

Collaborative Governance and Public Interest Representation in Neighborhood Regeneration in Post-Growth China: Evidence from Guangzhou and Foshan

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Abstract: In the post-growth era of stock optimization, China's neighborhood regeneration has shifted from development-driven redevelopment to inclusive governance. The dynamic participation of diverse stakeholders has reconstructed the representation mechanism of public interest, challenging traditional urban planning theories. Based on participatory research into cutting-edge practices in the Guangdong region, this study systematically analyzes the new characteristics of collaborative governance in the post-growth era. It identifies three distinct models: state-led co-creation, professional-led place-making, and society-community partnered co-production, illustrating the multi-scalar public interest representation mechanisms and diverse governance structures emerging within institutional gaps. Moving beyond the conventional dichotomies of development control and stakeholder gaming, this paper defines communicative public interest across three dimensions—regulatory order, local attachment, and action expectations. This reflects an evolutionary shift from benefit-sharing and joint consultation to collaborative symbiosis and value co-creation. By highlighting effective practices of Chinese collaborative governance, the paper analyzes the evolution of decision-making relations and planning responses, including the dynamic composition of the state, the changing role of planners, and the rise of new governance alliances, providing fresh insights for community planning efficacy and governance performance.

Keywords: neighborhood governance; public interest; urban regeneration; collaborative planning; community planner

Since the reform and opening up and the commercialization of urban housing, China's large-scale urbanization and community construction have long operated under a 'growth' logic. Early urban renewal models predominantly relied on demolition and incremental development to reuse urban spatial resources and capture land value increments. This perspective of land value distribution formed the primary ontological understanding of public interest in China's urban renewal. Various scholars have debated different methods of calculating renewal benefits through the lens of the 'public-private' relationship. Within urban planning, public interest is conceptualized either as objective rational boundaries and development control baselines, or as the aggregation of stakeholder choices aimed at maximizing economic utility.

In recent years, the state discourse has adopted a highly cautious policy stance toward urban renewal. Concurrently, a sluggish real estate market indicates that major Chinese cities have entered a 'post-growth' stock era, characterized by weakening market drivers, decelerating land supply, reduced density quotas, and heterogeneous interest groups. Consequently, neighborhood regeneration strategies have pivoted from demolition-reconstruction to 'micro-regeneration' [cite: 16-77]. Governance configurations

have shifted from real-estate-dominated regimes toward inclusive governance alliances comprising diverse entities. Renewal strategies now focus not only on physical spatial development but balance 'hardware' facilities with 'software' quality upgrades. Greater emphasis is placed on extensive stakeholder participation in negotiation, communication, and collective decision-making. Policy discourses such as 'collaborative wisdom, co-construction, and shared benefits,' 'People's City,' 'Complete Communities,' and 'preserving nostalgia' underscore that micro-regeneration in the post-growth era aims to improve existing human settlements, enhance resident autonomy, and encourage multi-stakeholder participation to break free from real estate dependency. This transformation highlights the communicative nature of public interest, manifested through broad decision-making participation, dynamic consensus building, and conscious collective action.

Recent exploratory neighborhood regeneration practices across China—including old residential community retrofitting, complete and future community construction, and the upgrading of urban villages—reveal rich governance dynamics involving residents, planners, community organizations, social groups, and local enterprises. These practices offer an inclusive platform for the multi-faceted representation of public interest and provide valuable cases for exploring the dynamic scalar shifts between individuals and collectives. Moving beyond the conventional debates over the 'composition' of public interest (the private vs. public interest debate), which often suffer from ambiguity and application limitations, this study repositions public interest as an emerging communicative collective consensus. We focus on how diverse stakeholders express public interest, their objectives, and how these expressions embed into urban planning. Centering on the emerging collaborative governance models in Guangdong, this paper analyzes the dynamic relations among actors and multi-scalar public interest representations, outlining theoretical pathways and practical lessons for advancing from benefit-sharing to value co-creation.

1 Evolution of Public Interest Representation Mechanism and Dialogue between Chinese and Western Theories

1.1 Concept of Public Interest Promoting Institutional Flexibility: Different Pathways from the 'Individual-Collective' Perspective

Rooted in Aristotle's philosophy of good governance, the public interest is the concretization of the 'highest good' and serves as the cornerstone of urban governance structures. Western and Chinese philosophies examine the formation mechanism of public interest from individual and collective scales, deriving schools of institutional and behavioral determinism.

