

10.70711/frim.v2i7.5033

# Modernization Framework of Community Governance: Practice and Reflection in Dongguan City

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**Abstract:** This paper delves into the innovative pathways for constructing a modern governance system amidst the backdrop of population growth and social diversification in Dongguan City. It scrutinizes the innovative governance models spearheaded by party-building, the government's legal responsibilities, and the involvement of diverse entities, proposing strategies for optimizing talent incentives, technological empowerment, and social integration. Despite certain achievements in grid management and the "Smart Grid Project," Dongguan City still confronts challenges due to the complexity of social situations and talent shortages. This article aims to offer solutions and practical directions for the modernization of grassroots governance in Dongguan City and other metropolises.

**Keywords:** Metropolis; Modernization of Grassroots Governance; Diversified Co-governance

## 1. Introduction of the Issue

The modernization of grassroots governance is a crucial component of China's advancement towards a modernized national governance system and capability. Situated at the core of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Dongguan City has not only achieved remarkable success in economic construction but also conducted a series of exploratory practices in the field of social governance. These practices hold significant exploratory value in promoting the modernization of community governance systems. However, Dongguan City also faces challenges such as rapid population growth, diversification of social structure, and diversification of public service demands during the process of modernizing grassroots social governance. Against this backdrop, the article posits that in analyzing and discussing the pathways to modernize grassroots governance in megacities.

## 2. Effectiveness of Dongguan's Grassroots Community Governance

### 2.1 Party-building Leads the Modernization of Community Governance Systems

Dongguan City has established party and mass service centers in all 596 villages (communities) by 2021, achieving the leadership requirements of party organizations in the grassroots governance system from an institutional setup. At the same time, considering the widespread distribution of industrial parks in Dongguan City, and the concentration of enterprises, populations, party members, and resources within these parks, 73 "Sunshine Rain" party and mass service centers have been established in key parks, creating a more convenient, open, and shared comprehensive management service platform, and promoting the overall improvement of urban grassroots party building levels.

### 2.2 The Government's Legal Responsibilities Aid in the Legalization of Community Governance Processes

In 2020, the Dongguan City Government took the lead in formulating the "Opinions on Creating a Co-construction, Co-governance, and Shared Social Governance Pattern" and 37 supporting systems, establishing a "1+N" policy system, and laying the normative foundation for the modernization of grassroots community governance systems. In 2021, it was the first in the province to introduce the "14th Five-Year Plan for the Modernization of Urban Social Governance," providing the fundamental institutional direction for the construction of modern community governance systems in Dongguan City through policy systems.

### 2.3 Diversified Entities Participate in Promoting the Socialization of Community Governance

Firstly, party-building leads the construction of mass organizations, giving full play to the co-construction role of mass organizations. Secondly, party members, landlords, fellow villagers' associations, volunteer teams, and other forces are actively mobilized to participate in grassroots governance. Thirdly, property companies take the initiative to take responsibility and play the role of corporate entities in participation.

### 2.4 "Smart Grid Project" Technologically Drives the Diversification of Governance Methods

The "Smart Grid Project" is the central system for achieving digital grid-based governance of grassroots urban areas in Dongguan City. Through in-depth investigation and reporting by grid managers and precise law enforcement by functional departments, as of 2022, the "Smart

Grid Project” has reported a total of 13.776 million types of problems and hidden dangers, promoting effective disposal of 13.385 million cases; it has carried out more than 51, 000 types of services, directly involving more than 700, 000 people.

### **3. Dilemmas in Dongguan’s Grassroots Community Governance**

#### **3.1 The Organizational Function of Party-building Leading Grassroots Community Governance Needs to be Strengthened**

Firstly, there is a phenomenon of insufficient party organization construction and lack of vitality in non-public enterprises. Some party organizations in non-public enterprises have even become “zombie” organizations. Secondly, in terms of party leadership in community resource integration, there is still a lack of understanding and a lack of supporting system construction for community resource sharing inside and outside the party organization. For example, the sense of responsibility of resident units is generally weak, and most believe that community governance has no direct relationship with their units. Even if some community organizations and grassroots party organizations plan related community activities, they are mostly more formal than substantive.

