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## COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE PATTERNS: FROM THE TENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF FRACTAL THEORY

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**Abstract.** Community governance quality is of interest to entire human beings across the globe, as communities are the very environment they are living in, hence deciding on people's life quality. However, the approaches to an inhabitable community vary and the specific governance patterns of community often differ from country to country. Some communities exhibit strong favor for spontaneous order while other communities obviously result from certain deliberate plan. The list of cross-community difference can go on. No matter what kind of pattern a community has chosen willy-nilly, it is noticeable that the realistic governance pattern for a community to embrace is determined by many factors, such as residents' mores, external institutions and historical tradition among others. To demonstrate the hypothesis, this paper employs a comparative case study of community governance respectively in USA and China (i.e., the city of Oswego, NY, USA and a few urban communities in China). First, a literature review is given on the significant approaches in China to improving community governance. Then, encouraged by the paradigm of social physics (that is a mindset about borrowing scientific principles to handle social problems), the authors choose fractal theory (especially the relevant concept of self-similarity) as an analysis framework to arrive at the conclusion that specific community governance pattern is usually not freely chosen but determined by the fundamental variables which the community happens to be embedded in. The method of analysis and its subsequent implications are expected to turn out useful in understanding and further bettering the community governance effect in future.

**Keywords:** *Community governance, fractal theory, self-similarity.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The Apollo temple at Delphi of Greece's inscription "know thyself" reminds us that self-awareness can be the origin point for us to know the universe and only through a careful study of ourselves could we grasp the operation logic of the community and society that we live in. Coincidentally, it is said that Westminster Abbey in London has another similar message that one person once dreamed of changing the world only to find he could not transform any person including his close relatives; and it was just at his end of life that he understood the cause to his

failure, that is, he should have started his ambitious project from nobody but himself. That is to say, a microsomal change might well lead to a macrosomal one.

Great minds always think alike, and this idea also has its copy in ancient Chinese philosophy. Confucius insisted that one should not get involved in external public administration unless he could satisfactorily perform his personal and domestic duties. (Dai, 2017). No wonder Fei Xiaotong (a sociologist in China) believed in the concept of *Chaxugeju*, a basic social structure of China that literally means a structure composed of differential scales or orders. According to Fei, the orders were like the circles formed on the surface of water when a stone was thrown into it. In such structure, individual might be the center whereas his family, community, country and so on are the extension of his own care (Fei, 2006). Vivid as the metaphorical paradigm is, a question arises therein. That is, why is it possible we could understand a whole or macrocosm by studying a part or microcosm? What implication does that logic have in our understanding community governance? Specifically, what is the relation between an individual state of mind and the quality of the community per se on one hand; and what is the connection between community governance and the nationwide governance system on the other?

This paper has a goal of trying to interpret the inherent logic of scalable entities. In an effort to complete this task, we incorporate some results from fractal theory.

## 1. RESEARCH METHOD

Our research in this regard began with a literature review, regarding established opinions about the approaches to build community in present day China. The approaches include nostalgic pattern, welfare-driven pattern, co-built pattern, and market-driven pattern among others. Although all these ideas prove relevant and significant, they are mostly based on subjective or prescriptive suppositions. Therefore, a comprehensive view seems worthwhile. Secondly, we applied the results of fractal theory to the analysis of problems with community governance patterns in an effort to get a special perspective for grasping the inherent logic for community governance itself. Fundamental to a comprehensive view was to review fractal theory.

In 1700, Leibniz raised the concept of self-similarity to demonstrate that most of the seemingly irregular fragmental parts in the world might well live in a scaling system and these scalable fractal parts are considered to be “self-similar” (Mandelbrot, 1983). According to this paradigm, although some piecemeal parts or fractals appear “disorderly, irregular and difficult in grasping its law”, the astonishing verity of “scalability” helps people to sense a certain order hidden in the seemingly disorderly state.

Of course, the main research is in geological graphics, which is beyond the classical European geometry, such as a cloud, which is not a sphere, a mountain that is not a vertebral body, the bark of a tree that is definitely not smooth, or the path of a lightning bolt that is bound to be far from a straight line. As far as these common irregular figures are concerned, mathematicians developed fractal theory

by which people could figure out what the whole is like judging by a tiny part that might be close to a regular shape.

This concept has much in common with the calculus, since both of them are concerned about the mini part and the huge whole. Fractal theory holds that these seemingly irregular and disordered samples with different scales and sizes do imply some remarkable similarities. In 1997, Mandelbrot performed his outstanding study of coastline topology. Complex as a continent's coastline looks, the analysts discovered a certain order in the structure. That is to say, among the specific differences in coastlines at different scales, they are geometrically equivalent. Then, self-similarity concept could act as a tool to shed light on a lot of puzzling problems by using simple rather than obscure logic to connect seemingly intractable phenomena to particular simple elements, hence showing clear logic. Actually, the convenience of this research makes fractal theory quickly attract the interest of many scientists apart from mathematicians. In Mandelbrot's words, "although the research of fractal theory is based on accurate mathematical derivation, it is hoped that nonmathematical professionals can understand its conclusions and then like and promote the use of relevant conclusions" (Mandelbrot, 1977). Afterwards, more usage of this idea is seen in the fields of biology, physics and geography, etc. Even further, the notable value of this analysis method extends into social science topics, as dreamt of long ago by M. A. Ampere who imagined a science of statecraft where community governance could be established upon certain strict rules of science. Put briefly, since Mandelbrot wrote "Fractal: Form, Chance and Dimension", which is considered to be a symbol of the origin of "Fractal Theory", people have been gradually accepting the hypothesis that irregularly shaped objects tend to bear identical fractal at distinct scales. As labeled by a Chinese scholar, fractal theory is "a line connecting multiple disciplines" (Sun Hongjun et al., 2005).

As the fractal geometry of nature shows us the beauty of the principle of deriving information about something from its bigger or smaller fractals, social students virtually hope to use the theory for "deriving the picture of a tree or even a forest by studying one single leaf" or "to know the food of one wok with one taste" (Lü, 1999).

Now, when it comes to community governance, the conceptual tools of fractals' self-similarity is believed to be powerfully relevant in explaining the grass-root community governance pattern choice under the given institutional environment (Zhou & Wang, 2016). Again, Confucius' remark about community governance is worth quoting: "It was advisable for one to make sure his house is surrounded by wise and good neighbors before finally deciding to settle in that community" (Eno, 2006). Obviously, the great philosopher was confident that part of the community (say, some residents' state of mind) could be the dependable indicators for the degree of value of the said communities. What is more, Confucius insists that one's attention did matter. Therefore, the environment has a subtle effect on people and the community environment, and the members inside it (especially their morality, intelligence, or state of mind) have a deep fractal effect. That is why there has emerged a chain of morals or lessons from the past, like "those who get close to red dye are red and those who get close to ink are black", "the birds particular about trees before perching therein are shrewd ones", "gardeners smell of flower", "like

father, like son”, or “love me love my dog”, etc. All these sayings point to a hypothesis that part is whole in some sense and element is both deciding on and being decided by the environment. Meanwhile, that is also why many Chinese parents are keen on deliberately moving houses in practice: they do so merely for their children to be in healthful surroundings to raise the expected character. It is well-known the great Saint Mencius has a mother who noticed his son imitating undertakers’ behavior when living nearby a cemetery, contracting butchers’ crudeness when living close to a butcher’s shop, mastering bargaining tricks with merchants as neighbors until she made her mind to move house to the side of a school where Mencius the sage came to learn the rites, politeness and diligence. Thus, it would be not an overstatement that the success of Mencius’ education is a result of a community quality. In other words, one person’s achievement might well be a fractal of its environmental variables.

In short, this paper continues this logic to provide a comparative study to demonstrate the close link between the community and its members’ mores on neighborhood basis and to explain the relevance of community governance to the overall institutions on national basis. This paper would like to take it as a hypothesis that the good governance of certain community is not only dependent on the physical facilities, but also by the subtle elements like inhabitants’ collective morals and spirits as well as the nation’s tradition and institutions. In order to support it, we would first carry out a literature study and then borrow mathematician’s fractal theory to shed light on our core point above mentioned (in short, community quality is related to individual mores and national institutions), and then the research used transnational cases to offer further exemplifications.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Before working upon our case study of community governance pattern choice, we first made a comprehensive review of the academia’s opinion about their ideal approaches to community governance. With this review as background, this research will use fractal theory framework to put forward some hidden mechanisms and mindsets for a community to select its specific governance patterns in practice.

### **2.1. Plural Facets of Community Concept**

Although the importance of community is widely accepted, the exact meanings of the often-heard word “community” are ironically far from articulately defined. In fact, community concept has a plethora of meanings. Just as Raymond Williams admits, “community is a difficult word” and it can mean “a specific group of people” and “the generality of mankind” as well (Williams, 2015).

No wonder we sometimes roughly understand it as the neighborhood we are living in, and on other occasions we often hear such concept as “a community of mankind with shared destiny” as being feverishly advocated by Chinese President Xi (Wang & Ling, 2017). No matter what sizes communities are, they “always feel good, as it is good to have a community, and 'to be in a community' means we are staying in a 'warm' place, a cozy and comfortable place where we can relax – we

are safe, there are no dangers looming in dark corners... (and in communities) We are never strangers to each other... (instead) we can count on each other's good will... (in brief) the word 'community' sounds sweet and what that word evokes is like a paradise lost – but one to which we dearly hope to return, and so we feverishly seek the roads that may bring us there” (Bauman, 2001).

As is known, it was Ferdinand Tönnies who raised the influential dichotomy between community and society, and in his framework, community refers to “small-scale, kinship and neighborhood-based” human relationship while society means those “large-scale competitive market-based” social bonds. If the former was taken as organic communities, then the purely mechanical construction would be regarded as the essence of society (Tönnies, 2001). Following this vein, we have to admit that the community is more like a people’s gathering by natural factors, and such form of gathering is commonly seen in the pre-industrial societies. For instance, the tribes in primitive age were often bonded by blood and governed by the domestic elders. Therefore, the classic idea of community in Tönnies’ sense is rather restricted to locality and blood-ties.

However, the concept of community generally used at present is beyond that domain prescribed by the classic writers. Especially, some advocates for community development might be pushing the community in a much broader and more inclusive direction. For example, endless projects are being put forward to facilitate the strangers to enjoy their communities, and many people would even use internet to freely contact any person if they like or feel in need to, which has given birth to a new realm called “virtual community”.

So, when we look back to Tönniesian concept of community, we have to admit that the picture he portrayed is turning somewhat out of date. In other words, people might grasp the word community as something quite different. Compared to the classic community researchers, like F. Tönnies (Tönnies, 2011) and H. Fei (Fei, 1939) who stressed the local intimacy and natural relativeness of community, modern community in industrial age and in current information age has carried more elements than previously interpreted. With the concept of community changing in its meanings, the goal of community construction will surely be different, and therefore the approaches to building community are far from identical. That explains why certain measures for building community might be the very nuisance to be got rid of in another community perception. No wonder Laotzu argued that “any artificial concept is virtually hard to be articulated in a dogmatic way” (Chen, 1984). And this blurry nature of the concept community makes it very wide-embracing.

