents. The aim is to enhance community identity and construct a community culture. However, officials of the Jie Dao Ban told the social workers to stop these cultural activities. They worried that those activities may actually worsen the community's stability. Hence, the social organizations, the private sectors, and the public all had to depend on grass roots government and its affiliate agencies, because those public officials did not totally trust them. As a result, the collaborative CGCS actions of the communities could not normally be dynamic and sustainable. In a word, trust among each of the collaborative sectors should



be reconstructed between the public officials and the social workers, as well as the entrepreneurs and residents of each community in China. In addition, officials of grass roots government and its outstanding agencies should step forward and change their attitude by eliminating their bureaucratic maladies.

### **Mobilized Collaborative Governance by Official “Red-Head” Documents**

By reviewing the short history of collaborative policies between the government and social forces, we find that “red-head” documents are the main incentives of collaborative governance in China. On July 31, 2013, Premier Li Keqiang convened a standing meeting of the State Council, with a view to promoting the government purchasing public services from social forces. Then, the central government of Mainland China issued several “red-head” documents. The same situation existed in the field of the collaborative governance of cultural services. In 2015, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of China issued “Opinions of Government Purchasing Public Cultural Services From Social Forces” as an official “red-head” document. Consequently, grass roots government, especially culture departments, became actively involved in promoting the innovation of cultural service supply. Also, NGOs tend to be important participants in CGCS. Therefore, a mobilized collaborative governance system of cultural service supply in the community was created without sustainable regulations or rules. Clearly, such a collaborative governance system is unstable and short-term in nature. On the one hand, the supply of community cultural services increased sharply, due to administrative command. For instance, in less than two years, each community in Jinan should have had at least one public library, according to the official document. On the other hand, a large proportion of cultural services may not meet the demands of the residents of the community. However, very few residents go to community public libraries, due to the associated inconvenience. Furthermore, the official “red-head” documents typically reflect the opinions of a few managers in central government. Once the manager retires or is replaced by another person, the collaborative reform may be stopped. Thus, the dependence inertia of CGCS is initiated.

## **Discussion: Dependence Inertia of CGCS**

### **Policy Dependence**

Policy dependence refers to the collaborative inertia between the central or local government and grassroots government caused by a policy implementation gap (O’Toole, 1997) or the selective policy implementation (O’Brien & Li, 1999). The former term refers to the gap between policy input and policy output. And the latter term refers to some cadres conscientiously enforce unpopular policies while refusing to carry out other measures that villagers welcome (O’Brien & Li, 1999). Since 2015, China’s central and local governments have vigorously promoted the socialization and marketization policies of community public cultural service supply, in order to compel the reformation of collaborative governance. However, obvious gaps exist in the development speed and governance efficiency of the CGCS of each community. Due to the unbalanced development of regional economies and cultures, the grass roots governments have policy implementation gaps, such as with air transmission policy, policy flexibility, implementation, and obstruction. In addition, people are more inclined to rely on the strategic planning of the grass roots governments, rather than on the policy planning of the central and local governments. This, therefore, leads to the collaborative inertia between the central and local governments and grass roots governments. For instance, Community A is located in District S, which is the center of the city. Seven famous colleges and universities and 66 schools are located in the district. In 2017, the GDP of this district ranked 12th among all districts and counties of the province, and third among all districts and

counties of the city (90.75 billion RMB). Therefore, the district not only has good economic strength but also has profound cultural heritage and cultural resources. “To Establish a Strong Cultural District” has been the basis of an important development strategy of the district government since 2016. Therefore, the government of District S pays close attention to public cultural services and collaborative governance. The corresponding policies and measures were issued earlier, with many financial subsidies, enabling a quick response to the relevant national policy requirements of CGCS. However, the CGCS situation is not so healthy in Community B, which is subordinated to District T, located at the north edge of the city. In 2017, the GDP of District T was 47.93 billion RMB, meaning the district ranked sixth among the eight districts and two counties of the city. Numerous old industrial enterprises are located in the area. However, with the development of the market economy, a large number of these old industrial enterprises have gone bankrupt. As a result, a large number of workers lost their jobs, and a large number of migrants are looking for lower housing rents, compared with other developing districts. Hence, the main problems faced by the government of District T are economic development, poverty control, and the management of the floating migrant population. District T’s grass-roots government pays little attention to CGCS in the process of policy formulation and implementation; their motivation is obviously insufficient. In addition, the grass roots government is beginning to engage in policy option behavior, due to financial pressure, that is, the selective implementation of the public CGCS policy. For instance, the grass roots government has focused on the policies involved in implementing economic transformation and growing GDP, while neglecting CGCS policies. Therefore, there is a strong policy attachment to the grass roots government, with the air transmission policy of the central and local governments. This has resulted in collaborative inertia between the central and local government and the grass roots government in the process of CGCS.

