

Research on the Development Dilemma and Countermeasures of Social Organization Incubators from the Perspective of Resource Dependence

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Abstract: *With the diversified and heterogeneous development of social needs, the single and homogeneous public services provided by the government alone can no longer meet the needs of social development, and the government needs the cooperation of social organizations as the "receiver" of its function transfer to provide quality public services. For this reason, the development of social organizations in China has been vigorously supported by the government and highly valued by the public, but how to ensure the smooth establishment and rapid development of social organizations at the start-up stage has become an important issue of concern to the government. Therefore, as an innovative model to cultivate and support the development of social organizations, public welfare social organization incubators have come into being. China's social organization incubators have problems and dilemmas such as limited incubation targets, insufficient professional capacity, biased service capacity cultivation, low operational performance, and insufficient professional segmentation, which need to be solved by improving the supportive policy framework, attracting social forces to set up incubators, enlarging the scale of incubation, strengthening the incubator's own capacity building, and promoting the standardized operation of the incubator; among other measures. This paper argues that public welfare social organization incubators nurture social organizations from the perspective of interaction between the government and social organizations. On the one hand, it undertakes the government's function to incubate the start-up social organizations; on the other hand, the incubated social organizations become the main body of social governance, which in turn strengthens the supervision of the government. The existence of public welfare social organization incubators builds a bridge between the government and social organizations, which is of great significance to the implementation of government-society interaction.*

Keywords: *social organization incubator; development dilemma; countermeasure research*

1. Introduction

In the process of promoting the rapid and healthy development of social organizations, the social welfare sector has introduced the concept of business incubators and created incubators aimed at nurturing social organizations. Although the emergence of social organization incubators has accelerated the development of social organizations, there are some problems and dilemmas that need to be solved. Although the emergence of social organization incubators has accelerated the development of social organizations, their own development has also encountered some problems and dilemmas that need to be resolved.

2. Formulation of the issue

With the deepening of China's institutional reform and the promulgation of new government support policies, social organizations have begun to emerge in large numbers. The report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) clearly pointed out the need to build a socialist social management system with Chinese characteristics, and to accelerate the formation of a modern social organization system that is "separate from the government and society, with clear powers and responsibilities, and autonomous in accordance with the law". To this end, local governments have introduced policies to support the development of social organizations, and have been exploring how to better nurture and support social organizations, and have developed various practice modes such as government procurement of public services, public welfare venture capital, and social organization

incubators. Among them, social organization incubators are widely recognized and supported by local governments because they can provide a series of professional services for the cultivation of organizations. A social organization incubator is "a centralized support system that occupies a certain physical space and provides resources, platforms, and capacity training for start-up or growing social organizations" (Cai Li-Qiang and Wang Shi-Qiang, 2012), which was developed on the basis of the concepts and practical experiences of business incubators. Since 2005, when the Center for Citizenship and Social Development at Sun Yat-sen University put forward the concept of "NPO incubator" at the conceptual level, social organization incubators have not only been implemented in practice in China, but have also developed numerous models. Among them, the first one is the Shanghai Pudong Social Organization Development Center (NPI), which represents the civil society-led model; in addition, there are also the government-NGO alliance model represented by the Nanjing Aide Social Organization Incubation Center, the Sichuan BOT incubator model, and many other models (Sun Yan, 2011). The social benefits generated by social organization incubators are very significant. Enpai alone has successfully incubated a number of reputable social organizations in China, such as "Carry One More Kilogram" and "Green Wings". For this reason, academics have conducted extensive research on social organization incubators. For example, some scholars have examined the connotations, development history and functions of social organization incubators (Wu Jin and Mao Lixiong, 2011). Some scholars have discussed the theoretical background of social organization incubators, such as the theory of collaborative governance and the theory of corporatism (Pan Yang, 2013). Other scholars have explained the specific incubation process (Li Cuiping, 2012), service content (Zhang Bingsuan, 2012), and operation mode (Wang Shijiang, 2012) of social organization incubators. The above studies reflect the important social value and significance of social organization incubators in promoting the development of social organizations. However, it is obvious that for the incubatees, social organizations can only help themselves to be incubated successfully if they choose an incubator with strong incubation ability, and successfully survive in the future market competition and have wings that can further take off, and the quality of incubation for the shelled organizations is closely related to the level of development of the incubator itself. In addition, like anything else, the incubator of social organizations has a development process from its establishment and growth to its maturity and demise. Only by paying attention to these stages and avoiding possible crises can the incubator itself have a strong incubation capacity. However, there has been no in-depth discussion in the academic community about the stages of development that may exist in a social organization incubator and how to move smoothly from one stage to the next in order to achieve perpetual vitality. This paper responds to this question from the perspective of resource dependency theory in the following discussion[1-3].