It is even suggested by some scholars that the community construction be strictly corresponding to the complete hierarchies of human need in Maslow’s terms, covering both physical needs, sense of belonging and spiritual needs as well (Wu, 2018). Since people as social animals have a natural need for cooperation and sense of belonging (Maslow, 1943), people tend to endow the word community with some positive connotations like warmth and intimacy (Philips, 1993). But it is also a fact that people cannot necessarily have the same goal for their imagined good community governance. For example, nostalgic students would rather push their idea to bring modern community back to certain tribe-like pattern; but realistic

learners might well accept the community style that highlights independence, privacy or even a bit of distance or strangeness. Therefore, we would insist that where there is a community governance pattern, there is some institutional design and social milieu. When modern (and/or postmodern) societies arise, where strangers take the place of former relatives, the interactive bridge to make a community as such will shift from natural element to something else, like “market mechanism” or the “invisible hand”, described by Adam Smith, or the authority planning, which prevails in present China.

Thus, we would hold that today’s residential communities in China are not what Tönnies described as community because they are not only different from the ancient patriarchal or blood-tie-based communities, but also distinct from the “unit courtyard communities” once formed in early stage of PRC (Arcuri & Jing, 2019). Instead, under many emerging impacts from modernity, China has been undergoing a considerable disintegration of the traditional communities in Tönnies’ terms and the once-popular Chinese unit system; meanwhile, with the housing commercialization, the urbanization and the transformation of government functions, the communities in present China are expected to play more roles that are complex.

Mill thought that an external institution and its change is really “a product of (internal) habits, instincts, and unconscious wants and desires” (Mill, 1999). That is to say, any selection of approaches is the fact of a function of spontaneous growth; so is the selection of community governance patterns in that the residents’ mindsets, engagement and mindsets altogether mold the specific approach and the quality of community construction. Meanwhile, suppose they find their community fails to meet their expectation for security or inhabitability, they would either positively take measures to make it enjoyable or negatively leave it in some “vote-with-foot” way. That is why quite a few community activists in present China hold a point that the appearance and governance structure are both dependent upon the individual residents’ consciousness to engage and their willingness to contribute to the wellbeing of the community as a whole.

In the information age, many societies appear increasingly atom-like rather than tribe-like. Therefore, when we are talking about community governance, we might be talking in more than one sense. Consequently, people do not always agree on the standards about community’s desirable state. In other words, people have set different goals for their respective community construction projects. Some writers prefer to emphasize the intimate nature of a community as classic scholars did; some others like to place more weight to physical life facilities; and even further, some scholars hope to combine all the factors into a compound structure of community (Wu, 2019a), where citizens’ different Maslowian needs can optimistically be met once the chimera work is complete. With the understanding of community being multiple, the specific suggestions for community construction turn out very different. For example, Amitai Etzioni agrees with Mary Ann Glendon, “everyone has duties to the community” (Etzioni, 1993), and that responsibility and effective participation are key factors for a wholesome community. When the task of community construction is placed in specific political contexts, the diversified administrative milieu would play decisive roles.

In China, the authorities have formally set up a goal for the community development, that is, “having community co-built, co-governed and shared” in the framework of party leadership (Huang, 2018). Therefore, the neighborhood communities are supposed to be the fundamental governance units at grass-root level. For that purpose, plural participation and effective social integration would be instrumental, and the task carrier at Chinese present will be the grass-root bureaucratic units – the numerous local residential committees and their agents. What is more, the party branches in communities play an outstanding role in the community affairs, and they are authoritative when deciding on the choice of community activities as well as their fulfillment means.

By contrast, such party organizations and their substantial roles in community governance are rarely seen in the communities of other countries. For example, in Oswego, NY, USA, there are not any party branches like the counterpart community agencies in China, including party branches and community administrative committees or residents’ committees called by Read (Read, 2003); instead, the major responsibility is shared by the city government and the civil society (Oswego City Budget Commission, 2019).

Therefore, we can see that people from different culture might approach the concept of community from very distinct perspectives and with their particular social contexts and institutional inertia. As the perception of community influences the decisions or suggestions on how to build it, we will continue to dwell upon some typical arguments about the way to construct an ideal community (particularly current arguments in China).

## **2.2. Typical Approaches to Community Building**

Briefly speaking, the major models about community construction exhibit a spectrum from nostalgic to post-modern colors as discussed below.

### *2.2.1. Nostalgic approach to restore community to tribe*

Nostalgic model believes that the direction of modern community management ought to restore the traditional community and make the grass roots society glow with the warmth and intimacy characteristic of community. In this school of thought, a typical element of the community is to have face-to-face personal relationships, so the prerequisite of community reconstruction is the encouragement of interpersonal relationships to deal with the possible emotional losses of modern people. For that purpose, community organization needs reconstructing to facilitate their combining efforts for their common interests. In addition, during the coordination across the community, some charismatic leaders would play eminent roles, so their abilities are the key variable for the effects of community governance and their personal charisma is critical in maintaining the homogeneity, solidarity, and hence fostering the cultural psychology of the community. Therefore, the core of this model is deliberate calling back the intimacy and consolidation usually represented in traditional communities. In other words, the nature of such proposal is to realize the “community” in Töniesian sense.

Attractive as this proposal sounds to people as the emotional animals that usually fear being different but desire embracing a sense of belongingness or

conformity. Another fact is equally noticeable that quite a few persons really want to live in an environment with certain degrees of strangeness. Even there might be some people who feel somewhat timid among familiar surroundings or acquaintances; by contrast, when put in a strange neighborhood, they seem to enjoy themselves better. It does sound unconventional or weird, but people sometimes really show a tendency for separation, independence or freedom from being watched. That is, when people get together beyond a certain limit, they might feel embarrassed and prefer to alienate each other. Especially under the influence of emotion, people may sometimes like to stay together, and sometimes choose to stay away from each other. As written by Zhu Ziqing, “people feel like living in mass sometimes and in solitude some other times” (Zhu, 2013). No wonder Chuang Tzu, the famous Taoist philosopher in ancient China, simply advocates to get rid of intimacy and to “act like strange passers-by who abide by the common rules, just like fish in the ocean that are able to lead their own lives freely and independently” (Shang, 2017). So, Confucius was right in pointing out the fact that “if the interpersonal relation turns excessively close, then due respect might well fade away” (Cheng, 2007). Even in a Biblical legend a hero was advised to leave the local, ethnic group and father’s home for expanding his own life spheres.

Therefore, the idea of “deliberately” restoring to “nostalgic” communities where mere intimacy surmounts any other values would sound a bit outdated, especially in today's specific socio-economic situation. Although it is charming, it fails to “keep pace with the times”. Therefore, if blindly following such suggestions to build so-called nostalgic communities, the future of our community would seem more monotonous. Philosophers believe that “any existence is somewhat reasonable” (Hegel, 1991), so it can be inferred that the disappearance of any existence has its rationality as well, including the traditional community model.

As a result, we do not think it advisable restoring the traditional community pattern in any rigid way but regardless of the possible cost. After all, history always moves forward, and the nostalgic suggestions seem lack of the courage to innovate, hence a Utopian ideal at best.

### *2.2.2. Welfare-driven community construction model*

Another influential argument in China proposed around community construction is that the goal should focus on developing modern community welfare system (Liu & Wei, 2019). Although Chinese urban residents are often active in amusement activities, such as gathering to dance, to sing, to play, etc., their awareness of engagement into community governance affairs seem dormant to some degree; instead, most of them are accustomed to waiting for community Party Branches or community Residents Committees to take charge of their communal problems. Since a wholesome community cannot go without the individuals’ attachment, it follows that some measures that can inspire them or give them incentives would be properly adopted. Therefore, they need constant payoffs to involve themselves in community construction projects. As Liu Jitong and Zuo Furong jointly proposed: “Community welfare system framework will be an ideal choice. The system with Chinese characteristics is composed of health services,

family services, housing, eugenics and childcare services, social insurance services, etc. (Liu & Zuo, 2014)

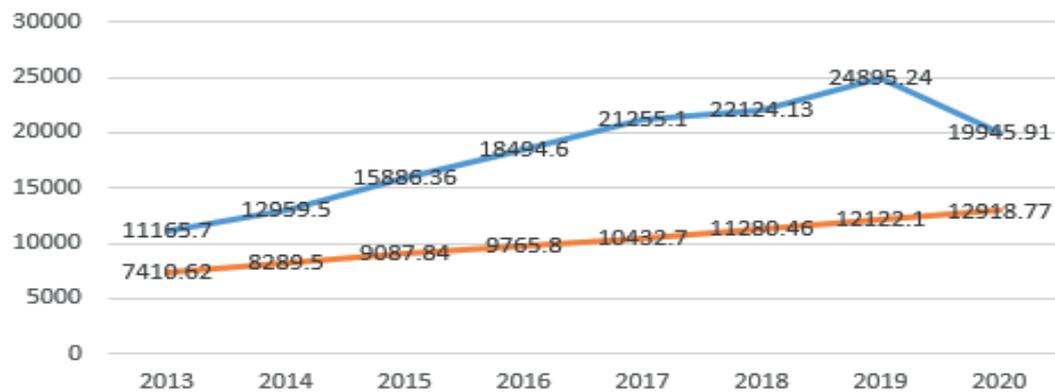
That is to say, for better attractiveness and stronger solidarity, certain welfare system is recommended to be built up. Moreover, the following facts and assumptions are worth mentioning.

Firstly, Chinese Reform and Opening-up policy has brought about great changes for common residents. Different from the former time when all common affairs were in the charge of special public agencies, the communities at present are expected to take up increasing functions that formerly were completed by government. Therefore, to empower community entities has become an urgent issue. It is believed that only by improving the community welfare system can we stimulate the residents' consciousness of common interest, attract more attention to community affairs, and avoid the community-wide "tragedy of commons". Besides, in order to lessen the potential complaints arising from the government's abrupt letting-go with community tasks, welfare-inspired way of Community Construction could also act as a shock absorber of reform and be conducive to social stability.

Secondly, interest is originally an economic consideration, but when placed in the field of social research, it represents the pursuit of social benefits and effectual utility. Once the interest dwindles or marginal value of community participation decreases, the participative contribution is easy to subside. Because the owners in commercial condominium communities have been a collection of diversified interests, they will find the opposite force to their mutual action is huge. Especially, when the struggle for property rights protection obtains a phased victory, the interest conflict between individual community house-owners will emerge rapidly, eroding or greatly reducing the self-organized social connection formed in the process of rights protection, and finally make them return to the atomized state as before (He, 2018). Therefore, the mere reliance upon homeowners' spontaneous order to realize a good governance could not prove always dependable. That is why private power could not prevail in community governance in present China. When it comes to who will have the core role for building community around the common welfare system, the adoptable organizational resources mainly lie in the community agencies assigned by local party branches and government departments because only such organization could have easy access to the government welfare resources and only powerful enough incentives (like welfare or benefits) could help get the residents well-organized for certain common goals. Thus, the government agencies in communities, like the so-called neighborhood residents' committees, will be highly esteemed in local community governance. Although such organization was initially an auxiliary system for improving the overall social management under the planned economy in conjunction with the unit system, the reform has made them change roles and become the main provider of community services sent with public finance. That is why the government-supported local community agencies are the substantial backbone and leading force of community construction.

Thirdly, community committees are accepting government's arrangements in personnel and projects. So even at the grass-roots level, government has its virtual representatives. In this case, the community agencies with government background rely on abundant public welfare to stimulate the community consciousness and

finally make welfare recipient groups in the community highly dependent on them. It is partly through this vein that party and local government establish and consolidate the stability they expect, despite a high level of expense in the welfare system as shown in Fig. 1.



