

How to Create Caring Public Value in Streets with the Leading of Party Building: A Study Based on the “Guicheng Street’s Experience”

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Abstract

Based on public value theory, we analyze the creation mechanism of “caring” public value in Guicheng Street’s experience. The study finds that party building leads the whole creating process of “caring” public value in Guicheng Street. In this process, there are three working mechanisms: identifying, practicing and self-propagating. These three mechanisms recreate the connections between the community and the residents and rebuild the close relationship among residents. They have created “caring” public values and made them self-propagating, so that they can be continued in Guicheng Street, spreading care to every corner of it.

Keywords

Party Building Leading, Grassroots Governance, Public Values

1. Introduction

In 2021, the document, the Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Strengthening the Modernization of the Grassroots Governance System and Governance Capacity, pointed out that grassroots governance is the cornerstone of national governance, and the overall promotion of township (street) and urban and rural community governance is the basic project to achieve the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity. This document emphasizes the fundamental role of grassroots governance for the country governance. The unit of grassroots governance is a community composed of specific groups of people, and the governance object is a group of people who are specific and diverse but live in a common community (Li, 2023). In community life, the abundant needs of people and common social

problems are often small things in people's daily lives. Although they are small, they are major matters of grassroots governance. The effectiveness of their solution and governance directly determines the stability of community life, and then the effectiveness of grassroots governance, which promotes the effectiveness of the country governance. From the perspective of grassroots party building, grassroots party organizations are the organizational foundation of urban and rural grassroots governance (Sun, 2022). Party-building is the core and essential requirement for effective social governance (Li & Zhang, 2022). General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out in the report of the 20th Party Congress that it is necessary to improve the mechanism of grassroots mass self-governance led by grassroots Party organizations, to build grassroots Party organizations into a strong bastion of effective Party leadership, and to encourage Party members to play a pioneering role. This provides fundamental guidelines and guidance for party building to lead grassroots governance in the new era. As the "nerve endings" of government governance, the streets, which are small living units of the people, are closest to the lives of people. It's easier and more effective to know about the true voice of the people from streets and solve problems caused by diverse needs, differentiated needs, and special needs of the people in their daily lives, which are directly related to the well-being of the people and bring happiness and security to the people. Consequently, streets are important parts of the construction of the country's grassroots power and their governance capacity is an important foundation of the country's governance capacity (Zhang et al., 2021). However, with rapid economic and social development, changes in the structure of urban housing, rapid changes in social conditions, and the lack of neighborhood public contact, neighborhoods in urban community are becoming increasingly distant. This is not only detrimental to the maintenance of community security and stability but also hinders the creation of a harmonious social atmosphere. Therefore, it becomes a significant topic in theory and practice to create public values that are recognized and accepted by residents through orderly and effective social integration, then realize good order and good community governance to adapt the background of diverse value forms, satisfy residents' needs and warm indifferent neighborhood relations. Then, how do we create such public values to achieve better grassroots governance? This paper analyzes the creating mechanism of "caring" public value in Guicheng Street through an empirical study of Guicheng Street in Nanhai District, Foshan City, combining the analytical framework of public value theory, in an attempt to provide useful perspectives and insights for answering this question.

2. Theoretical Framework and Case Description

2.1. Theoretical Framework: Public Value Theory

Public value theory is one of the most important theoretical systems that has developed rapidly in Western public management in the past 20 years. Unlike traditional public management theory, which focuses on efficiency first, and new

public management theory, which focuses on efficiency and effectiveness, public value theory pursues values other than efficiency and effectiveness (Bryson et al., 2014). In 1995, Mark Moore pointed out how public sector managers should think and act to create public value in the context in which they operate and proposed the “strategic triangle model” as a response to the above question and as an analytical tool to clarify the functions and tasks of public managers in creating public value. He proposed the “strategic triangle model” as a tool to clarify the functions and tasks of public managers in creating public value. He argues that strategy must have public value, operational and managerial viability, and sustainability (Bardach, 1997). Bryson et al. argue that individuals, groups, and social organizations can also play a role in creating public value besides the public managers as Muir emphasizes. In addition, Bryson et al. focus on practices, fields of action, public management issues or challenges, and functional issues in public value creation. They emphasize democracy, which is representative, consultative, and participatory (Bryson et al., 2014). Overall, public value theory believes that public value is a consensus between managers and the public on the rights and obligations of both parties, the social rules that should be followed, and the expectations of society, which is the starting and ending point of public management and social governance, so managers should not only pursue the maximization of economic returns and resource allocation efficiency (Sun, 2020).