3. Explanation of Resource Dependence Theory

Resource Dependence Theory, which originated in the 1940s and was widely used in the late 1970s and early 1980s to study the development of social organizations, suggests that in order to survive, a social organization should draw the resources it needs to survive and develop from its surroundings, and that it should maintain an interdependent and interactive relationship with its surroundings in order to achieve better survival. Resource Dependence Theory believes that the most basic and important thing for an organization is to survive, and in order to achieve this purpose, it must have the resources necessary for its survival, and these resources have to be obtained from the surrounding environment, and these resources also exist in other social organizations, so in order to survive the organization needs to maintain interaction with other organizations, and it must have the ability to obtain resources from other organizations. Resource Dependence Theory emphasizes that organizations should take the initiative to change themselves, choose their environment, adapt to the environment, and continuously improve their ability to draw external resources. As the organization matures, it should focus on developing its independence and avoiding too much influence and intervention from other organizations. When a social organization is first established, it often does not have enough resources to ensure its normal operation, so it should take the initiative to seek communication and interaction with organizations that can provide it with resources, and public welfare social organization incubators can meet the resources needed for the development of social organizations at the start-up stage. Therefore, in the initial stage of social organizations, they tend to have a certain degree of dependence on public welfare social organization incubators, and their development is also subject to the intervention and influence of public welfare social organization incubators.

However, after the development of social organizations has matured, public interest social organization incubators should give social organizations the opportunity to develop on their own, and social organizations should take the initiative to improve their own competitiveness and get rid of their

dependence on public interest social organization incubators.

4. Development stages and tasks of government-led social organization incubators

First, the initial stage. As government-led social organization incubators have the background of the creation of official capital injection support, when the incubator is born, itself tends to be weak, dependent, and unstable in its development as the main performance, and the main characteristics of the development in this stage are teething and exploration. Specifically, from the internal point of view of the social organization incubator, after the establishment of the incubator, although there will be a small number of social organizations or take the initiative to apply for, or be referred to, invited to this, the scale of cultivation of shelled organizations is relatively limited. The mission and development characteristics of the incubator are not clear, and it is still in the process of finding out whether the service modules developed by the incubator can really meet the needs of the shell organizations. The internal governance of the incubator is also at a stage of communication and integration, and the construction of corresponding systems is not sound and the management is not standardized. The phenomenon of not following rules and regulations exists at the same time. From the external viewpoint of the incubator, the relationship between the incubator and the government is still in the process of friction, and the boundaries of authority and responsibility are not yet clear. The number of incubator partners is also limited, and the credibility of the incubator itself has not yet been established. In short, government-led social organization incubators at the start-up stage are unstable in many aspects of development, and are relatively weak in terms of human, material and financial resources, and need support from all sides. For government-led social organization incubators, there are at least two problems that need to be solved in this period. One is that since the local government spends a lot of money to support the creation of the incubator, and the increase in the number of social organizations is often its primary pursuit, it is necessary for the incubator to take into account the quantity and quality of the social organizations, and not to expand the scale of incubation. Secondly, because the government has a different thinking logic from social organizations, government-led social organization incubators may lack a little bit in the capacity building of social organizations, especially in the need for a strong professional team to support them. Therefore, how to evaluate and select the support team is very important for government-led social organization incubators. Second, the growth stage. Once a government-led social organization incubator establishes its unique core competencies and begins to achieve some success, the growth phase arrives. Although the operations of nonprofit organizations and businesses are very different, the growth phase is characterized by growth. As the incubator's services become more mature and stronger, first, the number of organizations applying for shell membership will increase, thus expanding the size of the incubator