**Fig. 1.** The change of governmental expense in community affairs.

*Notes :* 1) monetary unit: Yuan (amounting to 100 million yuan); 2) the orange line represents the community welfare expenses and the blue one the national defense budget as a comparison (China Statistics Yearbook).

By way of such welfare distribution power, the Resident Committees supported by government are easy to mobilize the masses who are eager for receiving the welfare packages to participate in community common projects, including preventive measures of pandemics, keeping watch on potential vandals, and even assisting the police to crack down on criminal activities. As rewards for such contributions, the government-based community agencies will give priority to these volunteers when handing out welfares. Thus, a balance between contributions and incentives has been set up in communities. Of course, such welfare-driven community construction is not without drawbacks. The most obvious were its width of coverage, its fairness in favoring certain parts of folks over the others, and its sustainability due to the boundedness of resources in the end.

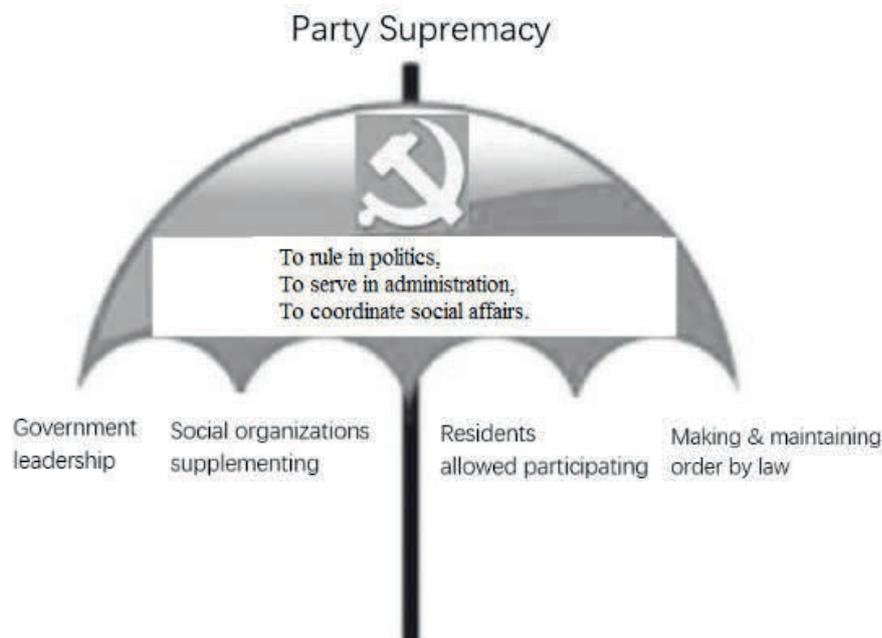
### 2.2.3. Pluralistic co-governance model

By criticizing welfare-based bureaucratic community building paradigm, some scholars depict a community governance pattern called pluralistic co-governance in hope of replacing the welfare-driven but monopolized community pattern. Under the new paradigm, the idealists want to “place community autonomy above community administration” and they believe the community construction’s future lies in “recovering the society”, reversing the pattern of “administrative unification” at the grass-roots level and allowing the community neighborhood committee to return to the “autonomous function” and “de-administrative state” (Sun, 2012). Years later, Sun’s further advocates the integration of top-down bureaucratic order and bottom-up innovation for more flexibility in the community choices (Sun, 2020). This pattern has also been previously advocated by Yang Hongshan who

argues that the effects of community governance are decided by the interactions of all the types of agents involved in community construction, like the property service companies, the HOAs, volunteer organizations, the Resident Committees, Community Party committee, sub-districts and other public sectors, like Housing Management Office, Sanitation Center and Social Security Institute among others; and what matters is their co-ordination and mutual aids (Yang, 2016).

So far, it is widely accepted that three interactive forces in the grass-root level are the most noteworthy: 1) Resident Committees and community service centers that represent bureaucratic force; 2) developers and property companies representing market forces; 3) owners and HOAs representing new social forces or civil society in western terms. The complex interactive relationship between the above three kinds of organizations will decide on the trend of community development. The community governance pattern has been summarized as “one core, dual power and three major agents”, which means listening to the discretion of Party organization, playing the roles of bureaucratic order and spontaneous order, and employing the 3 major kinds of community agents (Yang, 2013).

Honestly, it has become a cliché for current community student to seek order by “co-construction, co-governance and sharing” mechanism in China; however, the exact mechanism for implementing that ideal is far from clear. So far, Wu, a professor from Naikai University, who labels his design as “umbrella-shaped community construction model”, gave one impressive design (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** Integration of pluralistic agents under one umbrella in community level (Wu, 2019b).

As vividly portrayed in the diagram above, the Party and government’s deep and wide intervention in the community affairs can create a community with strong smell of politics or a highly politicized community, as well as dysfunctional. This

is convenient for the authority to fill the power vacuum at the grass level and build a well-regulated community order. In classic management science, unity of command was emphasized as a principle (Gulick & Urwick, 1937). The implication of this principle for various agents in communities is that they need a central coordinator, just like a person who cannot have two heads. In other words, a community can only have one leading force or the separate agents will easily dispel each other and cause confusion or “dilemma of collective actions” in Olson’s logic (Olson, 1965). Accordingly, the divergent actors need a nuclei moderator to set up a basic order for their cooperation. So does communities.

Actually, Party branches will exert such critical roles in community construction of China. Under the umbrella model, the party decide on the constitutional choices whereas the specific operations could be assigned to economic and social organizations and even the individuals alike. Autocratic as it sounds, this design makes sense for Weber, the German sociologist, because he held the authority and order very high with the following remarks: “Chaos can be eliminated and order can be brought through authority, and the goal of the community cannot be achieved without authority” (Ding, 2015). Therefore, quite a few authors insisted that party-leadership be necessary for good governance of communities and for prevention of the “scattered-sand” trap. In this vein, Tang Juan used Shenzhen City Government’s experience in community construction to explain the model of “building-community-under-Party’s leadership”, which stresses Party construction, stability, and service.

For that pattern to endure, government resources (especially financial resources) ought to sink into the community folks through the well-established minor bureaucratic system consisting of the sub-districts and Residential Committees (Tang, 2016). Correspondingly, according to Tang, the firms say taht the property companies are perceived as mere fulfillers of established plans. Sure, such arrangement also meets its challenges from market-centered advocates.

#### *2.2.4. Market-driven community construction model*

Nowadays, the emerging and expanding commercial housing complexes in China are a catalyst potential to speed up a fundamental transformation in her grass-root society. In particular, the mindset accustomed to bureaucratic control is confronted with a serious challenge and might be adapted to more appealing flat management. In retrospect, when plan-economy prevailed in China, the housing needs were met by state and units who struggled to raise money to build houses for the mass of people; but as the burden turned horribly heavy, the authority realized it a must to change. Therefore, the reform policy in housing required people to pay for their own houses, and the building tasks have been successfully transferred from government to private developers, which is ultimately spread to the society (Gao, 1989).

When transformed into market-driven style, the communities composed of houses that were developed and operated by real estate companies have gradually exhibited more fresh elements other than traditional bureaucratic ones. For instance, because the market force was fully introduced into the community, housing management and maintenance seemed to become a market-oriented

relationship between homeowners' demand and property companies' supply. Therefore, marketization plays a magical role in this transformation process. Just like Midas' Golden Touch that turns everything into gold (Myths and Legends, 2020), diluting other elements when interest-maximizing developers got the chance to develop certain community, they would automatically try every means to collect enduring lucrative profit, ignoring the proper rights of the separate house-buyers from time to time. What is more, the developer would like to adopt a "binding strategy" with the subsequent property management company. Moreover, the property management company have a tendency to expand its scope from property management to human management. That is to say, such firms in current Chinese communities seem to become some "quasi government", taking charge of all-round aspects of community life. As such, company has close relation to the developers; the latter actually still hold considerable power after the projects are finished. In addition, some developers choose not to sell houses covering a certain area, so they rely on these retained housing units and property rights to build their own influence and management right in the community (Chen, 2017). Under this background, the community construction model driven by market transformation comes into being. Twenty years ago, Sun Liping once used the market transformation theory as reference to analyze the community transformation. He holds that various transitional forms be formed in the process of community transformation and the complexity, diversity and gradualness of community construction need highlighting. As the too much marketing and maximizing engenders might turn out lack of natural spiritual care, we have to be cautious against the possibility that community members have little communication with each other, making the community less substantial (Sun, 2002).

Furthermore, Wu Qingxi echoed this point and she thinks that modern urban communities driven by the market purchase increased the mobility of residents, making it difficult for residents to interact with each other, nor to take care of each other emotionally. Therefore, it is not easy to have substantive communication and more difficult to form a community consciousness, which leads to appalling free ride or engagement apathy across community members, hence making in the community public life less attractive (Wu, 2017).

In some sense, it is accepted that such alienation in communities derives from people's nature as homo economics. From the perspective of cost-benefit, this phenomenon could be explained as below. Since every community member would try to maintain a balance between their gains and pains when it comes to public affairs involvement, the payment and payoffs among the individual homeowners cannot be absolutely balanced. There are always people who get something for nothing on free-ride basis while there are always some members who contribute more than their due incentives. In order to organize the separate homeowners who are not relative-based acquaintance popular in traditional society but are right-based strangers to one another in modern society, one relevant method is to let the owners form their owner organization. After all, a community without an owner organization will never have the legal status to claim their property right and to fight against any violation by other market agents, like developers and property managers.

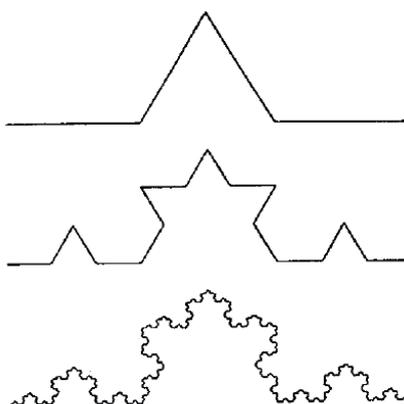
It has been due to the failure of the homeowners to well-organize in collective actions, that the marketization process cannot be completed, which will breed countless troubles and grievances (Read, 2003). The self-help model of community residents is more tolerant of diversity. Its connotation is mainly reflected in the new era. They have to learn all the tool-kits around self-governance among strangers in modern communities. That is a challenge, but it will be significant to Chinese social governance as a whole (Miao, 2007).

Due to the “continuous crisis in community self-management (autonomy)”, citizens’ consciousness of their rights and duties must play internal roles so that the homeowners’ autonomy of their own communities could be realized. Otherwise, the failure of the homeowners’ collective action would function as a justification for government to interfere with their private community areas. Therefore, the key variable is nothing but their own quality, their awareness and their willingness to better engage in the community affairs. It is expected that a fundamental change could take place in the terms of community governance (Guo, 2014a), and it is hoped the embers’ cooperation, symbiosis and community sense might be truly realized.

