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Master's Thesis of Xinyu Wang

Election and Functions of the
Residents' Committee in China
– Focusing on Shanghai –

중국 거민위원회의 선거와 기능 연구
– 상하이시를 중심으로 –

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Graduate School of International Studies
Seoul National University
International Area Studies Major

Xinyu Wang

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– Focusing on Shanghai –

Cho Young Nam

Submitting a master's thesis of
International Area Studies

August 2022

Graduate School of International Studies
Seoul National University
International Area Studies Major

Xinyu Wang

Confirming the master's thesis written by

Xinyu Wang

August 2022

Chair Cheong, Young Rok (Seal)

Vice Chair Jeong, Jong Ho (Seal)

Examiner Cho, Young Nam (Seal)

Abstract

Residents' committee in China is a grassroots mass organization with self-governing functions of democratic election, democratic consultation, democratic decision-making, democratic management, and democratic supervision. At the same time, the residents' committee is the lowest level of China's urban social management system, which is the main body of urban grassroots social management, undertaking the administrative functions of management and service. In the authoritarian political system and the single-party rule by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the residents' committee is also a tool used by the CCP to maintain the stability of the regime and improve the legitimacy of governance, undertaking political functions such as stability maintenance, mobilization, and education.

Shanghai is the city with the highest level of economic development in China. At the same time, since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, Shanghai has been at the forefront of the urban grassroots management system reform, and has undertaken many pilot tasks, forming a representative "Shanghai Model." The development and changes of the status and functions of Shanghai residents' committee provide an entry point for observing the dynamic interaction and changes in relationship between the state and society and predicting the future growth space of China's society under the party-state political system dominated by the CCP.

This paper first introduces the historical background of the residents' committee, and then analyzes the participants' behavior in the various processes of the residents' committee democratic election through specific cases. Next, this paper explores the autonomous, political, and administrative functions of residents' committees in reality. Then, it analyzes the causes and consequences of the residents' committee's democratic election being a mere 'democratic show,' and the political and administrative violations of their self-governing functions. In conclusion, this paper asserts that compared with the development of social grassroots autonomy, the development and changes of residents' committees actually reflect that the state power is penetrating and occupying the grassroots

level of urban society, continuously squeezing grassroots autonomous space, strengthening the state control over society. Lastly, this paper provides prospects for the potential direction of the election and the functions of the residents' committee in the future.

Keywords : residents' committee; state-society relation; urban management system; grassroots autonomy; community.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Research Question

The research question of this paper is that as mass self-governance organization in China's urban society, in the practice of the residents' committees(居民委员会, sometimes also translated as the neighborhood committee, abbreviated as RC hereafter)' election, are the principles and procedures of democratic election followed? In the practice of the RC's functions, does it function legitimately and reasonably as mass self-governance organizations? If there are problems in the practice of election and function of the RC that are inconsistent with its legal status as mass self-governance organizations, what are the main reasons?

1.2. Research Background and Significance

1.2.1. Research Background

From the early founding of the People's Republic of China to the reform and opening-up period, the "unit system(单位制)" assumed the most functions of urban management under the planned economic era. After the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1978, which marked the beginning of the "Reform and Opening Up" policy, the economic system in China changed from planned economy to market economy. At the same time, the urban grassroots management system also has also gone through an unceasing evolution, from unit system to street office-residents' committee system(街居制).

From the 1990s to the beginning of the 21st century, the conception of community(社区) began to be used in the official discourse of the Chinese government. Under the community construction(社区建设) policy in the beginning of 21st century, the development of grassroots democracy in China, represented by the democratic election of the RC, gained widespread attention in both domestic China and overseas. In 2013, as the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of CCP decided to comprehensively deepen the reform, which marked a critical turning point for the CCP shifting its governing philosophy from “management” to “governance”, the urban grassroots management system in China has also undergone new changes.

The RC is defined as grassroots self-governance organization in law, but it is also an important part of the CCP’s grassroots social management system and an important bridge between the party-state and residents. Since its emergence, the RC has a history of more than seventy years. During this time, the functions and status of the RC have evolved in response to changes in the ruling philosophy and policies of the CCP.

Since the 1980s, Shanghai has been at the forefront of urban grassroots management system reform in China. As the city of the largest GDP among all cities in China, Shanghai, with its strong financial resources, has developed a representative Shanghai model in urban grassroots management. In 2015, the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee issued the “1+6” documents, which officially kicked off the reform of Shanghai’s community governance system, and in a sense, Shanghai has once again undertaken the task of pilot reform of China's urban grassroots management system. With the development of big data, cloud computing, blockchain, artificial intelligence and other technologies, Shanghai, taking advantage of its technological strength, has begun new exploration of the platform governance model in urban management which is represented by the “one

network unified management (一网统管)”.

It has been more than two years since the outbreak of the Covid-19 in January 2020. In April 2022, a new round of Covid-19 broke out again in Shanghai. Under China’s “Zero-COVID” policy, Shanghai proclaimed lockdown management, with the community becoming the first line of epidemic prevention and management. The RC then became the main body responsible for COVID-19 pandemic control, resident management and services during the lockdown period. In this round of Covid-19 breakout in Shanghai, the grassroots management system was put to a great test, and the chaos that emerged in the process of pandemic control once again raised questions on the urban grassroots management system in Shanghai.

In addition, community which can be said to be the miniature of Chinese society is a place closely related to Chinese’s political and daily life. At the turn of the century, the democratic election reform of the RC had attracted widespread attention from Chinese and foreign scholars, many of whom even saw it as a sign and hope for the development of grassroots democracy in China. Now more than twenty years later, under Xi Jinping administration, a historical review and status assessment of the election and functions of the RC has the following implications. First, it helps to understand the changes in China's urban grassroots social governance system and the CCP's urban grassroots governance philosophy and policies; second, it provides an entry point to observe the state-society interaction in China in recent years under the one-party rule of the CCP; third, it provides an explanation for some phenomena that emerged during the process Covid-19 control in grassroots communities.

1.2.2 Literature Review

Most of the English-language literature studies the RC primarily from the perspectives of history and state-society relations. The perspective of state-society

relations can be divided into three main streams. The first focuses on corporatism, which sees the RC as a mean of control and management of urban residents by the CCP. The second stream focuses on the democratic dimension of the RC, which emphasizes the promotion of residents' political participation through democratic elections and RC's positive role in developing a civil society. And the third stream emphasizes on the dual nature of the RC—the development of grassroots democracy brought about by RC's democratic election, while at the same time acknowledging the role of the RC as a means for the Party-state to maintain rule and to control urban residents through “stability maintenance” and mass mobilization etc.

At the beginning of the 21st century, with the development of community construction in China, the reform of RCs represented by democratic elections attracted the attention of a large number of Chinese and Western scholars. Among English literature, scholars such as Benjamin L. Read (2012), James Derleth and Daniel R. Koldyk (2004) provide a general introduction to the RC and community construction policies, with Benjamin L. Read (2012) also focusing specifically on the administerization of the RC. Yong Gui, Joseph Y.S. Cheng and Weihong Ma (2006) focus on the practice of the direct elections of RCs in Shanghai. Jie Chen, Chunlong Lu and Yiyin Yang (2007) mainly study on residents' support for RCs, focusing on democratic dimensions such as RC's autonomy. Linda Wong and Bernard Poon (2005) focus their study on RC's transition from community service provision to control regain. Miu Chung Yan and Jian Guo Gao (2007) 's research is mainly from the perspective of China's community construction policy, focusing more on the nature of the RC as an instrument for the party-state to control over urban community and residents. Chow-Bing Ngeow (2012) provides a comprehensive analysis of the dual attributes of the RC, arguing that the RC has a seemingly contradictory dual role of promoting grassroots democracy on one hand,

and playing an important role of stability maintenance and mass mobilization in grassroots society on the other.

In Chinese literature there are also different perspectives on research related to the RC, mainly from the perspectives of democratic elections, residents' autonomous participation, state governance, and administerization of the RC. Similar to the English literature, studies on democratic elections of the RC in Chinese literature are mainly conducted the beginning of the 21st century to around 2006, with scholars such as Lin Shangli (2003), Li Fan (2003), and Lei Jieqiong (2001) focusing on the reform of RC's democratic election during the transition period. Gui Yong (2007), Xiong Yihan (2008), Liu Chunrong (2010) and Guo Shengli (2010) analyze the process of RC's elections and voters' behavior through fieldwork, focusing on the causes of high turnout and the problems in the election process.

After 2010, especially since the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CCP Central Committee, with the decision to deepen reform comprehensively and move from "management" to "governance," the research focus has also shifted from the democratic reform of the RC to community governance system taking the RC as one of several main bodies of community governance. Yin Baohua (2012) introduces new trends in community development from the perspective of community construction innovation, while Xu Xuanguo (2015) focuses on the innovation of urban community governance mechanisms from the perspective of state-society relations. Li Jun and Zhang Youting and other scholars (2018) introduce RCs' new exploration and practice in Shanghai to enhance their self-governance; Guo Shengli and Yin Lu (2019) also mention the status and functions of the RC in Shanghai in their study, focusing mainly on its administerization problem. Gu Rong (2020) provided a comprehensive and systematic overview of the current community governance system in the central city of Shanghai in her

study, revealing problems such as the positioning of RCs as administrative-like organizations.

Most of the English-language literature on the RC was written before 2010, and many of the studies took RC's democratic election as their starting point. Since Xi Jinping administration, the status and functions of the RC have changed as the CCP's governing philosophy has shifted from "management" to "governance", and the English-language literature has focused on the new development of the CCP's urban governance system since then. Beibei Tang (2020) mentions the role of the RC in grid management(网格化管理) system in China, and Jean Christopher Mittelstaedt (2022) focuses on the comparison of service-based and control-based grid management models, in which the RC is either only a small part of the study or are rarely mentioned. After the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CCP Central Committee, a large number of studies on community governance system emerged, mostly emphasizing the "shared governance" by the multi subjects in the community and treating the RC as one of the subjects, or focusing on the administerization of the RC.

Since there are already a large number of excellent works on the democratic election of the RC and the governance system of urban grassroots communities in China, this paper aims to provide a relatively comprehensive summary and analysis of the election and functions of the RC building on the previous outstanding studies and recent policies and news in China.

With regard to the election of the RC, this paper will focus on the specific practice in the process of direct elections of RCs in Shanghai in recent years, paying attention to the current situation and new changes. With regard to the functions, this paper will try to separate the RC from the current urban grassroots governance system and focus on the functions and operation of RCs in Shanghai's current community governance system.

All in all, this paper will try to present the dynamic of the RC in China's urban community governance based on previous and the latest information, combined with case studies and other research methods.

1.3 Central Argument

The central argument of this paper is that although in principle the members of RCs are democratically elected, in practice the principles and procedures of democratic election have been eroded by the party and government forces, coupled with the residents' indifference with election, the RCs' elections are characterized by formalization and "going through the motions". Besides there is a tendency of stronger intervention of RCs' elections by the party and government. As a legal grassroots mass self-governance organization, the RC has the functions of democratic consultation, democratic decision-making, democratic management, and democratic supervision. But in practice, RC's the self-governance function is limited, while the administrative and political functions are their main functions. The main reasons for the formalization of RC's democratic election and the weakening of self-government function are the weak connection between residents' interests and the RC, the historical origin of the RC, the Party's control over the personnel of the RC, financial support of street offices and audit control over the RC, and the rise of other social organizations in the community, such as the Owners' Committee(业主委员会).

In Shanghai, for example, the elections of RCs usually show a turnout over 90%, but party organizations at all levels of the CCP manipulate the elections of RCs through personnel control and other means. In particular, with the increase in the proportion of holding a concurrent post of RC director and party secretary of the neighborhood by one person(居委会主任、居民区党组织书记“一肩挑”),

the democratic nature of RC's election has actually regressed further more. In terms of functions, although RCs retains a certain degree of self-governance, they have not only taken on the political task of "stability maintenance" but also a large number of administrative tasks. Especially after the "1+6" reform, RCs in Shanghai have been further reduced to the nerve endings of the party-state, and their administrative attributes have been even enhanced.

Compared with the villagers' committee in rural area, urban residents do not have close economic relationship with the communities they live in, and their sense of belonging to the community and cohesion among residents are relatively weak, which is also the main reason for the lack of motivation for residents to participate in RCs' elections and self-governance.

1.4 Methodology

This paper mainly adopts literature analysis and case study as main research methods. The literature analysis is based on three main categories: firstly, the existing research literature in English and Chinese and a few in Korean, mainly including academic papers and master's and doctoral theses; secondly, official documents such as laws, regulations and notices issued by the Central Committee of the CCP, the State Council, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, the municipal government, some street offices and RCs; and thirdly, news reports.

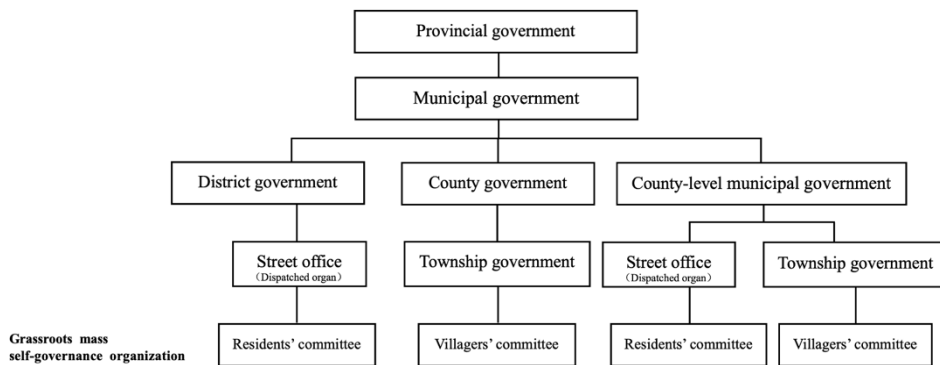
In terms of case study, this paper mainly selects cases related to the direct election and function operation of some RCs in Shanghai, and also some cases related to the RC in response to the Covid-19 in Shanghai. The reason for selecting RCs in Shanghai as the object of study is that as the most economically developed city in China, Shanghai has been at the forefront of the urban grassroots

management system reform, and has undertaken many pilot tasks, forming a representative “Shanghai Model.” Since the 18th National Congress of the CCP, in a sense, Shanghai has become a pilot again with the reform of the social grassroots governance system. The development and changes of the status and functions of RCs in Shanghai provide an entry point for observing the dynamic interaction and changes in relationship between the state and society and predicting the future growth space of China's society under the party-state political system dominated by the CCP.

Chapter 2. History of the Residents' Committee

The current urban and rural management structure in China is shown in the figure below. Urban management system is consisted of five levels: provincial government, municipal government, district government, street office, and residents' committee. Provincial government, municipal government, district government are the governmental organs, elected by people's congresses at each level respectively according to the constitution. Below the government level, the community level is composed of street offices and residents' committees. Street offices are the dispatched offices of the district or municipal governments, while RCs are grassroots level mass self-governance organizations (parallel to villagers' committees in rural areas) for residents' self-management, self-education, and self-service.

Figure 1. China's urban and rural management structure



Source: own elaboration

Since the founding of the PRC, China's urban grassroots management system has undergone a transformation from the unit system to street office-residents' committee system and then to the community system. Among them, the RC is the basic unit of the current community-based management system. The RC came into being at the beginning of the founding of the PRC. During Maoist era and the

reform and opening up, the status and functions of the RC have evolved, becoming an organization with distinct Chinese features.

2.1 Abolition of Baojia System

Before the founding of the PRC, the baojia(保甲) system assumed the function of urban grassroots management in China. The baojia system can be traced back to the reforms of Shang Yang(商鞅 390BC-338BC). The baojia system imposed by Shang Yang was used to ‘organize families into units collectively responsible for their activities to the state’ and to expand the taxation base and control of society.¹ The conceptualization of the baojia system as a grassroots political system originated in Song Dynasty with Wang Anshi(王安石,1021-1086)’s Change of Law. And in Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty, the basic structure of the baojia system was preserved, although there were changes in its scope and name. As a grassroots management system, the most essential feature of the baojia system was the use of the household as the basic unit of social organization, which was different from the Western tradition of using the individual as the unit.

The Baojia system had been preserved as a grassroots social management system until modern China. In 1937, the Japanese army occupied Shanghai, and through Wang Jingwei(汪精卫) regime(called simply the Republic of China) which is a government of the puppet state of the Empire of Japan in eastern China, baojia system was implemented in Shanghai to control the city. After the end of the second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), Chiang Kai-shek(蒋介石) government adopted baojia system in most parts of the country, including Shanghai. In

¹ Jason Young. 2013. *China's hukou system: markets, migrants and institutional change*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Huangpu (黄浦) District of Shanghai, for example, the government established the Huangpu District Office(黄浦区公所), which had 5 lianbao offices(联保办事处), each with 5-7 bao(保), totally 27 baos, 372 jias(甲), 23,506 households(户), and a resident population of over 130,000 in Huangpu District.²

After 1948, as the Kuomintang (KMT)-led government of the Republic of China (ROC) gradually collapsed in the midst of the civil war, CCP began to occupy more and more cities, and the management of urban society during the regime transition became a new task for the new Communist regime. However, before the civil war, CCP's activities were mainly conducted in rural areas so that CCP was lack of experience in urban society management. In addition, due to the economic depression, for the sake of stabilizing the new regime, the Communist regime decided to retain the baojia system implemented by the KMT to a great extent.³

While retaining most of staff in baojia system, the CCP also prepared for taking over by training cadres to replace the original baojia staff. The cadres trained by CCP came from several sources: first, employees of enterprises and public education personnel; second, workers and intellectuals in the former KMT-ruled areas; and third, the military. In addition, through mass movements the CCP also found and cultivated a number of activists. These activists mainly included workers, shopkeepers, the urban poor, etc. In the transition period, the Political Affair Takeover Committees(政务接管委员会)of CCP's local Military Controlling Committees(军事管制委员) established the Offices of Takeover Commissioners

² Wang Yibai (王怡白). 1996. “第一个居委会诞生在上海 (The first Residents' Committee was born in Shanghai).” *Century* 4.17.

³ Yang Liping (杨丽萍). 2010. “从废除保甲制度到建立居民委员会—以新中国成立前后的上海为例(From the Abolition of the Baojia System to the Establishment of Resident Committees: The Case of Shanghai before and after the Founding of PRC).” *党的文献 (Literature of Chinese Communist Party)* 2010(5):85-90.

(接管专员办事处), the predecessors of the street offices, based on baojia unit. As the takeover proceeded, the baojia system was eventually abolished by CCP.

2.2 Infancy and Institutionalization of the RC

After the abolition of the baojia system, a variety of residents' organizations were established throughout China due to the need for grassroots management and services in cities. These residents' organizations took different forms, including "burglar squad(防火队)," "winter defense squad(冬防队)," "street hall(街公所)," "life welfare committees(生活福利委员会)," "residents' groups(居民小组)," and "residents' committees(居民委员会)." They performed many functions such as security work, household registration, poverty and disaster relief, management of refugees and jobless vagrants, communist policy propaganda, and answering residents' questions about the new communist regime.⁴

Among them, the RC born in 1949 in Shangyangshi Street(上羊市街), Shangcheng District(上城区), Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province, is considered to be the first RC in China. On December 1, 1949, the Government of Hangzhou officially issued to the city the "Instruction on the Abolition of the Baojia System and the Establishment of Residents' Committees(关于取消保甲制度建立居民委员会的工作指示)". The RC soon developed uniformly throughout Hangzhou, and this Hangzhou decree eventually became the blueprint for the 1954 Regulations on the Organization of Urban Residents' Committees(城市居民委员会组织条例), which provided important reference about the nature, tasks, form of organization ("committee system"), and method of election of RC's members for the later

⁴ Chow-Bing Ngeow. 2012. "The Residents' Committee in China's Political System: Democracy, Stability, Mobilization." *Issues & Studies* 48(2):71-126.

Regulations on the Organization of Urban Residents' Committees.⁵

However, these residents' organizations established in various regions had duplicated functions, diverse forms, and multiple leaders, which led to disorder and chaos in urban management. In response to the chaos and disorder, in early summer of 1952, the Ministry of the Interior(内务部) of the Central Government, as the competent department, gradually began to pay attention to the construction of residents' organizations under district governments throughout the country.

In 1953, Peng Zhen(彭真), then secretary of the CCP Beijing Municipal Committee and mayor, suggested in a report to the Central Committee of CCP that an organization similar to a residents' committee needed to be established. Its nature should be that of a mass self-government organization, not a government agency. Its main task would be to organize people who did not work in factories, stores, schools, or the government. Under the principle of self-government, the residents' committee should be responsible for the welfare of the residents, propagandizing government policies and laws, mobilizing the public to support the government, and reflecting the residents' opinions to the grassroots government. The members of the residents' committee should be elected by the residents. The work of the residents' committees should be conducted under the leadership of grassroots governments or its dispatched agencies (the street offices). However, they are not the "legs" of the grassroots governments and should not be given too much work.⁶

At the urging of Peng Zhen, the Standing Committee of the National People's

⁵ Han Quanyong (韩全永). 2006. "建国初期城市居民组织的发现及启示(之一) 新中国第一个居委会诞生始末(The Discovery and Inspiration of Urban Residents' Organizations in the Early SAYS of the Founding of the People's Republic of China (1) The birth of the first RC in China)." 社区 (*Community*) 2006(5): 34-36.

⁶ Lei Jieqiong (雷洁琼) ed. 2001. 转型中的城市基层社区组织: 北京市基层社区组织与社区发展研究 (*Urban Grassroots Community Organizations in Transition: A Study of Grassroots Community Organizations and Community Development in Beijing*) 北京(Beijing): 北京大学出版社(Peking University Press).

Congress of the People's Republic of China adopted the Regulations on the Organization of Urban Residents' Committees and the Regulations on the Organization of Urban Street Office(城市街道办事处组织条例) in 1954. Thus, the street office and residents' committee system of managing urban residents, street office-residents' committee system(街居制) was formally established. By 1956, street offices and RCs have been formed all round China.

Since then, although the status and functions of street office and RC have undergone various changes in different periods, the urban grassroots management system based on the street office and RC has continued until today.

2.3 Changes in the Function and Status of the RC

2.3.1 Maoist Era: Work Unit System

Before the reform and opening up, the “work unit system” was the main system of grassroots management in China's urban areas, while the “people's commune(人民公社)” was the main form in rural areas. Under the “unit system” which was supplemented by the street office-residents' committee system, workers were controlled through the work units, and the unemployed were controlled through the street office-residents' committee system, thus the state achieved the purpose of controlling over all members in the urban society and maintaining social stability and consolidation of power.

In the early years of PRC, under the planned economic system, the CCP positioned the street office-residents' committee system as a transitional system for managing urban residents who were outside the coverage of the unit system. In another word, the street office-residents' committee system was only taken as a temporary system to assist the unit system in urban grassroots management during

the transitional period by the CCP.

Under the planned economy, the unit assumed the role of “agent of the government”. Employees worked in the unit, lived in the unit, and had fewer social activities outside the unit, so their dependence on the street office and RC was low. While the unit covers most of the members of society, the street office and RC are mainly responsible for the employment and welfare provision to the people outside the unit. People outside the unit mainly consisted of housewives, street vendors, artisans, jobless youth, and the elderly. These people were classified as non-productive people in socialist philosophy of the CCP at that time. The initial expectation of the CCP was that as industrialization proceeded, the economy developed, and the socialist transformation was completed, the unit system would eventually cover every individual in the city, and factories, institutions, enterprises, schools, and other units would solve all the livelihood problems of the residents, and the street office-residents’ committee system would not exist anymore.⁷

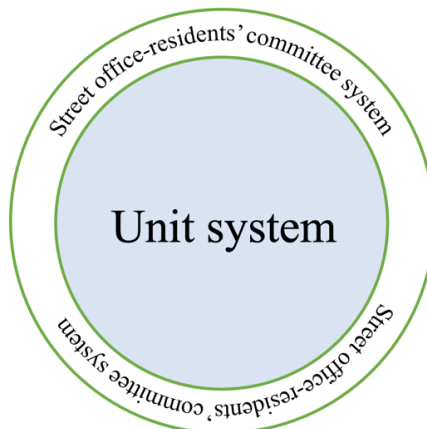
The unit system, a system of vertical management by the state over each individual, was one of the main systems that supported the authoritarian political system during the Maoist period. With the completion of the three major socialist transformations in 1956, namely the socialist transformation of agriculture, handicrafts, and industry and commerce, the socialist transformation of urban private enterprises was completed and the unit system was established. At the peak of the unit system, most residents in urban China were organized into work units, and people outside the units became a minority in the cities. Until 1990s, the unit system assumed the major functions in urban citizens management and services. “As a person in the unit, each person belonged to a certain unit, that meant his clothing, food, housing, transportation, sickness and death, social security, welfare

⁷ Chow-Bing Ngeow. 2012. “The Residents’ Committee in China’s Political System: Democracy, Stability, Mobilization.” *Issues & Studies* 48(2):71-126.

benefits were all borne by the unit. The unit as an agent of the state is the subject of the supply of the means of life, as well as the subject of social management and service provision. The state entrusts the unit agent to conduct the organization, education, control, management and service of citizens.”⁸ Under the unit system of the planned economy, the state has almost replaced society, and there is hardly any space for the free flow of resources and the free movement of people outside the unit system, and the status of individual subjectivity as a citizen is missing.

