

# Participation Based on Local Attachment——An Analytical Perspective to Understand Citizens' Participation in Public Opinion Crisis Management

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**Abstract:** *The crisis of public opinion is a major challenge faced by the government in the Internet era, and the governance of the crisis of public opinion has always been the focus of attention of the academic community. In the governance of the crisis of public opinion, the governance subject is relatively single, and often the government departments are in a situation of fighting alone. From the perspective of cooperative governance, this paper discusses the following two issues: "Is it possible for individuals to participate in public opinion crisis governance?", "What affects the individual's willingness to participate in the governance of public opinion crisis". This paper argues that participation based on the perspective of local attachment has two action paths, namely, the irrational path of "local identity - emotion - willingness to participate in governance" and the rational path of "local dependence - risk perception - willingness to participate in governance".*

**Keywords:** *Local Attachment; Local Identity; Local Dependence; Emotion; Risk Perception*

## 1. Introduction

The information communication and dissemination mechanism in the Internet era also deepens our citizenship. Topic advocacy, participation in political affairs and supervision of the government are one of our obligations and responsibilities as citizens. Cyberspace provides a platform and tool for citizens to realize these responsibilities and obligations. However, the discourse characteristics and information dissemination logic in the Internet era often lead to a crisis of public opinion for local governments. The problem of government governance anomie will be exposed in cyberspace. In cyberspace, some aspects will be one-sided magnified and misinterpreted through the mechanism of public opinion dissemination and the fermentation of Internet users' irrational emotions, which will lead to a crisis of government credibility. The author believes that the governance of public opinion crisis is definitely not a one-man show of the government, but should form a collaborative governance situation based on the community in the public opinion crisis. The author believes that from the perspective of connectivity, local citizens are closely related to the local government. Therefore, in the process of governance of public opinion crisis, local citizens' participation in the governance of public opinion crisis is a feasible entry point. What is the formation mechanism of the community? Through literature research, it is found that local attachment is an important mechanism for individuals and places to form a community. Local attachment is an emotional and functional connection between individuals and places. Local attachment can significantly affect individuals' behavioral tendencies in local holistic events such as neighborhood events, environmental protection events, disaster prevention events, etc. Based on the theory that local attachment can predict behavior, this paper raises the following questions: Will local attachment affect citizen participation in public opinion crisis governance? What is the impact path of local attachment on public opinion crisis participation in governance?

## 2. Literature Review and Research Process

The concept of "place" has attracted the attention of all disciplines long ago. Sociology emphasizes how the social background of environment affects human interaction. Anthropology attempts to explore the cultural significance of place in daily life. Human geography has also begun to introduce the sense of place, enriching the theoretical gap of environmental psychology. From the perspective of environmental geography, local attachment studies the emotional and functional connection between individuals and places.

The current research on local attachment is rich. From the perspective of application field, most domestic scholars focus their research on local attachment on the field of tourism management, and improve tourism management ability by discussing the level of tourists' attachment to tourist destinations.<sup>[1]</sup> Secondly, in the aspect of city image governance, Wang Zeya took the sense of locality as a perspective of city image building. Through empirical analysis, he found that citizens have differences in the way and content of city perception, which led to the differentiation of local perception groups.<sup>[2]</sup> The research scope of local attachment abroad is relatively wide. Local attachment is introduced as an explanatory variable not only in tourism management, urban image management, but also in risk governance, community governance, etc. In terms of risk governance, with the normalization of risk society, many scholars have paid attention to the question of what factors affect the individual's coping behavior in risk. Based on the regional characteristics of risk, the sense of locality has become an important predictor of the individual's behavioral tendencies in risk. Li Peng and others found that in the study of residents' participation in community disaster management, Local attachment can act as a mediator between social trust and participation, and affect the willingness to participate.<sup>[3]</sup>

In general, there have been many research results on the governance of public opinion crisis, but the research subject is relatively single. Most of the research is based on the government, and the cooperative governance framework on the government opinion crisis has not been formed; As for the research field of local attachment, foreign countries involve risk governance, tourism management, community governance and other aspects, while the concept of local attachment is an exotic product for China. In recent years, it has appeared in the research of environmental psychology and has not been quoted by other disciplines, and the academic community has not tried to localize the concept. Therefore, this paper attempts to explore the willingness of individuals to participate in public opinion crisis governance from the perspective of local attachment, and also provides a new perspective for public opinion crisis governance.