### **3. FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY CONSTRUCTION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FRACTAL THEORY**

Based on the previous literature review about community building, we learnt many insightful arguments about the possible future of community governance. Not only are these community building approaches a bit complex, but also their feasibility and reliability are doubtful despite some reason attached to the respective arguments. Therefore, we still need a comprehensive framework to clarify the logic of approach choice in this regard. Therefore, we plan to borrow some results from the fractal theory, especially its description of self-similarity, to show the inherent rules for the apparently confusing alternatives. The reasons for such a bold idea of using natural science knowledge to analyze social science problems stems from quite a few valuable experimental trials (Arcuri & Jing, 2019; Comte, 1996; 2000; Niu, 2001).

As fractal theory was originally a paradigm for understanding natural phenomena as a supplement to Euclidean geometry, it turns out very powerful in dealing with the irregular and uneven shapes in nature, like the image of cloud, when zoomed in, their edges are often rich in all kinds of twists and turns instead of smooth lines or curves. Then fractal theory is applicable here (Pinard, 2003). Generally speaking, fractal theory helps us to under a graph by way of studying a tiny part of it, since the enlarged part could be a good representative of the whole, as shown in Fig. 3, where an equilateral triangle rises from the middle of a line segment, and then the bottom edge is pulled out to become the top edge; then, an equilateral triangle is raised from the middle of each segment; if continuing to bulge a smaller equilateral triangle in the middle of all line segments in the middle figure, we can make a fairly complex third figure. That is to say, the Koch curve will be repeated in the same pattern as the original curve. If we enlarge any part of the graph, we can get the hologram as the overall shape.



**Fig. 3.** Koch curve (Pickover, 2005).

Fractal theorists call this property “self-similarity” (Chen & Chen, 2005), and under such paradigm, the stone on the mountain can be regarded as a miniature mountain range; the moss on the stone can be seen as a forest between the mountains, while the edge of the crystal particles on the stone is no different from the actual cliff. Likewise, the Earth-Moon system is quite similar to the bigger solar system, which is again not too much different from the Milky Way galaxy or even larger system. In another dimension, the atomic structure is said to be very similar to the stellar system structure on the macro scale of the universe.

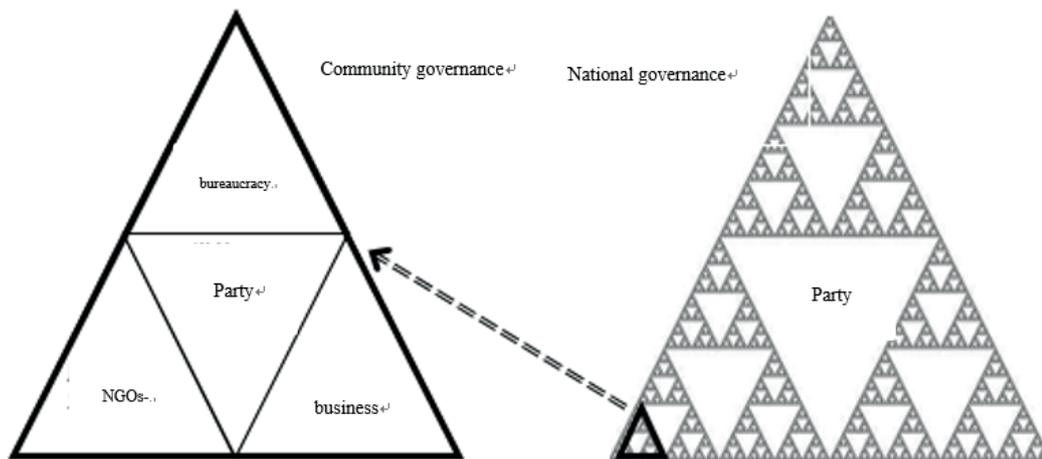
To this end, people have reached two basic consensuses: 1) the part will remain similar to the whole in the form of fractal; 2) whether the fractal set is enlarged or reduced, or even further reduced, some properties of this set are still similar. Although people are more used to using snowflakes, leaves and coastal shapes as examples, we would like to use community approaches as example to show its similarity to certain national institution system. Especially, in China, there has always been a tendency to link the human affairs with the natural phenomena to form an outlook called “Tianren Heyi”, which literally means, “the mankind is the tiny copy of the whole universe while the heavenly principles are identical to the ways of human affairs” (Dong, 2012). It sounds like another version of Biblical narration that God created humans in their image (Genesis, 2000).

Anyway, this paper attempts to build an analytical framework for the construction of community to help understand the approach alternatives of the construction of community, which could prove reliant upon certain prescriptions and required to be self-similar to some bigger institutional context, rather than chosen freely or randomly. That means the community construction in China is a subdivision element in the national governance system. There is a clear-cut consistency between the governance structure in the basic level and the overall governance system on the national basis. Because the macro transformation of government functions is bound to have a positive reflection on the governance of grass-roots communities, the construction of grass-roots governance order must match and adapt to the macro institutional environment, rather than isolate from that environment and the institutional web, not to mention violate them.

Considering both the established bureaucratic order and the emerging market & self-help order at the community level, there will be a remarkable DNA “double helix” structure where the former stresses political control and social stability as well as the provision of certain public community service delivered by community party committees and Resident Committees, while the latter keeps its self-organizing style to have the communities go in their expected direction.

Specifically, in terms of the relationship between part and whole, China's current community will be a basic social management unit in the national governance system. All citizens are in the charge of hundreds of thousands of Resident Communities, and as given previously, the community construction funds allocated by the state every year exceed twice the military expenditure. The purpose is to ensure that the community becomes a reliable pillar of the national governance system. The so-called “community wholesomeness means national security”, or in other words, as warned by the Central Committee of the Party, “if the foundation is not solid, the entire structure will shake and collapse” (Xi, 2020).

Facts have proved that although there are various types of communities, old and new, they all have the same status in national governance. According to the fractal theory, we try putting forward a framework of community construction in China, as shown in Fig. 4.



**Fig. 4.** Fractal diagram of the community construction pattern in China (developed by authors).

As far as the framework above is concerned, we hold that the national governance system, the government functions definitions, the traditional institutional inertia, the social conditions as well as the residents’ consciousness of their rights together constitute a big environment for the community building approach choice. Among the factors mentioned, the strong habitual force from history still plays a genetic decisive role in China's grass-roots communities, since the past thousands of years have witnessed the great attraction of “the ideology of great unification” (Gongyang, 1997). That is why the unit-of-command principle has been emphasized in Chinese administration at all levels and why there is always

a tenacious dependence on the monocentric style of governance on the national basis.

In Chinese history, there were a few schools of thought to show favor to civil society's autonomy by way of clans' patriarchy or local gentry. China's grass-roots society has never escaped the attention of governmental power. Instead, there was a tradition of strict grass-roots control in most of the time of Chinese civilization. In addition, this trend even extends so far after communism took root on this land. For example, at the initial stage of People's Republic, the urgent need for order and social stability engendered the highly organized society pattern so that all the personnel nationwide could be managed as a whole. Ever after, although the times have changed and the measures changed names, the mindset for strict internal control keeps consistent. Therefore, whether it is the Luli system, Baojia system or the unit-system after PRC's foundation, the internal core of governance structure survives where collective members keep watch on each other under a sole supervising body. Even when looking forward to the future, it can be determined that this logic will still apply, unless there is a particularly strong force to reverse this trend of continuity. This means that the control of the party and government over the basic order in the construction of community will not be loosened, let alone suspended.

Therefore, from the perspective of the social management function of the government, the community is as if a cell nested in the top-down governance pattern. The micro community construction unit is bound to show internal connection and similarity to the national macro governance system. In order to ensure the implementation of the principle of party in charge of everything, the macro structure of the national governance system and the mini structure of the community governance structure would invariably adhere to the Party-centered pattern as depicted in Fig. 4. That is what we mean by "institutional self-similarity" in the sense of fractal theory.

At the same time, as the agent of this grass-roots governance task, the value orientation of "stability" is derived from the bureaucratic nature. All work should be based on the completion of bureaucratic instructions and tasks assigned by the superior bodies, follow the lead, advocate stability and order, and show high degrees of risk aversion.

On the other hand, in terms of property management, whether it is managed by the homeowners themselves or managed by the employed property company, it shows a clear business logic of "profit-seeking" or "homo economicus". Human nature is "all for profit", and the pursuit of profit is natural and eternal. Therefore, the Party and the state have always adhered to the pursuit of profit as well. The standard of all work effectiveness in grass-roots communities is also based on whether the people's interests are safeguarded. The people's government does not like anything that infringes on the rights and interests of the people, too. In fact, the introduction of the property law is to promote the return of property rights to property owners. Therefore, the simple thought of "justice theory" is hidden behind the owners' awareness of rights protection and the logic of "profit seeking". From this perspective, the "stability" logic based on path dependence of political control

and the “profit seeking” logic around property rights will together form the actual mindset and approach choice in community construction in future.

#### **4. CASE STUDIES IN SUPPORT OF THE FRACTAL ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK**

Across the globe, people live in communities, which are common everywhere; but people live in different styles of communities with distinct characters. For example, there are party secretaries of community committees in Chinese communities to take the lead in community affairs, but as we know, there are no such party institutions nor counterpart party chief in American communities. The contrast interests us so that we come up with transnational case studies in the term of community construction. The purpose for this effort is to discover the relevant factors for any specific choice of the community management approaches in the said areas and to verify the reasonability of the analysis framework given above.

Based on many literature studies, Liu Yuzhao summarized the five basic elements of community, namely, group, boundary, external communication, cohesion or collective identity, and the relationship between internal members (Liu, 2002). Later, Wang Sibin describes another set of 5-element community picture, which includes social relations, regional boundaries, common social life, specific culture, customs and values, and residents’ sense of belonging and identity. Interestingly, people place different weight on the elements in the use of community concept. If we compare community as the elephant, then any element-emphasis would be like the parts of the elephant touched by those blind men in the legend (Daosheng, 2016). That is why some prefer to develop communities to be liberal while others might like them to be communitarian. In China, when Marx’s community thought is taken as the guide to build the future community (Chen, 2010), the result would surely be different from those guided by other ideologies, as seen in American communities.

It is usually from difference that people could derive some effective information or message. Therefore, we are interested in seeing the difference between the approaches of community governance in China and in the USA, by which doing we hope arrive at some noteworthy discoveries. Then, this research would go further to provide such experimental description followed by relevant explanations based on fractal theory.

##### **4.1. A Field Study on Community Governance in Oswego, N.Y.**

###### *4.1.1. General typology of Oswego housing styles*

From July 2018 to July 2019, the authors made a field investigation into American local community governance. The case study took place in Oswego, which is located in the northern part of New York State, bordering Canada to the north. It is a very small city. The official population in 2018 was about 17 000. Due to its vast land and sparse population, the housing in the city is much more spacious than that in China.

More interestingly, the concept community in Oswego, N.Y., refers to the whole city instead of some grass-root society as interpreted in China. So, when it comes to community governance or community development, it is generally taken for granted that the mayor of the city ought to be accountable for the related tasks, like environment protection, order maintenance, community festival organization, etc. Therefore, we first sense the difference of the connotation of community in United States and in China where community affairs are generally considered strictly to be taken care by grass-root agents instead of city-level government.