During the Great Leap Forward(大跃进), RCs were absorbed into urban people’s communes, while during the subsequent Cultural Revolution, they were reorganized into Revolutionary Residents’ Committees(革命居民委员会).

Figure 2. China's urban society management system in Maoist era



Source: own elaboration

To sum up, during the Maoist period, China’s urban grassroots management system has maintained the “unit system” as the main system, supplemented by the “street office-residents’ committee system”, which together constitute the management system of grassroots society. Public owned enterprises and public institutions as the core “units” have been in the central position of urban society

⁸ Zhang Hongwu (张洪武). 2021. “新中国成立以来社区治理的结构转型(The Model Transformation of Community Governance since the Founding of New China).” 党政干部学刊(*Journal of Party and Government Cadres*) 2021(12): 33-39.

management and service provision, while street offices and RCs are in the “residual position”, playing very limited role and having a relatively low status. In essence, however, both the unit system and the street office-residents’ committee system were government-centered management systems.

2.3.2 Reform Era: Community System

After the end of Cultural Revolution, the CCP convened the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in 1978 and decided to start the reform and opening up. The reform initially started in rural areas and gradually expanded to urban areas. As the reform and opening up proceeded, the social structure of China’s urban society changed dramatically, and at the same time, China’s urban grassroots society management system also changed continuously. In the process of exploring the urban grassroots society management model for new era, as the market economy gradually replaced the planned economy, the street office-residents’ committee system began to replace the unit system. However, in the face of the huge changes in grassroots society, the street office-residents’ committee system was unable to solve various problems and fell into difficulties in practice. As a new management system, the community system(社区制) finally assumed the function of social management and service. In the process of changing from the unit system to the street office-residents’ committee system and finally to the community system, the functions and status of the RC have also been changing.

I. Transitional period of reform and opening up (1978 - mid1980s)

The reform and opening up brought about changes in the social structure of urban society in mainly two aspects: a large number of people flowed from the “unit” under the public sector of the economy to the “society”, and the function of the “unit” changed.

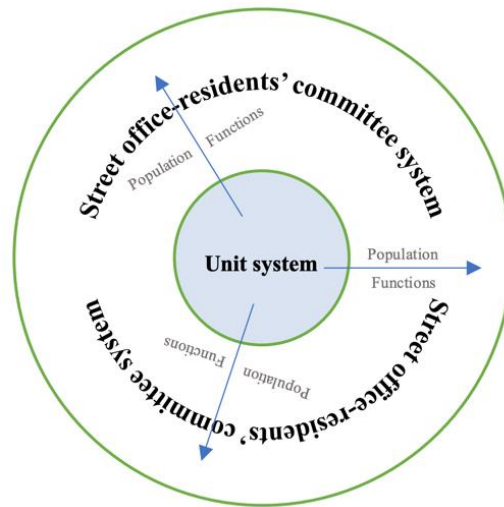
First, more and more people were moving from the “unit” to the “society”. On one hand, with privatization, the public sector of the economy has been reformed, the former state-led planned economy model has gradually collapsed, the private sector of the economy has developed. Self-employed people and people who work in private sector of the economy and foreign-funded enterprises has increased. As a result, the mobility of workers between enterprises and units has gradually become the norm. On the other hand, with marketization, in the late 1990s, state-owned enterprises began to enter a comprehensive reform phase, establishing a modern enterprise system in accordance with the laws of the market as a means of improving their efficiency and competitiveness. In the process of state-owned enterprise reform, a large number of state-owned and collective enterprise workers were laid off and turned from “unit people(单位人)” to “social people(社会人)”, and a large number of unemployed people emerged. In addition, with the deepening of the reform of rural economic system and the opening up of cities, the scale of urban-rural mobility had gradually expanded, and a large number of migrant workers had moved to cities, resulting in a nationwide “wave of migrant workers”, most of whom were employed in the private economy and have nothing to do with the units. In short, more and more people started to leave the “unit” and flow to urban society.

Second, the functions of public owned enterprises and public institutions had changed. During the reform and opening up, the higher government had been decentralizing social management and service functions, while state-owned enterprises had gradually changed their original mode of operation, shifting social welfare and service functions outward. The change of urban social structure inevitably led to the change of urban grassroots social management system. More and more “social people” had emerged, who were not connected with units, but had relatively close relations with street offices and RCs in their residence.

At the same time, the social impact of the decline of the unit system should not be underestimated. In terms of social management and services, social security had deteriorated, criminal activities were rampant, and there were no organizations to undertake social welfare services, migrant worker management, neighborhood dispute mediation, community environmental maintenance and other social management and service functions. In terms of administration, government policies such as family planning, medical and health care, and population census could not be implemented, all of which indicate the urgent need for a new urban grassroots management system to replace the original unit system and a need for new institutions to take over the functions stripped from the original units after the collapsing of the unit system to fill the vacuum in social management. In China, where intermediate social organizations were underdeveloped, these functions naturally fell to existing street office and the RC.

In the meantime, the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, adopted in 1982, stipulates that "the residents' committees or villagers' committees established in urban and rural areas according to residents' residence are grassroots mass self-governance organizations(基层群众性自治组织)". This is the first time that the nature of the RC is constitutionally defined, and also the first time that grassroots mass self-governance organizations are written into the Constitution.

Figure 3. China's urban society management system in transitional period of reform and opening up



Source: own elaboration

In summary, from the beginning of reform and opening up to the mid-1980s, the unit system as the urban grassroots social management system in China gradually collapsed. The role of street offices and RCs gradually strengthened under the street office-residents' committee system.

However, at that time, the RC under the street office-residents' committee system had always assumed the role of administrative agents. "In terms of the source of authority, the power of the RC comes from the government's authorization to a large extent. The RC is entrusted by the higher level government and becomes the agent of the higher government, with the mission of assisting the government department in providing public services and management and maintaining order in the grassroots community; in terms of the tasks, its tasks are assigned by the street office and the higher government department; in terms of the attribution of personnel power, the composition of the RC is reviewed and decided by the street office; in terms of the assessment, the main body of the assessment is still the higher level government; in terms of the source of funding, funding and

office space are supplied by the street office. The administrative attributes of the RC are clear.”⁹

II. Urban community construction period (after the mid-1980s)

With the development of reform and social transformation, many new issues problems had emerged in China’s urban grassroots society, and the street office-residents’ committee system were faced with practical difficulties of functional overload, limited authority etc.¹⁰ In this context, the community system was born.

The concept of “community” was first proposed by German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in his 1887 book *Community and Society* (also known as *Community and Society*), referring to a social unit that is larger than a single household, comprised of individuals that share values and thus create an environment of social cohesion. In the 1930s, anthropologist and sociologist Fei Xiaotong(费孝通) translated the word “community” as “社区 Shequ” in Chinese when translating the book *Community and Society*. Since then the concept of community entered China.¹¹ In the official definition of community in China, community refers to the social life community formed by people who live together within a certain geographical area. The geographical area involved in a community is generally the area under the jurisdiction of the RC that has been adjusted in size

⁹ Zhang Hongwu (张洪武). 2021. “新中国成立以来社区治理的结构转型(The Model Transformation of Community Governance since the Founding of New China).” 党政干部学刊(*Journal of Party and Government Cadres*) 2021(12): 33-39.

¹⁰ He Haibing (何海兵). 2003. “我国城市基层社会管理体制的变迁:从单位制、街居制到社区制(The Change of China's Urban Grassroots Social Management system: From Unit System, Street office-residents’ committee System to Community System).” 中国公共管理论坛(*China Public Management Forum*) 2003(6): 52-62.

¹¹ Zhao Chuanfang (赵川芳). 2014. “30年来我国社区发展法规、政策综述(A Review of Laws and Policies on Community Development in the Past 30 Years).” 广东广播电视大学学报(*Journal of Guangdong Radio & Television University*)23(108): 54-59.

after the community system reform.¹²

The changes in the functions and status of the RC are inextricably linked to the development of communities in China since the mid-to-late 1980s. The development of urban community system in China can be divided into four stages: community service stage, the experimental exploration stage of community construction, the comprehensive deepening stage of community construction, and the community governance(社区治理) stage.

The first stage is the community service stage from the mid to late 1980s to 1990. As the focus of China's economic reform shifted from rural to urban areas, in 1986 the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) first proposed the development of urban community services for various disadvantaged groups in the community, which was the first time the concept of community entered the Chinese government's management process. In 1989, MCA held a national conference on urban community service in Hangzhou to share experience of pilot reform and then the community service began to be implemented on a larger scale nationwide.

In the same year, the National People's Congress adopted the Organic Law of the Urban Residents' Committees of the People's Republic of China(中华人民共和国城市居民委员会组织法, hereafter Organic Law). Compared with the 1954 Organizational Regulations, the 1989 Organic Law made significant changes, regulating the nature, size, tasks, institutional set-up, term of office, and election methods of the RC. Firstly, the nature of the RC is clearly defined as "the RC is a grassroots mass self-governance organization for self-management(自我管理), self-education(自我教育) and self-service(自我服务)." Secondly, in terms of the

¹² General Office of the CCP Central Committee and the State Council (中共中央办公厅 国务院办公厅). 2000. "关于转发〈民政部关于在全国推进城市社区建设的意见〉的通知(中办发[2000]23号) (Memorandum from the Ministry of Civil Affairs on Promoting Urban Shequ Construction throughout the Nation)."

tasks of the RC, a new article “To assist the governments or its dispatched organs with the work related to the interests of residents in public health, family planning, relief aid, youth education and other work” was added. It also stipulated that RC was allowed to set up relevant service business. In addition, Organic Law also made new regulations on composition method of the members of the RC that the chairman, vice chairman and members of the RC should be elected by all the residents of the area in which they live or by representatives of each household; according to the opinion of the residents, the members of RC can also be elected by two to three representatives of each residents’ group. Each term of the RC is three years, and its members can be re-elected (The Seventh Session of the Standing Committee of the Thirteenth National People’s Congress in February 2018 adjusted the term of office of the RC to five years per term.). During the community service phase, community, a sociological concept originally familiar to a few within academic circles, first came into the view of the Chinese government and gradually into the view of the general Chinese public.

The second stage was the experimental exploration stage of community construction from 1991 to 1999. At this time, with the deepening of reform and opening up and urban reform, community services could no longer solve the new problems that emerged in the community, and a more comprehensive project was needed to promote community services and the all-round development of the community.

In 1991, Cui Naifu(崔乃夫), then Minister of Civil Affairs, first proposed community construction; in 1996, when former CCP general secretary Jiang Zemin attended the discussion of the Shanghai delegation at the Fourth Session of the Eighth National People’s Congress, he pointed out that “we should vigorously strengthen the construction of urban communities and give full play to the role of street offices and residents’ committees.” In 1998, the “Department of Grassroots

Political Authority Construction(基层政权建设司)” of the MCA was changed to the “Department of Grassroots Political Authority and Community Construction(基层政权与社区建设司)” and community construction was incorporated into the scope of national administrative functions. In 1999, the MCA launched the “National Community Construction Pilot Zone” project, and cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Qingdao and Hangzhou actively explored the path of community construction and accumulated some initial experience.

The third stage is the comprehensive deepening of community construction from 2000 to 2009. During this phase, community construction was formally promoted throughout China, and the core work of community construction was to innovate community management system and build a new community organization system.

In November 2000, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council jointly issued “Memorandum from the Ministry of Civil Affairs on Promoting Urban Shequ Construction throughout the Nation” (hereafter Document 23) which marked the end of the previous years of experimental exploration and the imminent official and comprehensive promotion of community construction throughout China. At the 16th National Congress of the CCP in 2002, Jiang Zemin proposed in his report that “we should improve grassroots self-governance organizations and democratic management systems, improve openness, ensure that the people directly exercise their democratic rights in accordance with the law, manage grass-roots public affairs and public welfare, and exercise democratic supervision over cadres. Improve the autonomy of urban residents, and establish new communities with order and peace.”

The implementation of community construction marks the beginning of the transformation of China’s urban grassroots social management system from street

office-residents' committee system to a community system. The RC under the street office-residents' committee system also began to transform into community resident committee(社区居民委员会) under the community system.

The fourth stage is the community governance(社区治理) stage, which started in 2010. In this stage, the focus of community development is to build urban and rural community governance system(城乡社区治理体系), improve the governance capacity of urban and rural communities, and create a governance pattern of joint construction and governance and share(共建共治共享).

The Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the CCP proposed the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity, requiring the replacement of “management(管理)” with “governance(治理)” as the ruling philosophy of the CCP in the period of comprehensive deepening reform. For grassroots community governance, it was proposed to strengthen community construction and solidify the foundation of the CCP as the ruling party. The conference proposed “Strengthen and innovate social governance, promote the refinement of social governance, and build a social governance pattern built and shared by all people.”

Figure 4. Current urban grassroots management system in China



Source: own elaboration

With the development of the community system, the size, selection of personnel, and functions of the RC have also changed. In terms of scale, through mergers and adjustments, the expanded RC are generally renamed community residents' committee(社区居民委员会), and one community residents' committee is set up for every 1,000 to 3,000 households. In terms of personnel selection method, with the development of community construction since 2000, more and more areas have changed from appointing members by higher authorities to directly electing by residents. In terms of functions, in addition to public services such as social security, labor and employment, social relief, preferential treatment and pension, public health, family planning, community education, culture and sports, consumer protection, and protection of the rights and interests of the elderly, the disabled, women, and minors, the RCs have also taken on other functions such as environmental maintenance, security and order maintenance, and grassroots democratic development. The function of the RC is gradually expanding.

This paper will focus on the direct election and the functions of community residents' committee, in which the main research scope will be locked in Shanghai. This paper will analyze the phenomenon and causes of the current status of the direct election and functional performance of the RCs in Shanghai, mainly through case studies.

Chapter 3. Election of the Residents' Committee

3.1 Legal and Policy Base

The current main legal basis for RCs in Shanghai is the Organic Law promulgated in 1989 (amended in 2018) and the Regulations on the Work of Shanghai Residents Committee(上海市居民委员会工作条例) adopted at the 37th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 14th Shanghai People's Congress in April 2017. Article 10 in the Regulations stipulated that "The members of the residents' committee, including the chairman, vice chairman and members, are elected by the residents of the district who have the right to vote in accordance with the law. Article 8 in the Organic Law stipulates three ways for residents to elect members of the RC: first, by all residents of the district who have the right to vote, that is, direct election; second, by representatives of each household, which is indirect election; third, by two to three representatives from each resident group, which is also an indirect election. In addition, the Organic Law stipulates that the term of the RC is five years (revised in 2018), and its members can be re-elected. In addition, it also stipulates that "All residents of the region in which they live, regardless of nationality, race, sex, occupation, family origin, religious beliefs, educational level, property status, or length of residence, have the right to vote and to be elected; except for those who have been deprived of political power in accordance with the law."

On this basis, the specific methods of implementing the RC election vary from place to place, and the schedule of the election of the RC and the specific implementation methods are formulated by the street office to which the RC belongs. Taking the election of RCs in Pudong New Area(浦东新区) of Shanghai in 2021 as an example, through the study of the implementation plan documents of

the election of RCs in Shanghai Shanggang Xincun Street(上钢新村街道东明路街道), Tangqiao Street(塘桥街道) and Weifang Xincun Street(潍坊新村街道), this paper found that the main legal basis for the formulation of the specific implementation methods of the election of RCs in each street is the Organic Law and the Regulations on the Work of Shanghai Residents' Committee.

3.2 History and Current State

In 1999, the MCA launched the pilot project of “National Community Construction Experimental Zone”, of which direct election of the RC is an important part. In 2000, 53 RCs were directly elected, accounting for 1.7% of the total number of RCs participating in the election that year. In the second half of 2003, Shanghai began to implement direct election of RCs on a large scale, and in 2006, 53% of all RCs in the city were directly elected. 2009, the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee and Municipal Government decided to further push the proportion of directly elected RCs, which was scheduled to be expanded to over 80%.

According to the “Summary of Civil Affairs Work in Shanghai in 2021(2021年上海市民政工作总结)” released by the Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau, the proportion of direct election in the 2021 Shanghai RC elections reached 97.5%,¹³ while the voter registration rate for the residents' and villagers' committee elections reached 93.4%.¹⁴ It shows that 304 RCs in Shanghai Xuhui District(徐汇区) all

¹³ Shanghai Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau(上海市民政局). 2022. “上海市民政局关于印发《2021年上海市民政工作总结》的通知(Notice on Shanghai Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau of the Issuance of the “Summary of Civil Affairs Work in Shanghai in 2021).”http://mzj.sh.gov.cn/MZ_zhuzhan292_0-2-8-15-55-244/20220216/9095e3a267ce46cd9d28a1b495918888.html(accessed on 14 April 2022).

¹⁴ Xinhua Net(新华网). 2021. “上海6094个居村党组织和6036个居村委会全部完成换届选举(Shanghai's 6,094 resident and village party organizations and 6,036 residents' and

adopted the direct election method, a total of 576,647 registered voters, 543,571 voters participated in the vote, the participation rate of 94.26%.¹⁵ While 325,288 voters were registered for the general election of the Huangpu District(黄浦区) RCs, 312,245 voters actually participated in the election, with a participation rate of 95.99% and a voter turnout rate of 99.04%.¹⁶ Does such a high participation rate¹⁷ indicate that citizens in Shanghai are enthusiastic about participating in democratic elections and that the democratic election of RCs is progressing smoothly, reflecting the development of democratic elections at the grassroots level in Shanghai?

The current research on Shanghai RCs' elections, both statistical and case studies, is mostly based on data before 2010, with a lack of recent statistics and limited systematic statistical data. Unfortunately, the author has not been able to conduct field surveys to obtain first-hand, up-to-date information due to geographical and environmental constraints, and can only conduct research based on case studies based on currently available research materials in English and Chinese. However, the Shanghai RCs' elections have not changed much in recent years compared with the previous ones, so although the research data are mainly before 2010, they are still applicable to the present to a large extent, and have considerable rationality and applicability. Although the cases are not widely

villagers' committees all complete general elections)." http://sh.xinhuanet.com/2021-06/10/c_139999740.htm (accessed on 15 April 2022).

¹⁵ Shangguan(上观). 2021. "徐汇区顺利完成2021年居民委员会换届选举工作(Xuhui District Successfully Completes 2021 Residents' Committee General Election)." <https://sghexport.shobserver.com/html/baijiahao/2021/05/29/446970.html> (accessed on 15 April 2022).

¹⁶ Shanghai Huangpu District gov.cn. 2021. "黄浦区2021年居委会换届选举顺利完成 (Huangpu District 2021 Neighborhood Committee General Election Successfully Completed)." <https://www.shhuangpu.gov.cn/yqyw/010001/010001006/010001006001/010001006001001/20210531/98e54d68-b186-41f6-af68-19959fc2ecd9.html> (accessed on 15 April 2022).

¹⁷ Participation rate = voters who voted in the election / total number of voters * 100%. http://www.szrd.gov.cn/dsxxjy/dszl/content/post_741767.html.

representative, they can still illustrate some issues, especially in the study of grassroots democratic elections in China.

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In China, the election of the RC is a process in which multiple actors participate, mainly party organizations, RCs, community activists, and voters. In this paper, this paper divides the election of the RC into three stages: the preparation stage (before voting), the election stage (during voting), and the follow-up stage (after voting).

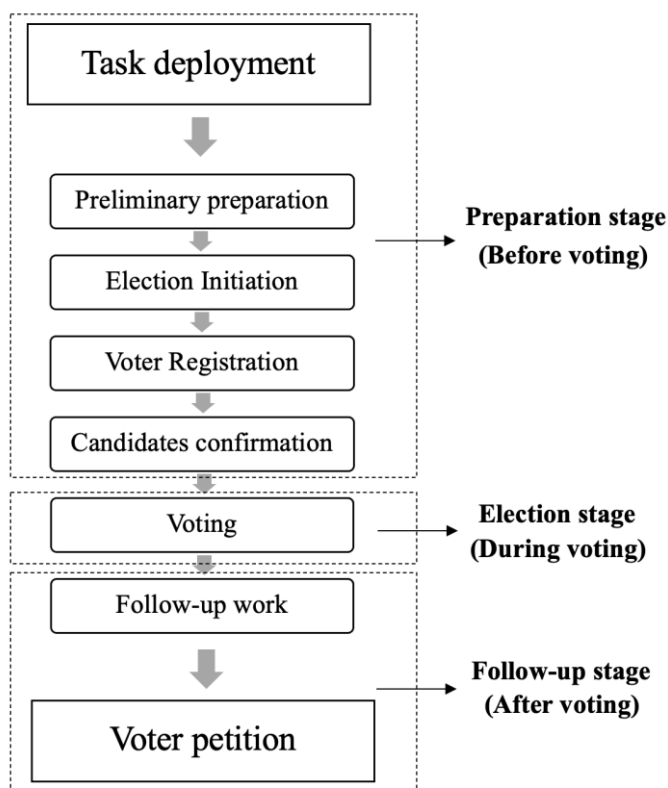
The first stage of preparation (before voting) mainly includes: task deployment phase: task deployment and personnel training of party organizations at all levels and other preparatory work; the preliminary preparation phase of street office and the RC: comprehensive research, audit and mobilization; election start-up phase: election committee(hereafter EC), election of residents' representatives, election of residents' group leaders, formulation and adoption of election work plan; voter registration phase: announcement of voter registration date, clarification of

voter qualifications, announcement of voter lists, correction, announcement and preservation of voter lists, handling of proxy voting, issuance of voter cards; candidate generation phase: nomination of candidates, announcement of candidate lists, joint qualification examination, registration for election (some streets adopt “mass-election(海选)” without candidates which will be discussed in detail later).

The second stage of the election (in the voting) mainly includes preparatory work (such as identifying staff for the election by the EC, training election staff, announcing the time and place of voting, printing ballots and making ballot boxes, setting up the election venue and polling stations, etc.); the conduct of election (under the auspices of the election committee, announcing the start of the election; announcing relevant matters; checking and sealing ballot boxes; collecting ballots and writing ballots; voting; opening the boxes to check the votes; counting the votes; announcing the election results; sealing the ballots. After the election, the results should be announced on the spot, the ballot papers should be sealed and sent to the street office or town); confirmation of the election result (the elected person received the majority of the votes of the voters who participated in the vote, to be elected. The election committee shall announce the election results on the day of the vote, on the same day or the next day, the list of elected members of the RC. If the elected members fail to pass the joint examination, the election is invalid).

The third follow-up stage (after voting) includes the RC follow-up stage: issuance of certificates, work handover, establishment of the election work record files; and the voter petition(信访) stage.

Figure 5. Flow chart of the various stages of the election of RC



Source: own elaboration

This paper focuses on the phenomenon of direct election of RCs in Shanghai. Direct election refers to the election by all residents who have the right to vote, which can be divided into direct election by with candidates and “mass election” without candidates. The party organizations involved in the RC election are the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee and the Shanghai Municipal District Committees above street office level, as well as the street party work committees and community party branches directly related to the election. The term “activist” in elections refers to the representatives of resident such as building group heads¹⁸ (楼组长) and party members.

¹⁸ Building group head is the name of the community in Shanghai, which refers to the head of the residents’ group by building block, also known as the residents’ group leader in Shanghai. It is called differently in other places.

3.3 Election Process

3.3.1 Preparation: Before Voting

I. Task deployment and personnel training: party organization

Taking the 2021 general election of Wenlan Community Residents' Committee(文兰社区居委会) located in Tangqiao Street of Shanghai Pudong New Area as an example, Tangqiao Street was established in April 1984, with an area of 3.86 square kilometers, a real population of nearly 80,000. As of October 2021, there are 24 RCs and 70 xiaoqu (neighborhood/housing estate, 小区) under its jurisdiction.¹⁹ The deployment of the 2021 Wenlan RC election first started with the document "Opinions on the Work of the 2021 Neighborhood and Village 'Two Committees'²⁰ Replacement Work" (No. 42 [2020] of the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee, 关于做好2021年居村“两委”换届工作的意见) issued by the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee in 2010. The document was sent from the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee to all districts in Shanghai, and then the CCP Shanghai Pudong New Area District Committee issued the "Plan on the Replacement of the 'Two Committees' in Pudong New Area in 2021" (关于做好浦东新区2021年居村“两委”换届工作的方案) to all street offices in Pudong New Area in early 2021, and then the Tangqiao Street Party Work Committee issued the "Implementation Plan on the Replacement of the 'Two Committees' in Tangqiao Street in 2021" (关于做好塘桥街道2021年居民区“两委”换届工作的实施方案). Annex 2, the "Procedures for the 2021 Residents' Committee Election in Tangqiao Street" (塘桥街道2021年居民委员会换届工作操作程序) sets out the procedures for the election of each community in Tangqiao Street, requiring each community

¹⁹ Tangqiao Street, Pudong, Shanghai, 2021. "塘桥街道简介 (Introduction to Tangqiao Street)." <https://www.pudong.gov.cn/016004001/> (accessed on 16 April 2022).