### **3. Theoretical Basis**

#### ***3.1. Local theory***

Local theory describes the relationship between people and places from the perspectives of sense, perception, culture, value and morality. In local theory, place is not only a spatial concept, but also an image bearing culture and value. Individuals do not exist in isolation. They belong to a certain place in space. When individuals invest in a certain place psychologically, the place becomes a part of their broader self-identity. Local culture and values endow the place with uniqueness and symbolic significance. It is this uniqueness and symbolic significance that enables individuals to obtain a sense of pride, happiness and self-esteem in the place. The local theory provides a new interpretation perspective for individual or collective behavior from the perspective of man land relationship. Charis believes that, based on local self perception, individuals will try their best to eliminate events that threaten their local uniqueness and symbolic significance.<sup>[4]</sup> At the same time, the culture, knowledge and experience that can be shared among individuals constitute the premise of collective action.

#### ***3.2. Risk perception theory***

Risk perception belongs to the category of psychology, which refers to the individual's perception and knowledge of objectively existing risks based on cognition, which is affected by visual judgment and subjective experience. This paper mainly discusses whether local attachment will affect the perception of risk in public opinion crisis from the perspective of risk psychometric paradigm. Risk is subjective in nature, which is defined subjectively after individuals feel that they may be affected by a series of social, psychological and personal factors.

#### ***3.3. Theory of emotional perception***

Emotional cognitive theory. In his Behavior, Emotion and Will, Anthony Kenny pointed out that emotion is defined from three aspects: physiology, psychology and behavior. He believed that the core part of emotion is behavior. With the feeling of emotion, behavior can be encouraged. The occurrence of emotion means a certain result of behavior.

#### 4. Path analysis based on local attachment participation

The individual is not an isolated individual, but a member embedded in the "personal local" network, and local attachment can measure the connectivity of individuals in the network. Local attachment can affect individual behavior tendency. Some scholars believe that local attachment can improve people's trust in local areas and also affect people's confidence in participating in local public affairs. Others believe that local sense has a strong explanatory power in collective action. *Charles* believe that local attachment affects collective behavior in local change events.<sup>[5]</sup> Anna and Tomasz found in their analysis of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians that local attachment can significantly affect the attitude tendency among groups, and the difference in the degree and form of local attachment can affect the group attitude.<sup>[6]</sup>

From the perspective of dimension, the academic circles have not unified the division of local attachment. There are two dimensions, three dimensions and even five dimensions. Based on the research purpose of this paper, local attachment is divided into two dimensions: local identity and local attachment. Local dependency is a functional dependency on a place Stokols and Schumaker believe that local dependency includes two dimensions, one is that local dependency can provide needed resources, and the other is that people rely on a place because it can provide what other places cannot, pointing out the dependence on local uniqueness; Local identity, PROS-HANSKY et al. defined local identity as a member of a place based on emotion, perception and cognition in the process of interaction with the place. In terms of nature, local identity has four characteristics: familiarity with groups and perception as insiders, emotional satisfaction brought by places and emotional preferences generated, signs and characteristics of places becoming self, and local identity will affect individual behavioral tendencies.<sup>[7]</sup> On two dimensions, this paper argues that there are two hypotheses of the impact path of local attachment on citizens' willingness to participate in governance in public opinion crisis governance.as shown in figure 1:

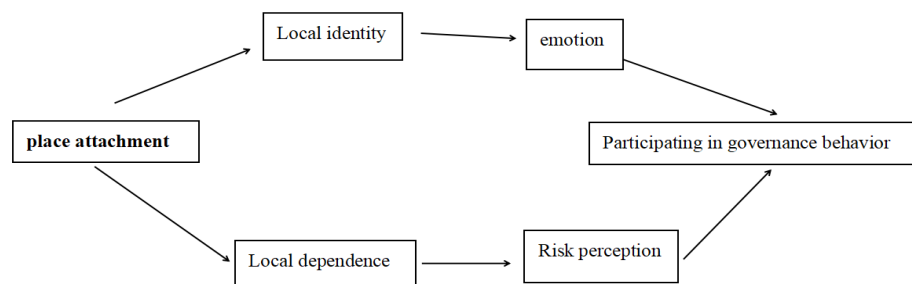


Figure 1: Two influence paths of local attachment

##### 4.1. Local identity emotion participation governance path

When the local government is in the crisis of public opinion, different individuals in the inner group (the crisis of public opinion is local oriented, and the inner group refers to local citizens) show different responses. Some groups have a distrustful attitude towards the government. Some studies have proved that "hot search to govern the city" is a common evolutionary logic of the public opinion crisis of local governments, because only by addressing the root of the public opinion problem, namely, the governance ability and efficiency are low, can public opinion change. Therefore, based on this logic, some groups have no obvious anxiety about the government public opinion crisis, and continue to wait and see or comment Forwarding makes public opinion continue to evolve. However, some inner groups often show more complex emotional reactions due to their identity attributes. They will feel the loss of self-esteem and pride in the face of the crisis of government public opinion, and then have anxiety and restlessness, which will affect their willingness to participate in governance in the crisis of government public opinion. The author believes that the reason why the inner groups have different emotions is that there are differences in local identity.

Local identity is a special emotion that people have accumulated for a long time. It is expressed in four dimensions: self-esteem, continuity, identity and self-efficacy. Local identity will affect the emotional tendency of citizens in public crisis events. For example, when a place is recognized and praised, it will generate a sense of pride, satisfaction and self-esteem. When a place is subject to a crisis of public opinion, it will generate panic, anxiety and insecurity. Any place that can make people feel

unique, continuous and self respecting can become their identity. People's homes often become part of their identity. People also try their best to avoid things that threaten their identity. They try their best to interfere. It can be seen that local identity can affect individual behavior tendencies.

However, the author believes that local identity does not directly affect people's behavior, and there is an emotional factor generated by a specific situation as a mediator variable. In the face of the crisis of public opinion, people's local identity, memory and local image are threatened, which is manifested by the reduced sense of self-esteem, satisfaction and happiness, so they will have feelings of anxiety, panic and shame. When people are in negative emotions such as fear and anxiety, they usually take measures to eliminate and eliminate such emotions. A series of negative emotions, such as anxiety, panic and shame, generated by people in the face of public opinion crisis will be resolved online, such as actively spreading positive information about the public opinion crisis, forwarding positive information, liking and commenting on positive information, or mobilizing netizens to clarify the facts.

Therefore, there is an influence path generated by local identity, that is, local identity influences participation behavior through the intermediary factor of influencing citizens' emotions in public opinion crisis.

#### ***4.2. Local dependence - risk perception - participation in governance path***

From the perspective of influence, the crisis of public opinion directly affects the credibility and ruling position of the government. However, due to the chain and derivative nature of the public opinion communication mechanism in cyberspace, there are many obscure influence paths. For example, the impact of public opinion crisis on city image and brand. The government trust crisis will not directly affect the local brand and reputation resources, but as the source of risk, the government trust crisis may affect the local cultural identity and reputation image under the fermentation of online public opinion space. This paper argues that the strong sense of local dependence makes individuals feel the possibility of risk.

There are two dimensions of local attachment: local identity and local dependence. These two dimensions measure the degree of connection between individuals and places. From immediate sensory pleasure and preference familiarity to lasting and deep-rooted attachment or grounding, local identity describes the former while local dependence measures the latter. Local dependence refers to dependence on local functions and resources. For individuals, if one place can provide functions and resources that other places cannot, their dependence on local will be enhanced. It can be seen that places depend on the strong attachment between individuals and places, which has connected individuals and places into a community of interests. When the community is faced with changes, individuals respond more sensitively. Therefore, this paper believes that in the face of public opinion crisis, individuals with a strong sense of local dependence will be keenly aware of the possibility of risks. Of course, this kind of risk refers not to individual risk, but to group risk and community risk.