Perhaps this difference is related to the social system and the overall institutional framework in the two countries. For example, the United States values private ownership. Land and housing are allocated by the market. The self-owned housing rate reaches more than 70 %. The rest part of residents usually live in apartments provided either by the government (accounting for 4 % of households) or by some enterprises. Since the public apartments were often exclusively oriented to the senior citizens or young unmarried folks, some people have to choose commercial apartments that do not meet the conditions of low rent housing. The commercial apartments are built by the real estate company and then designated by the property management company for unified management. What is more often seen, most people live in their private households. Among these households, there are generally two kinds of housing forms. Some live in detached houses and others are in common apartment houses (CID), which is close to the ubiquitous community living pattern in China. What is more important, Oswego city, as a typical local administrative region, has a deep-rooted tendency to govern itself instead of being obliged to take orders from any agents above. Therefore, they have their own charter and they could hold independent hearings so that ad-hoc measures could take effect according to Oswego's specific needs or preferences. Meanwhile, the mores of the residents exhibit a strong tradition of something like active "self-help" mode rather than passively listening to external orders. Now, we would like to offer a brief analysis into the quality of mores with a relevant introduction of the variety of housing styles.

First, most citizens in Oswego live in detached houses, and the house owners are usually more accustomed to the "do-it-yourself" management style, which is different from Chinese counterparts who seem invariably dependent upon community agencies, like Resident's Committees as government representative body or property management companies on market basis. For example, where there is a property problem to be fixed, homeowners usually prefer to have it solved by their own efforts or with some necessary help from other helpers; and it is only when there is a stern shortage of manpower or huge technical difficulty that they would ask outsiders for help, like cutting down trees in the back garden or repairing leaking roofs; in such situation they find professional engineers to offer aid. In terms of public utilities services, water and electricity are provided by municipal unified services. In addition, market force also plays a conspicuous role in the everyday life. For example, the garbage removal work usually is committed to professional garbage removal and transportation company with a service contract. For a service fee of \$ 25 a month or so, professionals would drive their removal vehicles to the door regularly to collect garbage in the community. Of course, if you are unwilling

to buy the services of the garbage company due to any economic problems, you can also accumulate the garbage and throw it into public garbage cans. Actually, there are such garbage cans in nearby community parks or some parking lots near shopping centers, so it is possible for the residents to bring their garbage there when taking a walk or going shopping.

The second dwelling pattern is collective apartment in Oswego. A number of people (usually the majority of young people, in addition to the floating people temporarily living in the city) choose to rent collective apartments. The monthly rent is about \$ 900. Professional property management companies take care of various property maintenance problems inside and outside, ranging from house repair and infrastructure transformation to faucet replacement and thermostat maintenance. The users can contact the property management company to solve property faults. In fact, these property management companies themselves are also the extension services that the developers of these apartment buildings continue to provide even after the development project is over. In other words, the purpose of developers' construction of these buildings is to rent rather than sell. Therefore, the developers are not only builders, managers and maintainers, but also the only owner of such community. The structures and conditions of these apartments are roughly similar. After the tenant pays the fee at one time, all the subsequent maintenance duties are in the charge of the property management company, so it is relatively carefree to deal with the house repairs, since there would be professionals to tackle them. However, to our surprise, although apartment people live close to each other, the physical nearness could not naturally lead to emotional intimacy. According to the authors' limited observations, the residents there would not deliberately enhance their relationship. They even do not know each other. Their communication is limited to greeting when face to face, which is a little similar to the current situation of Chinese communities. Therefore, it can be inferred that living close to each other may not be necessarily conducive to cultivate true trust or deep social capital in sociologist terms. Now it seems that if neighbors have no intention to communicate, then close proximity has nothing to help. No wonder Putnam laments the saddening status quo of "bowling alone" (Putnam, 2001). This situation is more prominent in collective apartments of Oswego, since compared to permanent property owners, the temporary residents have little incentive to give emotional investment to their neighbors, hence Mencius saying: "... those without permanent property have no perseverance" (Liang, 2007). Since it is ultimately a rental in nature, the sojourning mentality tends to overshadow other incentives to interact with other temporary residents. In a sense, renters take community as nothing more than "shelters for living" and do not think much about its social or emotional significance.

Third, government-sponsored low rent housing areas. As we all know, the real estate tax rate in the United States is, say, as high as 5 % of the evaluated price. Suppose a house is evaluated to be worth 120 thousand dollars, then the real estate tax and education fees payable to the government amount to 6000 US dollars every year. Of course, the amount paid also has something to do with the location. Generally, the closer to downtown, the heavier the tax burden. Because the property tax varies according to the location, some elderly people gradually move to more remote neighborhoods due to income reductions after retirement. There are quite a

few retired people who would rather sell their houses completely in order to avoid paying additional fees, which are too heavy for their limited income. When the house changes hands, these elderly people need to apply to the local government for low rent apartments. However, during the field survey, it was also found that some young people, over the age of 18, who need to leave their parents' home by American custom but do not have a stable source of income, can also apply for such apartments. There are no walls or security guards around these apartments, but access control is implemented, that is, if you want to enter the building, you must be the residents of the building or acquire their permission to enter the building. For such living areas, most community public affairs are in the charge of public departments, which is a bit of the nature of public community.

Fourthly, there is the residential area where the owners live in a same condominium and have to manage the commons together. The features of such residential communities include: (1) condominium houses could be bought and sold freely like detached houses, but unlike the apartments mentioned above that are only rental in nature; (2) Many house owners live in the same building, which involves the management of public affairs and requires more coordination and grass-root legislature procedures; (3) the condominium usually has its own charter or convention, and any member is expected to agree to the document's prescriptions before incorporation into the area. The document is designed to list the rights and prohibitions. This is a bit like what is seen in Hong Kong, China. Choosing to stay in a community is called "incorporation". It can be said that the community convention is the basic law that owners should follow. This is not only true in Oswego, but also in other parts of the United States. Somewhere, the document is even labeled as the "community constitution". It is generally formulated by the developer as the first owner with the help of his lawyer team. Since developers have most of the voting and decision-making rights, national laws stipulate that developers cannot use this privilege to make any decision harmful to other owners. When the developer sells the house to the individual owners, the owner group is usually regarded as a company, the so-called partnership corporation, and all the owners are the shareholders of the company. The industry committee of jointly managed housing is the main body of financial institutions and public affairs of owners. All owners automatically become members of the owners' assembly, and then they elect their own owners' board (equivalent to the HOA) and its members. At the beginning of community development, when most houses still belong to developers, owners can decide whether to change the terms of the Convention through negotiation and voting. In the United States, as long as the owners' corporation gathers, it is legally recognized as a non-profit organization and does not need to set up any entrusted property company.

#### *4.1.2. The governance style of condominium in particular*

Since Chinese neighborhood community is more like the condominium in the USA, we would like to give more details about its governance to facilitate our comparison between China and USA. Actually, the condominiums carry out "co-housing & co-management" approach in Oswego as well as in the rest part of the United States. For that purpose, they are to set up their own rules of procedure,

according to which the owners vote on the public issues discussed. According to the nature of the problem, the required proportion of people in favor is different, generally 80–90 %. These are clearly stipulated in the normative documents of the community. Due to the detailed provisions in all aspects, these community management documents are generally very thick and set various instructions, especially the distinction between exclusive property right and shared property right. Therefore, an owner must understand it and, if necessary, ask a housing agent or lawyer to explain the important terms for him. Only when he or she fully understand and accept the agreements and requirements can he or she decide whether to buy or not. Otherwise, if the residential community does not allow business performed therein, or forbid short rent or pets, the members have to obey in case troubles arise. Even for the sale of second-hand houses, it is also necessary to give the “community Convention” together with the “status certificate” and the “bylaws” to the buyer at the time of transfer of ownership, so as to clarify some important property management information, such as the property fee paid on the date of each month, the list and contact information of members of the home owners board, the address of the property management company and its manager contact data, the property insurance policy in force in the community, the total reserves of the community and the financial audit report of the previous year, etc.

As mentioned earlier, after accepting the “constitution” of the community, each buyer chooses to stay in, also known as “incorporation”, which means that the owners of a building naturally constitute a quasi-company or a community with common interests. A residential building jointly managed by owners is regarded as a corporation. If shareholders are all owners, then the homeowner association is equivalent to the general meeting of shareholders. By setting up its own owners' association, as the governance and implementation subject of its residential community, all owners automatically, become members of the association (that is, the owners' assembly). The association regularly elect members of the industry committee, and the members deal with the community affairs. The owners' assembly is not the owner of the joint real right but it takes care of the property affairs of the community. If property companies were hired to help manage the public affairs, they would be strictly supervised by the homeowner assembly to perform their contracts and ensure their work to be in place. They firmly believe in the doctrine that “only when supervision is in place, can the results be in place” (Evans, 2006). Anyone living in this community must seriously abide by the community norms, to literally “do as the Romans do” and “know the local prohibition before living there”.

For example, the Harbor House Communities in Oswego is a residential area with condominium where many families live in the same building. In addition to their own proprietary properties, they also share the community's central air conditioning, boilers and other equipment, as well as common resources, including parking lots (and some other communities might have the private swimming pools). The maintenance of this equipment is naturally the responsibility of all the owners. Therefore, they set aside nearly a quarter of the property cost as a reserve (similar to the public maintenance fund in China). The owner organization (a corporation in Hong Kong) deposits this money into the bank to cope with all kinds of routine or

temporary maintenance and renovation work. The older the house is, the more funds need to be reserved. Now, some owners in China often call this money “the pension of condominium”. This is very close to the community form after China's commercial housing reform, but the difference is that even in private communities, they also have no common guard security and no containment walls, which are typically seen in Chinese counterparts.

It is said differences make comparative research valuable, and therefore we would like to talk about another different point across the two countries – about the important difference in the governance structure.

In China, community HOAs should be guided and constrained by governmental agents, like the Resident Committees, Street Agencies and Party organizations. In terms of content, the constitutional convention of the community stipulates the boundary, area and property expenses of each house and make it clear how these expenses are managed and paid. At the same time, it also stipulates whether pets are allowed, whether clothes can be dried, etc. In brief, members should comply with the norms selected by most of owners and take the fundamental principle of not affecting the living environment and not lowering the real estate price as the fundamental principle.

The owners' assembly of the community with common property rights is a quasi-government entity (and sometimes they are directly called private governments) because they are authorized to manage public affairs in the housing community. Such a private government does not only have its own region and its own “taxes” (i.e., property fees), but also has its own legal system whose details ensue.

The legal institution for the condominium usually consists of three layers to achieve their autonomy. The first is the community convention equivalent to constitution for a community. The convention stipulates the basis of property rights and must clarify the following contents: land survey map, floor layout plan, supporting facilities of the community, description of common property rights, description of ancillary buildings, establishment certificate of owners' association, description of voting rights, and plan for construction and reconstruction of controlled land in the future. The second law is the by-laws or “rules of procedure for the condo community governance”, which requires to clarify the organizational procedures of the industry committee, the voting procedures of various action bills of the community, and other issues of community governance. The third document is “situations, conventions and restrictions”, which describes the rights and responsibilities of the owner “in as much detail as possible”. And more, there is sometimes a fourth law called “residential practices”, which explains the opening hours of swimming pools, pest control plans or other similar times.

#### *4.1.3. Summary of the characteristics of Oswego community governance*

In short, the governance mode or style of Oswego community is like an epitome of American national governance system, with strong color of self-autonomy. Once deciding on living in a community, they must respect and conform to the due public order. For a spontaneous order to take form, the application of Robert's rules of

procedure is widely accepted (Robert, 2000). Meanwhile, taking the four types of housing into consideration, we infer four characteristics therefrom.