First, regulatory theory posits that public interest represents a common value or collective morality achieved through unified action and established via top-down formal institutional design. Regulation is the formal avenue through which governments achieve public interest objectives, mitigate market failures, and maximize social welfare [cite: 15, 16]. Consequently, the state maintains a dominant position from a collective standpoint. Regulators, consisting of policymakers and professionals, possess the motivation and capacity to make rational choices aligned with the collective interest. Reflecting Plato's **Republic**, where wise guardians rule the city-state, social order and public interest are guaranteed by a set of legal rules set by policymakers and the unified order maintained by professionals

acting as state agents. This aligns closely with traditional Chinese thoughts on 'ritual' (Li) and 'law' (Fa). For instance, Han Feizi asserted that 'strength and order arise from law,' emphasizing the state's regulatory role in bounding individual behaviors [cite: 17]. Conversely, the concept of 'ritual' in *Guanzi* operates as an informal norm supplementing rigid legal systems, fostering flexible social order and ensuring fairness in wealth and resource distribution [cite: 18], which introduces the second perspective driven by informal behaviors.

Second, behavioral political theories argue that the public interest is primarily the aggregation of group benefits derived from individual utility maximization, constructed through bottom-up informal activities. As 'rational actors,' individuals make subjective choices to maximize utility based on personal needs [cite: 19]. This perspective stresses the challenges that market and social actors pose to top-down regulatory frameworks through spontaneous actions at the individual scale. However, as collective action theory points out, the simple summation of individual utility maximization does not automatically equal optimized social welfare [cite: 20]. Rousseau's theory of the 'general will' emphasizes the importance of individual political participation in decision-making. Building on this, Kant conceptualized the social contract as a universal consensus and collective rule formed during public participation and communication. The formation of this social contract follow two paths: radical and collaborative. The radical path refers to compromises and informal rules forged through conflict, resistance, and bargaining. When the fundamental rights of marginalized groups are neglected in public resource allocation, they often resort to contentious behaviors to force institutional adjustments and validate informal actions; a typical example is the social disputes and 'nail-house' phenomena in redevelopment projects. Conversely, the collaborative path denotes a collective consensus and spontaneous rational order built on bottom-up communication, interaction, and mutual learning among grassroots actors. This resonates with the Taoist philosophy of 'allowing each to follow their nature and find peace' and Laozi's wisdom of 'governing the state with righteousness, and win the world by non-action,' which advocates respecting the spontaneous laws arising from daily individual interactions.

China's urban stock renewal has evolved over nearly twenty years, splitting into two clear phases. Taking Guangdong Province as an example: the first phase (2009–2015) was dominated by incremental logic, characterized by real-estate-led redevelopment and inefficient land reuse. The second phase (2016–present) represents the 'post-growth' stock stage, emphasizing collaborative micro-regeneration that combines selective demolition and comprehensive retrofitting to improve human settlements. In this context, the public interest representation mechanism has shifted from a state-dominated regulatory path to an institutional arrangement where formal and informal local initiatives coexist. This mimics the network governance perspective in Western nations that operates between free-market logic and vertical hierarchies, characterized by multi-departmental collaboration and flattened networks of power extending beyond the state-market-society triad [cite: 21, 22]. Distinct from Western models, China's emerging governance dynamic features an intertwining of institutions and behaviors, blurring public-private boundaries and fostering vibrant grassroots initiatives situated between administrative coordination and market dominance.

1.2 Multi-scalar Analytical Framework Based on Communicative Public Interest Representation

According to the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, the effectiveness of the state lies in establishing representative institutions to manage the public interests and consequences arising from the collective actions of citizens affected by specific policies [cite: 23]. Dewey highlighted the relativity and plurality of the 'state' and its capacity to embed within 'organized communities.' Based on this understanding, this paper conceptualizes public interest as a communicative construct shaped through negotiation, collaboration, and consensus-building. By analyzing diverse collaborative governance models and neighborhood practices in China that navigate institutional flexibility and policy gaps, we reveal a public interest representation mechanism distinct from the Western conflict logic rooted in the 'right to the city.' We categorize these mechanisms into three types: regulatory representation, individual representation, and community representation (see Figure 1).

Regulatory representation of public interest: Local governments establish standardized rules and draft planning schemes based on shared objectives. Market and social actors are engaged through formal mechanisms such as institutional capacity building, public notices, consultation, and scheme debates. Examples include party-building-led 'co-creation' and state-coordinated land assembly policies. Here, public interest is bounded by the regulatory order. Its integration into planning follows two paths: government-constructed multi-departmental coordination or conflict-resolving multi-stakeholder negotiation. Since state-led public interest representation primarily revolves around balancing 'public-private' gains, the state, market, and social actors form a 'benefit-sharing' alliance.

Individual representation of public interest: Stakeholders undertake proactive interventions to maximize individual utility, steering collective decisions based on private will. For example, driven by daily living needs, residents choose implementing entities that align with their community vision or participate in participatory planning activities to express preferences. Driven by project progress and economic feasibility, decision-makers launch participatory activities to mobilize residents and link various actors to achieve their planning visions. Public interest here manifests as a collective consensus emerging from the diverse interests, preferences, and demands of individuals, driven by local attachment. The multiplication of individual representation actors drives the formation of 'joint consultation' platforms.