Traditional communities are mainly built on blood relations and kinship relations, such as Hakka houses built on blood relations and institutional compounds built on kinship relations, which closely and firmly link neighbors together and make them more familiar and more cordial. However, as urbanization accelerates and population mobility increases, modern urban communities are built mainly due to their geographical proximity and are no longer given the emotional bonding function of traditional communities, and in many cases, they just exist to meet the spatial needs of residents (Zhang & Cao, 2021). Neighborhoods lack communal ties and a common value code for community public life, which makes it difficult to form a sense of belonging to the community and ultimately leads to neighborhood indifference. Therefore, in order to promote neighborhood warming and create public value in the street, it is necessary to establish a relationship between the community and residents and among residents, and public value theory provides good theoretical support to do that.

2.2. Case Description

Guicheng Street is located in Nanhai District, Foshan City, Guangdong Province, the core area of the Guangzhou-Foshan Super City Cluster, with a total area of 84.16 square kilometers and a management service population of about 1 million people, including a household population of about 346,000. There are 45 communities under its jurisdiction, including 23 urban communities and 22 rural communities. In 2020, the street has 618 grassroots party organizations and 12,960 registered party members. Guicheng Street launched the Caring Gui-

cheng construction project on June 18, 2009. Under the leadership of the Party Committee, the Guicheng Street Party Working Committee established the Caring Guicheng Steering Committee, with the Secretary of the Party Working Committee in charge and the joint leadership of the Party and Government. The Steering Committee set up corresponding organizations, such as the Secretariat and the Street Party Group Service Center, and clearly defined the responsibilities of each unit. The vision of caring is to make the residents “home together, heart together, strength together”, and to make Guicheng Street a harmonious place where people from far away are pleased with it (Tan & Mai, 2019). After more than a decade of practice, Guicheng Street has developed a strong caring atmosphere in the area, where residents help each other, participate in grassroots governance on their own initiative, and actively help the community solve grassroots governance problems. The effectiveness of grassroots governance in Guicheng Street is so outstanding that it was awarded Chinese Most Happy City—Park City Model in 2021, the only street in the country that was awarded this title, and its community was awarded the title of the most beautiful volunteer community, the national civilization unit, the “six good” peace and harmony community in Guangdong Province. Therefore, it is typical and representative for this study to choose Guicheng Street as the research object.

Compared with other streets in the same region, why is “caring” public value prominent in Guicheng Street, Nanhai District, Foshan City, and why can a strong caring atmosphere be formed among neighbors in this street? In order to answer this question, the author has visited Guicheng Street several times from January to October in 2022 to conduct research. This paper will analyze the mechanism and operation logic of “caring” public value creation in Guicheng Street during the operation of the Caring Guicheng construction project based on public value theory, with a view to providing a model for other urban communities to create public values.

3. The Practical Mechanism of “Caring” Public Value Creation in Guicheng Street

Based on public value theory, it can be found that the Guicheng Street Party Committee leads the whole process of “caring” public value creation in Guicheng Street. This process can be summarized into three major mechanisms: the “caring” public value identification mechanism, the “caring” public value practice mechanism and the “caring” public value self-propagation mechanism. Identifying “caring” public values is the process that the needs of residents are cared by street party committees, functional departments, social work organizations and building managers. Then, the mechanism of practicing “caring” public values is the process of multiple subjects putting the care into practice, meeting the needs of residents, and making residents feel the care and develop an interest in them. Finally, the “caring” public value self-propagation mechanism is based on the formation of “caring” public values in the street, and the process of the

residents' feeding and caring the society. The three mechanisms form a virtuous circle (as shown in **Figure 1**) to promote the care of all people in Guicheng Street and let love spread to every corner of it.

3.1. "Caring" Public Value Identification Mechanism

The first element of the Strategic Triangle Model is "public value". The key to creating public value is to identify public value, which requires identifying individual preferences and collective needs (Wang & Han, 2017). In Guicheng Street, public value is identified in two ways: through the Social Work Together program and the Building Manager system.