#### *4.1.3.1. The community openness*

No matter which kind of community, one point is in common for various styles of shelters. That is, almost all residential areas are open. They usually do not build walls as Chinese communities do, let alone set up private security guards. In the United States, if private security guards are employed in residential areas, it should be the configuration of a very high-end community. Of course, Oswego is not completely without walls, but only visible on a few historical sites, like Kings Fort used during the American War of independence. Now, as a historical site of military fortress, it still maintains the original appearance with solid walls. However, the residential areas prove open. In addition to the overall openness of shared residential areas, the individual housing areas are mostly open, instead of being enclosed like Chinese quadrangles.

The openness of the community will naturally save the construction cost of the fence and gate as well as the cost paid for keeping watch at the gate. We have never seen private guards, which are default in Chinese residential areas. Of course, Oswego community advocates openness, which inevitably makes people worry about its security. Under the condition of open community, the maintenance of community safety in Oswego mainly depends on two aspects: one is the public police force and the other is the residents' own caution and preventions. Therefore, we can see the police patrol regularly in the jurisdiction, or selectively stay in a certain place, such as where people gather, where there are temporary collective activities, or where there are relatively high risks. Meantime, everyone should be responsible for their own safety. For example, it is best not to walk out after 9 pm; at home, the smart cameras are supposed to be installed or just keep a dog to increase the safety factor. However, Oswego's households rarely install guardrails, and even the common anti-theft doors in China are rarely seen. Nevertheless, this does not mean that citizens cannot be vigilant. On the contrary, they have formed the habit of neighborhood watch. If they happen to notice any suspicious people and their weird behaviors, they inform and warn each other in some way.

On the other hand, openness is not only reflected in the physical absence of walls, but also reflected in the opening of community governance structure, which will be discussed in the next section.

#### *4.1.3.2. Autonomy of community*

Oswego community public affairs have distinct autonomy, which is a bit like what Tocqueville revealed: community self-management is an important principle of local social operation (Zhou, 2016). Autonomy is both embodied in weekly city government hearings and represented in numerous residential area management. For example, the residents have free access to and great autonomy over the activities discussed in the city hall and the majority of discussions about the community problems in the city government are open to the public.

During the meeting, every family can freely participate in the consultation and discussion in the Municipal Council Hall. The topics of the hearing are usually

published in advance in the local newspapers and the municipal government website, and the newspapers are delivered to the public's mailbox free of charge. The meeting is presided over by the mayor, supervised by the chief prosecutor, and attended by representatives of members of various districts of the city. Ordinary citizens can freely choose to listen in and discuss according to their interests and will, there is no need to make an appointment, and there are no inventory and security inspection measures when entering the hall.

For example, when one of the authors attended one of such hearings, the topic involved more than one item, like how to plan the usage of a certain piece of public land, whether it is allowed to hold a cocktail party in the community rental house at night, etc. In a sense, the so-called City Council is equivalent to the nature of the residents' Congress or the joint meeting of property management and owners. Such legislative affairs are openly discussed, heard and voted by the City Council. At the same time, under the auspices of the mayor, the City Council widely solicits the opinions of all parties. After careful discussion, someone initiates a motion, followed by a second, and finally a public vote. According to the specific majority principle, various resolutions affecting community life are adopted. Once the motion is passed by the City Council, it has legal effect, and then enters the path of "governing the district according to law". In the whole operation process, the municipal government does not have more voice, but only constructs a negotiation platform for community governance.

The autonomous people themselves set topics, discuss and make decisions by themselves. After it takes effect in accordance with legal procedures, the municipal government only supervises the implementation and plays the role of defender of public order and defender of decision-making effectiveness. Obviously, such community governance style resonates with the tradition of local autonomy in the United States as a whole.

And even in private HOA meetings, they would also freely discuss about some common problems until certain consensus arises, like whether Airbnb can be introduced into the community, whether laundry could dry in backyard or how high level of rent a landlord should ask in certain areas so that no "improperly low price" appears to dilute the whole market value of the houses in the region.

#### *4.1.3.3. Pluralism of community governance*

In Oswego, the organic combination of the roles of government, enterprises and civil society are impressive. Firstly, Oswego city government itself is considered the leading force of community management. Where roads need to be repaired, where green plants need to be planted, how to shovel snow in streets, how to celebrate holidays, etc. – all of the questions are understood as the functions of the government. Interestingly, the city's website is marked as <https://oswegony.org/>, whereas we know that general government websites usually end with .gov, Oswego City government just chooses the domain name of civil society organizations org. It is said that such choice is to save money, but it might also reflect the tendency of the government of the city of the United States to position itself as a people's organization, which comes from and is responsible for the citizens. Such a

government, like property companies in many parts of China, shoulders the work of public security, greening and infrastructure in the community.

Meanwhile, multiple subjects beyond government jointly provide public services in Oswego. For example, the public-private partnership (PPP) model is common in the region. For some major community activities, including Harbor Festival and fireworks celebrations, the government mobilizes and attracts some enterprises to participate, incentivizes the sponsors and ensures that the funds for the activities are sufficient for the public events. For example, a local bank (Pathfinder) carried out the activity of “caring for teenagers and sending books to thousands of homes”. The enterprise would offer the book distribution service citywide, and as long as teenagers can go to choose two books they like, they can get them free regardless of their race, wealth or household registration. Of course, in this public relation process, the bank could harvest a good reputation, but what matters is the public benefit entirely. The whole activity is indeed very inclusive, and the effect is satisfactory for each side: the enterprise has improved its image among consumers and attracted popularity; the residents have received practical benefits, and the government has a good reputation for its good governance in creating a good public order and in making an atmosphere of neighborhood.

#### *4.1.3.4. Mutual assistance as a society resource*

There is rich social capital and people have strong tradition to help each other. In case of special festivals, such as Christmas, residents are more willing to greet each other. For example, when the author lived in one of the houses years ago, local Halloween preparation provided a surprise. In the evening, one of the next-door neighbors knocked on the door and introduced the local festival customs to the author in detail before offering some candy to the author. The warm-hearted neighbor said he did so in case of any possible embarrassment that neighborhood kids came to the author’s house for candy only to find the author had not prepared due to not understanding the festival custom. This small example shows that the social capital and the kindness of the folks are the buttress to make community a real community.

Furthermore, the spirit of mutual assistance among citizens is strengthened under religion. No matter how many people have met before and no matter what their origins, as long as they have the same faith, they can call each other brothers and sisters, which imperceptibly increases the unity and cohesion of the community in Oswego City, although the population is less than 20 000, the churches are quite widespread. Besides the larger Catholic churches such as the St. Mary's, St. Joseph's, and St. Paul's among others, there were also some Protestant, Jewish and other religious places, which have played a very positive role in community mutual assistance, spiritual sustenance and good neighborliness. The harmonious spirit of mutual assistance among the church people is prominent. For example, at a certain time in summer, church staff organized a charity sale in the nearby square of St. Mary's. They took the idle items at home and transferred them at a low price. Then the money raised was donated to the church or to families with financial difficulties in their neighborhood. Sometimes when the seller agreed, they were also given directly to those in need.

#### *4.1.3.5. Individual awareness of community*

Finally, let us mention the participation and contribution of individual residents' role in community building. Local residents in Oswego had a high degree of social participation. They were positive donating money to public activities. The author participated in the fund-raising lunch activities jointly held by the local library and the local education department. After everyone arrived, they talked to each other and had some communication. At the same time, they donated money to the library at will. In addition, local residents sometimes provided a sum of money to the public sector and declared that the money should be used exclusively for public welfare. For example, the government was expected to offer some public goods such as park benches, and some citizens would rather donate a fund to have the benches bought and fixed well on public land such as lakeside parks for people to rest on. Such arrangement could not only reduce financial expenditure, but also better meet the public's actual needs. The intention of donors turned out to commemorate some of their deceased relatives and the whole community could benefit from their memorizing efforts.

Etzioni might be right in believing that one of the key factors for a community is effectively realizing a balanced interest of its diversified members (Etzioni, 1993). In a word, the government, enterprises, non-profit organizations, individuals among others would participate in supplying public goods in Oswego community, hence facilitating a community atmosphere of unity, mutual assistance, fraternity, and kindness and sharing.

#### *4.1.4. Additional remarks about Oswego Community Governance*

In Oswego community governance, multiple agents established a sound collaborative mechanism in reality. Especially, the positive cooperation between the government and society is impressive. On one hand, the government provides basic good public infrastructures or cultural facilities whose accessibility and quality would highly influence private housing prices of the surrounding areas. This is the positive externality brought by the public sector to the private residential area, which the residents are usually willing to accept. On the other hand, the non-governmental forces (like the local enterprise, the volunteering groups, or just the common individual residents) are quite active in maintaining the community welfare in their respective way.

In addition, internet technology is also bringing new possibility to the Oswego's future of community governance. Not only will the municipal government use Facebook to timely handle public problems (such as where the road has been renovated, where the trees have been built, where the equipment has been updated, etc.); moreover, the atmosphere of the community of spontaneous governance has been better demonstrated in the era of Internet. Some business even comes up with an app called "next door" deliberately helping improve community construction. In this platform of virtual community, residents can timely reflect their concerns and get due feedback from their neighbors. We could easily see a lot of moving stories on such virtual community space. People could do a large variety of things on the app, extending their interactive range to a large degree. For example, they may post lost-found information on the app, they may transfer furniture or facilities for free

or for certain cost there; and people would just post some of their favorite encountering, say, of beautiful scenery, of heart-warming experiences, or just of their own thoughts and feelings.

Of course, the community web site could also function as a platform for users to find jobs or to seek whatever they like. To our pleasant surprise, the care between strangers might sometimes be very sweet. For example, no sooner had one community member posted a sad story about her daughter's bike stolen than some strangers would volunteer to transfer some of their used bikes to her free use, which made the acceptant so touched that she has to express her gratefulness openly. In addition, of course, the web could function as a necessary reminder.

Suppose some member sings too loudly in the community and disturbs others, his neighbor may put forward complaints and corrective measures, efficiently solving the problems. Community apps do not exclude commercial elements, but the embedded advertisements on the app are related to community services, such as housekeeping services and smart doorbell advertisements. These services realize the marketing purpose of businesses while enhancing neighborhood feelings. Therefore, through such an app, residents can communicate with government and with one another in real time, exchange what they need, and make their community live up to its prescriptive meaning.

What is more, as the saying goes, "a skillful housewife cannot cook without ingredients". The construction of community could not go without resources from political, economic and social forces. In Oswego, the city government plays a decisive role in setting up a fundamental public order, and the wide participation of the community members is encouraged as well for its inhabitability. Therefore, government, market and society all join the enduring and subtle project of community construction.

Last but never the least; Oswego community construction is matched with American macro institutional system as an ultimate background. Although there are no political party branches directing the community affairs, they managed a wholesome environment in certain cost-effective way. The established pattern of community construction in Oswego is congruent with many of American specific characters, including but not limited to its historical heritage, political tradition, administrative ecology and the autonomous mores or social capital overall.

## **4.2. Field Survey of Helping Community in Beijing of China**

Different from the casual and natural style of community governance in Oswego, Chinese community carries more expectations than mere living area or property area. Actually, it is also a grass-root part in the huge social control system. We would like to use the following case for more explanations.