²⁰ "Two committees" refers to the community party branch committee and the RC.

to elect an EC, which will formulate a specific election plan for each RC. It can be seen that the deployment of RC's election begins with the party committee or party work committee of the Shanghai Communist Party at all levels.

Figure 6. Flowchart of pre-Election work deployment for Wenlan RC



Source: own elaboration

In addition to the documents issued by the party organization at different levels, the training of the personnel in charge of the election is also an important part of the task arrangement of the direct election.

In his master's thesis, "An Analysis of Residents' Committee's Action Behind the Successful Election of Community—Take Direct Election of Community Committee in X District of Shanghai as an Example", Ge Xiaolin (葛肖麟) (2011) mentions that in 2009, during a field trip as a volunteer to the election of RCs in 13 streets and towns in Shanghai's X District, it was found that during the preparation stage of the election, the Civil Affairs Bureau of X District trained the heads of street party organizations in batches, followed by the heads of street party organizations training the heads of neighborhood party organizations on election work, and finally, the heads of neighborhood party organizations then provided relevant training to the cadres of the RC, and so on down the hierarchy of election work-related staff. "Although the street office and the RC do not have a hierarchical relationship in the legal sense, the line between the street office and the

RC is opened through the link of the party organization.”²¹

Thus, although RCs are grassroots mass self-governance organizations in the legal sense, their elections have been delegated by the CCP Shanghai party organizations at all levels to each RC in Shanghai in the form of tasks from the beginning, and the control of the party organizations over the RC elections is realized through the training of party members in the party organizations at all levels.

II. Formation of the EC: the secretary of the neighborhood party organization

The Residents' Election Committee (EC) is fully responsible for the entire RC election process. EC as the center of the practical operation of the election of each RC, plays a crucial role in the entire election process. According to the Rules for Residents' Committee Election Work of Shanghai(上海市居民委员会选举工作规则), the duties of the EC mainly include: (1) formulating the election work plan in accordance with the law and submitting it to the residents' meeting for discussion and adoption; (2) carrying out mobilization work; (3) identifying and training election staff; (4) determining and announcing the election day; (5) organizing the registration of residents, examining their election qualifications, and announcing the list of residents with the right to vote and residents with the right to be elected; (6) organize residents with the right to vote, household representatives or resident representatives to nominate candidates for members of the RC and announce the list of candidates; (7) preside over elections, announce the election result and report the result to the street office and town (township) government; (8) receive letters and visits from the public about the election; (9) summarize the election work,

²¹ Ge Xiaolin (葛肖麟). 2011. “‘成功’选举背后的居委会行动分析—上海市X区居委会直选为例 (*An Analysis of Residents' Committee's Action Behind the Successful Election of Community—Take Direct Election of Community Committee in X District of Shanghai as an Example*).”

organize and establish election work files.

With regard to the method of EC's formation, the Shanghai Residents' Committee Election Workbook(上海市居民委员会选举工作手册) states that A residents' election committee is established to preside over the election of the residents' committee. The members of the residents' election committee are elected by the residents' conference or various residents' groups.²² While in practice, the chairman of the EC is usually the secretary of the neighborhood party organization.

Still taking the 2021 Tangqiao Street RC election as an example, "Procedures for the 2021 Residents' Committee Election in Tangqiao Street" stipulates that the EC should be composed of 7-9 members. Generally, the secretary of the neighborhood party organization should take the chairman of the EC. In the case of the secretary of the neighborhood party organization running for the chairman of the RC, it should be equipped with a competent party member who is assured and recognized by the party and people as vice chairman. EC members who are nominated as candidates for the case, should promptly withdraw from the EC. Similar provisions related to the procedures for the election of RC are also found in documents of other streets.

Case studies of RC elections also confirm this fact that the EC directors are mainly from the neighborhood party branches. Xiong Yihan(熊易寒) and Yao Yinke(姚银科) (2011) mentioned in their paper "Toward Multi-motivation Election: the Transformation Party Organizations' Role in Community Elections" that from June to September 2009, commissioned by the Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau, the authors selected 20 RCs of different types in various urban areas of Shanghai and

²² Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau, Grassroots Power and Community Construction Division. ed. 2009 上海市居民委员会选举工作手册 (*Handbook on Election of Residents' Committees in Shanghai*).

observed the whole process of their elections. The authors found that the chairman of the EC was usually the secretary of the party branch of the neighborhood²³, and most of the other members are also members of the CCP. In Community C, for example, six of the seven members of the EC are CCP members.²⁴

Yong Gui, Joseph Y.S. Cheng, and Weihong Ma (2006) in “Cultivation of Grass-Roots Democracy: A Study of Direct Elections of Residents Committees in Shanghai” also mentions that the results of a four-month field study of RC election in community B of Shanghai’s YP district in 2003 showed that although the EC was elected by resident representatives, the EC was in fact representative of the CCP, as the party general branch secretary served as the chairman of the EC, and seven of the remaining nine members of the EC were also party members. In addition, the Party General Secretary is the central figure in the entire election process, exerting a decisive influence on key decisions. Through observations and interviews, the authors found that party secretaries had a key influence on the composition of the EC, mobilizing the "right" candidates to run for office, and deciding on the final list of candidates. Through formal and informal meetings, private conversations, and the design of specific details of the election process, party secretaries were able to influence candidates, EC members, election organizers, and even voting residents to a significant degree. In many important meetings, the party secretary is the opinion leader and ultimate decision maker.²⁵

²³ If the party secretary is nominated as a candidate for the chairman of the RC, the party secretary should resign as the chairman of EC and should be replaced by a vice chairman or member of the EC who is not running for election. However, the secretary will still “attend” the EC meetings and continue to lead the EC de facto as the head of the community party organization.

²⁴ Xiong Yihan(熊易寒) and Yao Yinke(姚银科). 2011. “迈向多动力选举：党组织在社区选举中的角色转型(Toward Multi-motivation Election: the Transformation Party Organizations’ Role in Community Elections).” 中共天津市委党校学报(*Journal of the Party School of Tianjin Committee of the CCP*). 2011(2): 12-16.

²⁵ Yong Gui, Joseph Y.S. Cheng and Weihong Ma. 2006. “Cultivation of Grass-Roots Democracy: A Study of Direct Elections of Residents Committees in Shanghai.” *China information*, 10 (1): 7–31.

Since the system stipulates that the members of the EC should be elected by the residents' conference or various residents' groups, how can there be guarantees that the secretary of the party organization must be elected as the chairman of the EC?

In his master's thesis, Ge Xiaolin(2011) mentioned that observing the process of 2009 election of community H in Shanghai, he found that without any meeting of residents representatives, Y, the secretary of the neighborhood party organization, decided the chairman of the EC of community H on his own according to the previous practice.²⁶

Yao Hua's(2006) doctoral dissertation "The Policy Implementation and the Strategy of the Actor——The Case Study of Residents Committee Direct Election Process in Shanghai" took the 2003 election of J RC in H Street, Changning(长宁区) District, Shanghai as the object of study. The study found that at a joint meeting held by J RC and Party Branch in the morning of September 30, 2003, Secretary Jin, the Party branch secretary of J Neighborhood, decided on balance by himself that the EC would consist of nine members and first circled four members - Secretary Jin himself, Tao, the organ liaison (assigned by H Street as a section member of the comprehensive management office of the street), Zhao, the director of the in-service Party activities committee (a resident), and He, the director of the women's representative. Secretary Kim said "These four people are expressly put in by the street, and there are five other places, on each of the five main residential buildings to produce a representative, to choose a good and enthusiastic person." After discussion, they jointly recommended five more candidates, namely Yuan of Building 2 (CCP member, retired cadres of state-owned enterprises), Chen of

²⁶ Ge Xiaolin (葛肖麟). 2011. " '成功' 选举背后的居委会行动分析—上海市X区居委会直选为例 (*An Analysis of Residents' Committee's Action Behind the Successful Election of Community——Take Direct Election of Community Committee in X District of Shanghai as an Example*)."

Building 4 (CCP member, retired cadres of the Labor Reform Bureau), Zhang of Building 6 (CCP member, retired cadres of the Audit Bureau), Lu of Building 8 (non-party member, retired factory doctor), and Yang of Building 10 (CCP member). This makes up an EC of nine people, seven of whom are party members.²⁷

It can be seen that although the members of the EC should be elected by the residents' conference or various residents' groups, in practice, the decision is made by the secretary of the neighborhood party organization and the party organization itself. The chairman of the EC is usually the secretary of the neighborhood party organization, and most of the EC members are CCP members, especially the secretary of the party organization plays a crucial role in the whole process of the election of the RC. In this way, by placing party members in the EC, the CCP has the EC firmly in its hands, and the CCP achieves control over the election of the RC through its control of the personnel of the EC, the body in charge of the election of the RC.

III. Mobilization: activist

Mobilization of the entire population in advance of the election is also an important part of the preparation for the election. Activist(积极分子)-based mobilization is a common and important phenomenon in RC elections. It is a common strategy for most RCs to mobilize the entire community by mobilizing activists first and then relying on heads of sections(块长), heads of buildings, and activists among residents to mobilize residents in the community to participate in the election.

²⁷ Yao Hua (姚华). “政策执行与行动者的策略—上海居民委员会直接选举的个案研究 (*The Policy Implementation and the Strategy of the Actor—The Case Study of Residents Committee Direct Election Process in Shanghai*).”

“Activists” in China refer to people outside the formal state system who are actively working for the party and government, and who serve the party and government’s relevant policies on a voluntary and active basis. They are the mass base for the CCP and government to implement the mass line(群众路线). The initial RCs were established by identifying and cultivating “mass activists”. Nowadays, the government and RC increasingly using the term “volunteers” instead of “activists” (Guo Shengli 郭圣莉, 2006).

The activists in RCs’ elections refer to the representatives of the residents around the RC, such as the building group heads and party members. With regard to the election method of building group heads, Guo Shengli (2006) and Ge Xiaolin (2011) both suggest that building group heads should be elected, but in practice, they are mostly appointed by the RC. And even if the building group heads are elected, it’s just a formality, and the original building group heads are usually “elected”.

Yong Gui, Joseph Y.S. Cheng, and Weihong Ma (2006) indicated their findings as the results of a field study of RC’s direct elections in Community B of Shanghai’s YB district. The secretary of the party general branch of Community B said that the propaganda about RC election had begun long ago, and that after receiving notification from the street, the community held a series of meetings, including: party general branch committee meeting, RC meeting, party members meeting, and building group heads meeting. The community’s strategy to mobilize residents to participate in the election is mainly through mobilizing political activists at all levels, and then relying on block heads, building group heads, and activists among the residents to mobilize the entire community to participate in the direct election.

In their research, the authors provide a conversation between a building head in Community B and a resident in her building, Mr. Zhang, before the election. As

a resident of Community B, Mr. Zhang was eligible to vote and had the right to vote, so he was a natural target for mobilization before the current RC election. Mr. Zhang is a businessman who is busy with his regular work. The first two visits to Mr. Zhang's house by the building group heads were unsuccessful, and finally on the third visit, Mr. Zhang met with her. The following is the conversation between the two:

Group Head: Mr Zhang, we finally manage to meet. Have you been very busy lately?

Mr Zhang: Yes, terribly busy. A lot of work in the unit cannot be done without me. I have to work overtime these days.

Group Head: Though work is important, one has to pay attention to health. I heard that your mother has not been well in the past few weeks. Is she better now?

Mr Zhang: She is much better now, thank you. Is there anything I can help you with?

Group Head: Do you know about the direct election of the residents committee?

Mr Zhang: No, I don't. What has that got to do with us?

Group Head: Oh, it is closely related to our life. This time we residents will directly elect the members of the residents committee whose purpose is to serve us. You are eligible as a voter. You must come when it is time to vote.

Mr Zhang: Well, you represent us and so vote for us then. I am too busy to find time [to vote].

Group Head: Oh, it shouldn't take too much of your time. On election day, just drop by and fill in the ballot paper.

Mr Zhang: Well, we don't have any connection with the residents committee. I

really don't know them, and whoever is elected is quite all right with me.

Group Head: In our building, many residents are willing to go [to vote], like our neighbors Mr Wang Senior, young Mr Li, etc. You should also go, please give me face.

Mr Zhang: All right.

Group Head: This is the right attitude. You can't go wrong following my advice. Ask your mother to come round to the Activity Centre for the Elderly to spend some time. It has now started a fan-dance class; it is quite enjoyable dancing together.

Mr Zhang: All right. I guess she will fully recover in two or three days. I shall ask her to go for some exercise.²⁸

In "An Analysis on the 'Negotiation' System and its Foundation of China City Community, Election" Guo Shengli (2010) summarizes the results of her two-month observation of elections in 13 RCs in 13 streets of District X in Shanghai in 2009. In her team's questionnaire survey, 80.4% of the residents answered that "during the election, community staffs, building group heads and other volunteers went to their homes to mobilize them." In addition, it was more common for activists, such as building group heads, to go to their homes to register voters than for residents to go to the RC to register themselves.²⁹

As seen above, residents showed relatively indifferent attitudes toward the RC election, and the door-to-door mobilization of community activists played a crucial

²⁸ Yong Gui, Joseph Y.S. Cheng and Weihong Ma, 2006, "Cultivation of Grass-Roots Democracy: A Study of Direct Elections of Residents Committees in Shanghai." *China information*, 10 (1): 7-31.

²⁹ Guo Shengli(郭圣莉). 2010. "加入核心团队：社区选举的合意机制及其运作基础分析(An Analysis on the 'Negotiation' System and its Foundation of China City Community, Election)." 公共行政评论 (*Journal of Public Administration*) 2010 (1): 81-105, 204-205.

role in the final high turnout, while “face(面子)” and favors were the main reasons for residents to accept activists’ mobilization and participate in the voting.

IV. How the candidates are decided

The most important difference between the election of the RC and the election of the villagers’ committee is the way the candidates are decided. Most of the villagers’ committees’ elections are held by “mass election” without candidates, while in the RCs’ elections, the number of RCs that held “mass election” is limited. In the 2018 Shanghai Pudong New Area villagers’ and residents’ committee election, for example, the proportion of villagers’ committees which held “mass election” reached 100%, while the proportion of RC direct election was 99.2%.

Although I did not have access to all the information on the general election plan of the RCs in Pudong New Area, from the information I obtained, only a small number of streets conducted RC “mass election”. In this step, there are some differences in the regulations of each RC, some streets have more specific regulations on the way of deciding candidates or self-nominators, and also include regulations on candidates and self-nominators’ campaign statements, while some streets have more abbreviated regulations on the way of deciding candidates or self-nominators, leaving more room for operation.

In the 2021 Shanghai RC election, Tangqiao Street in Pudong New Area adopted the “mass election” method, and also made relevant provisions for organizing self-nominees to make campaign statements. The “Procedures for the 2021 Residents’ Committee Election in Tangqiao Street”, provisions on the generation of self-nominees are refined as follows: (1) posting of self-nomination report announcement: the general election is conducted in the way of “direct election without candidates”, and residents register to run for the election; (2) registration of residents’ self-nomination; (3) qualification examination of self-

nominators; (4) posting of the announcement of self-nomination reports that have passed the audit; (5) withdrawal of self-nominators from the election; (6) signing of the “Air Election Undertaking”; (7) organization of campaign statements.

Weifang Street(潍坊街道) which also located in Pudong New Area also took no candidate direct election “mass election”, but for the self-nominee generation and other provisions are relatively simple. While Dongming Road Street(东明路街道) which also located in Pudong New Area, has adopted the election method with candidates. It is stipulated that the official candidates for the chairman and vice chairman of the RC should have one more person than the number to be elected, and the official candidates for members of the RC should be 1-3 more than the number to be elected.”

In addition, there are two ways to decide the candidates: first, Preliminary candidates are jointly nominated by residents (or household representatives and resident representatives) who are registered to vote, and then official candidates are decided through residents’ conference (or democratic consultations); second, a majority of residents registered to vote in the election, according to the number of votes received, directly determine the candidates.

However, in this step of the election of candidates or self-nominees, regardless of the street, there is a joint examination of the qualifications of candidates or self-nominees. “After the preliminary candidates/self-nominees are decided, the organization department of the street party work committee will take the lead, together with the functional departments of discipline inspection and supervision, petition, health and family planning, public security, market supervision, city management and law enforcement, etc., to conduct preliminary qualification examination of the preliminary candidates/self-nominees, and simultaneously submit for the district-level joint examination. The generation of

candidates/self-nominators can be said to be the most crucial step in the election. The party organization can exclude “anti-party” people from the list of candidates/self-nominees, and leave the candidates or self-nominees that the party organization feels safe and preferred on the final list of candidates. This allows the party organization to control the personnel of the election candidates through the organization department of the street party work committee.

In addition, in the case of RC elections with candidate, the process of candidate selection is also noteworthy. Many studies have found that in RC elections, although the street office does not directly interfere with the election, not only is the person elected with the highest number of votes “favored” from “above (the street)”, but the candidates are also mostly selected in accordance with what the above “meaning(意思)”.

In his master’s thesis, Ge Xiaolin(2011) mentions his observations on the process of formal candidate generation in the RC election of community H in Shanghai. According to the procedure, preliminary candidates are nominated and announced 10 days before the election day. Candidates are generated in three ways: jointly nominated by more than 10 residents, jointly nominated by more than 5 household representatives, and jointly nominated by more than 3 resident representatives. The consultation process from the initial nomination of candidates to the final determination of the official candidates (residents’ representatives meeting) seems to be open, fair and impartial, but no matter how many rounds of consultation, the final official candidates must be based on the members of the original RC, reflecting the will of the “above”, or at least the will of the grassroots government. So how is it ensured that the person favored by above selected as the official candidate?

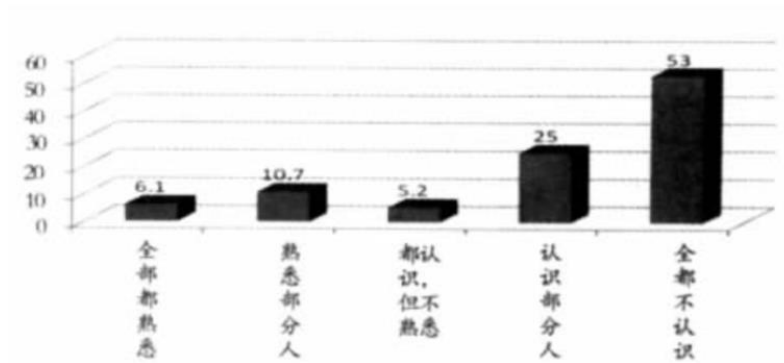
Long before the election, Q, who had passed the cadre training system, became the preferred candidate of the town government. The author mentions that

at the meeting with the candidates, when Y, the secretary of the community party branch, announced that Q was in charge, everyone understood. When the author asked the secretary of the street party organization to confirm if it is the government's intentions, she said "Of course, but if the residents had chosen another person, we would have respected the election results." However, she added, "Usually they know what the government wants." There is no community where the key 'core; members don't know who "should" be elected as chairman before they vote. Even if the RC could not successfully imply to the "core" helpers at the candidates' meeting who was favored by the "above", they would convey the "meaning" to them at other times. The H RC had already made it clear to the building group heads at their meeting on May 29 that Q was the person selected by the grassroots government to be the next chairman of the RC.³⁰

In addition, surveys show that it is common for residents to not know the candidates, and the "2011 Shanghai Community Building Survey" reported that 53% of residents, or more than half, said they knew none of the candidates.

³⁰ Ge Xiaolin (葛肖麟). 2011. " '成功' 选举背后的居委会行动分析—上海市X区居委会直选为例 (*An Analysis of Residents' Committee's Action Behind the Successful Election of Community—Take Direct Election of Community Committee in X District of Shanghai as an Example*)."

Figure 7. Proportion of residents who know the candidate



Source: Liu Yuzhao(刘玉照) etc. 2011. “上海社区建设调查报告(Research Report of Shanghai’s Community Construction.)” 科学发展 (*Scientific Development*) 2011(3):108-114.

In addition, interviews with residents also confirm this. Liu Chunrong(刘春荣) (2010), in “Frame Alignment in the Election Mobilization: A Case Study of the Officer Election for Yinxing Residential Committee” refers to an interview with resident Ms. C. during the observation of the 2003 Yinxing(银杏) RC election in Shanghai’s D Street.

“Our kind of commercial housing community neighbors do not interact much so participate in the RC election, I do not have too much interest. However, it is not impossible for me to participate in voting, the weather is so hot, it is not easy for them to go door to door to mobilize, and they all work on weekends and evenings. The problem is that we are not even familiar with the people across the street, so how do you think we should vote?”³¹

Both the data and the interviews suggest that many residents lack basic knowledge of the candidates in the RCs’ elections, and that the participation rates

³¹ Liu Chunrong(刘春荣). 2011. “选举动员的框架整合—银杏居委会换届选举个案研究(Frame Alignment in the Election Mobilization: A Case Study of the Officer Election for Yinxing Residential Committee) 社会(Chinese Journal of Sociology) 2010(1): 22-45.

in Shanghai's RC elections, which often exceed 90%, indicate that many voters voted without basic knowledge of the candidates.

Thus, unlike villagers' committees, which widely hold "mass election", most RCs in Shanghai hold direct election with candidates. In this important process of deciding the final candidates, the CCP exercises personnel control over the candidates for the RCs' elections through the organization department of the street party work committee. In addition, even if the candidates are decided negotiation among the representatives of the residents, they are chosen by the community party organizations and activists under the guidance of the "above", which, of course, cannot be separated from the residents' lack of knowledge about the candidates and the lack of interest in the election.

V. Residents' apathy towards elections

Residents' apathetic attitude toward elections can be glimpsed from the conversation between the building group head and citizen Mr. Zhang in the study of Yong Gui, Joseph Y.S. Cheng, and Weihong Ma (2006) mentioned above. In addition, activists such as the building group head who went door-to-door to conduct voter registration also reflected residents' negative attitudes toward participation in the election from the side.

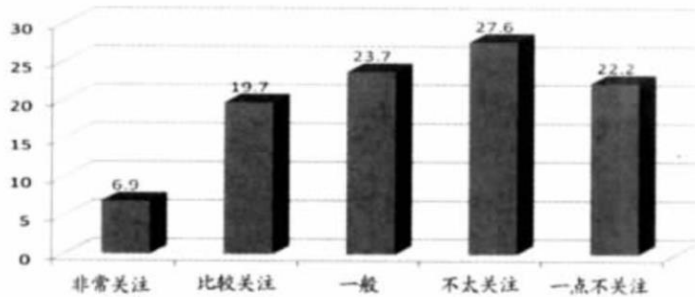
The "Research Report of Shanghai's Community Construction" released by the Shanghai Social Survey Research Center, Shanghai University Branch in 2011 shows that the participation rate of ordinary community residents in grassroots elections is only 4.67%. Only 26.6% of community residents expressed concern (including very concerned and relatively concerned) about RC elections.

Table 1. Proportion of general community residents' participation in community public affairs (%)

社区公共事务	公共卫生整治	基层选举	文明小区创建	社区文化娱乐活动	社区治安治理	社区居民培训	与物业公司谈判	社区公共设施修缮	抗震救灾捐助
普通社区居民作为主要参加者的参与比例	3.51	4.67	5.82	6.84	3.97	12.98	8.52	2.90	23.76

Source: Liu Yuzhao(刘玉照) etc. 2011. “上海社区建设调查报告(Research Report of Shanghai's Community Construction.)” 科学发展 (*Scientific Development*) 2011(3):108-114.

Figure 8. Proportion of community residents concerned about RC election



Source: Liu Yuzhao(刘玉照) etc. 2011. “上海社区建设调查报告(Research Report of Shanghai's Community Construction.)” 科学发展 (*Scientific Development*) 2011(3):108-114.