#### **3.2 The Pressure of Actual Governance Continues to Rise**

Firstly, the governance pressure brought by the huge population scale. According to the “Statistical Bulletin of the National Economic and Social Development of Dongguan City in 2023, “ the ratio of registered population to floating population is 1:3.9. This makes Dongguan City often face the contradiction of resource supply in the fields of education, medical care, transportation, and other livelihoods in grassroots community governance. Secondly, the economic growth slowdown has led to fiscal tension. According to the “Statistical Bulletin of the National Economic and Social Development of Dongguan City in 2023, “ the economic growth rate in 2023 was 3.6%, which is significantly lower than the economic growth rate of more than 7% per year before 2020. The slowdown in economic growth directly affects the financial support for community governance, adding tremendous financial pressure to the difficult tone of grassroots community governance in Dongguan City.

#### **3.3 The Challenge of Social Integration of Migrant Populations Exists for a Long Time**

Firstly, most of the foreign personnel in Dongguan are engaged in the processing manufacturing industry with junior college and below, their lower education level leads to a lower degree of social integration than those with a bachelor’s degree or above. Secondly, negative emotions of low income are bound to make foreign personnel disappointed and repelled by urban life, which in turn deepens the resistance to social integration. Finally, the working mode of traditional manufacturing industry makes the communication time and range of foreign personnel engaged in processing manufacturing industry limited, leading to their social interaction range is often limited to the same village group or online friends, making these foreign personnel insufficient in social integration and unable to participate in grassroots community governance.

#### **3.4 The Governance Pattern of Diversified Co-governance Still Needs to be Continuously Promoted**

On the one hand, the constraints of diversified governance are weak. In the practice of diversified grassroots governance, the grassroots people’s government has not made specific arrangements for the guidance and supervision of resident autonomous organizations such as homeowners’ committees, leading to most of the established homeowners’ committees being loosely organized, with unclear member tenure and evaluation mechanisms, and decision-making is not democratic and not open. On the other hand, the driving force for community resident governance is weak. In the actual operation of grassroots community governance, residents have a vague perception of their role in community management, considering it to be the affair of the government and property management, and generally exhibit a low level of attention and recognition towards the common interests of the community.

## **4. Suggestions for Improving the Modernization Pattern of Grassroots Community Governance in Megacities Represented by Dongguan**

### **4.1 Strengthen the Party-building Leading Function of Grassroots Party Organizations and Play the Organizational Role of the “Battle Fortress”**

Firstly, include the party-building work of non-public enterprise party organizations into the overall layout of the city’s party-building, strengthen its political positioning, service positioning, and planning positioning, and give full play to the “battle fortress” role of non-public enterprise grassroots party organizations in the grassroots community governance process, which is to take a comprehensive view of the whole situation, coordinate all parties, and serve the masses. Secondly, through the joint efforts of regional party-building organizations, sort out and integrate the public service supply and demand list of grassroots community party organizations, and provide more accurate governance services for the community masses.

### **4.2 Optimize Information-based Intelligent Governance Tools and Use Technology to Alleviate Governance Pressure**

Firstly, strengthen the construction of Dongguan City's basic database, achieve interconnection between government databases and social databases, improve the integration and utilization rate of data resources, and promote the efficiency of grassroots community governance. Secondly, rely on the "Smart Grid Project" to build a community governance grid system that participates in socialization. For example, you can rely on the online platform of the "Smart Grid Project" to guide community residents to use the community governance public account as a way to express demands. Thirdly, grasp the bottom line of data security and ensure the standardized use of online data.

#### **4.3 Continue to Explore Multi-channel Social Integration Methods to Help Break Through Various Social Integration Dilemmas**

Firstly, in terms of the integration of group differences in education, you can implement the first integration to lead the later integration, that is, to promote the social integration of high education groups first, and for low education groups, you can first grasp the most basic economic integration to solve the most basic survival problems, and on this basis, enrich the integration of culture, psychology, society, and other aspects of social integration. Secondly, in terms of work compensation, in addition to the most basic wage security and the bottom line of social security support, it is more necessary to help foreign workers acquire the ability to have high income. Thirdly, in terms of the social environment, it is crucial to build a communication platform between the foreign population and the registered population.

#### **4.4 Mechanism Construction and Motivation Enhancement Work Together to Continuously Optimize the Diversified Co-governance Pattern of Grassroots Communities**

Firstly, under the guidance of the grassroots government, break the functional barriers between different departments and establish a cross-departmental "Community Governance Committee" to achieve unified management and centralized output of community governance resources. Secondly, it is necessary to improve the multi-subject deliberation mechanism of community governance on the main battlefield of the community. Thirdly, it is necessary to cultivate the sense of ownership of residents and make good use of the vehicle of the homeowners' committee to strengthen the participation motivation of community residents.

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