Community representation of public interest: Diverse actors—including local governments, market enterprises, community organizations, and social agencies—form a 'collaborative symbiosis' alliance based on shared expectations for collective action. Local practices such as state-owned enterprises leading resource integration for inefficient land use, local businesses setting up community foundations for co-construction, and grassroots party organizations directly engaging in public affairs via property management companies reflect an embedded governance structure. This structure creates a partnership of 'shared interests, shared rights, and shared responsibilities.' Unlike collective regulatory representation or atomized individual representation, community representation does not rely on a state-predefined goal or sole individual motivation. Instead, it is a process where planning targets are dynamically adjusted through regular interaction and negotiation among diverse entities. In this process, local governance power is decentralized rather than concentrated, granting greater autonomy to renewal actors through community mobilization and empowerment. Within this new 'public sphere,' public interest represents value expectations for the multi-faceted development of the community.

Motivated by action expectations and shared goals, diverse participants drive 'value co-creation,' generating physical spatial revitalization and accumulating social capital.

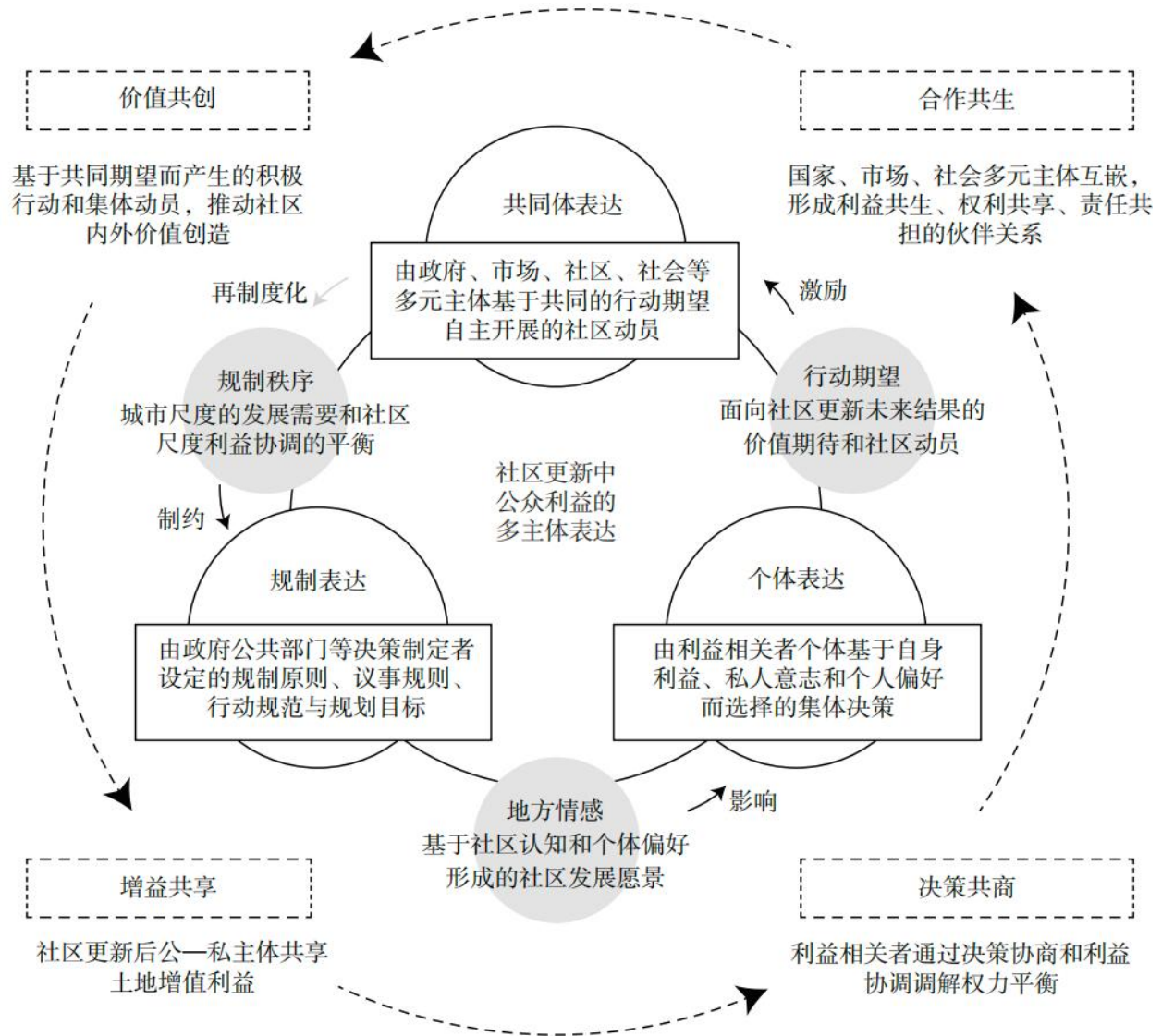


Fig.1 Multi-scalar analytical framework for public interest representation

2 Three Emerging Collaborative Governance Models and Their Public Interest Representation in China's Neighborhood Regeneration

Based on participatory observations, field surveys, and in-depth interviews from community planning practices between 2017 and 2024, this paper captures the frontier dynamics of neighborhood regeneration in Guangdong. We identify three emerging collaborative governance models, each representing distinct public interest representation mechanisms and actor relationships.