Second, the incubator may meet new partners, the proportion of funding sources is becoming more reasonable, and thus the incubator's ability to integrate resources continues to develop. During this period, the governance relationship within the incubator also tends to stabilize and the management is gradually standardized. However, the incubator's own social influence is still very limited and may still lack its own image. For government-led social organization incubators, a further issue to be addressed during this period is how to better define their role. The government should change its traditional concepts, clarify its role, play a better role in promoting talent policy, financial policy, evaluation and assessment policy, etc., which are conducive to the development of social organization incubators, and play a guiding role in the innovation of social organization incubator models, etc., so as to promote the fast and good development of social organization incubators. Again, the maturity stage. The maturity stage of social organization incubators is characterized by stability. This refers not only to the fact that the scale of incubation has reached the saturation state of the incubator, and the number of shelled organizations tends to be stable, but also includes the stability of the incubator's internal governance and resource integration capacity. In the maturity stage of the incubator, management becomes more complex, which in turn gives rise to further formalized hierarchical structures. During this period, as in the case of enterprises, the level of innovation in social organization incubators declines compared to the start-up phase, and the mindset becomes more conservative. For this reason, the incubator's leadership team should keep a clear head, carefully analyze the incubator's internal and external situation, comprehensively evaluate its own strengths, and fully develop entrepreneurial spirit, intentionally focusing on demand development and service innovation, so as not to put itself in a difficult situation for development. In addition, at this stage, the incubator's level of specialization has increased, and it should have formed its own characteristic "service products" with certain social influence. The focus of the incubator's development strategy should gradually change from survival at the start-up stage to striving for more favorable development opportunities and various development resources, thus enabling the incubator to achieve sustainable

development. For government-led social organization incubators, since they often have a certain advantage in acquiring resources and a certain degree of dependence on power, they may be in a situation of "waiting, relying and asking for help", and do not pay enough attention to capacity building in project development and acquisition of resources. Therefore, this aspect should be consciously explored. Finally, the stage of decline or revival. Like living organisms, organizations develop to a certain extent, and the organism will also decline. For example, the concepts become ossified, the knowledge and technology are relatively outdated, and the service modules cannot keep up with the needs of the times. As a result, the social adaptability of the shelled social organization becomes weaker, and the scale of incubation may be relatively smaller. Chen Jiagui (1995) points out that when an enterprise enters a period of decline, mergers, consolidation and corporate restructuring are all forms of corporate metamorphosis. In the case of social organization incubators, there are also two outcomes: decline or metamorphosis. It is just that as a non-profit organization, a social organization incubator is unlikely to undergo a clear economic or physical change like a business, and can be called a renaissance for the time being. In a sense, whether a social organization incubator is in a stage of decline or renaissance is certainly related to many factors, but a very important point is whether the incubator itself can be innovative. Therefore, incubators need to keep an eye on the needs of shelled organizations and do a good job of developing needs and innovating service modules, so that the incubators can achieve revival rather than decline[4-7].

