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MA LONGJUN

Northwest Normal University

МА ЛОҢ ЖУН

Тундук-Батыш педагогикалык университети

МА ЛУНЦЗЮНЬ

Северо-Западный педагогический университет

**DEPENDENT PARTICIPATION OF NGOS IN CHINESE RURAL MANAGEMENT:  
WAYS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

**Кытайдагы айыл кыштак башкаруусунун социалдык уюмдардан көз каранды  
түрдө катышуусу: методдору жана мүнөздөмөлөрү**

**Участие неправительственных организаций в управлении сельским хозяйством  
Китая: методы и параметры**

***Abstract.** Participation of rural NGOs in Chinese rural management has become one of the main directions and important strategies of Chinese rural management system innovation. However, in the context that the government has a high degree of recognition on the participation of rural NGOs while the institutionalization of rural NGOs is low, the participation of rural NGOs is on the whole reflected as an unstable and non-institutionalized dependent participation. In China, rural NGOs volunteer service and the government purchasing the rural NGOs social service are two main ways of the rural NGOs participating in rural management. The two main ways that NGOs participate in rural management show typical 'dependent style' features. To some extent, it is an important entry point and focal point for the modernization of Chinese rural management to continuously promote and strengthen the participation of rural NGOs in rural management and weaken its dependency characteristics.*

***Аннотация.** Кытайда айыл кыштактардагы социалдык уюмдарынын айыл кыштак башкаруу механизмине катышуусу эчак эле айыл кыштак башкаруу системасын инновациялоонун негизги багыттарынын жана маанилүү стратегияларынын бири болуп калган. Өкмөт тарабынан айыл кыштактардагы социалдык уюмдарынын катышуусуна чоң маани берилген, бирок, айыл кыштактардагы социалдык уюмдарынын институтташтырылышынын деңгээли төмөн болуп жаткан жагдайда, айыл кыштактардагы социалдык уюмдарынын катышуусу негизинен туруксуз, институтташпаган жана көз каранды катышуу болуп айгеленет. Кытайда айыл кыштак социалдык уюмдарынын катышуунун эки негизги жолу бар: бири волонтердук кызматтарга катышуу, экинчиси айыл кыштактардагы социалдык уюмдардын жалпылык кызматтарынын өкмөт тарабынан сатып алынышы. Айыл кыштак социалдык уюмдарынын айыл кыштак социалдык башкарууга катышуусу типтүү «көз каранды» мүнөздөмөнү көрсөтөт, ал уюштуруу мүнөздөмөлөрүндө, катышуу механизмдеринде жана катышуунун натыйжаларында чагылдырылат. Белгилүү бир деңгээлде айыл кыштак социалдык уюмдарынын айыл кыштак социалдык башкарууга катышуусун үзгүлтүксүз өнүктүрүү жана күчөтүү, жана алардын көз карандылыгын азайтуу бул Кытайдын айыл башкаруусун модернизациялоонун маанилүү кириш пункту жана багыты болуп саналат.*

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**Аннотация.** *Участие сельских неправительственных организаций (УСНО) в управлении сельским хозяйством Китая стало одним из основных направлений и важной стратегией инноваций в сфере регулирования сельскохозяйственной деятельности. С одной стороны, правительство уделяет повышенное внимание УСНО, с другой стороны, сельские общественные организации имеют более низкий уровень институционализации. По сути УСНО, как организация, в процессе своей работы является неустойчивой, неинституциональной и зависимой от многих факторов. В Китае существуют два основных направления деятельности УСНО: организация добровольного участия людей в оказании услуг и сотрудничество с правительством в части оказания государственных услуг для сельских общественных организаций. В обоих случаях в статусе УСНО присутствуют типичные черты «зависимости», которые проявляются в способах организации, системах и результатах участия. Постоянное содействие расширению участия сельских социальных организаций в сельском хозяйстве, снижение их зависимости в значительной степени является важным фактором и направлением модернизации управления сельскохозяйственной отраслью в Китае.*

**Keywords:** *Rural management; Rural NGOs; Dependent participation*

**Урунтлуу сөздөр:** *Айыл кыштак башкаруу, айыл кыштак социалдык уюмдар, көз каранды түрдө катышуу.*

**Ключевые слова:** *управление в сфере сельского хозяйства; участие сельских неправительственных организаций; зависимость в процессе участия.*

**Introduction.** Since the reform and opening up, Chinese rural NGOs have been developing rapidly, with the number of organizations increasing year by year, the types of organizations becoming more and more abundant, and the space for their growth and development becoming increasingly broad. At present, the government pays increasing attention to and attaches increasing importance to rural NGOs, expecting rural NGOs to play a prominent role in Chinese rural management, so as to deal with dynamic, diverse and complex rural social problems and remedy the government failure and market failure existing in rural management. So, in China, the participation of rural NGOs in rural management has become the main direction of rural management system innovation.