In addition, residents' interviews and questionnaires are a direct reflection of residents' attitudes. Xiao-Lin Ge (2011) mentions his observation on the day of election of RC H in Shanghai. Before the voting started, the author interviewed several residents in the neighborhood and when asked if they knew that the election was going to be held, most of them said they did. However, when asked further who the candidates were, many residents said that they did not know the candidates. After the candidates were decided, the RC H posted the list of candidates and their basic information on the bulletin board of the committee and at the two main entrances of the community. However, most of the residents did not go to the bulletin boards to read them, and many residents would glance at them when they

passed by the gates every day, knowing that there was such a thing, but few of them stopped to look, so in the end, they knew very little about the election.³²

In his paper “The Paradox of Urban Community Elections: between Political Apathy and High Turnout Rates”, Xiong Yihan (2008) summarizes the results of a field survey conducted by his research team from early June to late August 2006 on more than 20 RC elections in six districts of Shanghai. Prior to the election, the team conducted random interviews with some residents in Neighborhood L of District Z in Shanghai. At the time of the interviews, voter registration had been completed, the candidates were basically identified, and the announcement of the EC was posted on the bulletin board of the neighborhood, and the banner “Cherish your democratic rights and actively participate in the RC election” was hung in a prominent position, but the majority of the interviewees had an attitude of not caring about the election, and some of them did not even know about it. However, the vast majority of respondents had a carefree attitude toward the election, and some of them did not even know about it.³³

From the above it can be concluded that although the EC and activists actively prepared and mobilized before the RC election, residents generally showed apathic attitude toward the election.

3.3.2 Election: During Voting

I. Induction and intimidation

On election day, the EC and activists are active on the election site. In addition

³² Ge Xiaolin (葛肖麟). 2011. “‘成功’选举背后的居委会行动分析—上海市X区居委会直选为例 (*An Analysis of Residents' Committee's Action Behind the Successful Election of Community—Take Direct Election of Community Committee in X District of Shanghai as an Example*)”.

³³ Xiong Yihan(熊易寒). 2008. “社区选举：在政治冷漠与高投票率之间 (The Paradox of Urban Community Elections: between Political Apathy and High Turnout Rates).” 社会(Society) 2008(3):180-227.

to organizing the election and assisting voters in casting their ballots, some of their actions even have a significant impact on the outcome of the election.

Ge Xiaolin (2011) mentions in his thesis that at the voting site of a RC election in Shanghai, two staff members “patrolled” near the candidate introduction signs and “secret voting site”. When they saw that residents needed to know about the candidates, they immediately went forward to “help” introduce them. However, they often introduced the candidates with some tendencies, consciously guiding and suggesting residents to choose certain people. For example:

“..... will say “so-and-so, she does good job” and so on. Especially when filling out the “chairman” column, in the case that there are two choices, the staff will describe the current chairman’s work achievements in detail and specific, while the introduction of another candidate is only a few words, or even directly point to the current chairman’s name and told the voters “this person is doing a good job.”³⁴

In her paper, Guo Shengli (2010) also mentions the observations on the day of voting in the RC election that when filling out the ballot, there were always 1-2 staff members at the public writing site who worked hard to take care of everyone who came to vote, highlighting the 5 people, and occasionally when someone chose someone else, they would say “this person doesn’t live here anymore” and so on, with great tendency and influence.

Xiong Yihan (2008) also mentions similar phenomenon in his paper. The vast majority of voters fill out their ballots in public or semi-public (often under the watchful eye and guidance of staff), with staff (mainly filled by party cadres) playing a large role in the introduction of the candidates. The secretary of party

³⁴ Ge Xiaolin (葛肖麟). 2011. “‘成功’选举背后的居委会行动分析—上海市X区居委会直选为例 (*An Analysis of Residents’ Committee’s Action Behind the Successful Election of Community—Take Direct Election of Community Committee in X District of Shanghai as an Example*)”.

organization of Neighborhood L said:

“The way to guide, to be deft, both to achieve the purpose and (June) 17 evening (the night before the election), I called the party cadres one by one, talking about work about the election card, introduction to voters. I told them tomorrow’s election depends on them and explained one by one that the final decision is up to the voters, but they are obligated to introduce the campaigners to the residents. If they are not clear, I will explain again. I stayed home very late that day.”

He also mentioned that in some communities, the staff even “demonstrated” directly, “helping” the voter to fill out the first ballot, and then let the other voters follow. However, sometimes several voters came to vote at the same time, and the staff could not take care of them all at once, so they became “independent voters”, who often tended to circle the ballots according to their ranking. Perhaps in anticipation of this situation, some communities did not rank the candidates according to their last names, but rather put their preferred candidates in front and listed the others behind them. ³⁵

From the above, it can be seen that EC members and activists “hint”, “guide” and even “demonstrate” to the voters when they vote, and the voters lack understanding of the candidates.

II. Proxy voting

Proxy voting, which was intended to be for a small number of individual alternatives, has become a common phenomenon in RC election. If we remove proxy voting and only count the voters who actually came to the election site to vote, the turnout rate will be greatly reduced.

In their paper on the election observation of a neighborhood in Shanghai, Guo Shengli, Liu Yongliang and Luo Feiye (2013) mention the results of a follow-up

³⁵ Xiong Yihan(熊易寒). 2008. “社区选举：在政治冷漠与高投票率之间(The Paradox of Urban Community Elections: between Political Apathy and High Turnout Rates).” 社会(Society) 2008(3):180-227.

survey on the election of six RCs in Xuhui District(徐汇区), Shanghai in 2012.

Table 2. Overview of the 2012 RC election of six RCs in Xuhui District, Shanghai

	Y 社区	B1 社区	B2 社区	B3 社区	B4 社区	B5 社区
居民数	3920	5000	6000	3500	3085	1290
楼组长数	59	200	127	66	102	27
党员数	/	300	296	198	199	20
居民代表数	59	202	149	66	102	467
登记选民数	2035	3859	4175	240	3046	1268
有效选票	2031	3678	4004	2429	2827	1213
统计投票率	99.80%	95.31%	95.50%	97.55%	92.81%	95.67%
实际投票数*	450	110-140	200-250	130	180-200	100-110
实际投票率	22%	3.0%-3.8%	5%-6.2%	5.4%	6.3%-7%	8%-9%

The actual number of votes cast is the number of voters who really came to vote.

Source: Guo Shengli(郭圣莉), Liu Yongliang(刘永亮) and Luo Feiye(罗菲烨). 2013. “纵横交织的社区网络：中国城市社区社会资本与社区选举—上海市Y小区个案研究(The Vertical and Horizontal Community Network: Social Capital and Election of Chinese Urban Community—The Case Analysis of Community Y in Shanghai.)” 华东理工大学学报(*Journal of East China University of Science and Technology*) 2013(3): 1-11.

One of the communities, Y, is a well-known upscale neighborhood located in the center of Shanghai, with active community associations, well-off and educated residents, and a large proportion of residents who are experts, scholars, and current and retired government officials. As the statistics show, the statistical turnout rate of all six communities is above 90%, but except for Community Y, which presents an actual turnout rate of 22%, the actual turnout rate of the rest of the communities is below 10%.

The large gap between actual turnout and statistical turnout is the large number of proxy and substitute votes. In addition to the numbers, it is important to focus on the specific process of voting when analyzing the RC election. In this paper, proxy versus substitute voting will be analyzed in two cases, according to the target of the proxy: one is proxy voting by family members, and the other is proxy voting by activists.

Voting as a household-based unit

Ge Xiaolin(2011) mentioned in his thesis that there were 1,542 registered voters in the election of RC H in Shanghai, and 1,403 ballots were issued on the same day, while the number of voters who came to the site to vote was only 600. This is because there is a widespread phenomenon of proxy voting at the voting site. Most of the people who came to vote were elderly people, who usually had two to three votes in their hands, and votes for their family members together.³⁶

Xiong Yihan (2008) takes a more nuanced look at the voting process. At the voting sites of RCs in L District and H New Village in Shanghai's Z District, the author found that many voters came with multiple election cards to "exchange" for ballots, as few as three or four and as many as twenty. When asked why the rest of the family didn't come, the answers were basically of two kinds: one was that they were busy; the other was that "A family, one person is enough, save trouble."

In addition to on-site voting, the mobile ballot box door-to-door scenario also confirms this fact of household-based voting. Xiong Yihan (2008) observed that almost all households' ballots were filled out by one person, and they were not seen to consult other family members during the filling process; instead, they preferred to ask the building group head or election staff 'who do you think is better?' Then the building group head or the election staff would introduce the candidate according to the general secretary of party organization, and they followed the example, and the voting was done. Interviews with 50 residents of Neighborhood L further confirmed this. Twenty-three of the interviewees said that one person was "solely responsible" for the ballots in their households; three people went to vote as

³⁶ Ge Xiaolin (葛肖麟). 2011. " '成功' 选举背后的居委会行动分析—上海市X区居委会直选为例 (*An Analysis of Residents' Committee's Action Behind the Successful Election of Community—Take Direct Election of Community Committee in X District of Shanghai as an Example*)".

a couple; 15 people delegated their votes to the building group head, party group leader or neighbors; three people (and their households) did not participate in the voting; and six people said they were not sure. Among these 50 households, nearly half (46%) voted as a household unit.³⁷

This shows that household-based voting is a common phenomenon in RC elections due to the lack of interest of residents, and that in the case of mobile ballot boxes, family representatives are more likely to ask the opinion of election workers or building group head than to ask the opinion of family members when one person fills out the ballot for the whole family.

Proxy voting by activists

Proxy voting, which was intended to be for a small number of individual alternatives, has become a common phenomenon in RC election. In addition to proxy voting by family, neighbors, etc., proxy voting by community activists is not uncommon.

Ge Xiaolin (2011) mentions in his thesis that in the election of the RC H in Shanghai, some residents gave up their right to vote when election staff came to their homes with mobile ballot boxes to “call for votes”. According to S, the building group head, the general reaction of the residents was “I can vote for anyone, I don’t know anyone anyway.”³⁸

Xiong Yihan (2008) also mentions in his paper that in H New Village, Z District, Shanghai, an activist told the interviewer quite proudly that she cast a total

³⁷ Xiong Yihan(熊易寒). 2008. “社区选举：在政治冷漠与高投票率之间(The Paradox of Urban Community Elections: between Political Apathy and High Turnout Rates).” *社会(Society)* 2008(3): 180-227.

³⁸ Ge Xiaolin (葛肖麟). 2011. “‘成功’选举背后的居委会行动分析—上海市X区居委会直选为例(*An Analysis of Residents’ Committee’s Action Behind the Successful Election of Community—Take Direct Election of Community Committee in X District of Shanghai as an Example.*)”

of 26 votes. And according to the election rules, a voter can only accept proxies from a maximum of three people. Another building group head, who knew more about the election rules, said that three households in her building group had entrusted her with their votes, and all had issued proxies. When asked, “Have they told you who they intend to vote for?” She replied, “They all said, ‘I’ll vote for whoever you choose.’”³⁹

This shows that it is not uncommon for community activists to be entrusted by residents to vote by proxy instead of residents in RC elections. And in many cases, residents even put their voting rights directly into the hands of activists.

3.3.3 Follow-up: After Voting

After the RC elections, petitions become a way for residents to give feedback on the election results. In “Institutionalization of Urban Community Elections and Alternative Political Participation: An Empirical Study of the Petitions for Residents’ Committee Elections in Shanghai’s District H,” Zhang Letian and Guo Yundan (2009) summarize the results of their survey in July September 2006 of 18 of 121 RCs in nine streets in Shanghai’s District H. In the petition letters, the petitioners expressed their dissatisfaction with the election in two main areas: first, the violation of election rules and personal manipulation of the election by the staff, and second, the arbitrary changes and interpretations of the determined election process by the streets.

For violation of the election rules and personal manipulation in the election practices, a letter written: XDM street leaders, in the preparation phase of this year’s RC election work, knowing the law and violating it, deciding the chairman

³⁹ Xiong Yihan(熊易寒). 2008. “社区选举：在政治冷漠与高投票率之间(The Paradox of Urban Community Elections: between Political Apathy and High Turnout Rates).” 社会(Society) 2008(3):180-227.

before election, and asked ZH party branch secretary must do a good job of residents regardless of the method used in the election The first thing you need to do is to make sure that the election of the guaranteed chairman is a success! Another letter written: Y also repeatedly warned voters “Don’t vote for C!” In the afternoon election, the election committee staff ignored the legal provisions of the election law and directly instructed voters not to put “yes” circles on the names of “CAH” with hand gestures. What they did is never allowed by law or regulation!

In terms of the arbitrary changes and interpretations of established election rules by the street. A letter expressing doubts about the street's understanding of the principle of “localization”: Does a person like ZLQ, whose household registration is not in the local area, meet the requirements of true “localization”? How can she stand for election as an official candidate? Another letter mentions that JL Street had a framework for the age requirements of RC candidates, and the JL RC election working group was actively working accordingly, talking to the incumbent RC leaders who met the above conditions to understand their thoughts and work. By June, however, the street changed the age requirement for RC candidates to the day of the election. The petitioner SHJ expressed doubts “Now the streets say ‘this is how we decided, before it was all ineffective.’ Sometimes they say it is decided by the party work committee, and sometimes they say it is according to the election law, so their speeches are also inconsistent. This election law can start with such an election method, and then it can be changed later?”⁴⁰

After the election, residents expressed their dissatisfaction with the staff of the RC election, the street office leaders, and the EC members through petition. The main dissatisfactions were mainly about the vote counting manipulation etc.

⁴⁰ Zhang Letian(张乐天) Guo Yundan(国云丹)(2009), “城市社区选举制度化与另类政治参与—对上海H区居委会选举信访的实证研究(Institutionalization of Urban Community Elections and Alternative Political Participation: An Empirical Study of the Petitions for Neighborhood Committee Elections in Shanghai’s District H).” 理论探讨(*Theory and Reform*) 2009(2):20-23.

3.4 Strengthening of Party Control

At the beginning of the reform of direct election of the RC, the phenomenon of “two committees’ head on one shoulder(两委一肩挑)” (the secretary of the party branch hold the post of chairman of the RC at the same time) was not uncommon in practice. According to a field study conducted by Professor Lin Shangli(林尚立) in Shanghai, there is a growing tendency for RC elections to have “two committees on one shoulder”. This represents the integration of the decision-making power of the party branch and the RC which is conducive to the formation of consensus in decision-making. The initiative of “building the party branch on the RC(支部建在居委上)” puts the RC under the control of the party organization further more.

Since the 19th National Congress of the CCP, in order to strengthen the leadership of the CCP in urban work, the General Office of the CCP Central Committee issued the “Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Urban Grassroots Party Construction Work(中共中央办公厅关于加强和改进城市基层党建的建设工作的意见)” in May 2019. In the Opinion, it is written “Strengthen the leading role of the party organization as a gatekeeper, standardize the community ‘two committees’ election, and prevent candidates who do not meet the standard conditions from entering the committees. Fully promote the secretary of the community party organization to be elected as the chairman of the RC through the statutory procedures, ‘two committees’ members’ cross-posting(交叉任职).”⁴¹

In July 2021, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council issued the “Opinions of the CCP Central Committee and the State Council on Strengthening

⁴¹ China gov.cn. 2019. General Office of the CCP Central Committee issued the “中共中央办公厅关于加强和改进城市基层党建的建设工作的意见(Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Urban Grassroots Party Construction Work).” (accessed on 17 April 2022).

the Modernization of the Grassroots Governance System and Governance Capacity(中共中央 国务院关于加强基层治理体系和治理能力现代化建设的意见, abbreviated as Opinions hereafter)", proposing to "adhere to the party's overall leadership of grassroots governance, the party's leadership throughout the process of grassroots governance and every aspects; strengthen the construction of grassroots organizations of the party, improve the party's leadership system of grassroots governance; actively improve the village (Community) party organization secretary to serve as the chairman of the villagers' (residents') committee through the statutory procedures, and the village (community) 'two committees' members' cross-posting."

With the emphasis of the Central Committee of the CCP on strengthening grassroots party building, the "one-shoulder" position of the secretary of the community party organization and the head of the RC, as well as the cross-posting of members of the community party organization and members of the RC are being promoted in practice. Take the 2021 RC election in Baoshan(宝山) District, Shanghai as an example, in this election, the proportion of "two committees' head on one shoulder" has increased significantly, and the number of the RC and villager's committee chairman who are also act as party organization secretary is 199, accounting for 49.6%, an increase of 26.1% over the previous term; the proportion of party members in the RC and the villagers' committees has also increased, with a proportion of 58.59%, an increase of 3.31% over the previous term.⁴²

In addition, the strengthening of the CCP's control over the RC's personnel is also reflected in the selection and training of candidates for RC elections. The

⁴² Sohu(搜狐网). 2021. "宝山区新一届居村委会主任即将走马上任)(Baoshan District's new chairman of the residents' and villagers' committee is about to take office)." https://www.sohu.com/a/471512957_120972834 (accessed on 17 April 2022).

“Opinions” also stipulate that strengthening the role of the leadership of the party organization in the villager’s and residents’ committees’ election, fully implementing of the village (community) ‘two committees’ members’ qualification joint examination mechanism, resolutely preventing the political two-faced people, who have been criminally punished, or related to the ‘black and evil forces’, illegal religion and cult organizers, implementers, participants, etc. into the village (community) ‘two committees’.⁴³

In the year before the 2021 Shanghai RCs’ elections, the Organization Department of the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee and the Shanghai Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau planned and deployed the construction of a reserve force of community and village cadres, and focused on building a good “reservoir”. 2,212 outstanding cadres who acted bravely in the urgent and difficult tasks such as fighting against ‘black and evil forces’, epidemic prevention and control entered the team. In the new class, the proportion of retired soldiers, diverted workers of state-owned enterprises, excellent college graduates and excellent community workers reached 44.5%.

The Organization Department of the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee and the Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau, together with the Shanghai Municipal Commission for Discipline Inspection and Supervision organs, the United Front Work, political and legal affairs, petition, public security, justice, planning and natural resources, agriculture and rural areas, health, urban management, courts, procuratorates and other 12 units jointly issued district-level joint examination documents on the qualifications of the members of the “two committees” of the residents’ committee and the villagers’ committee, aiming at a comprehensive

⁴³ China gov.cn. 2021. “中共中央 国务院关于加强基层治理体系和治理能力现代化建设的意见(Opinions of the CCP Central Committee and the State Council on Strengthening the Modernization of the Grassroots Governance System and Governance Capacity)” http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2021-07/11/content_5624201.htm (accessed on 17 April 2022).

review and examination to achieve close control over the composition of the members of the RC.⁴⁴

The intensification of the CCP's control over the RC's personnel through qualification examinations and other means and the infiltration of party members into RCs further weakened the democratic nature of RC elections.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

In summary, through a comprehensive analysis of the papers and materials on the observation of RCs' elections in Shanghai, it is easy to find that the current RCs' elections in Shanghai is actually closer to a "democratic show" on the whole. The election task starts with the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, and is deployed at various levels and finally distributed to the RCs. In this process, the party committees at all levels trained and appointed the secretaries of the community party organizations as the directors of the election committees, and the secretaries of the community party organizations expressed or implied the final candidates and "should" be elected to the community activists, who mainly consisted of building heads", and voting instead of voters, ultimately achieving control over the entire RC election. In this process, the cooperation of community activists and residents' indifference to the election are important supporting factors for the party organization to achieve control over the RC election. The high turnout rate in the RC elections, despite the fact that the residents did not care about the elections and knew little about the candidates, was mainly due to the mobilization of community activists before the elections and the large number of proxy votes.

⁴⁴ Shanghai gov.cn. 2021. "上海6094个居村党组织和6036个居村委会全部完成换届选举(Shanghai's 6,094 residents' and villagers' party organizations and 6,036 residents' and villagers' committees have all completed elections)." <https://www.shanghai.gov.cn/nw4411/20210610/8968b5b3f93147b68926b180aa68e7ca.html>" (accessed on 17 April 2022).

There was very limited real voter participation in the sense of democratic political participation.

Nonetheless, there is no shortage of positive phenomena that reflect democracy in practice in RC elections, which are generally controlled by party-state. For example, some communities in Shanghai have adopted the “mass election” method in the RC election. Although self-nominees still need to pass the examination led by the organization department of the street-office party work committee, compared with the direct election method with candidates, the “mass election” is in a sense, a more democratic way of election, which is also conducive to a more “democratic” atmosphere for residents. In addition, some studies have found that residents in communities with active associations are more enthusiastic and participate more in RC elections. Post-election correspondence also suggests that not all voters are “acquiescent” to the results of such formal elections, and that a minority of residents (the majority of RC election stakeholders) are still calling for “truly democratic elections” that conform to democratic election procedures.

Moreover, with the CCP’s emphasis on strengthening its leadership of cities and strengthening urban grassroots party building since the 19th National Congress, grassroots party organizations have further strengthened their control over RCs through personnel control and infiltration, and the democratic nature of RC democratic elections has regressed in some sense.

Chapter 4. Functions of the Residents' Committee

4.1 Historical Functions

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, RCs have been in existence for more than sixty years. During this period, the functions, status and nature of RCs have undergone various changes, which are closely related to the reform of the urban management system in China.

The RCs at the beginning of the People's Republic of China, such as the "anti-theft team" and the "winter defense team" were largely the product of urban residents' spontaneous organization for self-help and social assistance. Soon after, in order to cooperate with the planned economic system, the RCs were incorporated into the street office-residents' committee system as a supplement to the unit system, while the street offices and RCs assumed limited functions.

After the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP in 1978, reform and opening up became a national policy, and with the collapse of the unit system under the planned economy, street office-residents' committee system, which was previously a supplement to the unit system, began to take over the social management and service functions originally undertaken by the units. With the introduction of the "community service" policy by the MCA, RCs began to take on more and more community service functions.

From June 1984 to July 1985, Shanghai carried out the reorganization and re-election of RCs throughout the city.⁴⁵ Through the reorganization and re-election reform, first, the size of the RCs was unified, and the number of RC in the city increased from 1,884 to 2,831. Second, the organizational structure has been

⁴⁵ Fan Jingsi(范静思) ed. 2000. 上海民政志 (*Shanghai Civil Affairs Journal*) 上海 (Shanghai): 上海社会科学院出版社(Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press).

improved, and democratic election was introduced; third, the functions have been rationalized and some of the work tasks have been alleviated.

In 1986, the Regulations on the Work of Shanghai Urban Residents' Committees (for Trial Implementation), formulated by the Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau and approved by the municipal government, further defined the main functions and tasks of the RC. In the process of developing community services in the 1980s, RCs became the providers and coordinators of many welfare services, including services to the disadvantaged. At the same time, street offices and RCs were allowed to establish street economies, squatter economies, and paid social services, such as grocery stores and barber stores. The RCs' staff saw a significant increase in both fixed subsidies and real income. However, such a policy brings the disadvantage that RCs became more concerned with financial interests than with welfare provision.⁴⁶

After community service, community construction policies were implemented, and after the mid-1990s, community construction began to be actively developed throughout China. Unlike the "unit system" and the "street office-residents' committee system" which are highly administrative and show overall uniformity throughout China, the "community system" focuses more on autonomous and original governance model. There is no experience to follow, nor is there a uniform standard set from the top down. As a result, different types of community governance models have been developed in different places, such as the "Shanghai model(上海模式)", "Shenyang model(沈阳模式)", "Jiangnan model(江汉模式)", "Tongling model(铜陵模式)" etc. The division of such models is largely based on the relationship between the state and society and the weight of the state and society in community governance, which is essentially a reform to solve the

⁴⁶ Qingwen Xu and John F. Jones. 2004. "Community Welfare Services in Urban China: A Public-Private Experiment", *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 9(2):47-62.

problem of insufficient funding and excessive administerization faced by RCs and to rationalize the relationship between the government and RCs.⁴⁷

It is generally believed that the social management model in China in practice is divided into three types: administrative, autonomous and mixed. The Shanghai model has shown a strong administrative orientation since the beginning of the reform of the social management system of “two levels of government and three levels of management (district government and street offices)⁴⁸”, with the party and government system decentralized to the street offices and the management function of the RCs strengthened. The administrative orientation is characterized by the recentralization of power to the government and the absorption of grassroots society into the government management system through the allocation of sufficient economic resources⁴⁹, and is supported by sufficient local government financial resources to cover the huge administrative expenses.⁵⁰ The Shenyang model was initially positioned as a bottom-up self-governance model due to the formation of self-governance organizations such as member representative assemblies within the community, and was essentially a “low-cost” innovation to solve the government’s financial dilemma. The Jiangnan model is, to some extent,

⁴⁷ Gu Rong(顾荣). 2020. 上海市中心城区社区治理体系构建探索(*Exploring the Construction of Community Governance System in the Central City of Shanghai*)上海(Shanghai): 复旦大学出版社(Fudan University Press).

⁴⁸ The two levels of government refer to the municipal government and the district government, and the three levels of management refer to the street office as the district government’s dispatch agency to assume the management function.

⁴⁹ Gui Yong(桂永) and Cui Zhiyu(崔之余). 2000. “行政化进程中的城市居委会体制变迁—对上海市的个案研究(The Change of Residential Committee in the Process of Community Construction: A Case Study of Shanghai City).” 华中理工大学学报(社会科学版) (*Journal of Huazhong University of Science and Technology (Edition of Social Science)*)14(3):2-4.