2.1 Co-creation Model Led by Local Government: Vertical Regulatory Representation

Co-creation (*Gongtong Dinciao*) was the earliest collaborative governance model to emerge in post-growth China, spearheaded by the 'state' role consisting of local governments, public departments, and grassroots party organizations. Initiated at the 2010 Guangdong Yunfu seminar on 'Transforming Development Approaches and Constructing Human Settlements,' this model matured across Fujian, Guangdong, Liaoning, and Hubei, rising to a national strategy in 2018. Led by local governments and public sectors, special governance bodies are established to formulate consultation rules and organize participatory activities, bridging the state, residents, planners, and other stakeholders. Since 2019, the co-creation model has diverged into two practical types: 'negotiation platforms' and 'cooperative frameworks' (see Figure 2).

The first type builds negotiation platforms to facilitate face-to-face communication among stakeholders, proactively mitigating conflicts and social impacts resulting from planning interventions. For example, in September 2018, the Enning Road neighborhood in Guangzhou established the city's first 'Co-creation Committee.' Operating alongside the project 'Headquarters,' it served as an essential grassroots governance body to coordinate communication, oversee planning implementation, and channel public feedback to defuse tensions. The application of the co-creation model in Enning Road advanced public interest representation in two ways: first, it provided a direct dialogue platform for residents, developers, and local government, leveraging experts to address grievances and resistance accumulated over a decade of redevelopment; second, it leveraged institutionalized collaborative discourse to rebuild residents' trust in local authorities and cushion the negative externalities of urban renewal. Interaction within this model follows a 'vertical dimension' of collaborative governance, where the Co-creation Committee acts as a mediator and integrator of the interest community, streamlining resources and resolving systemic frictions to advance the project.

The second type creates cooperative frameworks to optimize community management and resource integration, strengthening horizontal ties between community party organizations and social groups. This framework reinforces the legitimacy of state actors in grassroots governance by selecting resident representatives, pooling cross-administrative resources, and securing community empowerment from higher authorities. For instance, the Fenghuang Community in Jiangxia District, Wuhan, launched a party-building-led co-creation model in 2020. Plagued by poor construction quality, deficient property management, and a high proportion of non-local residents, the old neighborhoods suffered from fragmented management and acute tensions between residents and property management companies. In this context, the co-creation model advanced public interest representation by: (1) uniting five old neighborhoods under a vertical, multi-tiered grassroots governance system led by the community's Grand Party Committee; (2) establishing home-owner committees and introducing a 'remuneration-based' property management system to enhance internal asset management and external resource pooling. This established a collaborative alliance with neighboring universities, businesses, hospitals, and villages to strengthen vertical connections among participants.

Under the co-creation model, the 'public' is viewed as a grassroots audience relative to policymakers, comprising local residents and citizens. Planners act as institutional executors; composed of planning compilers and technical experts, they form part of the regulatory body, assisting local governments in defining public interest and community development targets objectively. This drives the top-down

vertical representation of regulatory public interest. In the Enning Road Co-creation Committee, for example, planning professionals assisted the district government and housing bureau in drafting rules, facilitating discussions, and executing scheme modifications. However, because this government-led approach remained largely a one-way transmission of opinions, the Co-creation Committee was gradually marginalized in later stages. Some residents questioned whether the platform exacerbated imbalances in local governance discourse. Despite these controversies, party-building-led co-creation activities in Liaoning and Hubei continue to integrate internal assets and bind external entities effectively.

2.2 Place-making Model Led by Professional Planners: Horizontal Individual Representation

Place-making has emerged recently through public space micro-regeneration and neighborhood beautification initiatives, typically championed by professional planners, non-governmental organizations, or planning scholars. For example, community garden initiatives in Shanghai and Guangzhou are often initiated by urban planning and landscape architecture professionals who mobilize active residents to co-design and maintain public spaces. The local evolution of this model relies on two conditions: first, a supportive policy environment and discourse that encourages grassroots autonomy—such as the *Shanghai Urban Renewal Implementation Measures*, which offer floor-area-ratio (FAR) incentives for stakeholders who improve public spaces independently; second, residents' growing demand for better environments and their willingness to participate.