But a basic problem is that the reality of rural NGOs participating in Chinese rural management is certainly not the picture depicted by the public governance theory. Because the public governance theory describes the organization system and its operation mode and effect of multiple subjects in a state of relative equality. From the perspective of the participation of NGOs, the public governance theory also describes the NGOs with higher maturity and their relatively independent and equal participation modes operating under the conditions of western social systems. In the reality of Chinese rural management context -- the high government attitude to rural NGOs participation but low maturity of rural NGOs, it is forming a multiple but inequality organization system, the real state is rural NGOs with low maturity dependently participating in rural management, this article referred to as 'dependent participation'. It is different from the assumption of public governance theory. Then, what are the characteristics of the dependent participation, in terms of the purpose, scope, content, degree, mode, mechanism and function of participation? This paper discusses the main ways and core features of Chinese rural NGOs dependent participation in rural management.

#### **Two ways of dependent participation.**

From the perspective of participation content, at present, rural NGOs in China mainly participate in the management of education, health, environmental protection, poverty

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alleviation, disaster reduction and relief. However, from the perspective of the way of participation, according to the division of operation logic contained in the process of participation, the current ways of participation of rural NGOs can be divided into two types: One is professionalism-oriented, Participation through government purchase of NGOs services, it is a way of 'project scheme' participation--mainly accept 'project' entrusted by the government, rely on the 'operational resources' of rural NGOs and provide professional public service and public administration. The other is voluntary-oriented, rural NGOs are involved in the rural management through spontaneous and voluntary participation in the community Autonomous affairs, provide daily self-service and self-management, the participation process depends on the 'management resources' of rural NGOs [1]. These two ways of participation involve different degrees of power structure in rural society, the former is shallow, the latter is deep.

#### **The government purchasing the services of rural NGOs.**

The government purchasing the services of rural NGOs, in a broad sense, it means that the government will entrust the public service affairs to the rural NGOs and pay the cost through the competitive and non-competitive methods such as open bidding, invitation bidding, competitive negotiation, single source and inquiry. The government purchasing the services of rural NGOs is similar to the market transaction. In essence, the government uses market means and contractual tools to entrust rural NGOs as its agents to fulfill the government functions of public management and public services. Thus, the principal-agent relationship between the government and rural NGOs based on public services or public management projects was formed [2]. In this principal-agent relationship, the government solves the shortage of government production capacity in public services by purchasing rural NGOs' services, then it realizes its responsibility and obligation of supplying public services to rural society. In addition, rural NGOs participate in the rural management with the help of their own professional service and organization resources.

At present, the government purchasing the services of rural NGOs has become an important practice for Chinese government to carry out administrative system reform and social management system reform with 'streamlining administration and delegating power' as the main content, and it is also an important way for rural NGOs to participate in rural social public services and public management. The rural governments actively implement the national policy, increase financial resources and expand the scope of purchase. From the perspective of historical development, rural governments have been expanding the scope and intensity of purchase year by year. For several consecutive years, some provinces have allocated funds from the 'Welfare Lottery fund' to support grassroots governments to purchase all kinds of public services from rural NGOs. For example, the governments of shanxi province put the welfare lottery fund 6 million yuan in 2016 and allocated 10.8 million yuan in 2018 to buy the NGO services, the governments of Gansu province allocated 6 million yuan per year to support 25 NGOs to participate in public service projects in 2018 and 2019. The purchase content mainly includes transactional work and service work, rural NGOs focused on the public welfare projects.

In theory, rural NGOs have their unique advantages in participating in rural management by means of government purchasing services. First, government provides funds, administrative legitimacy and specific participation platform and space for rural NGOs to participate, so that rural NGOs can have the opportunity to give full play to their professional advantages and provide professional public services for rural society more efficiently. The second is the introduction of market mechanism. Within the framework of contract, rural

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NGOs can participate in rural management on a relatively equal status with the government. The rights and obligations in the process of participation are stipulated by legal contracts, and the effect of participation is more reliable.