⁵⁰ Chen Weidong(陈伟东) and Li Xueping(李雪萍). 2004. “社区民主治理的理论假设与案例分析(Theoretical Assumptions and Case Studies of Community Democratic Governance), edited by Zhu Xinmin(朱新民), 中国大陆基层民主研究(*Research on Grassroots Democracy in Mainland China*) Taipei(台北): Vision Foundation(远景基金会) 2004. 95-96.

a copy and adaptation of the Shenyang model, with the addition of the transformation of government functions, and is therefore considered a representative of the hybrid model. Peng Bo argues that the Shanghai model of community building is characterized by strong state involvement, with the ruling party and the government working in tandem to organize and promote the functions of grassroots society, and taking a dominant and powerful position in social development.⁵¹

However, it is important to note that this division is based on the ideal form of community development, and in fact fully autonomous or fully administrative community governance models are almost non-existent in China today. Both the “Shanghai model”, which is considered administrative, and the “Shenyang model”, which is considered autonomous, are essentially hybrid community governance models.

In the 1990s, along with the implementation of the community construction policy, Shanghai began to implement the reform of the urban grassroots management system. In 1996, Shanghai held the “Urban Area Work Conference” and issued the “Policy Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of Streets and Residents’ Committee and Community Management” to formally set up the “two levels of government and three levels of management” system. The system of “two levels of government and three levels of management”, which was first implemented in Shanghai, was called the “Shanghai Model”. The essence of the system is to promote the third level of management, the street offices to take over the administrative functions of the relevant government departments at the city and district levels through the reform of the urban management system, while

⁵¹ Gu Rong(顾荣). 2020. 上海市中心城区社区治理体系构建探索(*Exploring the Construction of Community Governance System in the Central City of Shanghai*)上海(Shanghai): 复旦大学出版社(Fudan University Press).

emphasizing the administrative authority of the government at the street level.⁵² In this process, the street offices, as the lowest level of administration, have taken over a large number of administrative functions delegated by higher-level government agencies. However, due to the limited human and material resources of the street offices, the administrative work can only be passed to the RCs below through the mechanisms of personnel selection, salary evaluation, and performance assessment, and the RCs thus take on a large number of administrative tasks in addition to their self-governing functions as grassroots mass self-government organizations.

At the beginning of the 21st century, with the further development of community construction, Shanghai has adjusted the functions and positioning of the RCs, and in April 2000, the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee and Municipal Government held the Shanghai Community Work Conference, based on the lessons learned from the past 10 years of community construction work in Shanghai. On the one hand, the urban social management system was extended from “two levels of government and three levels of management” to “two levels of government, three levels of management and four levels of network (city, district, street office and the RC)”, and RCs were incorporated into the “four levels of network” system. On the other hand, “de-administration” has also become an important orientation of Shanghai’s community construction. Although Shanghai has been exploring the possibility of stimulating the self-governance of RCs through democratic election, the separation of councils and rows(议行分设), the three-meeting system(三会制度), and autonomous homes(自治家园), the problem of administerization of RCs has not been fundamentally solved due to the limited

⁵² Liu, Chunrong(刘春荣) and Tang Yanwen(汤艳文). 2013. “告别科层? 基层群众自治的组织变迁及其困境(A Farewell to the Section Level? The organizational change of grassroots mass autonomy and its dilemma).” 当代中国政治研究报告(*Research Report on Contemporary Chinese Politics*) 2013(10):52-67.

breadth and depth of realistic operation in the process of implementation.

In 2013, the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CCP Central Committee decided to deepen reform and opening up comprehensively, which was a critical point when the ruling philosophy of the CCP shifted from “management” to “governance”. The conference put forward the new goal of “innovating the system of social governance, improving the level of social governance, and promoting the transformation of social management into social governance”. The Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the CCP put forward five major development concepts, and for the first time applied the concept of shared development to social governance, proposing to “strengthen and innovate social governance, promote the refinement of social governance, and build a social governance pattern for all to build and share.” The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed “to build a social governance pattern of common construction and shared governance, strengthen the construction of social governance system, and improve the social governance system led by the party committee, responsible by the government, coordinated by the society, with public participation and guaranteed by the rule of law.”

In response to the call of the central government, the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee officially released the “1+6” document⁵³ in early 2015, based on the No. 1 topic of 2014, “Innovating Social Governance and Strengthening

⁵³ The “1+6” documents refer to the “Opinions of the Shanghai Municipal People’s Government of the Communist Party of China on Further Innovation in Social Governance and Strengthening Grassroots Construction” issued by the Shanghai Municipal Committee, a thematic document (“1”) and the “Implementation Opinions on Deepening Street System Reform”, “Implementation Opinions on Deepening and Expanding Grid-based Management to Enhance the Effectiveness of Comprehensive Urban Management”, “Implementation Opinions on Implementation Opinions on Improving the Governance System of Neighborhoods to Strengthen Grassroots Construction”, “Implementation Opinions on Improving the Governance System of Villages to Strengthen Grassroots Construction”, “Implementation Opinions on Organizing and Guiding Social Forces to Participate in Community Governance” and “Measures for the Management of Community Workers in Shanghai (for Trial Implementation)”.

Grassroots Construction”, to make a comprehensive plan on how to innovate social governance and strengthen grassroots construction in Shanghai. With this, Shanghai has seen new changes in grassroots community governance. Compared to the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CCP Central Committee, the 19th National Congress report added “shared governance” to the plan to create an interactive social governance system with the leadership of the Communist Party of China as the core and the collaboration of all parties and participation of all people. In the context of emphasizing shared governance in streets and communities with multiple entities (e.g., street party work committees and street offices, RCs and community party organizations, social organizations, and units within the district), RCs have been further integrated into the system of shared governance in Shanghai.

4.2 Current Functions

4.2.1 Self-governing Functions

The legal status of RCs is self-governance, self-education, self-service, and self-monitoring organizations of the masses. However, both at the beginning of the 21st century and today, more than two decades later, state power has never been withdrawn from the grassroots community, but has instead strengthened the already declining administrative system at the grassroots level, and party organizations have further penetrated the urban grassroots. Under the extension of state public power at the grassroots level, the scope of control power has been superficially limited, but the effectiveness and capacity of the state system has gradually increased. From the perspective of the Chinese Communist regime, the party-state system is gradually being rebuilt at the grassroots level; from the perspective of grassroots society, social space is being further squeezed.

I. Democratic consultation

The White Paper on Democracy in China mentions that democratic consultation in grassroots self-governance organizations is “carried out by villagers (residents) through various forms of consultation and deliberation.” The “three-meeting system” is a representative system in Shanghai to promote the development of community self-governance centered on RCs. It was first introduced in 2000 in Luwan(卢湾) District, Shanghai, the “three-meeting system” refers to a hearing, a coordination meeting and a review board. In 2006, the Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau piloted the “Trial Measures for the System of Hearing, Coordinating and Reviewing Councils in Shanghai’s Neighborhoods” to encourage RCs to use the “three-meeting system” to actively participate in community public affairs that are of vital interest to residents. The core of the “three meeting system” is to encourage residents to actively participate in democratic consultation and to listen to their opinions.

Hearing is the relevant government departments or RCs for the implementation of projects in the community or major matters involving the vital interests of the residents, before making decisions, the RC organized by some community members representatives to hold meetings, extensive discussion, and put forward specific views of the meeting system. Huangpu District, Shanghai’s Wuliqiao(五里桥) Street is the birthplace of the “three meetings”, before the street area of Shaoxing Road, a six-story residential building in urgent need of repair, Huangpu District Public Housing Assets Company decided to fund 180,000 yuan to entrust the property company to carry out repairs. After the residents' have been repair requirements, in order to optimize the cost allocation, the district held a hearing. At the meeting, residents and construction-related units reached agreement through consultation, and the construction of the project went smoothly after the

meeting, and residents expressed their satisfaction.⁵⁴

The council is a meeting system in which the RC organizes representatives of community members to assess and comment on the agencies under review, etc. It aims to establish a social supervision mechanism by introducing social organizations to participate and permitting residents to supervise the assessment of the work of community housing, industry and commerce, sanitation, and other grassroots offices. The council adopts a combination of annual comprehensive review and occasional thematic review, and uses specific forms such as centralized discussion, field survey, questionnaire survey and online review.

The three-meeting system aims to deal with the internal affairs of this community through consultation and promote residents' active participation in community self-governance affairs. Wuliqiao Street held 39 hearings, 45 coordination meetings, and 15 review meetings in 2010, resolving or alleviating 21 conflicts. However, in reality, the practice of the three-meeting system varies among Shanghai's RCs due to differences in resident cohesion and RC's leadership.

II. Democratic decision-making

The White Paper on Democracy in China mentions that democratic decision-making in grassroots self-governing organizations is decided by villagers (residents) through villagers' (residents') meetings or villagers' (residents') representative meetings on community public affairs and public welfare.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Shanghai has implemented the "separation of the deliberative and executive levels, and the separation of selection and recruitment" of RCs and the "social work stations" to promote the realization of the autonomous function of RCs. The "separation of the council and the

⁵⁴ Li Jun(李骏), Zhang Youting(张友庭) et al. 2018. 超大城市的社区治理：上海探索与实践(*Community Governance in Mega-cities: Explorations and Practices in Shanghai*). 上海(Shanghai): 上海人民出版社(Shanghai People's Publishing House): 132-147.

executive” refers to the separation of the council and the executive levels of the community. The deliberative level is composed of the elected members of the RC, while the executive level is recruited by the street. Through the establishment of community work stations (social work stations), the administrative affairs that were the direct responsibility of the RC are transferred to social workers who are purchased by the street offices, so that the community work stations can take over the administrative services and management that are divested from the RC, freeing the RC from the heavy administrative burden and separating it from the administrative affairs, and restoring its autonomous status in terms of organization and function. In practice, social work stations have gradually taken up more administrative and quasi-administrative affairs, and the “administrative distance” between RCs and street offices has gradually increased. In the face of this change, RCs have taken the initiative to adopt a series of strategies to exclude social work stations and try to “steal work” from them.

Since 2006, as a response to the marginalization of RCs, many street social work stations and RCs have actually been combined into one, with “two pieces of paper and one set of people (两块牌子, 一套人马)”. Thus, it can be seen that the “separation of the discussion and execution”, which aimed to promote the development of democratic decision-making in RCs, was actually resisted by the RCs themselves and declared a failure.

The Regulations on the Work of Shanghai Residents’ Committee, which came into effect in 2017, stipulate that the residents’ meeting shall be attended by all residents over eighteen years of age or by representatives of each household, or by two to three representatives elected by each residents’ group the resident’ meeting shall be held at least once a year. The residents’ meeting shall be convened and presided over by the residents’ committee in accordance with the law to discuss the formulation of the residents’ self-governance constitution and the residents’

convention, to consider the annual work plan and report of the RC, to deliberate on the work of the RC and its members, and other important matters concerning the interests of all residents. The residents' meeting shall have the right to remove and re-elect members of the RC and revoke or change inappropriate decisions of the RC in accordance with the law; the RC, its members and residents shall comply with the resolutions made by the residents' meeting.

According to the regulations, the residents' meeting should be the highest decision-making body in the community, while the RC is the executive body for its decision-making. However, in practice, since the residents' meeting is held only once a year or so, its decision-making power is actually in name only, and the RC tends to ignore the existence of the residents' meeting in reality or even in practice.⁵⁵

In recent years, RCs and community party organizations have become the de facto decision-making bodies. Taking Dongming Road Street in Pudong New Area of Shanghai as an example, in 2021, the party work Committee of Dongming Road Street issued the Measures for Collective Decision-Making on Important Matters of Dongming Road Street Resident Area Party Organization and Resident Committee (for Trial Implementation), which stipulates that “the meeting of the Resident Area Party Organization Committee and Residents' Committee ‘two committees’ is the Resident Area Party organizations, residents' committees of important matters collective decision-making deliberative body.” The important matters of the residential area include: the party organization, the RC election related programs, candidates and other matters; the construction of the residential area office space, public activity places, adjustment plans, etc.; the residential area affects the social security and stability of major issues and major emergencies, public events and the

⁵⁵ Wang Jun(王军). 2006. “居民会议的权利需得到应有的尊重? (The Power of Residents' meetings Needs to be Duly Respected).” 中国社会报(*China Social News*) September 21, 2006.

response and disposal of important matters; matters that need to be submitted to the residential area to hold hearings, coordination meetings, councils; the development of residents' conventions and other important matters that need to be submitted to the residents' meeting for adoption.⁵⁶

Thus, in practice, it is not the residents' meeting but the RC and the neighborhood party organization that make decisions on important matters in the neighborhood.

III. Democratic management

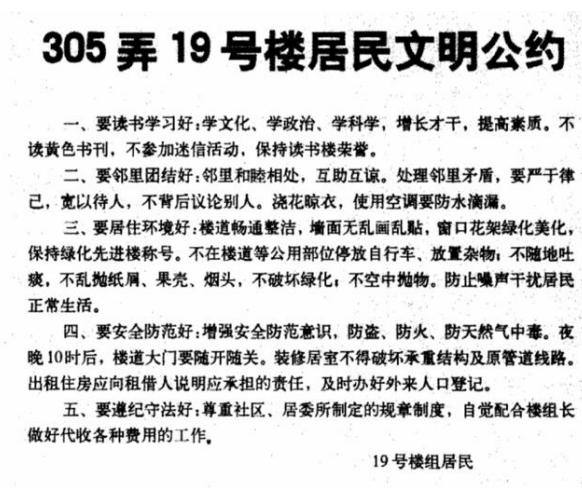
In the White Paper on Democracy in China, the democratic management of grassroots self-governance organizations is mentioned as “democratic management, with villagers (residents) discussing and deciding on villagers (residents) self-governance statutes, village rules and regulations, and residents' covenants, as well as conducting self-management.”

Both the residents' self-governing regulations(居民自治章程) and the residents' convention(居民公约) are used to regulate the residents' behavior, and their binding force is stronger than the general social norms, but weaker than the law. The Shanghai Regulations on the Work of Residents' Committees stipulate that “the articles of a residents' self-governing regulations shall regulate the basic self-governance matters such as the organization of residents' committees, the system of residents' self-governance and the code of conduct and supervision and evaluation. The residents' convention regulates the specific matters of self-management, self-education, self-services and self-monitoring in this residential

⁵⁶ Shanghai Pudong New Area gov.cn. 2021. “关于印发《东明路街道居民区党组织、居民委员会重要事项集体决策办法(试行)》的通知(Notice on the Issuance of Dongming Road Street Resident Area Party Organizations, Residents' Committee Collective Decision-Making on Important Matters (for Trial Implementation)).” https://www.pudong.gov.cn/14541.gkml_qtl/20220106/421990.html (accessed on 20 April 2022).

area.” Residents’ conventions are generally used to regulate residents’ behavior, such as littering, pet ownership, parking and other matters, and are generally brief in content. In the case of Weifang Bacun(潍坊八村) Street in Pudong New Area, Shanghai, for example, when developing the residents’ convention, the RC decided to adopt different paradigms to start the development of the residents’ convention for a building group according to the different types of building groups. In one case, the residents’ convention of a building group was initially drafted by a resident for consultation, and after a meeting and discussion among the party members, resident representatives and activists in the building, it was sent to every household for comments. Feedback from residents of the RC was constantly revised, resulting in a convention that satisfied residents.

Figure 9. Weifang Bacun street one building group residents’ convention



Source: Xie Jian(谢坚). 2006. “楼组居民公约居民自己定(Building Group Residents’ Convention Set by Residents Themselves.) 社区(Community) 2006 (12) on: 14.

Since the 19th National Congress of the CCP, Xi Jinping, President of China and General Secretary of the CCP Central Committee, has given instructions on a number of occasions on playing the role of village rules and conventions, educating and guiding the poor masses to change stereotypical habits. In February 2018,

MCA issued the “Guidance on the Work of Village Rules and Residents’ Conventions by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Central Organization Department, Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, Central Civilization Office, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, All-China Women’s Federation” (hereinafter referred to as the “Guidance”), which made deployments to standardize and strengthen the work of village rules and residents’ conventions. It is the first national guiding document on the work of village rules and residents’ conventions jointly issued in the name of the relevant departments of the central and state organs.⁵⁷

The Guidance put forward the work target that “By 2020, all villages and communities across the country generally formulate or revise the formation of practical and effective village rules and regulations, residents’ conventions, and promote the improvement of modern grassroots social governance mechanisms under the leadership of the party organization combining autonomy, the rule of law and moral governance. The Guidance on the development of village rules and regulations and residents’ covenants detailed provisions, it is clear that generally should go through the five steps of collecting public opinion, draft, submit for review, consideration and voting, record publication. And stressed that “fully develop democracy, in the development of procedures to adhere to the legal form of villagers’ (residents’) meeting, the revision of village rules and regulations, residents’ conventions into the framework of urban and rural community consultation system, effective linkage and organic promotion, so that consultation becomes an important part of the revision, to guide the villagers (residents) to participate widely, reach consensus, promote grassroots democracy, deepen mass

⁵⁷ People.com(人民网). 2018. “7部门联合出台意见规范推进‘村规民约’‘居民公约’ (7 Departments Jointly Issue Opinions to Regulate the Promotion of ‘Village Rules and Regulations’ ‘Residents’ Conventions’).” <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2018/1227/c1001-30492011.html> (accessed 12 April 2022).

self-governing.”

In recent years, in the practice of grassroots communities in Shanghai, the residents’ code has become an option for many communities in addition to the residents’ convention. Why is it necessary to have a “residents’ code” in addition to the residents’ convention? The reason is that many residents’ conventions are mostly civilized and simple, and there are no specific penalties for violating the conventions, while the residents’ code is more community-oriented, focusing mainly on the high incidence of conflicts, with detailed agreements and strict expressions, and is more legal in nature. In the case of the Yaojiang(耀江) Neighborhood in Shanghai’s Huangpu District, the Residents’ Code, led by the Association of Property Committee Directors and assisted by a team of professional lawyers, was finally drafted after 13 months and 9 revisions, with a total of 38 articles in 3 chapters, and was officially published in 10 neighborhoods under the jurisdiction of the Yaojiang Community after a democratic process of voting by all residents. The Code was officially released after a democratic process of voting by all residents in the 10 neighborhoods under the jurisdiction of the Yaojiang Community.⁵⁸ Previously, according to the residents’ convention, the community would encounter resistance and noise from the residents when managing the residents who parked indiscriminately. However, according to the residents’ code, the committee can publicize the vehicle information and owner’s information on the electronic screen or other means for the residents who do not correct the situation. For the residents who parked their motor vehicles or non-motorized vehicles illegally more than twice, the committee can entrust the property to lock the vehicles, and the costs incurred will be borne by the residents.

⁵⁸ Democracy and Law Times(民主与法制时报). 2021. “沪上新型居民公约《住户守则》助力现代社区治理(Shanghai’s New Residents’ Convention, the Residents’ Code, Helps Modern Community Governance).” http://e.mzyfz.org.cn/paper/1645/paper_43290_9324.html (accessed on 12 April 2022).

The costs incurred will be borne by the responsible tenants. In the area of “pet keeping”, in addition to stipulating that the residents should bring their pets out on a leash and clean up pet excrement, the residents’ code also stipulates that if a pet causes injury to another person, the breeder must promptly take the victim to a hospital for treatment and advance the relevant costs.⁵⁹

Compared with the residents’ convention, the content of the residents’ self-governance regulation is more systematic and comprehensive. The articles of regulation are the basic norms for the implementation of residents’ self-government, which are formulated by the residents’ meeting in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations and the local reality. As a law-like document, the charter of residents’ self-governance is actually equivalent to a “community constitution”, covering the community management framework, organizational structure (including the distribution of powers and responsibilities among community entities), the nature, powers, duties, and responsibilities of each entity in the community, and the basic rules and procedures for managing community affairs, especially public expenditure and finance. In practice, however, most communities do not have a clear self-governance regulation compared to a residents’ convention. Since community governance is formulated and implemented by the state from top to bottom, from community services to community construction and community governance, it is constantly developing and changing, and under such circumstances, the rights and responsibilities of various subjects in the community are not clear, so it is difficult to form a “community constitution” with strong legal constraints. In fact, this reflects the low level of institutionalization in the community and the squeezed space for community autonomy, which is based on

⁵⁹ Shangguan News(上观新闻). 2017. “上海这个居民区推出的《住户守则》，能成为居民公约‘样板房’吗？(Can this Shanghai Neighborhood’s Introduction of a Residents’ Code Become a Residents’ Convention ‘Model House’?)” <https://www.shobserver.com/wx/detail.do?id=51159> (accessed on 12 April 2022).

the state's community policy.

IV. Democratic supervision

The White Paper on Democracy in China mentions that the democratic supervision of grassroots self-governance organizations is “being elected by villagers (residents) to form village (residence) affairs supervision committees to oversee the implementation of village (community) affairs and the open system of village (residence) affairs.”

Jiading(嘉定) District of Shanghai announced the Measures for the Implementation of Openness of Community Affairs in Jiading District in 2014 (hereinafter Measures). According to the Measures, openness of residents' affairs refers to a system of residents' self-governance and democratic supervision in which the community RC discloses to the residents the matters involving the residents' interests in its work and the relevant affairs in community construction and community management, as well as assists the government in disclosing government affairs. The contents to be disclosed in a timely manner include: the resolutions made at residents' meetings on important community affairs and their implementation, community charitable fundraising, and other contents requested by more than one tenth of the residents or one third of the residents' representatives. The Measures also provides for four forms of openness in community affairs: openness on the community affairs board, openness on the walls of the community committee office, openness in the form of issuing materials to households and using the Internet, and openness at residents' meetings.⁶⁰

In addition, the intelligent community governance platform “Community

⁶⁰ Baidu Encyclopedia(百度百科). 2014. “嘉定区居务公开实施办法(Jiading District resident affairs open implementation measures).” <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%98%89%E5%AE%9A%E5%8C%BA%E5%B1%85%E5%8A%A1%E5%85%AC%E5%BC%80%E5%AE%9E%E6%96%BD%E5%8A%9E%E6%B3%95/22094675> (Accessed on 21 April 2022).

Cloud” platform will be launched in December 2019 on a pilot basis. First in Pudong, Huangpu, Xuhui(徐汇), Changning(长宁), Jing’an(静安), Putuo(普陀), Baoshan(宝山), Songjiang(松江), Chongming(崇明) 9 districts in Shanghai more than 20 streets and towns pilot⁶¹, as of 2021, Community Cloud covers the Shanghai community residents 24,387,000.⁶²

The core of the Community Cloud architecture is “1+2+X”. The “1” is a unified “community governance theme database” in the city, connected to the big data center, connected to each district, street, town and village, and connected to each government function department horizontally, which can provide big data support for community refinement. The “2” refers to two application platforms, namely the “community governance” platform for residents and village cadres and the “community interaction” platform for residents. The “X” stands for openness. The “community interaction” platform for residents provides a new way for democratic self-governance. Among them, residents can access the “community affairs”, “community announcements”, “online services”, “self-governance deliberations”, and “online services” through the Community Cloud.⁶³ Through “self-governance deliberations” and “neighborhood interaction”, residents can participate in democratic consultation, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic supervision.

⁶¹ People’s Daily(人民网). 2020. “上海 ‘社区云’ 平台年内实现居村全覆盖(Shanghai’s ‘Community Cloud’ Platform to Achieve Full Coverage of Residences and Villages within the Year).” <http://sh.people.com.cn/n2/2020/0615/c134768-34088933.html> (accessed on 21 April 2022).

⁶² Shanghai gov.cn. 2022. “关于上海市2021年国民经济和社会发展计划执行情况与2022年国民经济和社会发展计划草案的报告(Report on the Implementation of Shanghai’s National Economic and Social Development Plan for 2021 and the Draft National Economic and Social Development Plan for 2022).” <https://www.shanghai.gov.cn/nw12337/20220314/f84847e2deeb464e878ff2bb3c188141.html> (accessed on 21 April 2022).

⁶³ Guangming.com(光明网). 2020. “上了 ‘社区云’ 办事更方便 上海年内实现社区事务 ‘一网统管’ (It’s more convenient to do things on the ‘community cloud’ Shanghai realizes community affairs ‘one network unified management; within a year).” <https://m.gmw.cn/baijia/2020-06/15/1301290920.html> (accessed on 21 April 2022).

V. Concluding remarks

From a general point of view, the current community self-governance system is not standardized and residents' participation is low, which is mainly reflected in the following aspects: (1) Some self-governance meetings are held less frequently. Among the three meetings in the neighborhood, 60% of the coordination meetings are held frequently, while the hearing and review meetings are held less frequently. (2) The level of institutionalization of self-government meetings is low. For example, the councils and the “three meetings” of residential areas are seldom held regularly, and the proportion of residents/village councils held regularly is 18.2%, while the proportion of those held on demand is 81.8%. The degree of participation is low. As the table shows, 37.9% of the residents regularly participated in the residents' representative meetings, while the proportion of those who regularly participated in the councils and the “three meetings” was around 20%, and more than half of the residents said they had never participated in such meetings.