### *4.2.1. Basic introduction of the community*

Heping community is located in Chaoyang District, Beijing. An old community was built in the 1950s. With its harmonious and safe community order, it has been granted a rare honor as a standard National Excellent Community, whose experience is being copied across the country. From 2019 to 2020, the author conducted a field survey on the service and governance of the community. The

community covers a total area of about 1 square kilometer, with 86 residential buildings, 3 bungalows, 4860 households and about 13 000 people, as well as more than 2000 floating population. There is one primary and secondary school, one kindergarten and one private nursing home in the community.

The management system of the community is complex. There are offices of the community Party committee, community Resident Committee and community service station. There are some public servant or public employees specializing in community affairs, including five Party Branch members and eight community affairs assistants. In a sense, the roles of these people are equivalent to the roles of grass-root bureaucrats in ancient times. They are responsible for all community construction affairs, including parking lot management, greenery keeping and entertainment activities, etc. The community has its own library and other cultural and sports facilities, which are invariably supported by the government-supported agencies. Actually, the community seems very dependent on government resources, as shown in the table below.

**Table 1.** Community Service Items and their Sponsors

<b>Community services</b>	<b>Sponsors</b>
General Supervisor	Community Party Committee
Facility services	Chartered firms, both public and private
Education, entertainment	Government departments or social organizations
medicare	Community health center managed by government
Property management	state-owned enterprise
Security service	Police station and patrolling team

Source: Heping Community

#### *4.2.2. Heping community's obvious dependency on government*

As mentioned earlier, Heping Community, an old residential area, has neither its own HOAs nor the employment of a commercial property management company. Although there is such a property service station, it is run by a state-owned enterprise, and community residents habitually believe that the management of community public affairs is in the scope of Resident Committee's duties. The private security guards and full-time cleaners that are visible in other commercial communities are really absent in Heping community. On the contrary, the public resources have been considerably invested here.

For example, the order in the community is given directly by certain police station forces. There is a police booth where a couple of dispatched police officers are positioned. At the same time, the neighborhood office has also funded to offer safety patrol vehicles for the community volunteers to patrol the community regularly. Meanwhile, the common residents should be careful enough about their own security as well. Therefore, they usually install particular protective fences, such as anti-theft doors, high-grade locks and watch cameras, etc. Some families would even raise dogs to enhance the sense of security. In short, governmental and

social forces work together to help Heping community maintain a good public security.

Another point is sanitation and cleaning service. Heping community does not have their own cleaning personnel, either; but the local District Environmental Sanitation Bureau somehow is obliged to arrange for professionals to do that job. A newly employed garbage truck driver and operator told the author that the District government outsources the community waste recycling task to some commercial company that hires drivers to recycle the garbage in the community.

In addition, in terms of housing maintenance, the public finance would drizzle down to the communities full of old buildings built in the 1950s and 1960s. Originally, they belong to different SOEs. Later, the property right units have gradually let go of the management duties. Therefore, when major repairs are needed, residents often habitually rely on government investment. For example, the government spent tens of millions of yuan on thermal insulation and seismic reinforcement in the community, which is obviously a kind of welfare for relevant residents. Imagine that if it is in a new commercial residential community, this cost usually has to be taken by homeowners. Such contrast reflects an important difference between the public and private. Of course, the decision-making power of the public sector to the community is also very strict and even covers some very trivial things, including tree trimming or parking tolls.

Of course, according to Barnard's organizational equilibrium theory, contribution and incentive are supposed to match (Barnard, 2007). Although community maintenance costs a lot, Heping community resources can also give birth to large amount of economic benefits, like produce market management fees, parking tolls, and the public house rents. For example, it is said that the annual charge for each car is 800 yuan, and there are over 2000 cars in the community, which means that the public sectors can collect about 1.6 million just for the residential parking fee.

Therefore, Heping community got considerable public investment and public service while contributing large amount of resources. Government agencies play critical roles in community governance. From the perspective of residents, it seems that the residents of Heping community do not think too much about residents' self-management, so they do not show their enthusiasm to actively participate in community public affairs. Ironically, when it comes to playing poker, mahjong, table tennis and square dance, people's enthusiasm rises. Therefore, "government-supported community" has made the residents more accustomed to accepting whatever service or control than taking initiative for any autonomy. After all, Heping community is a part in the completely political administration system.

#### *4.2.3. Political tasks that Heping Community bears*

Since Heping community receives construction resources from the government every year, it has to bear some political tasks. First, it needs to do a good job in ideological publicity and maintain the image of "socialist family". To this end, the community needs to publicize the current political principles, basic national policies, and mainstream ideology in a way residents like. For example, the community committee has placed a series of bulletin boards to convey the

ideological content of the Party. Whenever there are new trends in national policies, such as environmental protection policies, population policy change or conscription initiatives, the community conveys these contents to the community residents at the fastest speed. It should be acknowledged that Heping community cadres have been doing a very good job in this regard.

Secondly, the community serves as the guarantor of grass-roots order during major national activities. For example, during the two sessions of the National People's Congress every year, or when the country holds important international conferences, or encounters national events such as military parades, Heping community is invariably highly vigilant. A large number of senior citizens wearing red armbands carry a big flag at each intersection, corner or crowded area, hold up a sun umbrella, sit on a stool, and start their simple but important inspection-watch-precaution work.

Thirdly, the community should demonstrate the theoretical description of “socialist family” through livelihood services. As the primary stage of communism, socialism naturally reflects the superiority of the system in all aspects. The “people without help” that existed in history need substantial aid in the so-called socialist family to ensure that all members could get access to necessary provision. Therefore, for some poor families and vulnerable groups in the community, community workers should apply for necessary social security programs, such as minimum living security, affordable housing, or low rent housing, and provide various livelihood services for the elderly and the disabled. These are the unique attributes of public communities. For example, from the perspective of serving the elderly, the community responded to the call of the policy and carried forward the excellent tradition of “respect the old, no matter who is the old”. For example, in view of the urgent needs of the elderly, Heping community adopted a PPP model to set up a special restaurant, called “the elderly table”, inviting private enterprises to manage with a reduced operating cost through tax relief, so as to benefit the elderly and enable them to come to the elderly dining table at a price much lower than the market price to solve their eating problems. At the same time, for the elderly aged over 80, the community also provides meal vouchers, which can be used to consume. The receivers could order or buy staple foods. In this way, many elderly people can realize home-based care even if they do not live with their children. Suppose any elderly people are inconvenient to move, meal delivery services can also be arranged. As the meals at the elderly table are both healthy and economical, many elderly people indeed benefit a lot. Of course, for the sustainable operation of the charity restaurant, there are services for middle-aged and young people. In this way, the market share of the restaurant could be expanded to ensure the reasonable profit space for the managers or bosses, hence enhancing the sustainability of this mode of serving the elderly.

In short, this comprehensive service ability for the elderly is usually available only in “government-supported” communities, which is beyond the functional scope of general commercial housing community owners' organizations.

Fourthly, Heping community is expected to monitor the floating population. When there are vagrants in the community, such “government-supported” communities are always active in contacting the corresponding government

departments, seeing to that these people can also be properly resettled. This is not only the need of the appearance of the city, but also a means to spread the warmth of the socialist family to the hearts of the people in need and accumulate “political accounts” for the country.

Through these specific community charities, the essence of “warm community” could be arguably shown; similarly, these may not be the scope of interest driven homeowner organizations in commercial residential communities, but these things need someone to manage and do after all. What is more, there was also a problem found here, that is, in the livelihood service projects publicized on the community bulletin board, a good many low rent houses are available for the residents. Whoever could get the lottery-like benefit depends on the community cadres’ ratings. Therefore, anybody that has little relation to them would have slim opportunity to enjoy these benefit packages, which would add some space for corruption.

#### *4.2.4. Comprehensive remarks about Heping community building*

In short, Party-Government control and patrons characterize the Heping community governance mechanism. Community public welfare services, Party-mass relations and basic order maintenance are all in the charge of grass-roots Party committees and administrative Resident Committees. And government functional departments (such as housing administration bureau, food and drug office, comprehensive management office, urban management and law enforcement agencies, public security bureaus, as well as public facilities providers) all play peripheral roles in the everyday operation of Heping community.

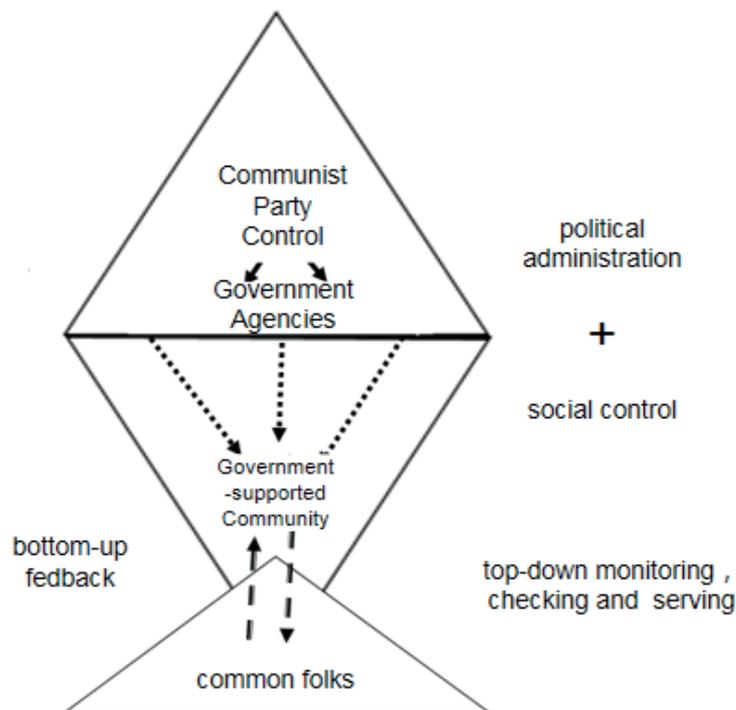
The residents living in Heping community feel that everything is managed by external agents (especially the public sectors), and there is no need for the carefree residents to think about self-autonomy. Of course, the shortcoming of such community governance style is lack of self-dependency and decision-making rights in community public affairs.

Under the all-round “nanny-style” governmental community framework, the residents themselves seem to “be ruled by doing nothing” and even become unaccustomed to worrying about community problems by themselves. Therefore, the community there can be divided into two groups:

1. One group is the majority of residents, who prefer to be far away from the community management burdens but would rather retreat to take care of their own life. If there is a demand for services in the community, they are prone to turning to governmental community management staff for help or service while they themselves are mainly keen on entertainment and fitness activities. Of course, there are also spontaneous orders and activities among residents, but they generally have nothing to do with community governance in strict sense.
2. The other group is professional community agents assigned by Party-Government departments, who can both connect with relevant Government departments at the upper level and integrate with the masses through residents' groups, grid administrators, volunteers, various associations, and professional management committees. Thus, the people's livelihood policies

can be implemented, the stability maintenance policy can be implemented, the residents' movements can be monitored, and the social demands can be effectively transmitted upwards as well. This can be said to be the governance ecology of Government-supported Heping community at present.

To sum up, the prominent feature of public community is “passivity” or certain tendency to be “given”! That is to say, the community folks like to be given order, institutions, services and other public goods on one hand whereas the party-government agencies enjoy giving order, control, check and other baits for the people to live up to their expected governance picture on the other hand. So, one of the biggest characteristics of Heping community lies in their folks’ passivity, apathy or indifference to governance itself, and some degree of alienation to each other hence diluting the valuable social capital. Meanwhile, the vision of government-supported community construction is the extension of authoritative bureaucratic order to the grass-root community level, ensuring a solid grasp of the grass-root society and hence making the community governance permeated with every attribute of bureaucracy, which is not only a reflection of historical inertia, but also determined by fractal theory, as shown in Fig. 4.