5. Development dilemma of social organization incubators

5.1 Limitations on incubation targets

What makes social organization incubators work is that they provide critical support to start-up social organizations, thus helping them to grow and expand rapidly. Since most social organization incubators are established with the support of local governments, the selection of incubatees is often subject to government regulations and constraints. For the government, it is generally hoped that the incubators can nurture social organizations that can assist the government in undertaking public services and transferring functions to the government. As for other types of social organizations, their desire for support and assistance from incubators is often limited by resource constraints and cannot be met. For example, in 2013, the Social Organization Incubation and Development Center of a city in the South formally signed incubation agreements with 10 social organizations, which would receive free venues and financial support, as well as all kinds of relevant training and expert guidance and other services. However, most of the organizations were community service organizations, industry associations, and other organizations, and there was a lack of grassroots NGOs, which caused controversy. The reason for this situation is that during the period of social transformation in China, the government still holds a large portion of social resources, therefore, even for social organization incubators led by civil society organizations, a large portion of their funding comes from the government. For example, although the source of funding for the incubator "Enpai" is characterized by averaging and diversification, government funding still accounts for 30%. It can be said that without the financial support of the government, the survival of the organization will be more difficult. In addition to financial support, the survival and development of social organization incubators also need other help from the government, such as the acquisition of space and legitimacy. Under such circumstances, the first and foremost task for the survival and development of social organization incubators is to obtain government recognition, and the way to obtain government recognition lies in whether social organization incubators can assist the government in solving the problems and dilemmas of social management and public services. For social organization incubators, the way to gain government recognition is to incubate more service-oriented social organizations that can take over government services or transfer functions, so as to promote the construction of a service-oriented government and a harmonious society.

5.2 Lack of own professional competence

In the course of promoting the building of a harmonious society and social construction with a focus on improving people's livelihoods, management authorities have come to realize that social organizations have the function of compensating for market failures and governmental failures, and that they play a role that cannot be replaced by the Government or enterprises. However, in view of the small number and scale of social organizations, their lack of professional competence, the inadequacy of their internal governance structure and their poor credibility, local governments have adopted a series of supportive and supportive policies and measures to promote the rapid development of social organizations. Among them, "the incubator model has been welcomed by local governments and rapidly replicated in various

places because it can solve many of the current problems faced by social organizations in one package". However, with the spread of incubators all over the country, the problem of the incubator's own level of professionalism has emerged. For example, the staff of some incubation centers basically do not come from social work or related professions, and basically do not know much about the cultivation of social organizations, so they can only slowly grope their way out in practice; some incubation centers basically rely on "external assistance" to help them solve the problems of professional supervision of resident organizations and projects. Some incubation centers basically rely on "outside help" to help solve the problems of professional supervision and evaluation of resident organizations and projects, and for the professional problems encountered by resident organizations in such areas as finance and projects, the staff usually "perfunctorily" use their past work experience, resulting in professional problems not being effectively solved. The lack of professional capacity of social organization incubators mainly stems from the lack of talents (including managers, social workers, financial and management talents, etc.). This is because, compared with the government, enterprises and other first and second sectors, social organizations have difficulty in attracting high-level talent due to factors such as low remuneration, low social evaluation of their careers, and uncertainty about their career development prospects. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China, more than 200 colleges and universities across the country have established social work majors, with annual graduates numbering around 10,000. However, less than 10% of graduates are actually engaged in social work, and there are even some schools where the rate of graduates in this specialty is zero. Job instability, low salary levels, low social recognition and difficulties in reflecting professional values are considered to be important reasons preventing social work talents from engaging in social work.