Table 3. Residents' participation in the five types of meetings

	单位: %			
	经常参加	偶尔参加	知道, 但没参加过	从没听说过
居民代表会议	37.9	31.3	28.9	1.9
议事会	20	27.9	43.1	8.9
听证会	17.8	27.5	43.2	11.4
协调会	16.1	32.4	43.1	8.3
评议会	20.8	28.9	41.3	9.0

Source: Jinqiao(金桥). 2018. “上海基层社区自治规范化和居民参与社区治理机制创新 (The Standardization of Grass-roots Community Autonomy in Shanghai and the Mechanism Innovation of Residents' Participation in Community Governance Chinese Full Text.)” *科学发展(Scientific Development)* August 2018 (117): 97-107.

As a grassroots mass self-governance organization, the function of self-governance is the essential function of the RC. In terms of the current

implementation status, the democratic decision-making and democratic management functions are still at a low level of development, with the decision-making power of residents' meetings hanging in the air and the RC becoming the de facto main body of decision-making in the neighborhood party organization. In contrast to democratic decision-making and democratic management, the democratic consultation function of RCs has been developed in Shanghai in recent years through institutional innovations such as the three-meeting system. In addition, among all the self-governance functions, the democratic supervision function has been developed, and the ways of democratic supervision by residents have been expanded through the development and application of traditional councils and the innovative platform Community Cloud.

The "Opinions of the CCP Central Committee and the State Council on Strengthening the Modernization of the Governance System and Governance Capability at the Basic Level" issued in 2021 mentions that "self-management, self-service, self-education and self-supervision by the masses in public affairs and public welfare undertakings at the basic level are widely implemented, and the channels for the masses to reflect their opinions and suggestions are broadened. Focus on practical matters of people's livelihood and important matters of concern to the masses, and regularly carry out democratic consultation. Improve the party affairs, village (residence) affairs, financial open system, timely disclosure of power matters, and accept the supervision of the masses. Strengthen the communication and collaboration between grassroots discipline inspection and supervision organizations and village (residence) affairs supervisory committees, effective linkage, forming a supervisory synergy." As can be seen, the reform of state power over residents' self-governing focuses on democratic consultation and democratic supervision, with limited development of democratic elections, democratic decision-making and democratic management, which actually reflects

that the autonomous function of the RC does not lie in the real realization of democracy at the level of grassroots elections and decision-making, but essentially serves to absorb potential conflicts within the community. Through the limited implementation of self-governance, RCs are used to meet or respond to residents' needs for community environment and construction, thus buffering grassroots dissatisfaction with administrative effectiveness and reinforcing the legitimacy of government governance. Thus, the transformation of community governance essentially reflects the state's need to pursue political stability at grassroots level.⁶⁴

4.2.2 Political Functions

I. History

For the RCs established in Hangzhou in 1950, one of the first tasks was to register the population. The RCs surveyed 100 to 2,000 households and classified them as “good” (revolutionary activists, workers, etc.) and “bad” (criminals, KMT members, religious people, etc.). Households classified as “bad” are under special control and are monitored by the RC and the public security authorities.⁶⁵ The RCs in Shanghai were similar to this. On May 27, 1949, the CCP seized all of Shanghai, and the next day the Shanghai Municipal People's Government was established, with Chen Yi(陈毅) as the director of the Shanghai Military Control Committee (MCC). The Shanghai MCC guided the districts to take over the offices of the commissioners, and organized the residents of the lanes to set up organizations such as the Water Management Committee, the Anti-Bombing People's Protection

⁶⁴ Geng Shu(耿曙) and Chen Yiling(陈奕伶). 2007. “中国大陆的社区治理与转型前景：发展促转或政权维稳？ (Community Governance and the Prospects for Transformation in Mainland China: Development for Transformation or Regime for Stability?)” 远景基金会季刊(*Vision Foundation Quarterly*) 8(1): 87-122.

⁶⁵ James Z. Gao. 2004. *The Communist Takeover of Hangzhou: The Transformation of City and Cadre, 1949-1954*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press: 138-140.

Team, the Welfare Association of the lanes, and the People's Winter Defense (anti-special, anti-bandit, anti-aircraft, and fire prevention) Service Team. The main duties of them were to organize and mobilize the masses, conduct patriotic education, participate in the suppression of counter-revolution, assist in the maintenance of social security, and provide welfare services to the residents.⁶⁶

Thus, from the very beginning, RCs were established under the guidance of the CCP and had close ties with local public security organs, street offices, and local CCP party organizations.⁶⁷ Although the Organic Law stipulates that the RC is grassroots mass self-governance organization, in practice, from the very beginning, they have assumed the political functions of “stability maintenance” and party building to help the CCP consolidate power. The Organic Law states that residents' committees shall have committees for people's mediation, public security, public health, etc., as needed. The committees established under the RC also reflect the functions they have assumed.

In the Opinions on Strengthening and Improving the Construction of Urban Community Resident Committees issued by the General Office of the CCP Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council in October 2020, it is mentioned that “urban community residents' committees play an irreplaceable and important role in serving the masses of residents, improving urban management, closely relating to the party and the cadres, and maintaining social stability. At present, China is in the comprehensive construction of a well-off society, speed up the socialist modernization of a new historical starting point, the urban grassroots is undergoing new profound changes, community residents' committees to undertake the task of social management more heavy, the function of maintaining social

⁶⁶ Zheng Zhanggen(郑张根). 2013. “从上海实践分析居民自治的环境和路径(he Environment and Path: The Analysis on the Residents Autonomy Based on Shanghai Practice).” *科学发展(Scientific Development)* 2013(5): 95-103.

⁶⁷ James Z. Gao. 2004. *The Communist Takeover of Hangzhou: The Transformation of City and Cadre, 1949-1954*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press: 138-140.

stability more prominent”⁶⁸

The Organic Law states that “the residents’ committees shall have committees for people’s mediation, public security, public health, etc., as needed.” In the early years of the People’s Republic of China, RCs were composed of community activists who monitored the community and reported suspicious activity to police stations.⁶⁹ Jerome Cohen (1968), a U.S. expert on China’s criminal justice system, noted in his study that residents’ security committees were able to achieve a level of surveillance of each household that would not have been possible through the public security authorities alone.⁷⁰ Nicholas Eftimiades (1995), an expert on Chinese intelligence agencies, states that residents’ committees are one of the basic units of domestic intelligence in China.⁷¹ In their memoirs, participants in the 1989 Tiananmen democratization demonstrations also mentioned that after the PLA suppressed the Tiananmen democratization movement, RCs in each city went door-to-door with the police to check on each household.⁷²

II. Ordinary times

The people’s mediation committee under the RC assumes the task of “maintaining stability” in urban grassroots communities in normal times. From the perspective of state power, mediation helps maintain social stability and is an effective way for the state to achieve control over the community. The people’s mediation committee of the RC works under the guidance of the grassroots

⁶⁸ Government of the People’s Republic of China. 2010. “关于加强和改进城市社区居民委员会建设的意见(Opinions on Strengthening and Improving the Construction of Urban Community Resident Committees).” http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2010-11/09/content_1741643.htm (accessed on 27 April 2022).

⁶⁹ Maurice Meisner. 1986. *Mao’s China and After: A History of the Peoples’ Republic*. New York: Free Press: 90.

⁷⁰ Jerome Cohen. 1968. *The Criminal Process in the People’s Republic of China, 1949-1963: An Introduction*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press: 19-20.

⁷¹ Nicholas Eftimiades. 1995. *Chinese Intelligence Operations*. Tokyo: Toppan Press: 44.

⁷² Zhang Boli. 2002. *The Long Journey from Tiananmen to Freedom*. New York: Washington Square Press: 89.

government and courts. According to the principle of “general conflicts and disputes do not leave the residents’ (villagers’) committee, major conflicts and disputes do not leave the street (town), and conflicts and disputes are not handed over(一般矛盾纠纷不出居(村), 重大矛盾纠纷不出街道(镇), 矛盾纠纷不上交)”, civil disputes should be resolved at the community or street level as much as possible. Once a person involved in a dispute calls an emergency number (e.g. 110), it will be sent to the municipal public security authorities, which are obliged to automatically notify the district public security authorities, street offices and RCs, regardless of the severity of the problem, and in some cases the people’s mediation committee will immediately go to the scene of the dispute for mediation.⁷³ The mediator of the people’s mediation committee of a RC in Baoshan District, Shanghai, described his work as “never regardless of work time, regardless of holidays and weekends, as long as there is a situation, immediately go to deal with it; never stop mediation.” He put his cell phone number in the whole district 188 building entrance, ready to answer. “24 hours on at any time to answer.”⁷⁴

III. “Sensitive” period

At special times, such as when important international and domestic conferences are held, or when international events such as the Olympic Games, Asian Games and World Expo are held, “maintaining stability” becomes an important task of the RC under the deployment of the street office. Every March, when the National People’s Congress and the National Political Consultative Conference are held in Beijing, security patrols, mainly composed of retirees, are

⁷³ Peng Bo. 2005. “State Control and Governance of Residential Communities — The Case to be Examined: Community Mediation in Shanghai.” *China Perspectives* 57.

⁷⁴ NetEase. 2021. “榜样，就在我们身边(Role Models, All around Us).” <https://www.163.com/dy/article/G6G6KC6805341282.html> (accessed on 27 April 2022).

organized by the RC to patrol the community and report any “suspicious” vehicles or people entering or leaving the community to ensure community security and stability.⁷⁵⁷⁶ During the Third China International Import Expo held in Shanghai in November 2020, in order to achieve stability during the Expo, Shanghai Jiangqiao(江桥) Town Jincheng(金城) RC staff not only on duty 24 hours a day but also organized community peace volunteers to carry out community security patrols, leading community peace volunteers to patrol the community, during the patrol to promote peace knowledge, safe electricity knowledge and garbage classification and other key work.⁷⁷

IV. Grid management

Since the 21st century, China has started to strengthen social security and grassroots management in order to “maintain stability” and has begun to implement grid management in urban areas. The so-called “grid management” refers to the division of urban space into grids based on geographical or administrative boundaries, with each grid having a number of grid managers to closely manage the activities of residents.⁷⁸⁷⁹ The goal of grid-based management is to realize “general conflicts and disputes do not leave the residents’ (villagers’) committee,

⁷⁵ New York Times. 2013. “Beijing’s Retirees Keep Eye Out for Trouble During Party Congress”, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/16/world/asia/neighborhood-committees-keep-watch-over-beijing-during-peoples-congress.html>. (accessed on 27 April 2022).

⁷⁶ Sohu.com. 2020. “两会进行时，社区多了一道美丽风景(The Two Sessions are Underway, the Community Has an Additional Beautiful Landscape).” https://www.sohu.com/a/396906515_120209831 (accessed on 27 April 2022).

⁷⁷ People’s Daily (人民网). 2020. “为进博会保驾护航 社区志愿者在行动(Escorting for the Fair: Community Volunteers in Action).” <http://sh.people.com.cn/n2/2020/0911/c375987-34287078.html> (accessed on 28 April 2022).

⁷⁸ Youngnam Cho(조영남), 2020. “중국은 어떻게 코로나19의 통제에 성공했나?: 후베이성과 우한시의 활동을 중심으로(How China Succeeds in Control of COVID-19: Focusing on Activities in Hubei Province and Wuhan City?)” 국제 지역연구 (*International Regional Study*) 29(3): 107-138.

⁷⁹ Beibei Tang. 2020. “Grid Governance in China’s Urban Middle-class Neighborhoods”, *The China Quarterly*, 241: 43-61.

major conflicts and disputes do not leave the street (town), and conflicts and disputes are not handed over”. Grid-based management is based on basic grid units, with information technology as the core, community grid members assume two responsibilities: monitoring residents and serving them⁸⁰, and dealing with problems that can be dealt with, reporting those that cannot be dealt with. The grid member is responsible for the basic information collection, hidden danger investigation and livelihood service guarantee in the grid. Community grid members can be street cadres, community leaders, general community staff, police officers, social work staff and volunteers.⁸¹ They can also include faculty members, medical personnel, police officers or security guards.⁸²

Community grid management can be divided into two models, one is focused on stability maintenance and management functions, which started in Beijing Dongcheng(东城) District pilot area in 2004 and is currently represented by Beijing Dongcheng District, Shanghai Yangpu District, Wuhan Jiangnan District, and Hubei Province Yichang city (宜昌); the other is focused on social service functions, which started in Zhoushan(舟山) City, Zhejiang Province pilot area in 2007 and is currently represented by Zhoushan City, Zhejiang Province, Chongqing Wushan(巫山) County, and Xiamen(厦门) City, Fujian Province and Xiamen City, Fujian Province as representatives.⁸³ The former is technology-oriented, which

⁸⁰ Jean Christopher Mittelstaedt, 2022. “The Grid Managements System in Contemporary China: Grass-roots Governance in Social Surveillance and Service Provision”, *China Information*, 36(1): 3-22.

⁸¹ People’s Daily. 2020. “疫情防控要用好社区网格化管理(Epidemic Prevention and Control to Use Community Grid-based Management).” <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0210/c40531-31578754.html> (accessed on 28 April 2022).

⁸² He Linghui(贺伶俐). 2016. “网格化管理模式中社区护理服务模式的探讨(Study on Community Nursing Service Model in the Gridding Management Model).” *中国卫生产业(China Health Industry)* 13(17): 193-195.

⁸³ Jean Christopher Mittelstaedt. 2022. “The Grid Managements System in Contemporary China: Grass-roots Governance in Social Surveillance and Service Provision”, *China*

requires substantial public financial investment and changes in institutional mechanisms to establish a digital information system that integrates the processes of “information collection, information transmission, task dispatch, task processing, when to supervise, and information feedback” and separates supervision and execution to realize the governance of events in the cell grid.⁸⁴ The working organization and information platform of Shanghai’s grid management are mainly divided into four levels: city digital city management center, district grid integrated management center, street and town grid management center, and village workstation. As of 2018, Shanghai has built 1 city digital city management center, 16 district grid-based integrated management centers, 214 street and town grid-based management centers, and 5,902 residence and village workstations.⁸⁵

Take Songjiang(松江) District of Shanghai as an example, the whole district of Songjiang District of Shanghai is a large network of 605 square kilometers, 16 streets, towns and parks constitute the middle network, 304 villages and RCs constitute the small network, and the small network is then divided into 1322 grids.⁸⁶ The Jiang Hong(江虹) Residents’ Committee of Fang Song(方松) Street in Songjiang District has 1,725 households in 216,000 square meters of area under its jurisdiction. The area under the jurisdiction of Jianghong RC is divided into five

Information, 36(1) 3-22.

⁸⁴ Kong Nana(孔娜娜). 2015. “网格中的微自治：城市基层社会治理的新机制(Micro Autonomy in the Grid Management: A New Mechanisms of Urban Grass-Roots Social Governance).” *社会主义研究(Socialism Studies)* 2015(4): 90-96.

⁸⁵ China.gov.cn. 2019. “上海公布城市精细化管理 ‘成绩单’ (Shanghai Announces ‘Report Card’ for Fine Urban Management).” http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-08/09/content_5420032.htm (accessed on 29 April 2022).

⁸⁶ Communist Party of China News(中国共产党新闻网). 2015. “创新社会治理 加强基层建设 网格不留死角条块责任捆绑 松江构建 ‘四位一体’ 社会治理体系第一时间发现、协调和处置难题(Innovative social governance Strengthening grassroots construction Grid does not leave dead ends Strip responsibility bundle Songjiang builds ‘four-in-one’ social governance system First time to find, coordinate and dispose of problems).” <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2015/0205/c87228-26509819.html> (accessed on 29 April 2022).

grids, each with a selected grid head. Based on the grid, the grid head is the core of this management model. At present, the 1,322 grid heads adopt a combination of full-time and part-time models, with rural areas being dominated by full-time, and urbanized areas where grid heads are generally staffed by RCs or community service stations. Around a grid head is the “1+X+Y” grid management team. “X” is generally the community self-governance force, including the grid of the auxiliary force, grid supervisors, as well as villagers’ (residents’) group heads, building group heads, retired veteran cadres, volunteers, etc.; “Y” refers to the district functional departments and streets and towns of the relevant sections of the staff, each grid With a number of “Y” bundled, generally including industry and commerce, food and drug supervision, urban management, public security, housing management and planning and land and other seven functional departments personnel.⁸⁷

V. Major emergencies - Covid-19 prevention and control as an example

In 2020, at the beginning of the outbreak of New Coronavirus Pneumonia (hereafter Covid-19) within China, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CCP, pointed out that “all regions should compact the responsibilities of local party committees and governments, strengthen the grid-based management of community prevention and control, and take more thorough and precise, effective and efficient measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic.”⁸⁸ It has been more than two years since the Covid-19 lasted, and during the time, communities have

⁸⁷ Shanghai Politics(上海政务). 2014. “松江:1322个网格构成一张网, 社区一盘棋, 旨在精细管理(Songjiang:1322 grids form a network, community a chessboard, aiming at fine management).” <http://shzw.eastday.com/shzw/G/20140729/u1ai133438.html> (accessed on 5 May 2022).

⁸⁸ People’s Daily. 2020. “疫情防控要用好社区网格化管理(Pandemic prevention and control to use community grid-based management).” <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0210/c40531-31578754.html> (accessed on 5 May 2022).

been at the forefront of pandemic prevention and control in China. If we look back the history, communities in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong Province also played an important role in the prevention and control of SARS in 2002.

In the prevention and control of Covid-19, Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the important role of communities. On February 10, 2020, while during a tour about the prevention and control of Covid-19 in Beijing, Xi Jinping emphasized “The whole country should give full play to the community’s role in the prevention and control of the pandemic, sink the prevention and control forces to the community, strengthen the implementation of various prevention and control measures in the community, so that all communities become strong bastions of pandemic prevention and control.” The community is the first line of joint prevention and control of the pandemic, and it is also the most effective line of defense against external importation and internal spread. By holding this line of defense in the community, we can effectively cut off the channels for the spread of the pandemic.” On March 10, 2020, Xi Jinping in Hubei Province to inspect the prevention and control of Covid-19, stressed that “there are two positions to fight the pandemic, one is the hospital to save lives, one is the community prevention and control position. Perseverance to do a good job in the prevention and control of the pandemic key rely on the community.”⁸⁹

Regarding the role of RCs in the prevention and control of the pandemic, the Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases - Emergency Response to Public Emergencies(中华人民共和国传染病防治·突发公共事件应急条例) stipulate that “for residents’ committees and villagers’ committees, they shall actively mobilize the general residents and

⁸⁹ Communist Party of China News(中国共产党新闻网). 2020. “这道疫情防控的重要防线 习近平高度重视(This important line of defense for epidemic prevention and control Xi Jinping attaches great importance to).” <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0410/c164113-31668143.html> (accessed on 5 May 2022).

villagers to actively participate in the specific work of prevention and control of infectious diseases, and truly achieve universal participation and responsibility.” In 2020, the “Notice of the Shanghai Municipal People’s Government of the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee on Further Strengthening the Prevention and Control of the New Coronavirus Infected Pneumonia Epidemic in the City(中共上海市委上海市人民政府关于进一步加强我市新型冠状病毒感染的肺炎疫情防控工作通知)” mentioned that “each town and street should, in accordance with the unified deployment of the city and district, play a group prevention and control force, fully mobilize grassroots communities to carry out environmental health improvement, organize and guide villagers’ committees and the residents’ committees to conduct work in the management of foreigners in the district. Take targeted prevention and control initiatives to effectively do the prevention and control work in the area. Further improve the work of home and centralized isolation medical observation, while doing a good job in the daily life of those under medical observation. The villager’ committees and the residents’ committees should cooperate with the disease prevention and control agencies and community health services, seriously do a good job of community disease prevention and education and health tips, timely collection and reporting of relevant information, and cooperate with relevant departments to do a good job for the home isolation of medical observation services. Property service companies should cooperate in the prevention and control work.”⁹⁰ In 2020, the Standing Committee of the Shanghai Municipal People’s Congress decided to amend the Regulations on the Work of Shanghai Residents’ Committee to add “in the event of an emergency, the

⁹⁰ Shanghai gov.cn. 2020. “中共上海市委上海市人民政府关于进一步加强我市新型冠状病毒感染的肺炎疫情防控工作的通知(Notice of the Shanghai Municipal People's Government of the Communist Party of China on Further Strengthening the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia Infected by Novel Coronavirus in the City).” https://www.shanghai.gov.cn/nw48635/20200826/0001-48635_63483.html (accessed on 6 May 2022).

residents' committee shall, in accordance with the decision and requirements of the local government, organize and mobilize residents to carry out self-help and mutual help, and cooperate with government and its dispatched organs to carry out emergency response work” and so on.

In the community pandemic prevention and control, the CCP organization assumed the function of leadership and organization, while the RC assumed the function of management and service. In addition to implementing the government's requirements, the RC, in its role as the main body of community governance, also worked with the community property company to develop a community work system for preventing and combating the pandemic, such as access management, temperature testing, and monitoring; contacting merchants in the community to ensure the supply of food and supplies for residents; contacting social organizations to collect donations and purchase disinfection supplies for community disinfection during short-term shortages of supplies; using the regular “grid” management mechanism, arranging for grid members to conduct door-to-door mapping, research and targeted assistance.⁹¹

In order to understand the role of RCs in community outbreak prevention and control, the following is an example of the community outbreak prevention and control mechanism of a street in Pudong New Area, Shanghai, during the period from the initial outbreak in January 2020 to May 2020, when Shanghai lowered the level of emergency response to Level 3 for public health emergencies. The street is located in Lujiazui(陆家嘴), a prosperous trading area with a resident population of about 160,000, 40 RCs, and 116 subdivisions. On January 4, 2020, Shanghai officially launched a major public health emergency and response mechanism, and

⁹¹ Liu Lanbo(刘澜波). 2021. “从地域单元治理到场域治理：疫情联防联控中的“社区共同体” (Governance from geographical unit to field: “community” in Pademic Prevention and Control of the Covid-19).” 未来与发展(*Future and Development*) 2021(6): 16-21.

began to implement strict preventive and control measures for Covid-19.⁹²

In the early stage of the pandemic from January to February 2020, the measures for the prevention and control of Covid-19 at the grassroots community level can be divided into three main categories: first, organizational leadership; second, the role of party organizations and party members; and third, multiple participation. Organizational leadership, the street established a “1 + 6 + X” prevention and control system, the street level party and government organizations to play a leading role in the establishment of the pandemic prevention and control command, while the establishment of the coordination group, the city environment group, community stability and control group, community liaison group, publicity and reporting group, supervision and inspection team and other six working groups and a number of special focus on emergency work; the five levels of responsibility, from high to low, are the command, divisional cadres, organ cadres, neighborhood party secretaries and neighborhood social workers, forming a vertical management network.

In terms of the role of party organizations and party members, the street requires 106 cadres and 40 party members to sink into the community, 293 party branches and 162 party members in the “community battlefield”; the secretary of the neighborhood party organization is the main person responsible for community prevention and control. Party organizations mobilize “two committees” members and party volunteers to join the prevention and control work, relying on the original party building pattern of the residential area and the “general branch to grasp the general, branch package, group package building, work to the household” sub-patch package system, to achieve grid management, the building as the basic

⁹² Yang Huan(杨欢). 2021. “重大突发公共卫生事件中城市社区治理能力问题及对策研究—以浦东新区Y街道为例(*Research on the Problem and Countermeasure of Urban Community Governance Capability in Grave Public Health Event—Taking Pudong New District Y Street as An Example*).”

management unit of prevention and control. The basic management unit of the building is to fully grasp the information related to people returning to Shanghai.

In terms of diversified participation, a system is formed with the neighborhood party organization as the leading core, the RC as dominance, and multiple forces such as the owners' committees, social organizations etc. participating together; a community service liaison mechanism of "1+3+N" is formed. The "1" refers to one isolated family, "3" refers to three workers (residential area responsibility contact person, property personnel and medical workers), and "N" mainly refers to community police, psychological counselors, community volunteers and other personnel. The "N" refers to community police, psychologists, community volunteers and others. Under the guidance of the neighborhood party organization, the "troika" cooperation function of the RC, property management company and owners' committee are brought into play. The property management company cooperated with the RC to carry out door-to-door mapping, close public places such as activity rooms, ping pong rooms and swimming pools, cancel all club activities, and publicize the knowledge of pandemic prevention and control.⁹³

In March 2020, the pandemic entered the middle stage, and the focus of Shanghai's Covid-19 prevention and control shifted from community prevention and control to "external prevention of importation and internal prevention of rebound", especially the prevention and control of incoming persons. During this period, the focus of community work was to grasp information and isolate and monitor inbound workers. In terms of information mastery, the street relies on big data information to obtain information about people who will return to Shanghai,

⁹³ Yang Huan(杨欢). 2021. "重大突发公共卫生事件中城市社区治理能力问题及对策研究—以浦东新区Y街道为例(*Research on the Problem and Countermeasure of Urban Community Governance Capability in Grave Public Health Event—Taking Pudong New District Y Street as An Example*)."

and adopts a grid-based responsibility system of community subdivision, through a carpet check, to obtain basic information about foreigners returning to Shanghai, their health status, etc., and to master the number of people returning to Shanghai and flight information. Especially for the foreigners who have not yet returned to Shanghai, the RCs contacted them in advance through WeChat and telephone to explain to them the precautions to take, and at the same time posted registration signs at the entrance of the neighborhoods where more foreigners live, so that foreigners know that they must register when they return to Shanghai.