3.1.1. Hand in Hand with Social Workers Program: Grassroots Research to Understand the Needs

At the conference commemorating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Marx, General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed "People's aspiration for a better life is our goal of struggle. We should adhere to the people-centered development ideology, seize the most direct and realistic interest issues of the people, and continuously protect and improve people's livelihood." Therefore, creating public value requires adhering to the people as the center and understanding the real needs of residents through grassroots research. Under the leadership of the Party Working Committee of Guicheng Street, the Caring Guicheng project was launched in 2011. It aims to promote the participation of communities, functional departments, and units in the construction of Caring Guicheng, and to radiate the functions of community service provided by social work teams and functional departments to the grassroots. In this project, the social work team and functional departments will conduct demand research at the grassroots level to understand the needs of the public, so that functional departments and social organizations can work together to design service projects and link multiple resources to promote the implementation of service projects to effectively address the needs of the public. For example, the Hand in Hand with Social Workers program has explored the dual-track intervention service model of "doctor-patient" with the Health and Welfare Bureau to build a long-term patient support and medical staff support network in response to the problems of doctor-patient relationship. As of 2018, Caring Guicheng has launched 162 Hand in Hand with Social Workers programs, including Guicheng Xia Dong Community Youth Service and Guicheng Yihai Community Development Service. By developing care projects through the Hand in Hand with Social Workers program, it has changed the single model of the government providing projects and social organizations providing services (Tan & Mai, 2019). These projects adhere to the mass line, taking the discovery of the real needs of community residents as the starting point, solving the real problems of community residents as the ending point, meeting the people's needs for a better life, and practicing the Party's aim—serve the people wholeheartedly, thus ensuring the accuracy of the caring program.

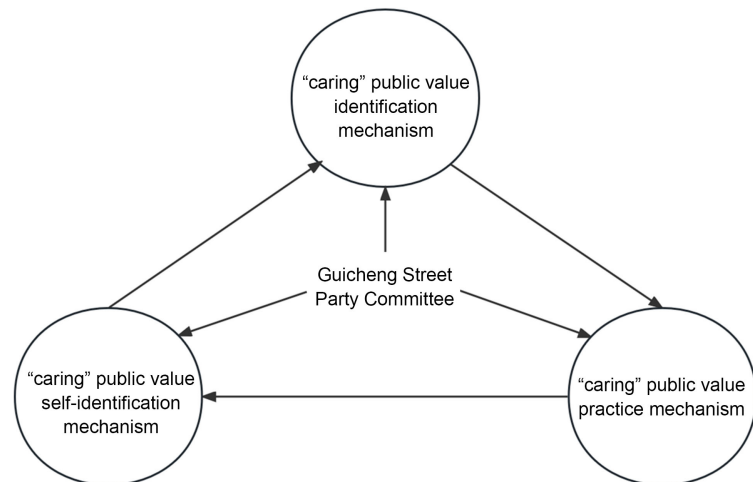


Figure 1. The practical mechanism of “caring” public value creation in Guicheng Street.

3.1.2. Building Manager System: Build a Platform to Open Up Public Opinion

The rapid economic development of Guicheng Street has attracted a large number of foreigners to gather here, and thousands of residents’ demands have been “flocked” to the community committee and the district property, which has escalated the difficulty of grassroots governance. In order to solve this problem of grassroots governance, the Caring Guicheng construction project established the Building Manager system in 2013, in which the community party committee and social organizations explore residents who are enthusiastic about public services as building managers to be a link between the community, property management company and residents. After the selection of building managers, community workers and social workers visit the residents of the building together with the building managers, who introduce themselves to the residents of the building, understand the situation of the building residents and collect their demands. In addition, under the leadership of the community party committee, the building manager will also form a building WeChat group to shorten the distance between the residents and the community committee and the property management company, where the committee, property management company and the building manager can collect and understand the opinions and suggestions of the building residents at any time. After receiving the residents’ needs, the building manager will do his best to solve the problem, and if it is beyond his ability, the building manager will reflect the problem to the neighborhood committee and property management company through the residents’ council room and multiparty joint meeting, and actively participate in the follow-up. At present, Guicheng Street has implemented the building manager system in 149 living quarters and cultivated 2142 building manager service teams, which are trusted by residents (Tan & Mai, 2019). In our interview, a resident Aunt Liang in Guicheng Street mentioned that many conflicts among residents were mediated by the building manager. She thought since there was a building manager

system, the atmosphere among the residents was better, and they were more friendly to one another. When meeting, they had a nod, greeting, or something (20220929LSM).

3.2. “Caring” Public Value Practice Mechanism

After identifying the public values of residents, under the leadership of the street Party Working Committee, the Steering Committee of Caring Guicheng has improved the top-level design and established the “five-ji”¹ working system at the macro level to guarantee the practice of “caring” public values. In the mid-scale view, social work organizations are stationed in the community to provide professional care services for the residents. At the micro level, multi-participates are involved in putting the residents’ caring needs into practice.