### **Information Dependence**

Information dependence refers to the inertia of negotiation and consensus with regard to CGCS, specifically due to information asymmetry problems, such as information “black boxes” among stakeholders. In 1948, W. R. Ashby put forward the concept of a “black box”, based on the concept of “closed box” introduced by Norbert Wiener (Ashby, 1957). The phrase is used to describe the internal mechanism of organisms that are difficult to observe. Through the survey of six Jie Dao Bans or counties of Shandong Province, “information black boxes” and asymmetric information problems of CGCS were found among the governance participants. These included grass roots governments, grass roots autonomous organizations (such as community neighborhood committees), grass roots party organizations, resident social organizations, cultural enterprises, community voluntary organizations, and community residents. That is to say, the policy information of the higher-level government and the public resources of the community are mainly overseen by the core members of the grass roots government, the grass roots autonomous organizations, and the grass roots party group. Meanwhile, the external social organizations, cultural enterprises, community voluntary organizations, and community residents face the problem of “information black boxes”, due to being outside the administrative system. On the other hand, the grass roots governments, grass roots autonomous organizations, and grass roots party organizations have a relatively singular approach to acquiring the information of those organizations outside the system. Evidently, the grass roots governments, grass roots autonomous organizations, and grass roots party organizations face the problem of an “information black box” with regard to the organizational background, governance ability, and participation motivation of those outside system organizations. Finally, there is a highly-independent relationship of information communication among inside system organizations and outside system organizations, especially

between community neighborhood committees and private sectors. This relationship also leads to the inertia of consensus negotiation among the subjects of CGCS. Compared with other organizations, the private sector usually has additional organizational advantages in the management of cultural projects, given the private sector's abundant resources of personnel, investment, and management skills. However, this study found that the participation of the private sector is the weak link of CGCS in China. Fewer communities have established long-term collaborative relations with private sector cultural enterprises. The inertia of consultation and consensus among the enterprises, grass roots autonomous organizations, and social residents, specifically due to the lack of effective communication and asymmetric information, is a widespread problem. There are two concrete aspects of this phenomenon. Firstly, the alternative negotiation behavior of the higher-level government has been initiated. Consequently, there are some problems of information asymmetry and ineffective communication between the grass roots autonomous organizations, community residents, and cultural enterprises. For example, in rural Community C, the local government purchases a large number of cultural performance projects from cultural enterprises every year. However, due to the operation mode of "the government arranges the program, the community and Jie Dao Ban are responsible for the accommodation and performance venues of the performers, and the people are responsible for attending and watching", the cultural service supply is repeatedly locked in a strange circle of "the people are unwilling to watch, the community is unwilling to receive, and the government actively buys". Secondly, an "information black box" in the negotiation between the two parties is caused by overemphasis on "public welfare", while the profitable characteristics of enterprises are ignored. For example, in Community A, cultural enterprises are forced to provide public welfare services and not to engage in any profit-making activities. It seems that the two sides have reached a consensus on this at present. However, the problem of the sustainability of those collaborative activities continues to exist, since a consensus has not been reached on the basis of full communication and equal dialogue. In addition, the "information black box" can very easily cause distrust or betrayal among collaborative subjects.

### **Power Dependence**

Power dependence refers to the inertia of collaborative actions among subjects that is due to the imbalance of power status. Power and trust are the two most critical elements of collaborative governance; they directly affect the effect and sustainability of collaborative governance. There is also a kind of "entangled twins" growth relationship between them. That is, the relationship between the two is one of mutual influence and mutual restriction, rather than being a causal relationship (Ran & Qi, 2018). In the field survey of CGCS in China, an imbalance of power status was found among the subjects, which in turn led to the inertia of collaborative governance among those subjects. Firstly, the power status of each subject of CGCS is unbalanced. Specifically, grass roots governments and autonomous organizations usually enjoy rich political, financial, and human resources. In addition, constrained by the traditional "official-based" ideology, such governance subjects can very easily position themselves as "leaders" or "controllers" in the process of CGCS. Conversely, NGOs, cultural enterprises, community volunteer organizations, and community residents tend to be "the dependent", due to a lack of political and financial resources. In particular, the investment made by some NGOs comes mainly from the grass roots government. For instance, a government purchase fund is the only financial source of the Qunyi social service organization. Obviously, due to the high dependence of the latter on government departments and public power, the power status of each subject of CGCS is unbalanced. This also leads to the formalization and even "pseudo collaboration" phenomenon of negotiation and collaboration among each subject. As a result, some