In the Keyuan Community in Guangzhou, planners initiated a community garden co-creation project in 2023, forming a self-help group consisting of residents, neighborhood committee members, social organizations, and staff from local child education centers (such as kindergartens, early learning centers, youth activity hubs, and art studios). Planners served as the core organizers and facilitators: (1) setting co-creation targets and managing execution quality—for instance, during a wall-painting activity, university art instructors prepared the drafts, and 28 university students were organized to mix colors and guide families during painting; (2) connecting external resources by mobilizing social organizations, educational firms, and university volunteers to contribute space, labor, and funding. Through these efforts, the community planner organized a children's charity bazaar that crowdfunded over 6,000 RMB from residents, while securing financial backing and equipment donations from the Qianhe Community Foundation and Huanghuagang Chamber of Commerce.

Under the place-making model, the 'public' is a localized group bonded by economic benefits, personal care, or daily needs, including residents, social organizations, and local businesses. Planners act as practical constructors, giving rise to grass-roots governance alliances supported by technical expertise. As central decision-makers, planners operate as the emotional core binding multiple subjects horizontally, creating a flat collaborative alliance focused on building a child-friendly community as its public interest target (see Figure 3). For example, in the Dongming community garden project in Shanghai, the sub-district office, an NGO (Clover Nature School), universities, and planners formed a co-creation team that enhanced landscapes and raised public awareness through education and gardening. Similarly, in Guangzhou's Keyuan Community, planners brought together students, residents, NGOs, and educational businesses to achieve child-friendly community goals. Nonetheless, this model relies heavily on individual planners and has not yet established self-sustaining community momentum. A

misalignment also exists between idealized professional visions and real resident demands; for instance, the planners' proposal for long-term online monitoring of plant growth failed to secure a resident response. Despite this, community garden co-creation explores innovative roles for planners in pooling external resources, achieving diverse social and cultural goals beyond mere economic growth.

2.3 'Society-Community' Collaboration Model: Cross-Scalar Community Representation

The co-production model embodies a collaborative symbiosis among community organizations, residents, local businesses, and social agencies, blending top-down state intervention with bottom-up individual actions. Within this setup, private enterprises play an important role by establishing community foundations to coordinate and mobilize local assets for neighborhood regeneration. Examples include the Taoyuanju Public Welfare Development Foundation established by Taoyuanju Group in 2008, the Chengdu Luxehills Community Development Foundation set up by Wanhua New Town in 2010, and the Guangdong Desheng Community Foundation launched by Midea Group in 2017. These initiatives have forged a new 'society-community' partnership, driving a co-production model focused on value creation within and beyond the neighborhood.

Taking Shunde in Foshan as an example, local authorities have explored collaborative governance models combining communities, social organizations, professional social workers, volunteers, and philanthropic resources since 2010. Currently, 243 charitable organizations have been established, channeling approximately 15 billion RMB into neighborhood regeneration. In the Dongfeng Community of Shunde, the partnership among the community party organization, professional planners, and local businesses operates across two dimensions. Internally, the community works closely with planners to activate grassroots agency, mobilizing residents to contribute ideas for planning implementation and daily management, resulting in co-built public spaces. Since 2021, participatory design has delivered a series of public space renovations and infrastructural upgrades (see Figure 4). By gathering local knowledge, planners learned about the village tradition of holding large outdoor banquets in the central square and identified the behavior patterns of a local ant species, which directly informed the selection of permeable bricks and layout design. Externally, close ties with upper-level governments and local businesses grant the community formal legitimacy for co-production. In 2022, the Dongfeng Community signed an agreement with the Desheng Community Foundation to establish a community co-construction fund, institutionalizing this governance model. Over 90% of residents contributed to the fund, raising about 8 million RMB, most of which will be funneled into real estate investments to generate sustainable income for long-term community development.

The value creation driven by public interest representation in this co-production model is twofold: first, by optimizing underutilized land resources to create new public spaces, it revitalizes local lifestyles and cultural customs; second, by mobilizing collective capital, it creates new governance bodies and consultation platforms, institutionalizing autonomous updates through the community fund. Local governments, community party organizations, professional planners, community foundations, and active residents form a cross-scalar, cross-regional, and multi-tiered nested governance configuration (see Figure 4). This structure advances a public interest representation focused on creating public spaces, pooling external assets, and building collaborative platforms.

Under the co-production model, the scope of the 'public' expands to encompass cross-scalar external regions, while planners act as systemic coordinators, facilitating cross-scalar alliances among participants and social organizations. The public interest here aligns with underutilized land resource optimization and community mobilization goals. Unlike the previous two models, the local government is not the sole leader nor entirely detached; instead, through the community party organization, it connects social organizations, residents, planners, and local businesses into an embedded alliance. The state sets the vertical cooperation framework within which planners forge horizontal linkages. A planner involved in the Dongfeng project highlighted this efficiency: 'The planning process was incredibly smooth. The community party organization handled coordination with residents and social organizations, so we only needed to communicate with the party organization to conduct our professional work efficiently. What we need most is access to a stable, fixed group of interlocutors, rather than having to locate stakeholders ourselves every time' (Interview, May 17, 2024).