But, from the current specific practice, the government purchasing the services of rural NGOs did not really apply the market mechanism--They are often 'formal purchases' under 'unfair market rules', [3] embodied in 'purchasing behavior internalization' [4]. In the process of purchasing services, the government obviously prefers to choose existing government-run NGOs, or 'some governments establish corresponding NGOs and conduct targeted purchase of services after determining the service purchase items' [5]. Even public-tender contracts for public services tend to discourage free competition among rural NGOs and choose the ones the government prefers, by setting a hidden threshold or specific bidding criteria. In this essentially 'non-competitive purchase activities under dependent relationship' [6], The government has invested a huge amount of financial resources, has given administrative legitimacy and has provided a platform and space for rural NGOs participation, but The type of NGOs introduced into the countryside tend to be government-dependent ones, whose ability to provide professional public services is doubtful. In fact, its dependence on the government destroys the equality of subjects required by the market contract, the advantages of the market mechanism are virtually eliminated, and the effect of participation cannot be guaranteed. In addition, with the limited number and types of projects purchased by the government, such unequal or non-free competition actually reduces the participation space of rural NGOs, aggravates the polarization of rural NGOs, and may form a kind of non-virtuous cycle.

Moreover, due to the obvious limitations of rural NGOs -- small scale, simple structure, limited decision-making and execution ability, and lack of clear service purpose, object, content, scope, method and demand-oriented consciousness. As a result, there is a serious shortage of service capacity in rural NGOs. In addition, the service projects undertaken by rural NGOs have clear timeliness and stage, with less long-term projects but more short-term projects, and lack sustainability [7].

#### **Volunteer services of rural NGOs in community.**

At present, Chinese rural society is faced with a series of social problems and contradictions that need to be solved urgently, including not only the old problems such as the help of vulnerable groups, neighborhood disputes, land transfer, but also new problems such as land expropriation and demolition, environmental pollution and so on. The old and new problems are intertwined, making it difficult to solve them. However, because local governments are 'attached' to higher governments, [8] 'levitates' the rural society, [9] and the villagers Committees are 'Administrative', [10] the rural management bodies appear to be 'disconnected' from the rural society, and they are unable to focus on the rural management, especially the community management. Faced with these old and new contradictions, the government began to emphasize the cultivation and development of rural NGOs and support them participating in rural community management to play the positive roles.

In December 2017, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the Opinions on Vigorously Cultivating Community NGOs, which explicitly requires all local governments to vigorously cultivate and develop rural community NGOs. Then, some governments issued implementation detailed rules. For example, Shaanxi Province government clearly pointed out that community NGOs should actively play the following four functions and roles: first, providing community services; Second, expanding resident's participation; Third, cultivating community culture; Fourth, promoting community harmony.

In the original sense, 'community is a regional social life community composed of a certain number of members, with common needs and interests, forming frequent social interaction,

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producing emotional connection and psychological identity' [11] but, in China, 'community is a typical constructivist concept. First of all, it is not a pure sociological concept, but a social entity or social unit based on a certain region that the government tries to construct'. [12] In the current practice of rural community management, community usually refers to the grass-roots society at the township and administrative village level, rural community NGOs act and operate within this scope. From the perspective of the nature and fields of the activities of rural community NGOs, there are mainly three types. First, managerial NGOs, such as Village Affairs Supervision Council. Second, economic NGOs, such as specialized farmer's cooperatives, rural mutual fund cooperatives; Third, social NGOs, such as the association of the elderly.

From the ideal level, the various forms of rural community NGOs, as rooted in community, can play its kinship, popularity, geographical advantages because they are more familiar with internal affairs of rural community. On the one hand, rural community NGOs can enhance the capacity of the public 'self-organization', expand community internal public participation and provide public products and public services, to make them become the basic power of community management and dynamic factors. On the other hand, they can also act as a bridge between the people and the government -- both reflecting the people collective appeal to local government, at the same time conveying all kinds of government policies to the community, so they can link people and government together and jointly maintain community order, dissolve the contradictions among the community, to promote community harmony, promote community development.