In terms of isolation monitoring, the 14-day home isolation management was implemented for incoming persons during Covid-19 prevention and control period. After the escort team of party members from the authorities sent the arrivals to the district, a tripartite working group composed of residents, public security and community health center was responsible for receiving, informing, disinfecting and implementing the installation of intelligent doorbell video surveillance, and then the community workers of the street city transportation center and the RC responsible for the package double insurance to implement the doorbell alarm monitoring.⁹⁴

On May 9, 2020, Shanghai announced that the emergency response level for public health emergencies was adjusted to Level 3 response. Residents' life gradually returned to normal and Covid-19 prevention and control moved to the normalization phase. Normalized community Covid-19 prevention and control includes normalization of prevention and control and normalization of Covid-19 prevention and propaganda. The normalization of prevention and control aims to continue to implement isolation, surveillance and disinfection in the community

⁹⁴ Yang Huan(杨欢). 2021. “重大突发公共卫生事件中城市社区治理能力问题及对策研究—以浦东新区Y街道为例(*Research on the Problem and Countermeasure of Urban Community Governance Capability in Grave Public Health Event—Taking Pudong New District Y Street as An Example*).”

under the principle of “external importation and internal prevention of rebound”; the normalization of epidemic prevention and propaganda refers to the use of a combination of traditional and modern propaganda methods to convey policy requirements to residents in a timely manner, and through “positive” propaganda guidance and policy interpretation, vigorously publication of the knowledge of Covid-19 prevention and control in the community, always reminding residents to stay alert, bring mask when going out, wash hands and ventilate more often at home.

Table 4. Covid-19 prevention and control mechanism in Shanghai streets

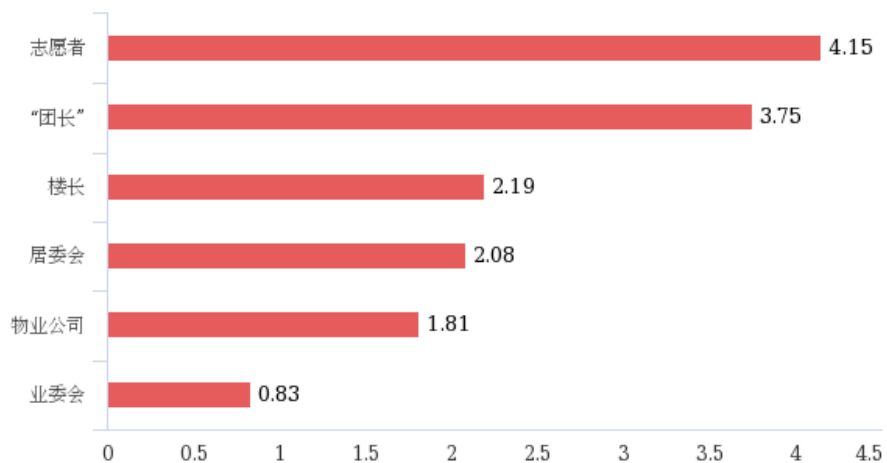
社区治理主体	主要防控工作
街道办事处 (政府派出机构)	成立疫情防控工作指挥部，组建疫情防控工作队伍
	制定防控工作方案
	传达上级政府防控政策、发布信息
	下沉机关干部、党员干部
	发动社会力量，整合辖区资源
居民区党组织	居民区书记牵头社区联防联控队伍
	“总支抓总、支部包片、小组包楼、工作到户”多层包干体系
居委会	掌握社区居民的健康状况和出行情况
	防控知识宣传、舆论引导
	外来人员登记和排摸，流动人口管理
	特殊重点人员管理（社区民警、社区卫生服务中心配合）
	口罩预约登记、发放
	疫苗接种宣传、动员
业委会	配合居委会开展上门排摸
	监督物业落实小区全面消毒
	疫情防控知识宣传
物业	小区人员和车辆的出入管控
	门岗测量体温
	环境卫生治理和督查
社会组织	筹集、捐赠防疫物资
	提供心理疏导、外语翻译等服务
居民	参加社区志愿者
	积极配合居委会登记排摸工作

Source: Yang Huan(杨欢). 2021. “重大突发公共卫生事件中城市社区治理能力问题及对策研究—以浦东新区Y街道为例”(Research on the Problem and Countermeasure of Urban Community Governance Capability in Grave Public Health Event—Taking Pudong New District Y Street as An Example.)

In March 2022, a new round of Covid-19 broke out in Shanghai, and during this time, Kerry Property Management launched an online questionnaire on community management in Shanghai under the recent pandemic. In response to the

question “Who played the biggest role in the pandemic”, the respondents believed that volunteers played the biggest role in the community, followed by the “chief (tuangzhang, 团长)”, then the building group head, and then the RC.

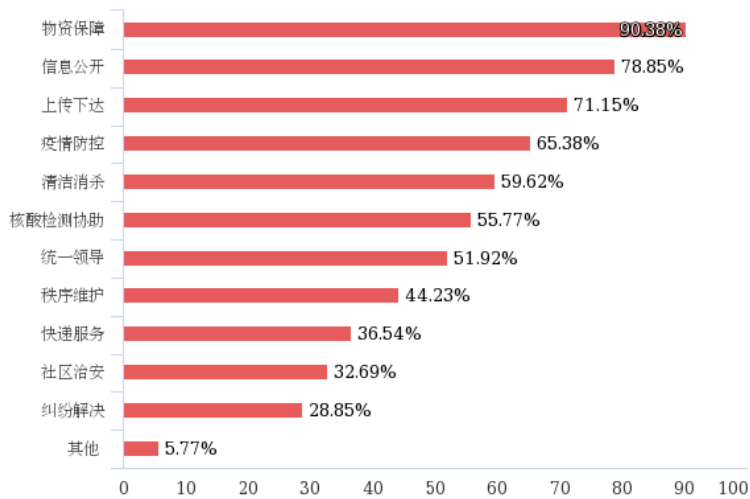
Figure 10. Answers to “Who played the biggest role in this outbreak?”



Source: Kruger Property Management. 2022. “*Online Questionnaire on Community Management Practices in Shanghai under the Recent Pandemic.*”

In response to the question “What role should the residents’ committee play in this pandemic”, 90.38% of the respondents answered “material security”, which ranked first, followed by “information disclosure”, the third place was “dissemination of information”, and the following were pandemic prevention and control, cleaning and disinfection, and nucleic acid testing assistance.

Figure 11. Answers to “What role should the RC play in this outbreak?”



Source: Kruger Property Management. 2022. “*Online Questionnaire on Community Management Practices in Shanghai under the Recent Pandemic.*”

In addition to the above, the RC also undertakes many other political functions such as party building, popular mobilization, publicity and education including anti-drug, anti-cult and spiritual civilization building.

4.2.3 Administrative Functions

The Constitution and the Organic Law stipulate that RCs are grassroots mass self-governance organizations, but they also stipulate that RCs must “assist” the grassroots government in its work. At the same time, the content related to the RC is placed in Chapter III of the Constitution, “State Institutions,” which shows the dual attributes of the RC as mass self-governance organization and the foundation of state power at the grassroots level.

In 1997, Shanghai proposed the “two levels of government, three levels of management, and four levels of grid”, which further strengthened the administrative attributes of RCs by logically integrating them into the four-level

network of administration. In 2006, Shanghai promoted the “1+3” system of party building,⁹⁵ changing the street party work committee into the community party work committee so that the community and the street are basically the same structure, and the RC has actually become the “leg” of the grassroots government.⁹⁶

At the practical level, the administrative affairs undertaken by the RC take up a major share of the daily operation of the RC compared to the self-governing affairs, and the administrative function of the RC refers to the function of to assist the grassroots government, i.e., the street office, in its transactional work. As the saying goes, “A thousand threads from above, but a needle from below(上面千条线, 下面一根针)”, a large number of administrative affairs are sunk to the RC members who are often overworked, and the RC is reduced to a “dispatched organization” of the street office. According to Zheng Zhanggen (郑张根, 2013), deputy director of the District Administration Division of the Shanghai Municipal Government Office, a sample of about 200 RCs in Shanghai over a five-year period from 2008 to 2013, the daily work of RCs can be subdivided into about 150 small items, of which about 80% are administrative tasks issued by superiors.⁹⁷

In a questionnaire survey and interviews conducted in April 2010 among 235

⁹⁵ Party building 1+3 system refers to the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee in 2006, on the basis of piloting, to try to form a new system of “1+3” community party building work of community (street) party working committee and administrative organization party group, comprehensive party committee and neighborhood party committee, gradually forming a new regional party building work pattern with community (street) party working committee as the core, administrative unit party organization, district party organization and neighborhood party organization (the “three lines”) as the basis, all party members in the community as the main body, and all kinds of community organizations participating together. Chen Yi(陈怡). 2007. “试论上海“1+3”社区党建体制的创新实践(The innovative practice of “1+3” community party building system in Shanghai).” *上海党史与党建(Shanghai Party History and Party Building)* 2007(6):55-57.

⁹⁶ Research Group of Fudan University. 2014. “上海居委会等社会组织权责问题调研(Research on Rights and Liabilities of Shanghai Neighborhood Committee and Other Grassroots Organizations). *科学与发展(Scientific Development)*2014(12): 54-60.

⁹⁷ Zheng Zhanggen(郑张根). 2013. “从上海实践分析居民自治的环境和路径(The Environment and Path: The Analysis on the Residents Autonomy Based on Shanghai Practice).” *科学发展(Scientific Development)* 2013(05): 95-103.

RCs' chairmen in six districts of Shanghai, including Yangpu, Putuo, Changning, Xuhui, Zhabei, and Jing'an, the classification and percentage of the most important energy in the daily work of RC chairmen showed that completing the work assigned by various lines of streets accounted for 82.6% of the daily work energy of them, ranking first, followed by community security (70.2%), elderly care (70.2), community cleanliness and sanitation (59.6%), etc.

Table 5. Results of the survey on the most important efforts in and aspects of the daily work of the directors of RCs in Shanghai

日常工作中最主要精力分类及占比		日常工作中最主要精力分类及占比	
小区治安	70.2	妇女和青少年工作	8.1
老年人关爱	70.2	残疾人事务	12.8
小区内老干部工作	8.1	小区宣传和居民学习	26.4
小区清洁卫生	59.6	居民和社团文体活动	29.8
楼组建设	32.3	参加各种会议	36.2
邻里纠纷	52.3	特困居民关心	48.9
外来人员管理与服务	17.4	完成街道各条线布置的工作	82.6

Source: Chen Tianren(陈天仁), Song Dajie(宋大杰), Wang Yazhen(王雅珍), and Jiang Kui(蒋葵) 2010. "社会建设中基层民主自治组织的研究(A Study of Grassroots Democratic Self-Government Organizations in Social Construction.)" *社会学(Sociology)* 2010 No. 4:1-15.

In 2015, Shanghai's "1+6" reform aimed to change the overly administrative way of working of RCs and return them to the function of self-governance, making them a true organizational vehicle for residents' self-governance. However, in practice, it still failed to change the status quo of the RCs' administrative affairs. The document stipulates that the incumbent of the position of secretary of the neighborhood party organization enjoys career benefits and can be transferred to a regular position if he or she performs well for two consecutive terms. Since the secretary of the neighborhood party organization and the chairman of the RC are "one shoulder" and the two committees are cross-posted (two brands, one set of

people), this practice is considered by some scholars to be a complete internalization of the RC as a mass self-government organization into a nerve end of the party and state power, which is essentially a regression of the self-government attribute of the RC.

Chapter 5. Causes and Consequences of Formalistic Election and Weak Self-governing Functions of the Residents' Committee

5.1 Causes of Formalistic Election and Weak Self-governing Functions

Through the previous chapters, we can find that although RCs are statutory grassroots mass self-governance organizations, both in terms of their elections and their functions, we can see that their self-governance attributes are actually fairly weak. On one hand, although the RC elections show a high turnout, they are mainly the result of mobilization, and there are many irregularities and manipulations in the election process, making the whole election process a kind of formalized “democratic show”. And the candidates for the RC are still firmly in the hands of the party and government. On the other hand, although the RCs retain a certain degree of self-governing functions, they are still weak compared to their administrative and political functions, and the proportion of self-governing affairs in the total work of RCs is low.

5.1.1 Causes of Formalistic Election

Although Shanghai's RC elections show a high participation rate, this can hardly be seen as a sign of progress in the development of urban grassroots democracy. Contrary to the strict democratic election procedures, the election process of RCs has been characterized by various phenomena of manipulation by party and government forces, coupled with the indifference of residents to

participate in the election, and the direct election of RCs has become a mere formality, for the following reasons.

First, residents do not have a direct interest with the RC, which is glimpsed by the contrast with the enthusiasm of rural villagers for villagers' committee elections. The difference lies in two main points. On one hand, the degree of association of economic interests is different. In rural areas, the ownership of the most important means of production, land, is owned collectively by villagers. In reality, disputes over land between villagers occur from time to time. Under such circumstances, villagers' self-governance provides an opportunity for villagers to be the masters of their own house, and they naturally participate actively in the election of villagers' committees to elect their own approved leaders to manage village affairs.⁹⁸ In contrast, after the reform and opening up, urban residents do not have close economic interests with each other, and their economic activities are carried out outside the community. Compared to villagers' committees, which assume the function of dealing with conflicts related to economic interests such as land disputes, the functions assumed by RCs, such as community services, environmental sanitation, and cultural and sports activities, are not directly related to residents' interests, and RC elections do not generate sufficient inducements for residents.

On the other hand, the degree of life connection is different. Villages have relatively closed characteristics, it is both the production place and the living place of villagers, and it is an organizational carrier integrating economic, political, cultural and social functions, which is closely connected with villagers, so villagers have a strong motivation to participate in rural self-governance and a stronger

⁹⁸ Hu Xiaodi(胡晓迪). 2018.“城乡基层自治发展不均衡的原因与对策(Causes of the imbalanced development of urban and rural grassroots self-governance and possible solutions).”云南民族大学学报 (哲学社会科学版) (*Journal of Yunnan Minzu University(Social Sciences)*)2018(4): 11-17.

willingness to participate in villagers' committee elections. On the contrary, urban cities are characterized by openness and mobility, and people's work and life places are relatively separated, so the activities carried out in the community are extremely limited, and except for emergency events such as the breakout of Covid-19, residents are not closely connected with the RC. In addition, the residents are "atomized" and the community tends to be a "stranger society". Most of the residents are not familiar with the candidates, so the residents are not willing to participate in the RC election.

Second, the "government and party presence" in the RC election process have become the norm, controlling the presentation of candidates and influencing voters' voting intentions. The democratic process, in which the people's right to elect their own RC members is infringed upon by party and government forces, and the residents' distrust of the democratic nature of the elections and their own voting rights has further contributed to the formalization of RC elections.

Some studies show that in Chinese RC elections, voter's willingness to participate is inversely proportional to the level of urban economic development, which means the higher the level of economic development, the worse the residents' participation in elections. For example, in Shanghai, with strong financial support and information technology, the government's administrative control over the grassroots is strong, and the political participation of community residents is poor.⁹⁹

5.1.2 Causes of Weak Self-governing Functions

I. Historical origins

Although RCs are legally self-governing grassroots mass organizations, unlike

⁹⁹ Lifan(李凡). 2002. 中国基层民主发展报告2000-2001(*Report on the Development of Grassroots Democracy in China 2000-2001*) 东方出版社(Oriental Press): 306-309.

NGOs, they were constructed from the beginning by the top-down initiative of the state regime in response to the needs of the situation. The new communist regime used RCs as an organizational vehicle to achieve the purpose of consolidating power and building the state through political mobilization and education. This means that the RC must not only be a purely spontaneous form of organization of the residents, but it must also assume certain political functions, and even perform certain governmental or state functions, and be able to connect the state and society, especially to connect and mobilize the state to the residents.¹⁰⁰

A study of the work of the Jiu'an Alley RC in the Shanghai Municipal Archives found that "...of the various types of work carried out by the Residents' Committee in 1952, political campaigns accounted for 80 percent of the activities, while only 20 percent of the daily work was carried out. For example, mass campaigns included air defense drills and winter defense for bombing prevention in 1950, and donations for the Korean War in 1951."¹⁰¹

During the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, RCs were also transformed into "revolutionary committees" and were regarded as the front line of the class struggle. Political mobilization and campaigns became the main work of the "revolutionary committees", such as mobilizing intellectual youth to go to the mountains and go to the countryside(上山下乡), and criticizing and denouncing(批斗). Since the reform and opening up, with the development of the market economy, China's grassroots urban management system has also undergone reform,

¹⁰⁰ Hou Liwen(侯利文). 2019. "国家政权建设与居委会行政化的历史变迁—基于“国家与社会”视角的考察(The Construction of State Power and the Historical Changes in the Administration of Residents' Committees—from the Perspective of "State and Society)." 浙江工商大学学报(*Journal of Zhejiang Gongshang University*), 2019(1): 120-133.

¹⁰¹ Hou Liwen(侯利文). 2019. "国家政权建设与居委会行政化的历史变迁—基于“国家与社会”视角的考察(The Construction of State Power and the Historical Changes in the Administration of Residents' Committees—from the Perspective of "State and Society)." 浙江工商大学学报(*Journal of Zhejiang Gongshang University*), 2019(1): 120-133.

and the street office-residents' committee system has assumed the urban management and service functions originally undertaken by the unit system under the planned economy. The task of the RC at its subordinate level has taken on a lot of administrative tasks from the street office.

Since then, China's urban grassroots social management system has continued to change, from the street office-residents' committee system to the community system, and then to grid-based management and "one network unified management". Every change in the RC has been a passive change under design of the state. Since its establishment, the RC has assumed political and administrative functions, and has never been and cannot be freed from the control of the party-state.

II. Institutional reasons

The weakening of RC's self-governing functions also comes from institutional reasons. While the Constitution and the Organic Law clearly stipulate that RCs are grassroots mass self-governance organizations, they also stipulate that RCs must "assist" the grassroots government in its work, and they are given a number of political tasks, such as propaganda and mobilization and stability maintenance. In addition, the content related to RC is placed in Chapter III of the Constitution, "State Institutions", which leads to a fundamental institutional ambiguity in the positioning of the RC. The law only defines the political status of the RC as grassroots self-governance organization, but does not clearly define the scope, content, and boundaries of self-governance, and gives them political and administrative tasks that do not correspond to their political status.

The administrative tasks of Shanghai' RCs come directly from the municipal administrative organs or the administrative regulations issued by the relevant government offices. According to the statistics, there are 17 administrative laws

and regulations that directly propose the tasks of RCs, such as Article 6 of the Fire Protection Law(消防法), which stipulates that “residents’ committees shall assist the government and public security authorities to strengthen fire prevention and education”; and Article 6 of the Blood Donation Law(献血法), which stipulates that “RCs shall mobilize and organize citizens of the appropriate age in the local residential area to participate in blood donation.” Article 9 of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases(中华人民共和国传染病防治法) provides that “residents’ committees and villagers’ committees shall organize residents and villagers to participate in community and rural activities for the prevention and control of infectious diseases. Article 21 of the Emergency Regulations on Public Health Emergencies(突发公共卫生事件应急条例) provides that “the county-level government and its relevant departments, township-level government, street offices, residents’ committees and villagers’ committees shall promptly mediate and deal with conflicts and disputes that may lead to social security incidents”; Article 29 stipulates that “residents’ committees, villagers’ committees and enterprises and institutions shall, in accordance with the requirements of the local government and taking into account their actual situation, carry out activities related to the popularization of emergency knowledge and the necessary emergency drills”; and Article 38 stipulates that “the county government shall establish a full-time or part-time information reporter system in residents’ committees, villagers’ committees and relevant units”, etc.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Research Group of Fudan University. 2014. “上海居委会等社会组织权责问题调研 (Research on Rights and Liabilities of Shanghai Neighborhood Committee and Other Grassroots Organizations).” 科学与发展(*Scientific Development*) 2014(12): 54-60.

III. Personnel control

The inability of RCs to get rid of their political functions also comes from the personnel and organizational control by the party organizations and higher levels of government. First, as mentioned above, the party and government organizations control the election results of the RCs through the ECs and candidate qualification examination. Second, while advocating that the chairman of the RC and the secretary of the neighborhood party organization “on one shoulder” and that the “two committees” are “cross-posting”, in some communities the chairman of the RC and the secretary of the neighborhood party organization is one person, and a significant number of the members of the RC are members of the CCP. In Shanghai, at the end of October 2021, 63% of the 139 members of the four directly elected RCs and 15 non-directly elected RCs were members of the CCP.¹⁰³ In addition, even if the head of the RC and the secretary of the neighborhood party organization are split between the two, the democratically elected head of the RC becomes a virtual position in most communities, with the secretary of the neighborhood party organization being the de facto “head” of the community and the individual chairmen of the RC who are more deeply involved in community affairs relying more on the personal prestige of the person elected.¹⁰⁴

In fact, even in neighborhoods where the RC chairman and the neighborhood secretary are not the same person, the party organization and the RC are integrated. The party organization and the RC rely on the same network to carry out their tasks, and in most communities, the two signs of the RC and the party organization

¹⁰³ Shanghai Local Records Office. 2021. “新当选的居委会委员党员占63%(63% of Newly Elected Residents’ Committee Members are Party Members).” http://www.shtong.gov.cn/dfz_web/DFZ/Info?idnode=286227&tableName=userobject1a&id=528945(accessed on 10 May 2022).

¹⁰⁴ Gu Rong(顾荣). 2020. 上海市中心城区社区治理体系构建探索(*Exploring the Construction of Community Governance System in the Central City of Shanghai*)上海(Shanghai): 复旦大学出版社(Fudan University Press).

appear in front of one office or building at the same time, i.e., “two signs, one set of people”.¹⁰⁵

Higher-level government control over the RC personnel is reflected in the examination and recruitment and the arbitrary removal of the RC members. Some local governments also stipulate that new entrants to the RC must go through procedures such as recruitment examinations - elections - and collective study and decision by the street party work committee. For example, Huangpu District in Shanghai has openly recruited community workers for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021, in which the recruitment positions are divided into two categories, one for RC members and the other for staff of the “five centers¹⁰⁶” and social work offices.¹⁰⁷¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Ma Weihong(马卫红), Gui Yong(桂勇) and Luo Tianjue(骆天珏). 2008. “城市社区研究中的国家社会视角：局限、经验和发展可能(On Country Concept in the Study of Urban Community Chinese Full Text).” *学术研究(Academic Research)* 2008(11): 64-67, 159.

¹⁰⁶ The “five centers” refer to the street community party and mass service center (街道社区党群服务中心)(including party and group service station), city operation and management center(城市运行管理中心), community affairs service center(社区事务受理服务中心), street social security comprehensive management work center(街道社会治安综合治理工作中心), community cultural activities center(社区文化活动中心).

¹⁰⁷ Shangguan News. 2020. “10月16日开始报名，黄浦区2020年(下半年)面向社会公开招聘专业化社区工作者104名(Registration began on October 16, Huangpu District 2020 (second half of the year) open recruitment of 104 specialized community workers for the community).” <https://sghexport.shobserver.com/html/baijiahao/2020/10/16/279145.html> (accessed on 10 May 2022).

¹⁰⁸ Thepaper. 2019. “黄浦区2019年(下半年)公开招聘社区工作者80名！10月10日开始报名(Huangpu District Open Recruitment of Community Workers 80 in 2019 (Second Half)! Registration begins on October 10).” https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_4639732 (accessed on 10 May 2022).

Table 6. Planned recruitment of community worker positions in Huangpu District, Shanghai in 2019 (second half of the year)

街道	计划招录人数		合计
	居委会 (居民区)	“五个中心” 及社工事务所	
南京东路街道	5		5
外滩街道	8	2	10
豫园街道	5		5
小东门街道	13	2	15
老西门街道	5		5
半淞园路街道	3		3
瑞金二路街道	6	4	10
淮海中路街道	5	5	10
打浦桥街道	6	1	7
五里桥街道	10		10
合计	66	14	80

Source: Shanghai Huangpu WeChat official account (accessed on 9 May 2022).