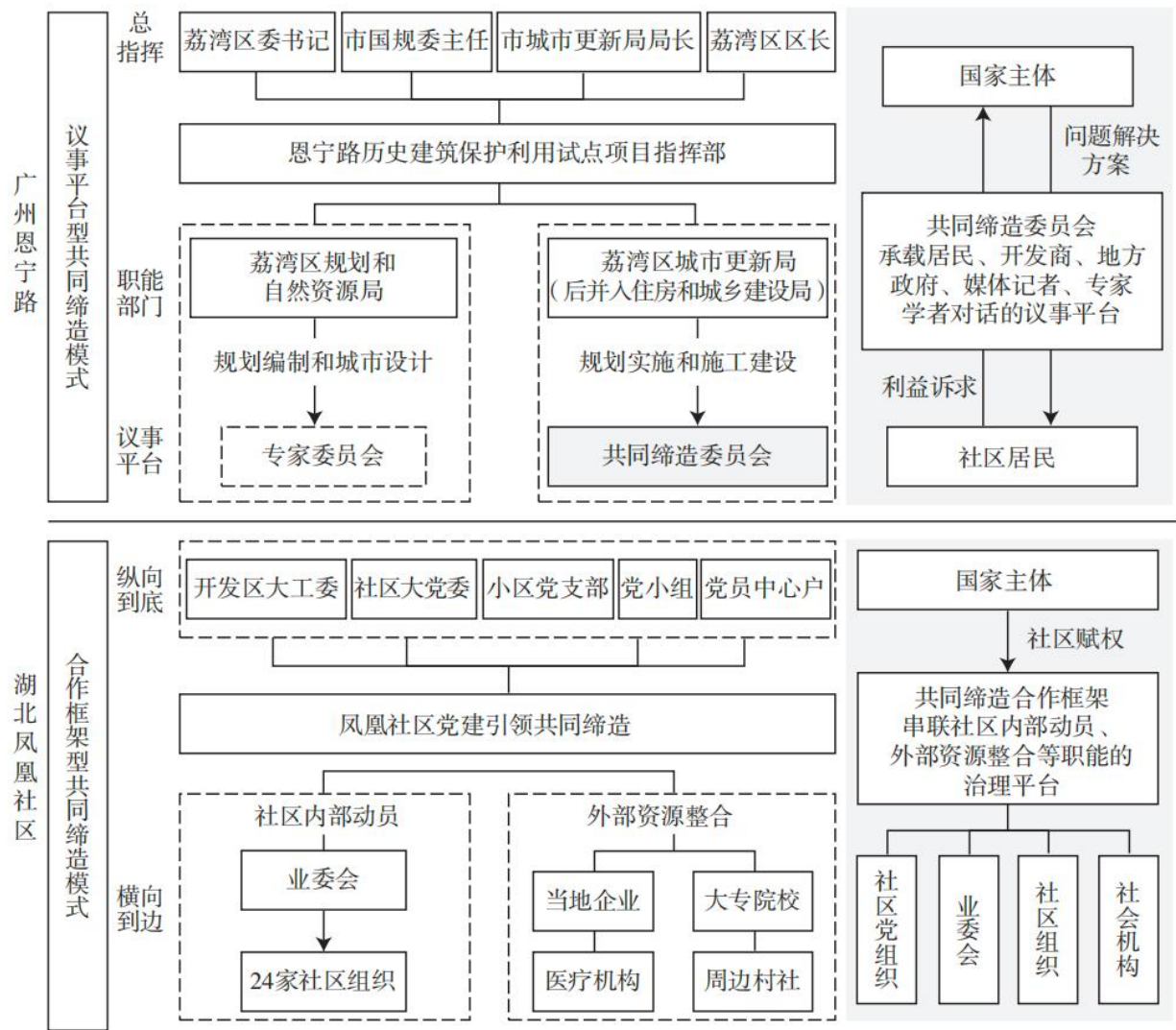


Fig.2 Two governance structures of the co-creation model

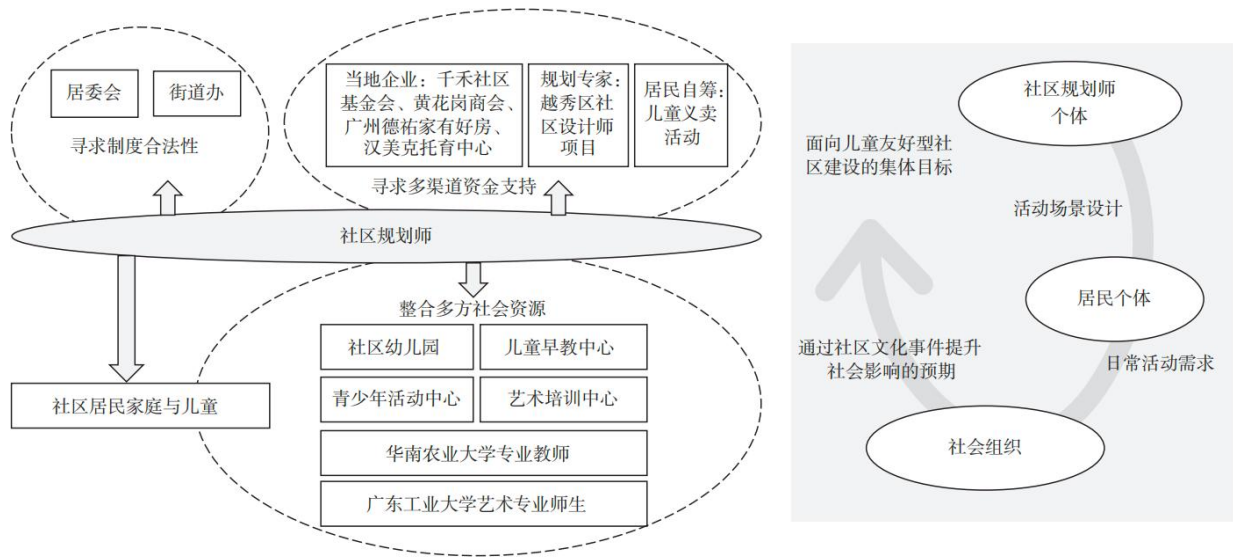


Fig.3 Governance structure of the place-making model

3 Discussion: Practical and Theoretical Interactions of Collaborative Governance in the Post-Growth Era

3.1 From Economic Growth to Stock Optimization: Differentiation of State Goals and Governance Efficacy

The expression of public interest driven by stakeholder communication, negotiation, and mutual learning is the primary driver behind the emergence of diverse collaborative governance models. Recently, China's urban renewal has shifted from a singular growth logic focused on land value maximization toward enhancing overall social welfare, centered on citizens' sense of security, happiness, and fulfillment. This reflects a differentiation of state objectives. In neighborhood regeneration, practices have transitioned from state-driven campaign-style construction and market-driven real estate development toward inclusive governance structures encompassing grassroots bodies, NGOs, and professional planners. The 'post-growth' stock era does not mean 'zero growth' or 'anti-growth'; rather, it emphasizes enhancing the positive externalities of neighborhood regeneration through robust inter-subjective communication amid weakening market dynamics, tighter density constraints, and mixed stakeholder interests. Hence, governance efficacy becomes a core issue. Many scholars critically evaluate planning theories based on Habermas's communicative rationality, arguing that the planner's role as a government agent can reduce communication to a one-way, educational governance path, rendering symbolic collaborative activities tools for the state to consolidate discourse. However, evidence from Guangdong demonstrates that under these three models, the state, market, and social actors do not exist in isolation. Instead, they form specific, hybrid governance alliances through nested interactions during public interest representation. Policy discourses like 'People's City' and 'co-construction, co-governance, and shared benefits' encourage the rise of this collaborative paradigm that transcends the state-market binary. Unlike Western intermediate social organizations (such as NGOs and advocacy groups) that operate independently of the state, collaborative action in Chinese