**Fig. 4.** Functional orientation and construction logic diagram of government-supported communities (developed by authors).

This kind of bureaucracy in community level is an inverted triangle, that is, the general bureaucratic system is described as a regular triangle model, with fewer superiors and more subordinates; however, at the government-supported

community level, there is an inverted triangle pattern, that is, the number of superiors is large but the number of subordinates is small. This is why community staff, in practice, always describe the community function as “a needle under a thousand lines above”. When each government functional department can arrange for the grass root community to perform any task, this public community with bureaucratic attributes becomes such an inverted triangle as shown above.

### **4.3. Typical Contrasts of Oswego Community and Heping Community**

The international comparative study at the community level can better reveal the formation logic of certain community governance models. Firstly, in Oswego, community governance does not necessarily involve top-down administrative or party control system; instead, there is no government-supported communities in the neighborhood area and the community governance approach is comparatively open, clear and more autonomous. Even residents should abide by certain regulations set by government; the rules are adopted through dependable process of hearing and discussion. Moreover, as far as those condominiums in particular are concerned, there could even arise some HOAs acting as “private governments”, which are responsible for the public affair management in their exclusive and limited areas. Meanwhile, for the more common detached houses, the families generally live a self-managing life. As for the apartments managed by property companies, the housing conditions are to be maintained by the company, but the specific activities are at the disposal of individual renters themselves. In short, the community governance in the city proves well-coordinated, with government providing infrastructure and basic order, with firms providing jobs and goods, with residents minding their own businesses. Therefore, the general picture of community governance in Oswego is composed of very clear-cut division and cooperation of various actors.

Secondly, the Heping community, by contrast, refers to both a specific neighborhood area and a basic administrative body in the entire party-governmental bureaucratic systems. Therefore, the construction paradigm of government-supported community is rather different from self-autonomous style. Instead, the residents rely on Party-Governmental bodies for stability and for financial resources to make the community run as expected. Therefore, there is a supervisor in the community construction, which includes sub-district departments and the community Party Committees as well as community welfare stations. In other words, such government-supported communities derive their resources from bureaucratic system, and the cadres' employment is in the charge of government, so the communities' activities have to meet the preferences of superiors. That means that Heping community construction will be nearly impossible without government's visible hand to interfere, and the people living in such communities have become used to such passive manner of community governance. Although the laws stipulate that the Residents' Committee be a grass-roots mass organization, it actually only undertakes the tasks distributed by the government. The reason is simple. The employees in community committees get their positions, promotions, and even salary or welfare packages from government, which dilutes their seeming

autonomous state. But that also brings about another unexpected result, that is, the employed community cadres would not think as highly of the masses' interest as of the government's preferences. The more party-government's visible hands in Heping Community, the more the individuals' lethargy in taking responsibility for their own community governance, and vice versa.

Thirdly, under fractal theory, there is a mapping relationship similar to "quantum entanglement" between micro and macro institutional systems. If we ignore the basic institutional conditions and social environment and blindly introduce the certain community construction model somewhere, the result, we are afraid, would be too many misfits, just like round pegs in square holes. Imagine that when hundreds of thousands of residential communities across China had high degree of autonomy, according to the fractal theory, the governance vision of Lao Zi's so-called "governing by doing nothing" will be presented. If so, as some scholars foresee, it will "change China from grass-root living areas" (Guo, 2014). Finally, we should pay special attention to the following aspects in the approach selection of community construction:

1. The main responsibility of community construction is to clarify the responsibilities and rights, and stimulate the awareness of participation, so as to sublimate the passive and separate residents into somebody active and responsible just as some "loose sand" is made into concrete.
2. Although the approaches are diverse, the internal logic is consistent. The operation arrangement of the path of grass-roots community construction must be consistent with the idea of macro governance system, and the party's leadership should seek to get itself strengthened, not the opposite.
3. The construction of community is inseparable from the necessary economic foundation. Although it is at the lower level of Maslow's demand level, this study points out that the lower the demand level turns out to have higher degree of preference. Therefore, all the designs or choices around community construction approach must fully give priority to the material resources and economic foundation of community sustainable construction. As the approach of community construction is not a choice in a vacuum, its construction pattern would be a function of such variables as historical tradition, institutional environments, folk mores and the available economic and physical conditions.

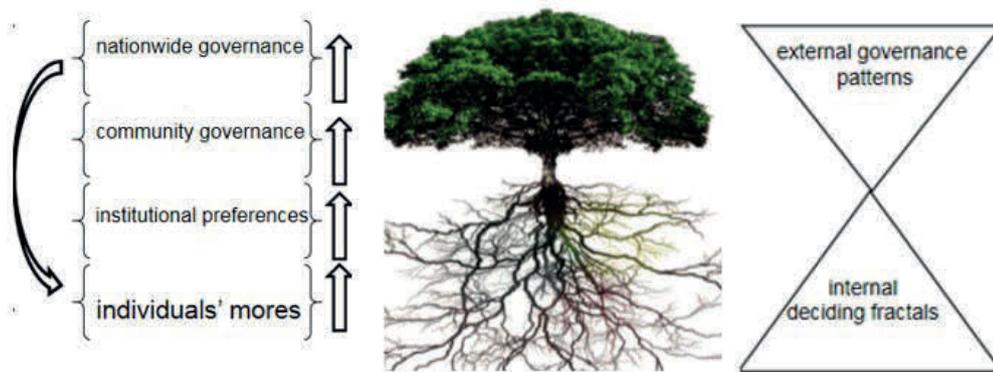
This point is further explained by way of fractal theory in the next section.

#### **4.4. The Implication of Fractal Theory in Explaining the Approach Choices of Community Governance**

As described above, Oswego's community governance pattern is compatible with its traditional habits, folks' preferences, and the entire American institutional characters, just as Heping Community governance style fits with the Chinese overall governance system nationwide.

In detail, the United States stressed the rights to "live free, and pursue happiness", for which all the institutions have been created including levels of government. That means, the small city government, such as Oswego government,

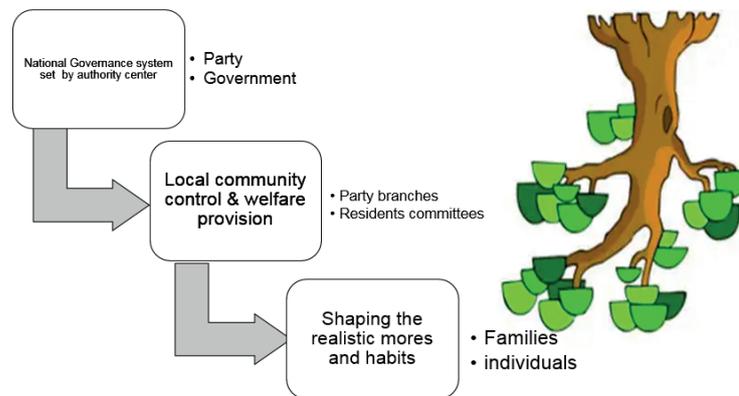
is obliged to follow the basic rules set by American Constitution, which would delineate Oswego community’s general approach, that is, using democracy and necessary power to build up and keep up the basic order for the community members (including individuals and organizations) to work, live and interact. Moreover, in Smithian logic, the government is expected to function as a night watchman so that the society and market could fully play their roles. From the simplified statement, we can infer that Oswego as part is roleplaying or exemplifying the entire American governance principle; meanwhile Oswego as a whole is also an integration of numerous democracy-favored individuals. Therefore, we can make up a fractal model as shown below in Fig. 5.



**Fig. 5.** Fractal evolution of governance: from micro-mindsets to macro-governance system.

In the flowchart, the governance elements are gradually transmitted to show an entire tree or even a forest of governance nationwide. Therefore, the folks’ psychology and mindsets are like the root of all visible institutions, and they are the very origin point for higher structures, even including the nation-wide governance system, which might be compared to a forest. The case of Oswego community construction demonstrates that the people’s mores and historical democratic tradition have shaped the community governance to be open, autonomous and democratic. In addition, what happens in a small community could be understood as an epitome of the national constitutional elements. Likewise, we could see such fractal effect functioning in Heping community, although it would be a different story, as described in the following diagram (Fig. 6).

The upside-down tree means the bureaucratic nature of Heping community governance, where the root lies in the central body of authority who provides a complete blueprint for the social management so that every member of the socialist “family” could be positioned, monitored and tracked down. In addition, with such control mindset, the local community governance structure would be beneficial to such idiosyncrasy of having a solid grasp of each neighborhood community, which would further exert influence upon every family & individual, which are like the leaves in the picture.



**Fig. 6.** A metaphorical description of the dependent approaches in Heping community.

Interestingly, the analyses in the dual cases above reveal a feature of self-similarity between one's idiosyncrasy and the pattern of his or her community governance as well as the entire national governance system. Therefore, there is a definitely clear-cut cause-effect logic relation between the mini parts and the macro whole, which will be highlighted in the conclusions.

## CONCLUSIONS

As the idiom goes, “*Xiaozhongjianda* (one can see the big in the small)” in Chinese, or “the bitter melon has bitter roots while sweet melon's pedicel is also sweet” in English. Both of the sayings refer to the significant characters of fractal theory. For instance, one of the characters is scalability and the other is self-similarity.

For a clear and dependable logic for understanding the specific choices of community governance approaches, we, first, offer a comprehensive review of the established arguments so far. For example, the nostalgic writers insist that the community should stress intimacy; the socialist or communist would rather the community turns out more welfare equally accessible to every member; the property-right advocates prefer governing themselves to be told what to do. However, those accustomed to passively listening to and benefiting from government would like to wait for whatever the authority offers: control and resources. Therefore, we try to continue searching for certain fundamental logic in this field. Thus, we borrow some insights from fractal theory and believe individual choices, when bound together, would ultimately affect the collective choice of community construction approach, hence the self-similarity between individual preference and institutional choice when it comes to community governance. In other words, the mores supported by the people's state of mind turn out to be the final deciding variable under every form of community governance, and it is the individuals' habits, psychology, and state of mind that ultimately influence the

substantial pattern of community construction, and even influence the whole picture of the governance system nationwide.

The conclusions of this research are as follows. By giving a comparative study of two typical community cases across the Pacific, we hold that the exact forms of community governance are far from arbitrarily or casually chosen; instead, they result both from a macro-institutional environment and from a micro-individual idiosyncrasy called mores. Therefore, the specific approach alternatives prove somewhat inevitable. During the process, their respective institutional environment, their historical tradition, their habitual mores have much to do with the quality of community construction. Meanwhile, the accumulated effect of community governance in a given area would exert influence on the general governance system of a city, a state or the whole country's public administration. With the exemplification, we also could see that a local area's governance reflects many facets of the society on the whole as well as its members preferences. If the residents are active and highly responsible, then the community tends to be autonomous, which is similar to the higher level of political institutional environment; but suppose the residents have raised the habit of accepting both positive welfare and negative control, then such state of mind would mold a community more reliant upon external leadership as well as resources or services. That is to say, they gain something at the cost of something else: that is a trade-off wherein the key lies in the individuals' own choice.

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