Volunteer services of rural NGOs in community as another main way of participation in rural management, is different from the first way to participate. In essence, it is voluntary-oriented, based on the principle of spontaneous and voluntary, participating in the comprehensive services and management of daily affairs to promote community internal 'self-education, self-management, self-service and self-supervision'. The forms and contents of this kind of participation are more flexible and diverse. The rural NGOs can provide the community public life care, entertainment, psychological counseling, humanistic care and spiritual consolation service and personalized service. In a sense, this kind of participation will touch the deep power structure or management mode within the community to a greater extent.

#### **The typical characteristics of dependent participation.**

As the core concept of this paper, 'dependent participation' is used to describe the realistic state and type of rural NGOs participating in rural management in China. It refers to the process in which rural NGOs participate in rural management when their independence and autonomy are relatively lacking. In this process, rural NGOs show 'dependence' to the government and 'passivity' in participating in rural management. In other words, rural NGO 'dependent participation', its core is participation but typical characteristic is 'dependence'.

In terms of participation process, in the current rural management situation, rural NGOs are often passively incorporated into the rural management activities advocated by the government through various strong mobilization. No matter what kind of mobilization is adopted, it will make the rural NGOs participation in rural management show a strong dependent character. This kind of dependent participation has three prominent problems: first, the administrative phenomenon of rural NGOs is serious, which is reflected in organizational goals, organizational structure and operating system; Second, the participation mechanism is not perfect, which is mainly embodied in the power and responsibility division institution, communication and coordination institution, incentive system and supervision and accountability institution. The specific problems are the lack of institution and institution

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failure. Third, participation performance is not well, mainly reflected in the problematic direction of public service, inefficiency public service and low public satisfaction.

To some extent, rural NGOs serve as tools for the government to provide public services, and they do not have equal management subject status. The process of participation in essence is still dominated by the administrative control and that is passive and unstable, the rural NGOs participation range, depth and effect largely depend on the will of the government. Their roles are limited and partial, short-term and temporary, unstable, discontinuous. This kind of dependent participation does not fundamentally change the traditional power structure and operation mode in rural management, let alone establish a new 'social management community' featuring 'co-construction, co-management and Shared benefits'. In short, the dependent participation of rural NGOs fails to give full play to the unique management effectiveness that the public governance theory expected.

#### **Conclusion.**

In China, rural NGOs volunteer service and the government purchasing the rural NGOs services are two main ways of the rural NGOs participating in rural management. But on the whole, the participation is still unstable and non-institutionalized, and it is a kind of random and dependent participation, its typical characteristic is 'dependent'.

In fact, the dependent participation of rural NGOs means that there is still no stable space and institutionalized channels for rural NGOs to participate in the rural management, and more importantly, the current rural management structure and management system still maintain the traditional unified management mode. 'So far, we still lack a practical institutional arrangement to connect the top-down administrative system with the multi-participation system of self-government' [13]. 'Although a dense institutional network has been established in the rural society, it is confronted with the double structural management dilemma of bottom-up and top-down when connecting the diverse and complex rural society'. The dilemma of system cohesion just shows the contradiction between the unified management system and the diversified management system in the aspect of system logic. The unified management system emphasizes the top-down control and dominance of administrative power, while the diversified management system emphasizes the open system and multi-subject consultation based on the principle of equality. There is a natural tension between the organizational operation principles followed by these two management systems, and they tend to automatically repel each other. To effectively promote the modernization of rural management system and management capacity, it is necessary to go beyond the institutional arrangement of traditional administrative management and the organizational logic of bureaucratic system, carry out new organizational design and institutional arrangement, and adopt new administrative skills and ways to carry out systematic and structural reform in accordance with the new logic. We will continue to strengthen and promote the participation of rural NGOs in rural management and gradually dilute their dependent characteristics, which may be an important entry point and focal point for this kind of structural reform.

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***Expert comments:***

*This paper mainly analyzes the ways and characteristics of Chinese rural NGOs' participation in rural management. On the whole, the concept of "dependent participation" proposed in this paper can better summarize the practical characteristics of rural NGOs' participation in Chinese rural management. Moreover, this paper makes a proper comparison between "dependent participation" and public governance theory, and points out the applicability of public governance theory in China, which is of high academic significance and meets the requirements of publication.*

***Kim Dongri, Professor of Public Administration  
Zhou Enlai School of Government,  
Nankai University***