neighborhood regeneration is largely driven by cohesive groups living in the same geographic locality (the community). This is the essence of communicative public interest, expressed through daily activities and grassroots participation.

3.2 From Blueprint Planning to Inclusive Governance: Distinct Governance Alliances

The shift from blueprint-based scenario building to inclusive spatial governance reflects changing roles for the state and social actors in public interest representation and spatial response. Diverse actors establish a new community based on economic returns, local attachments, and action expectations, creating a novel 'state-market-society' governance framework distinct from growth coalitions. The practices in Guangzhou and Foshan demonstrate innovative frameworks for these alliances and reveal the internal mechanisms through which consensus is forged among the government, market, and citizens under different institutional setups. In the co-creation model, local governments build vertical negotiation platforms to transform administrative authority into dialogic spaces, using technical planning expertise to translate fragmented demands into an actionable public agenda. The place-making model reconfigures consensus-building via flat social networks, leveraging planners to translate heterogeneous demands into shared spatial symbols. The co-production model extends consensus-building across scales, achieving multi-tiered interest integration through nested governance structures where community foundations bridge strategic state goals and citizen needs. These three models highlight differentiated paths of consensus-building in China's stock renewal. Their integrated framework of 'vertical integration, horizontal linkage, and cross-scalar collaboration' offers a typical empirical sample for advancing public interest representation, improving stock optimization efficiency, and accommodating pluralistic value distribution across cities.