3.2.1. “Five-Ji” Work System: Systematic Top-Level Design

In order to effectively carry out the construction of Caring Guicheng, the Steering Committee of Caring Guicheng, under the leadership of the Party Working Committee of the street, has improved the top-level design and established the “five-ji” working system which is constitutive of institution, mechanism, base, fund and foundation to guarantee the practice of “caring” public values. Through this working system, the Steering Committee of Caring Guicheng plays a coordinating role to effectively develop and mobilize social forces. Firstly, through the Caring Organization, it coordinates 10 functional departments and institutions, introduces and nurtures 40 high-quality social organizations, and helps businesses and the general public to participate in the development of public welfare in the region, forming a large and capable work team. Secondly, the Caring Fund has been launched to purchase social services to leverage social resources and provide the most important resources for the construction of Caring Guicheng. As of 2018, the Caring Fund has invested a total of RMB 83.74 million to purchase 258 social service projects, covering eight service areas, including community services, family services and elderly services. It has created care bases such as the Caring Guicheng Creation Center, the Guicheng Green Apple Home and the Guicheng Senior Caring Center, which serve as platforms for work teams and social resources to play a role (Tan & Mai, 2019). In addition, eight caring mechanisms have been established, such as the awarding mechanism, the research and development mechanism of caring projects, the mobilization mechanism of social participation, the education mechanism of “caring curriculum in school”, the cultivation mechanism of social organizations, the cultivation mechanism of social work talents, the evaluation system of caring service projects, and the emergency response and graded disposal mechanism of psychological assistance services. The construction of Caring Guicheng will be consolidated and developed continuously. Finally, through the development of a number of caring brand activities such as the Award Ceremony, Caring Town,

¹“Five-Ji” is named after the initials of institution, mechanism, base, fund, and foundation in Chinese phonetic alphabet.

Public Welfare Market Day and Public Welfare Day Trip, a solid service foundation has been formed. A caring park has been built in the community as a supporting foundation for the construction of Caring Guicheng, so that the public can cultivate the core socialist values and spread the positive energy of social care through games, entertainments and public welfare markets.

3.2.2. Social Work Organizations in the Community: Professional Care Services Led by Party Building

Relying on the Caring Fund, Guicheng Street has introduced social work organizations to carry out diversified social governance projects such as community development, community integration and social services in the form of purchasing social services, injecting new vitality into community governance, building a channel and platform for the originally fragmented community residents and community autonomous organizations, and integrating the public value of care into community services. Unlike the common cooperation model of government purchase of social services, starting from 2018, community neighborhood committees have become the C-party of social service projects, strengthening the intervention of community party organizations in project initiation, procurement, supervision and evaluation, better guiding service resources to meet the needs of community people, following up on the use of project funds and the daily implementation of projects, and realizing the coordination of service projects by community party organizations. This changes the government's function from "paddling" to "steering", which means government doesn't need to follow up projects and just need to give guidance. It makes the caring services enjoyed by the residents more professional, and makes the community party organizations be "supervisors". In the course of service projects, the community party committee takes the initiative to communicate with the project social workers on a regular basis to listen to the progress of the projects, gives guidance on the direction of the activities, and mobilizes human power and resources to support the service projects at the right time. In the course of the activities, the community party committee directly participates in the activities and responds to the questions raised by the residents, so that the residents understand that the services provided by the social workers are carried out under the leadership of the party organization.

3.2.3. Party, Government and Society All Participate: Diversified Care Subjects

In addition to the two main bodies of the street party committee and social work organizations involved in the construction of Caring Guicheng, there is no shortage of party members, government departments and social enterprises in the period. First, party members "sink" into the community to play an exemplary role. Guicheng Street specially set up Guicheng Street Party Members Volunteer Service Center, for the organs, community, enterprises, and school party members to provide volunteer knowledge and skills coaching, planning and implementation of a large number of projects to serve the people, such as "red