However, it is reported that in 2021, 161 RCs in Huangpu District will be elected by direct election¹⁰⁹, which means that although the RC election will be held by direct election, in fact, the personnel who will be elected in the election will be recruited and assessed beforehand. Under such an election and personnel system, the members of the RCs actually become cadres employed by the street offices, and the street offices can remove and replace the members of the RCs at will¹¹⁰, and the higher-level government and street offices achieve personnel control over the RCs through examinations and recruitment and personnel removal.

¹⁰⁹ Huangpu Newspaper. 2021. “黄浦区居委会换届选举圆满成功全区161个参选居委会换届选举投票全部一次完成(Huangpu District Residents’ Committee General Election Successfully Completed All 161 Participating Residents’ Committees in the District Voted in the Election at Once).” <http://hpb.shhuangpu.gov.cn/459001/20210604/139a45d2-90ea-44e4-95c6-db281bdec6d3.html> (Accessed on 10 May 2022).

¹¹⁰ Xiang Deping(向德平). 2006. “社区组织行政化：表现、原因及对策分析(The Administerization of Community Organizations: Analysis of Performance, Causes and Countermeasures).” *学海(Scholastic Sea)* 2006(1): 22-30.

IV. Funding and assessment

The dependence of RCs on higher government departments for funding and assessment is also an important reason why RCs cannot get rid of their administrative functions.

First, there are three sources of funding for the work of RCs: government financial allocation, community property income and community self-financing, of which the main source of funding is government financial assistance. As the income from community properties is not high, the awareness of community units in the district is not strong, and the income from social donations is small and unstable, there is a large gap in the funding for the work of community committees, which is generally provided by the streets. The street offices implement unified management of the RC's work expenses, and the community account is set up by the street finance office to make unified accounts, which results in "whose rice bowl is under the control of whoever is in charge(端谁的饭碗归谁管)", and the community committee has to depend on the street office.¹¹¹

In 2016, the Yinhang(殷行) Street Office of Shanghai Yangpu District Government issued the "Management Measures on the Use of Residents' Committee Funds(关于居委会经费使用管理办法)", which stipulates that "according to the different channels and nature of funding sources, the funds of residents' committees are divided into residents' committee work funds and special funds. The funds for the work of the residents; committee are included in the annual budget of the street office, and are arranged for the necessary funds to guarantee the office of the residents; committee, community services and the organization of self-government. And the residents' committee office funds and

¹¹¹ Xiang Deping(向德平). 2006. "社区组织行政化: 表现、原因及对策分析(The Administerization of Community Organizations: Analysis of Performance, Causes and Countermeasures)." 学海(*Scholastic Sea*) 2006(1): 22-30.

community service funds are made specific amount of money, including office funds “below 1000 households, 1400 yuan / month; 1001-1500 households, 1600 yuan / month; 1501-2000 households, 1800 yuan / month; 2001 More than 2001 households, 2000 yuan / month”; community service funding provides that “less than 1000 households, 1800 yuan / month; 1001-1500 households, 2000 yuan / month; 1501-2000 households, 2200 yuan / month; 2001 households Above, 2400 yuan/month.” The funding for self-governance projects stipulates “adopt the principle of one report and reimbursement according to the actual situation, encourage and guide the neighborhoods to report the residents’ self-governance projects according to the community’s actual needs and budget, and reimburse them according to the actual situation of the operation of the self-governance projects”, without specifying the amount. This to a certain extent has inadvertently set obstacles to the development of the self-governance function of RCs.

Not only do the RC’s funds come from the streets and are subject to the approval and reimbursement of the street offices, the use of the RC’s funds is also subject to the supervision of the party organization. They shall regularly monitor and inspect the expenditure and use of funds. If problems are found, they should be promptly supervised and rectified. If serious problems are found, they should be promptly reported to the party work committee and office.”¹¹²

In addition to working expenses, the welfare benefits and the four pensions (pension, housing fund, unemployment insurance and medical insurance) are all paid from the financial budget, which is tantamount to placing the RCs within the government and making them part of the government.¹¹³

¹¹² Shanghai Yangpu District gov.cn. 2016. “关于印发《居委会经费使用管理办法》的通知(Notice on the Issuance of the Management Measures for the Use of Residents’ Committee Funds).” <https://www.shyp.gov.cn/zwgk/Xxgk/RsrInfo?id=0e6cbc65-6f7f-4d75-9595-b615e9718826> (accessed on 10 May 2022).

¹¹³ Research Group of Fudan University. 2014. “上海居委会等社会组织权责问题调研(Research on Rights and Liabilities of Shanghai Residents’ Committee and Other

Secondly, there are two forms of supervision and evaluation for RCs: one is the democratic evaluation by residents, and the other is the evaluation by streets and government departments. However, among the two forms of supervision and evaluation, since the evaluation results of the street and government departments are linked to the RC's work funding, personnel appointment and dismissal, the evaluation of the street and government departments occupies the absolute dominant position and influences the work orientation of the community committee, while the effectiveness of the evaluation of the residents is powerless.¹¹⁴

The “Wusong Street Community Worker Appraisal Measures (for Trial Implementation)” issued by Wusong(吴淞) Street in Baoshan District, Shanghai in April 2020 stipulates that the appraisal will provide sufficient basis for the promotion, appointment, reward and punishment, training, dismissal, and adjustment of wages and benefits of community workers (including members of RCs). The appraisal method is a combination of organizational assessment and democratic assessment of the masses; the appraisal leading group is mainly composed of the heads of the street party work committee, community party building office, community party committee and other departments; while the appraisal team is mainly composed of the secretary of the general party branch of each residential area and the head of the section (department). The assessment content is based on the job responsibilities of community workers and the work tasks they undertake, public satisfaction, the main assessment “moral, ability, diligence, performance, integrity” five items. Among them, the assessment results of the democratic assessment of community workers by no less than 20 people are included in the internal assessment of the residential area, the other two internal

Grassroots Organizations).” 科学与发展(*Scientific Development*) 2014(12): 54-60.

¹¹⁴ Xiang Deping(向德平). 2006. “社区组织行政化：表现、原因及对策分析(The Administerization of Community Organizations: Analysis of Performance, Causes and Countermeasures).” 学海(*Scholastic Sea*) 2006(1): 22-30.

assessment of the residential area party branch, all the staff of the RC for self-assessment and mutual assessment, as well as the identification of the secretary of the general party branch of the residential area, the three together accounted for 40% of the total score. In contrast, the residents' satisfaction flight check, which is conducted by randomly calling back ordinary residents to examine their contact and service situation and their satisfaction with their work, only accounts for 10% of the total assessment score. This shows that the democratic appraisal accounts for a very small percentage of the results of the supervision and assessment of the RC.

V. The rise of other emerging social organizations

With the emergence of organizations such as owners' committees and property management companies, the responsibilities assumed by RCs and their functions are less and less relevant to community governance and residents' lives. The survey found that in a property-rights-based autonomous community dominated by an industrial committee, the entire neighborhood is run around the community property management, and the RC can only engage in recreational activities such as singing and dancing. If not for the legal and institutional requirements, RCs would be completely redundant in such neighborhoods. When society operates according to the logic of marketization, RCs, which are built according to the logic of politics and control, are immediately marginalized and in an awkward situation.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Research Group of Fudan University. 2014. "上海居委会等社会组织权责问题调研 (Research on Rights and Liabilities of Shanghai Residents' Committee and Other Grassroots Organizations)." 科学与发展(*Scientific Development*) 2014(12): 54-60.

5.2 Consequences of Formalistic Election and Weak Self-governing Functions

5.2.1 “Performance-based Community”(政绩共同体)

After the reform and opening up, under the double pressure of economic development and social stability maintenance, China’s state management gradually formed a top-down system from the central government, the logic and basic process of which are as follows: through political mobilization and administrative charter, the higher-level government gradually assigns and delegates the tasks of economic development, market supervision, public services and social management to the lower-level government or relevant units, and implements the assessment mechanism of responsibility to the point or person.¹¹⁶ Due to the formalized democratic election of RCs, they are obviously more inclined to perform administrative and political functions than self-governance functions, and under the “two levels of government, three levels of management, and four levels of network”, the municipal government, district governments, street offices, and RCs form a “performance-based community” of interest.

5.2.2 Irrational Behaviors

On the other hand, RCs are still statutory grassroots mass self-governance organizations without administrative power, elected by and accountable to the residents in principle. In order to accomplish the various complicated tasks assigned by the higher party and government agencies, the RCs are more eager to adopt various informal and even illegal means, techniques and strategies. Under the

¹¹⁶ Rong Jingben(荣敬本) et al. 1998. “从压力型体制向民主合作体制的转变—县乡两级政治体制改革 (*From a Pressure-based System to a Democratic Cooperative System: Reforming the Political System at the County and Township Levels*).” 中央编译出版社 (Central Compilation and Publishing House Press.)

logic of strategic action, RCs are more concerned with the results of organizational action than with the process, and the “result-not-means” type of “pacification” is characterized by “irrationality at any cost and at any price.”¹¹⁷

5.2.3 Example: Response to the Pandemic

The RC is a statutory grassroots mass self-governance type organization elected by the residents, not an administrative body. The resources at its disposal mainly come from the deployment of the higher-level street, with very limited human, financial and power resources. On the one hand, the RC has to execute the orders of the higher party and government agencies and is responsible to the top; on the other hand, it has to represent the interests of the RC and serve the residents and is responsible to the bottom, so the RC has to be “doubly attacked” by the higher party and state power and the residents directly. The consequences of the misalignment between the legal status of the RC as a grassroots mass self-governance organization and the actual functions it undertakes are more obvious when faced with emergencies.

In March 2022, Shanghai had another widespread outbreak of Covid-19, and most areas in Shanghai were closed, with RCs becoming the main body of community management and services during the closure period. By the end of 2021, Shanghai had a resident population of 24,894,300, with 107 streets, 106 towns, 2 townships, 4,628 RCs, and 1,556 villagers’ committees in 16 districts, with each RC or villagers’ committee responsible for managing and serving more than 4,000 people on average. Therefore, in addition to the RCs, a large number of volunteers as well as community party organizations, owners’ committees and

¹¹⁷ Zhonghai(钟海). 2016. “权益性治理：城市基层社会治理中的居委会行为逻辑探析 (Rights-based Governance: An Exploration of the Logic of Residents’ Committee Behavior in Urban Grassroots Social Governance).” *走向社会科学(Toward Social Science)* 2016(4):139-143.

sinking party members were involved in the prevention and control of the pandemic.

Since in reality RCs are the end nerve of the state power, all policies and instructions from the party and government organs are ultimately implemented through them. At the same time, they are also responsible for communicating to the residents the requirements of the higher level government (such as informing them of the closure date, nucleic acid testing requirements, etc.) and providing services to the residents in the community during the closure period (such as material distribution, courier pickup, and assistance to the needy, etc.). The committee was overwhelmed.

In addition, the RC is not a statutory government administrative body, and does not have administrative authority, and does not have the administrative coercive and administrative law enforcement powers of the executive authorities. The RC usually works mainly through consultation, mediation and persuasion, which are relatively flexible.

The RCs are at the front line of the pandemic prevention and control, and they are often rigid in receiving prevention and control tasks from the higher levels. At the same time, they have to convey the pandemic prevention and control requirements of the higher government to the residents, and also has to serve the residents' work. Therefore, all the residents; own demands and questions about the government's Covid-19 prevention-related policies and regulations are directed to the RC.

In a state of understaffing and heavy workload, RCs inevitably make mistakes in the midst of their work, and as a result, they have to suffer from the "pestering" of both residents and the higher government. In this round of lockdown, Shanghai citizens have expressed their dissatisfaction through Weibo, WeChat and other Internet platforms about the ineffective prevention and control of the pandemic and

the chaotic situation of the RCs.

Since the personnel, finance and assessment of RCs are controlled by the streets, the implementation of tasks assigned by the higher level of government is the first priority for them than serving the residents. And since RCs do not have decision-making power, this has caused some of them to ignore the interests of the residents and the actual situation when implementing the task from higher level under the goal of “no accident”. In practice, when carrying out pandemic prevention and control tasks at higher levels, the residents’ interests and actual situation were not taken into account, and the rigid approach, or even the “one-size-fits-all” approach, caused residents’ resentment.

For example, during this lockdown period, residents of a community in Pengpu(彭浦镇) Town, Jing’an District, Shanghai, organized a group purchase of live fish, but the group purchase “head” reported to the RC that the group purchase was frozen fish, while “live fish cannot enter the community”. As a result, in front of the community all live fish were drop dead by the group purchase “head” under the supervision of the RC staff.¹¹⁸ There is also a RC in Baoshan(宝山) District, Shanghai, smuggled materials that should have been distributed to residents under the guise of garbage, which was exposed on the spot by residents, who posted the video on their cell phones to the Internet, causing widespread concern.¹¹⁹ Shortly thereafter, the secretary of the party work committee of Zhangmiao(张庙) Street in Baoshan District, the secretary of the RC involved (secretary of the neighborhood party organization), and the director of the RC were all removed from their

¹¹⁸ Sohu. 2022. “上海一小区门口男子徒手摔活鱼，居委会：团长报备的是冷鲜鱼，活鱼不能进小区(Shanghai a Neighborhood Door Man Wrestled Live Fish with His Bare Hands, the Residents’ Committee: the Head Reported that it was Frozen Fish, Live Fish Cannot Enter the Community).” https://www.sohu.com/a/545926890_120099896 (accessed on 11 May 2022).

¹¹⁹ Sohu. 2022. “曝上海一居委会将物资伪装垃圾偷运(Exposure of a Residents’ Committee in Shanghai to Feign Materials as Garbage Smuggling).” https://www.sohu.com/a/542919741_120078003 (accessed on 11 May 2022).

positions.¹²⁰ This is not the first time that a RC chairman and a RC member have been removed from their positions due to improper Covid-19 prevention and control. Previously, a member of a RC in Cao Lu(曹路) Town, Pudong New Area, and the secretary of the general branch of the party and the head of the RC in Jin Ze(金泽) Town, Qing Pu District, had been removed from their posts due to ineffective prevention and control of the disease.¹²¹

In fact, the pattern of interaction between the party, the government, the RCs and the residents in this pandemic response in Shanghai can be divided into two lines. One is “the CCP Central Committee makes decisions on Covid —19 prevention and control — the Shanghai Municipal Government, district governments, and street offices formulate detailed implementation methods and regulations — RCs carry out Covid-19 prevention and control tasks for residents at higher levels — RCs’ implementation of Covid-19 prevention and control policies cause dissatisfaction among residents — Residents express their dissatisfaction through the Internet — The higher level of government dismisses the RC members” and another line is that “The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China makes decisions on the prevention and control of the Covid-19 — The Shanghai Municipal Government, district governments and street offices formulate detailed regulations on how to implement the Covid-19 — The RCs carried out the tasks of pandemic prevention and control at higher levels for residents —The official media publicizes the ‘Covid-19 fighting’ deeds

¹²⁰ Guangming. 2022. “上海3名干部未及时发放物资导致腐烂被免职(Three Cadres in Shanghai Removed for Failing to Distribute Supplies in Time Leading to Rot).” <https://m.gmw.cn/baijia/2022-05/01/1302926790.html> (accessed on 11 May 2022).

¹²¹ Guangming. 2022. “上海3人因在疫情防控中不担当不作为被免职(Three People in Shanghai Removed for Not Taking Charge and Not Acting in Pandemic Prevention and Control).” <https://m.gmw.cn/baijia/2022-04/20/1302908757.html> (accessed on 12 May 2022).

of community members such as RCs.

In the former case, the state “appeased” the residents by “sacrificing” the RCs, while in the latter case, the purpose of rationalizing the state policy was achieved by publicizing the RCs, both of which were essentially aimed at “making the people satisfied with the state.”

5.3 Concluding Remarks

From the above, we can see that the reasons for the formalization of neighborhood committee elections and the weakening of the function of self-governance are diverse and complex. As a result, the political status of neighborhood committees (grassroots self-governance organizations) is not in line with their resources and power, and when special social events, such as the new crown epidemic, break out, neighborhood committees will be unable to respond. When problems arise, the mismatch of power and responsibility makes the neighborhood committee a sacrificial lamb, as it is responsible to the residents and has to carry out tasks assigned by the higher party and government organs.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The introduction of direct elections was seen as an important step in the development of democracy at the grassroots level in China's urban society, as a way to change the one-party ruling CCP's monopoly on personnel power and to provide avenues for individual political participation. Thus, at the beginning of the RC direct election reform, many scholars expected that the coordination of social participation mechanisms and democratic procedures would be an important opportunity for the development of autonomous social power at the grassroots level in China.

However, an analysis of the process of RC elections in Shanghai reveals that although the democratic elections of RCs in Shanghai show a high participation rate, this can hardly be regarded as a sign of progress in the development of urban grassroots democracy. The reason for this is mainly due to three reasons: First, from the very beginning, the democratic election of RCs was a "political task" set by the party and government organizations from the top down. And during the election process, the party and government organizations at the higher levels, through the organization of election committees and the qualification examination of candidates, have been able to assess the "political qualifications" and abilities of candidates for elections. Second, community activists influence residents' voting behavior and manipulate the election results by mobilizing, guiding and imploring them to vote. Third, residents are indifferent to participating in elections and need to be mobilized by activists before they are willing to vote. The residents also lack knowledge of the candidates. As a result, proxy voting has become a common phenomenon in voting. Therefore, it is difficult to consider the direct election of RCs as a process of civil society development.

By analyzing the functions of the RC, it can be concluded that although RCs are statutory grassroots mass self-governance organizations, they have been given political and administrative functions other than self-governance functions, both historically and legally. In practice, the administrative and political functions of RCs have become even more dominant, and the original self-governance functions as grassroots mass self-governance organizations are weakened. Especially in Shanghai, with sufficient financial resources, the community governance model in Shanghai was administrative-oriented from the beginning, and the grid management supported by information technology was mainly control functions. RCs are absorbed into the community's pluralistic governance system, but they still maintain the main role in community governance. Although Shanghai's "6+1" street system reform aims to reduce the administrative burden of RCs and return them to self-governing functions, it has had little effect and has even tended to further strengthen the administerization of RCs in Shanghai. The reason for this is that, under China's oparty-state system, it is difficult for RCs to be separated from the control of the party and government organizations. In terms of administration, street offices control RCs through funding and assessment.

This stems from the fact that, unlike NGOs, RCs, as grassroots self-governing organizations, do not emerge from within society, but are the result of the active construction of state power and institutional design.¹²² With the development of the reform of China's grassroots urban management system, the party-state has not withdrawn from the grassroots communities, but have gradually strengthened their control and infiltration through personnel control, organizational control, and resource control, relying on modern information technology. In terms of the

¹²² Bang Zuo(邦佐). 2003. 居委会与社区治理: 城市社区居委会组织研究(*Residents' Committee and Community Governance: A Study of Residents' Committee Organizations in Urban Communities*), 上海(Shanghai): 上海人民出版社(Shanghai People's Publishing Press): 92.

changes in the positioning and functions of RCs in China's urban management system reform, the status of RCs between residents and the state is awkwardly blurred. At the same time, there is a gap between the RC's statutory status and its actual administrative functions, making the gap between its human and financial power and the resources it needs to perform its political and administrative functions in practice increasingly obvious. The performance of Shanghai's RCs in Covid-19 prevention and control since March 2022 has been widely criticized for this reason.

In response to the political and administrative tasks of the higher levels, the RCs often adopt a "result-oriented" approach to the residents they are supposed to be responsible for, which has led to dissatisfaction among the residents. The government, on the other hand, has adopted the method of removing the RC members from their positions in order to alleviate residents' discontent, and the RCs are thus "aggrieved at both ends" between the higher party and government organs and the residents. In addition, with the reform and opening up of the economic system, after the commercialization of housing in China, with the increasing number of various new community organizations such as the owners' committees, property management companies, and public service organizations, RCs have been facing competition in terms of self-governing and other aspects, and are more caught in the dilemma of administrative and socialization.

In summary, the reform of China's urban grassroots management system, from the street office-residents' committee system to the community system, and then to the grid management and "one network unified management", is in fact a reconstruction of the party-state system in grassroots society, especially in Shanghai, which is supported by abundant financial resources and sophisticated information technology.

The political value of the RC is its function as the "glue" that allows the state

and the residents to avoid direct conflicts and to be ostensibly peaceful. On the one hand, the RC is a vehicle for the state to infiltrate its control structure into the community through party organizations, personnel, and financial resources, to re-establish a close relationship between the party, government, and residents, and to enhance the legitimacy of party-state authority at the grassroots level. On the other hand, by absorbing potential conflicts within the community, the limited autonomy is used to meet the residents' needs for community environment and services, thus blocking the grassroots; dissatisfaction with administrative effectiveness and strengthening the legitimacy of governance. When major emergencies occur, the misalignment between the legal status of RCs and their actual functions is exposed, and the development of social organizations that should be responsible for social assistance and other functions is inhibited due to state control. The consequences of the vacancy of the social space finally fall on the head of every resident.

The changing electoral and functional development and operation of RCs provides a window for analyzing the changing state-society relation under the one-party rule of the CCP. Contrary to the expectations of many people at the beginning of the 21st century when the democratic electoral reform of RCs was underway, with the reform of the urban grassroots management system, the party and state forces continue to penetrate deeper into the grassroots, the social space at the grassroots is continuously squeezed, and the state control over society is further strengthened.

However, in this Covid-19 response, the role of RCs was highlighted, and the contact with residents became very intensive in a short period of time. Residents realized that RCs are organizations closely related to their own interests in case of emergencies, which may strengthen the understanding and importance of RCs, and become more concerned and participatory in the RC election. However, it will not change the control of the party and government over the candidates of RCs through

prior recruitment, and the residents' political participation through democratic elections is still greatly constrained by the strong party-state power. At the same time, the inability of RCs to prevent and control the Covid-19 since the outbreak may inspire the CCP leaders to think about the system of grassroots community governance, but it is more likely to improve the ability of RCs to carry out administrative and political tasks at higher levels through manpower and resource supplements than to return them to their full self-governance attributes. In addition, with the development of organizations such as the owners' committees, neighborhood committees are increasingly marginalized in community autonomy, and the trend of RCs becoming agents of state power at the grassroots level may be further strengthened.

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중국 거민위원회의 선거와 기능 연구 - 상하이시를 중심으로 -

Xinyu Wang

국제학과 지역학과 전공

국제대학원

서울대학교

중국의 거민위원회는 민주적 선거, 민주적 협상, 민주적 의사결정, 민주적 관리, 민주적 감독 등의 자치 기능을 가진 기층 대중 조직이다. 이와 함께 거민위원회는 중국 도시사회관리 체계 중 최하위의 관리·서비스 등의 행정 기능을 맡고 있다. 권위주의적 정치체제인 중국공산당(CCP)의 일당통치에서도 거민위원회는 안정유지·동원·교육 등 정치 기능을 맡아 정권의 안정을 유지하고 통치의 정당성을 높이기 위해 중국 공산당이 사용하는 도구다.

상하이는 중국에서 경제 발전 수준이 가장 높은 도시이다. 이와 함께 중화인민공화국 건국 이후 상하이는 도시 기층 사회 관리 시스템 개혁의 선두에 서서 많은 시범 임무를 맡아 대표적인 ‘상하이 모델’을 형성되었다. 상하이시 거민위원회의 지위와 기능의 발전과 변화는 중국에서 국가와 사회 사이의 역동적인 상호작용과 변화를 관찰하고 중국 공산당이 지배하는 당-국가 정치 체제 하에서 중국 사회의 미래 성장 공간을 예측하는 진입점을 제공할 수 있다.

본 논문은 먼저 거민위원회의 역사적 배경을 소개한 후, 구체적인 사

례를 통해 거민위원회 민주선거의 다양한 과정에서 참여자들의 행동을 분석한다. 다음으로, 본 논문은 현실에서 거민위원회의 자치기능, 정치기능, 행정기능을 탐구한다. 이어 거민위원회의 민주선거가 단순한 ‘민주쇼’에 그친 원인과 결과, 자치기능의 정치적·행정적 침해 등을 분석한다. 결론적으로, 본 논문은 사회 기층 민주와 자유의 발전보다, 거민위원회의 발전과 변화는 사실 국가 권력이 도시 사회의 기층에 침투하여 점유하고 있으며, 기층 사회 자유 공간을 지속적으로 옥죄고 있으며, 정부에 대한 국가 통제를 강화하고 있음을 반영한다고 주장한다. 마지막으로 본 논문은 선거의 잠재적 방향과 향후 거민위원회의 기능에 대한 전망을 제공한다.

키워드 : 거민위원회, 국가-사회관계, 도시 관리체제, 기층 민주, 사구
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