When people perceive risks, they will take measures to eliminate such threats based on self-interest motives. When local governments experience public opinion crisis, individuals with strong local dependence perceive that public opinion crisis will not only threaten the credibility and legitimacy foundation of local governments, but also have other impacts on local governments, such as the loss of intangible assets such as city image and brand, and feel group crisis and city image crisis. After perceiving the risk, the individual will take measures to avoid this situation, or take measures to reduce the impact of this situation, such as clarifying relevant facts, making positive comments, and forwarding positive behaviors.

Therefore, there is an impact path driven by local dependence. Local dependence will magnify the risk perception in the crisis of public opinion, and affect the willingness to participate in governance through the intermediary factor of risk perception.

### **5. Practice demonstration based on local attachment participation**

There are two cities, A and B. A City has a large population. Due to its relatively developed economy, it has attracted people from many parts of the country. The source of urban population is complex and the population mobility is large. City B is a tourist city with a small number of migrants and many people born and raised here. A. B Both cities have experienced a new round of epidemic after COVID-19 in 2020. The new round of epidemic in the two cities is the result of a combination of many reasons, either because of the severe international and domestic epidemic, or because of the

anomie of epidemic prevention in the public sector, and so on. After the outbreak of a new round of epidemic, the governments of the two cities fell into a crisis of public opinion. After the crisis of public opinion broke out, the citizens of the two cities showed different attitudes. Their attitudes and behaviors in cyberspace led to the evolution of public opinion in the two cities in two different directions.

In City A, after the outbreak of public opinion, more people were dissatisfied with the government's epidemic prevention work, competing for epidemic prevention materials, and distrusting the government, and tried to force the local government to make a statement through online exposure and other channels, which further worsened the already high public opinion and evolved in an uncontrollable direction. After the public opinion crisis broke out in City B, with the escalation of public opinion, some citizens of City B saw this situation, encouraged Government B on the network, clarified some rumors on the network, sought netizens to understand the government's work, forwarded and praised positive information, and the active participation of citizens timely clarified the network rumors, which also made netizens see the efforts made by the city government in epidemic prevention. According to the data, B The public opinion did not further escalate or deteriorate due to the behavior of citizens.

The author believes that the perspective of local attachment can explain the behavioral differences of citizens in cities A and B. City B is a tourist city, that is, a city with culture and tourism as its image and brand. Citizens tend to have a strong sense of place. For example, citizens have a high sense of self-esteem in the city. Culture and tourism give citizens a collective memory based on the city's unique culture and characteristics, and a sense of happiness based on special memory, The sense of identity and belonging based on shared experience has enhanced citizens' attachment to the city. The impact of the crisis of public opinion is huge. The flow oriented self media experience mining more topics with the word "B city". Internet users who have been to B city will expose more negative experiences about "B city" based on their sense of presence. Some studies have proved that negative news spreads faster and more widely in the online space, so the government public opinion crisis as the trigger will have a "ripple effect". Of course, the government image crisis will also directly have a negative impact on the intangible assets of local brands, because the government image is a component of local brands. Many internal groups will notice the possibility of intangible asset loss and actively participate in the governance of public opinion crisis. However, the population composition of city A is relatively complex, the residents have a short residence time, a large mobility and a relatively low degree of attachment to the city, so there is no obvious tendency to participate in governance in the public opinion crisis.

## 6. Conclusions and suggestions

This paper analyzes citizen participation in public opinion crisis from the perspective of local attachment, provides a new perspective for government public opinion crisis governance, and fills the gap in the current theoretical framework of crisis multi governance.

Through literature analysis, this paper proposes a path framework for local attachment to affect the willingness to participate in governance, and discusses the possibility of citizens' participation in public opinion crisis governance. Local attachment can affect individual collective behavior, which is of great significance to participatory governance. Therefore, the realization of governance issues can focus on improving the local attachment of citizens. Local administrators should enhance the local attachment of citizens by shaping the local cultural impression, enhancing citizens' trust in the local government, and enhancing citizens' sense of belonging in the local area.

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