5.3 Favoring the cultivation of service capacity

Start-up social organizations are admitted to the incubator with the aim of obtaining appropriate capacity building services so that they can grow rapidly and adapt to the needs of national and social development. From the viewpoint of the types of capacities of social organizations, there are only two types: professional public service capacity and interest expression capacity. In terms of the focus of incubators, on the one hand, they are inclined to cultivate the management ability of social organizations, with special emphasis on the rational configuration of goals and means, and management courses such as strategy, fundraising, project, evaluation, etc.; on the other hand, they are focused on the institutional norms endowed to the social organizations, especially the values of self-governance, participation, advocating, action, and sustainable development and other missions, with the main focus on the civil society. In the context of building a harmonious socialist society and promoting the professionalization of public services, the first social organization incubator "Enpai" has been designed and shaped to put capacity building in the former, because in the view of Enpai, social organizations must first consider their own survival rather than value norms, and the incubator should focus on fostering the professional service capacity and management capacity of social organizations. Incubators should focus on cultivating the professional service capacity and management capacity of social organizations. Incubators around the world basically follow this concept of Entrepreneurs, focusing on cultivating the professional service capacity and management capacity of social organizations at the start-up stage. In fact, this is the result of the government's selective support. From the government's point of view, it wants to give full play to the public service capacity of social organizations and excludes the function of expressing interests of social organizations. From this, it can be clearly seen that a series of policies and measures for the development of social organizations issued by the central government to the local government implies such a logic of selective support, i.e., it explicitly supports those social organizations that are capable of providing public services while ignoring or even restricting those that are engaged in the expression of interests. Because only in this way will social organizations become "helpers" and "assistants" of the government. Under this institutional environment, it is a wise choice for incubators to focus their capacity-building efforts on technical management in order to enhance the professional service and management capabilities of social organizations[8-9].

5.4 Poor operational performance

With the rapid development of incubators around the world, it is inevitable that people, especially governments, are concerned about their operational performance. The concerns are mainly reflected in the following: first, the questioning of the incubator's almost "nanny-type incubation". For example, the first batch of social organizations incubated by a local social organization service center are still worried about not having a place after "coming out of the shell", and hope that the service center will continue to support them in terms of hardware and software, including venues, training, etc. As a result, the social

organization service center has to provide additional support to them. As a result, the social organization service center had to provide a follow-up period of one to two years to continue to provide services. Secondly, there is criticism of the over-reliance on government-purchased services by the incubated social organizations. It is believed that the incubators are fostering a group of government-dependent social organizations, which does not reflect the advantages of social incubation compared with the administrative incubation approach. The same problem exists in terms of the performance of their internal operation. The costs of social organization incubators include both explicit costs, such as construction costs, maintenance costs, personnel expenses and operational expenses, and implicit costs, such as communication costs, brain drain costs, job creation costs and management costs. On the one hand, social organization incubators need to invest in large construction costs and maintenance costs because they must have a certain physical space; on the other hand, in order to obtain resources and funding expenses from the government and the society, the lack of institutional linkage between each other leads to high communication costs. In addition, the cost of incubator brain drain is also triggered by issues such as career development prospects and remuneration packages for social organizations. For example, an incubator in Beijing had a total of six experienced professional management talents, and lost five of them in 2010.

5.5 Insufficient specialization breakdown

Specialization must be accompanied by a refinement of the division of labour. Looking at the development of social organization incubators in China, in recent years, there have been incubators specializing in services for social organizations in the fields of youth, women and children, workers, and assistance to the disabled, which is obviously the result of the support of the corresponding group organizations, but on the whole, there is insufficient segmentation of incubation targets and fields. In addition, in terms of the breakdown of development stages, the services provided by incubators are mostly focused on project development to the stage of organization registration, while fewer services are provided for the stage from idea and conception to project activities, and only a few foundation-supported incubators pay attention to this stage. Generally speaking, government-supported incubators are more concerned with getting mature projects into the community as soon as possible. The lack of professional segmentation is, on the one hand, due to the fact that Chinese social organization incubators have limited access to resources, which makes it impossible for them to take into account the development of professional segmentation; on the other hand, it is also related to the lack of talents with incubation experience. Specialty segmentation requires talents with a certain level of experience, which cannot be directly supplied by colleges and universities, and because China's public welfare incubators have not been in development for a long time, they do not have a corresponding talent pool.

6. Conclusions

Based on the above analysis, the healthy development of social organization incubators requires a series of measures and means in terms of government policy improvement, social resource support and the incubator's own construction.