3.3 From Benefit-Sharing to Value Co-Creation: Adaptation and Mutation of Collaborative Planning in China

The spontaneous, diversified representations of public interest in China's neighborhood regeneration reflect an evolutionary shift from benefit-sharing to value co-creation, marking an adaptive application and mutation of Western collaborative planning. Since the 1990s, inspired by Habermas's communicative rationality and its optimism toward deliberative democracy, various participatory models emerged, such as Forester's participatory planning and Healey's collaborative planning [cite: 22]. However, both models struggle to explain the institutional environments and multi-faceted dynamics of grassroots participation in China. Crucially, Healey's collaborative planning theory emphasizes bottom-up agency while questioning the state's institutional legitimacy and its role in fostering collaboration, limiting its explanatory power in the Chinese context. This paper underscores the necessity and importance of state actors and institutional forces in defining 'rational communication boundaries,' providing legitimate resources, and institutionalizing collaborative governance. Empirical findings from Guangdong show that grassroots bodies like community party organizations, neighborhood committees, and sub-district offices play pivotal roles in advancing implementation, positively impacting incremental participation and community empowerment. This demonstrates that China's collaborative configuration represents an effective governance form situated between British neighborhood planning and American collaborative planning.

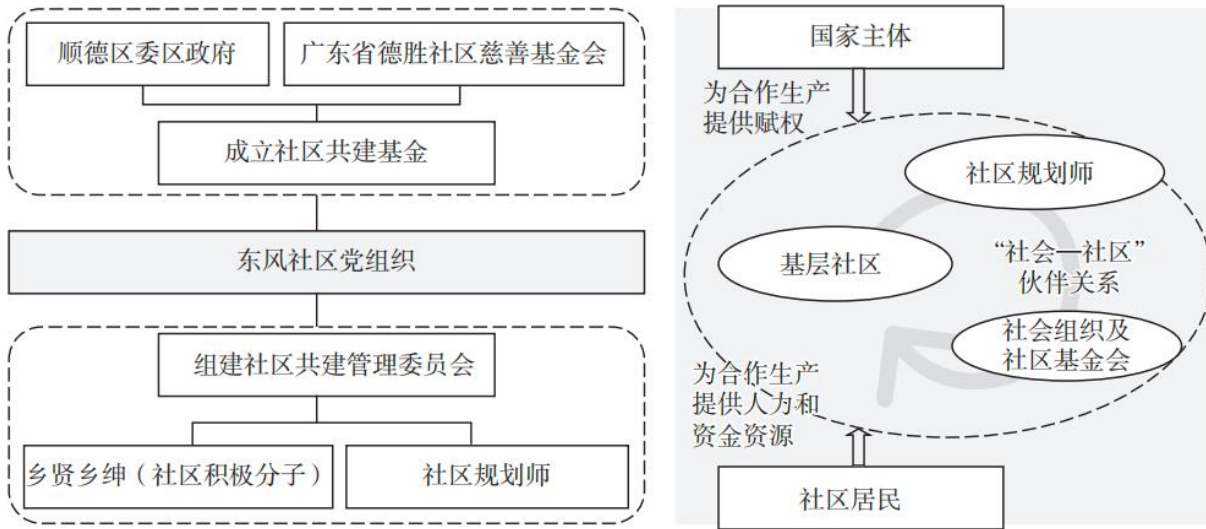


Fig.4 Governance structure of the co-production model

4 Conclusion

Confronting the discursive shift from development-driven redevelopment to inclusive governance in the post-growth era, the diverse actors in neighborhood regeneration have surpassed traditional stakeholder frameworks, reshaping how public interest is represented and manifested in planning. Therefore, this study bypasses the ontological limitations of public interest, demonstrating from an epistemological stance the emerging collaborative governance configurations catalyzed by public interest representation, and focusing on shifting stakeholder dynamics in Chinese neighborhood regeneration.

The theoretical innovations are threefold: first, distinct from the 'state-market' growth coalitions of the traditional incremental phase, the post-growth era introduces inclusive governance alliances where diverse actors coexist; second, unlike the 'no-growth' urban trajectories of some developed Western nations, China's post-growth stock era still features incremental adjustments, but space expansion indicators centered on FAR are reduced, shifting focus toward improving human settlements and addressing infrastructural deficits to enhance overall social welfare; third, unlike the 'anti-growth' discourses in isolated redevelopment projects, stock planning targets in the post-growth era are oriented toward benefit-sharing and win-win cooperation, advancing public interest across multiple scales.

Based on participatory research into frontier community practices in Guangdong, this study identifies three collaborative governance models—co-creation, place-making, and co-production—which reflect the practical evolution and changing connotations of communicative public interest representation across collective, individual, and community scales. This paper constructs an analytical framework for public interest representation in the post-growth era, where actors span three scales: regulatory bodies (local government and public sectors), individuals (private wills of stakeholders), and communities (society-community partnerships). Driven by regulatory order, local attachment, and action expectations,

these scales propel planning expressions, yielding progressive outcomes from benefit-sharing and joint consultation to collaborative symbiosis and value co-creation. By highlighting effective collaborative practices, this study illustrates the dynamic composition of decision-making bodies, uncovers multi-faceted goals beyond economic growth, and addresses the theoretical adaptability of collaborative planning in China, offering a fresh lens and empirical reference for urban governance and neighborhood regeneration.

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(AI 辅助翻译)