care”, “red service”, “red communication”, so that the Party’s care reaches the community and the people’s hearts. Nowadays, there are more than 400 party volunteer service teams in Guicheng Street, with more than 10,000 registered party volunteers, carrying out more than 40,000 various volunteer service activities and serving the public 2 million times (Tan & Mai, 2019). Second, “party building + departmental function building” effectively meets the care needs of residents. In the construction of Caring Guicheng led by the party building, the joint promotion of departments plays an important role. The Guicheng Street Office and related departments promote “caring” public values through “party building + departmental function building”. For example, to help new Guicheng residents solve the problem of weekend childcare, Guicheng Street Party Committee, Office and Education Bureau launched the Saturday Children’s Palace project in 2012, which was led by street teachers, to organize a team of elite teachers to carry out extensive voluntary tutoring every Saturday throughout Guicheng Street, and its tutoring contents include subject competitions, sports, and art interests. By 2021, the program has achieved full coverage in public primary and secondary schools, with more than 120 programs in 4 categories of sports, science and technology, arts and culture, and social practice accessible to students for free, with more than 400 master teachers and nearly 60,000 Guicheng students participating every week. In early 2015, under the guidance of the Steering Committee of Caring Guicheng, more than 10 Guicheng business enterprises took the lead in establishing the Guicheng Business Care Association to inject new activities into the construction of Caring Guicheng. Over the years, with the mission of “enhancing the happiness of Guicheng Street’s residents with care”, the Guicheng Business Care Association has actively set up a platform for matching public welfare resources and advocated the social responsibility of business enterprises. It has created service brands such as Meet You at 75 and Science and Technology in School, and its image as a model of corporate public welfare is deeply recognized by Guicheng Street’s residents (Tan & Mai, 2019).

3.3. “Caring” Public Value Self-Propagation Mechanism

Through the implementation of the two aforementioned mechanisms, Guicheng residents and the community have reached a consensus on “caring” public values. Under the leadership of the Party Working Committee, social workers not only provide professional social services, but also focus on cultivating residents’ caring capacity, creating self-organization, and guiding residents to care about the community, so that the “caring” public values can continue.

3.3.1. Self-Organization Creating: Cultivating Residents’ Caring Capacity

In order to cultivate residents’ caring capacity, with the support of the Caring Guicheng Construction Steering Committee, the social workers organize a Community Micro-initiative activity, in which the finalists are given a grant to carry out community volunteer activities or participate in community construction. In order to encourage residents to participate in this activity, social work-

ers, in the process of community care services, will pay attention to discover enthusiastic residents and guide them to form teams to participate in activities. This way can create self organization. A virtuous cycle is achieved through the development of service projects to foster the capacity of residents and promote the growth of community organizations. In addition, in order to stimulate the enthusiasm of social organizations to serve the community, the Caring Guicheng construction project has also developed a system of exchanging volunteer service hours for activity space, which allows social organizations to use indoor community space once a week to carry out organizational activities. If social organizations need to increase the frequency of use in a week, they have to exchange the right to use the activity space by carrying out corresponding volunteer service hours.

3.3.2. Care for All: Residents Give Back to the Community and Actively Serve as Volunteers

With the deepening of the “caring” public value practice mechanism, residents and the community have reached a consensus on “caring” public values, and a caring atmosphere has basically been formed in Guicheng Street, in which many residents have received care, and have been grateful to the community, or have realized the unity of self-value and social value through dedication and then have encouraged more people to participate. For example, Ling Xianjun from Hunan Province was helped by many people in Guicheng Street as a new resident, which gave him the idea and action to give back to the society and care about others, and gradually grew into a volunteer leader, gaining recognition and praise from the society. As a result, a virtuous cycle of “caring” public value creation is formed in Guicheng Street, and the caring atmosphere in the street is getting stronger and stronger.

4. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the mechanism of public value creation in Guicheng Street under the leadership of party building. In the “caring” public value identification mechanism, through the Hand in Hand with Social Workers program, functional departments and social organizations conduct grassroots research to understand residents’ needs. Through establishing the building manager system, the building manager becomes a link between residents and the community, and builds a WeChat platform to smoothly communicate public opinions. In the “caring” public value practice mechanism, at the macro level, the Steering Committee of Caring Guicheng improves the top-level design and establishes the “five-ji” work system to guarantee the practice of “caring” public values. In the mid-scale view, social work organizations are stationed in the community to provide professional care services for residents. At the micro level, multi-participates implement the needs of residents’ care. Through the implementation of the identification and practice mechanism, residents and communities in Guicheng Street have reached a consensus on “caring” public values. In the self-propagation me-

chanism of “caring” public values, social workers foster self-organization and guide residents to care about the society, so as to promote the continuation of “caring” public values.

In the future, other streets should learn from Guicheng Street’s experience from their reality and form their unique public values, as “caring” public value may not be suitable for all places. Besides, there are some suggestions for other streets to create public value. Firstly, Street party committees and government departments should go down to the grassroots to investigate and understand the real needs of residents. Secondly, the government should strengthen the leadership of party building in the implementation of public services purchased by the government and strengthen the influence and cohesion of the party on residents. Last but not least, other streets should focus on fostering self-organization and improving the ability of residents to give back to society and spread public values in the streets.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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