6.1 Improving the supportive policy framework

The development of social organization incubators requires a sound policy system. Currently, policy support, embodied in the form of operating fund subsidies, construction fund support, government-purchased services, and the lowering of registration thresholds, has promoted the rapid development of social organization incubators. However, to achieve the sustainable development of social organization incubators, it is also necessary to form a series of targeted policy systems, including the formulation of talent introduction and its corresponding social security and vocational policies, so as to ensure that social organization incubators can attract more high-quality professionals to join them. Formulate evaluation and assessment policies to promote the standardized operation of social organization incubators. Establish policies to encourage non-profit business incubators to open their doors to social organizations, so as to achieve healthy competition in the field of public welfare, and so on. In short, through the government's overall planning and systematic design, it guides the rapid and healthy development of social organization incubators.

6.2 Attracting social forces to establish incubators

The incubation of social organizations is a process of continuous resource input. In terms of the main bodies of resource supply, the government, market (enterprise) and society constitute the three main bodies of resource supply for social organization incubators. From the current national situation of China, it is characterized by strong government and weak society. As for the market (enterprises), due to the asymmetry of information and its unregulated order of public welfare, the strength and quantity of funding social organization incubators are limited. Therefore, the current social organization incubators are often led by government resources, which objectively limits the independence, autonomy, diversity and stability of the incubators. Therefore, an effective and feasible way to improve the situation is to diversify the main body of resource inputs, attracting social capital, foundations, enterprises and even universities and scientific research institutions to participate in the operation, so as to promote the sustainable, stable, diversified and autonomous development of social organization incubators and get rid of the predicament of the incubators' overdependence on the Government.

6.3 Expansion of hatchery scale

Given that it is difficult for social organization incubators to meet the needs of public welfare entrepreneurship and development, it is necessary to learn from the experience of business incubator development in order to expand the target and scale of incubation. On the one hand, we should form the whole incubator system of "pre-incubator + incubator + gas pedal", so as to realize the "forward extension" and "backward extension" of the incubator; on the other hand, we should establish a network virtual incubator based on the physical incubator, so as to break through the limitations of the incubator. On the other hand, relying on physical incubators, establish network virtual incubators, break through the limitations of physical space of incubators, and use information technology to improve the service margins and effectiveness of incubators. In this way, the incubation needs of more social organizations and social organizations at different stages of development can be met, and the incubation effect of social organization incubators can be enlarged.

6.4 Strengthening the incubator's own capacity building

Only by continuously improving its own capabilities, including governance and leadership, resource mobilization, project implementation, social interaction, institutional innovation, etc., can the incubator enhance the social influence of the organization in order to obtain broad social support from the government, the public, enterprises, the media, foundations, etc., and achieve its own sustainable development. In view of the fact that China's social organization incubators are still in the nascent stage, a convenient way is to combine the actual development of China's social organizations, learn from the successful operation mechanism and advanced management experience of business incubators and domestic and foreign social organization incubators, and form a scientific and effective management model that meets the local reality; on the other hand, incubators have to improve their own professional ability and build an excellent incubator service team. On the other hand, the incubator should improve its own professional ability and build an excellent incubator service team. The key is to introduce and cultivate a group of talents with management experience, professional knowledge and cultural qualities, and to retain talents and reduce the loss of talents with an attractive salary system and incentive system mechanism.

6.5 Promoting the standardization of incubator operations

As an expenditure-type social organization that requires constant input of social resources, a social organization incubator must operate in a standardized manner, and only in this way can it enhance its credibility and gain wide social recognition and more support. First, a set of scientific evaluation and assessment mechanism should be formed. Evaluation and assessment of the incubator function is complete, the level of service, the advantages and disadvantages of the resident grassroots organizations, the incubation speed of the incubated organizations, the success rate of the shell organization. Secondly, it is necessary to establish an information disclosure mechanism for social organization incubators, and disclose various specific operational and financial information of the incubators in a timely manner, so that the public can understand their internal specific information. Third, a third-party monitoring mechanism should be established to form a third-party monitoring force composed of ordinary people in the community, foundation members, public-spirited people, expert teams, etc., independent of the government and social organization incubators.

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