of the supply of community public cultural services has become a hidden act of transmission; social organizations face the risk of “being administrated” and “being rolled in”. Secondly, due to the imbalance of power status among the subjects of CGCS, there is a crisis of trust or blind trust. This ultimately leads to the inertia of collaborative governance. Through in-depth interviews with some staff of those NGOs providing services in the surveyed communities, this study found that most of those NGOs have a high psychological dependence on the grass roots government and grass roots autonomous organizations. This dependence leads to a natural imbalance of power in the process of CGCS. For example, in the survey, a large number of social workers in China were found to have chosen to be admitted to the administrative posts of community neighborhood committees, or to be transferred to other industries every year. In addition, NGOs are on the edge of “being administrated”. As a result, on the one hand, NGOs have serious brain drain problems, due to poor treatment and heavy workloads. On the other hand, the managers of those NGOs always feel there is nothing they can do about the problem, due to their long-term dependence on grass roots governments and their agencies.

### **Ability Dependence**

Ability dependence refers to the inertia of collaborative governance caused by the insufficient governance ability of grass roots leaders. Ansell and Gash (2008) pointed out that leadership (including licensing and authorization) and other factors are important factors affecting the efficiency of collaborative governance. Their research was based on a comprehensive analysis of 137 regional research studies of collaborative governance in the fields of public health, education, social welfare, and international relations. As the most important participants of CGCS, grass roots leaders have an important impact on CGCS in China. The efficiency of CGCS also has strong dependence on the governance ability of grass roots leaders, especially their innovation ability. The inertia of collaboration takes many forms, such as the behavior of collaboration becoming a mere formality, the passive participation or low participation of community residents, and the passive collaboration or low participation of social forces. This type of inertia is initiated due to the lack of the governance ability of grass roots leaders. Take Community A, Community B, and Community C as examples. The main leader of Community A has a strong sense of innovation, and an ability to mobilize and to obtain public resources. As a result, the efficiency of the CGCS of Community A is much higher than the other two communities. Zhang is the main leader of Community A. She has been engaged in community management for more than 10 years since graduating from college. Through the survey of six Jie Dao Bans, Zhang was found to have a relatively high education; she is also a younger director of the community neighborhood committee. She was also found through face-to-face interviews to be very enthusiastic about innovating the current community public cultural service supply mechanism, strengthening cooperation with social organizations and enterprises, and actively applying for grass roots governments. The ultimate aim is to help create a community cooperative production mechanism. The participants of CGCS in Community A are becoming more and more diverse. They not only collaborate with NGOs, cultural enterprises, and community volunteer organizations, but they also collaborate with provincial literature and art broadcasting, as well as other news media. The content and influence of community public cultural service projects are being expanded, and the initiative in terms of participating in CGCS has greatly improved. Conversely, the main leaders of Community B and Community C both have low education levels and are older than Zhang. They also have a low level of acceptance and understanding of government purchases, collaborative governance, and other grass roots governance innovation matters. They have high enthusiasm for their work, but their working methods are much more traditional and stereotyped. They generally hold strong

attitudes regarding the exclusion of CGCS. Their ability to access and mobilize public resources is also weak. Consequently, the inertia of collaboration between community and grass roots government has occurred.

In addition, the fragmented housing pattern has led to a growing alienation of neighborhood relations among community residents, as well as a declining sense of community identity. Especially in communities with large floating populations, community residents have a low sense of participation and community identity. This makes mobilizing and organizing community public affairs extremely difficult. The result is a lack of awareness and participation of community residents, which will also lead to the inertia of CGCS.

### Conclusion

This paper finds that developing countries with relatively centralized power, an insufficient independence of social forces, but a rising awareness of citizen participation (such as China), are prone to face the problem of collaboration inertia in the process of promoting the reform of CGCS. This finding is specifically shown in four types which are policy dependence, information dependence, power dependence, ability dependence. Thus, this study suggests that the current unequal negotiated collaborative system should be improved by supplementing the existing system with an attitude change of local governments, formal CGCS regulations or rules, trust reconstruction among each of the collaborative sectors, and an incentive system with social work organization and cultural NGOs. Such a collaborative governance system of cultural services might also provide some lessons to those developing countries with relatively centralized power and an insufficient independence of social forces, but a rising awareness of citizen participation. In addition, there are some different mechanisms of CGCS for regional differences. Therefore, this study could not cover each mechanism of CGCS in China.

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