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Party Building Leads the Standardised Election of Owners' Committees—A Multi-Case Analysis Based on the Embedding of Party Organisations in Democratic Procedures

Zijie Xia

School of Political Science and Law, Jiangxi Normal University, Nanchang, China
291139584@qq.com

Abstract. In the face of the problems arising from the process of owners' committee election, this paper focuses on the practical mechanism and effectiveness of the party organisation embedded in the owners' committee election process, based on the theory of procedural democracy and embedded governance, and adopts the case study method to explore how the party organisation is embedded in the whole process of democratic election. The study shows that through value embedding, system embedding, organisational embedding and personnel embedding, the Party organisation promotes more scientific and standardised property owners' committee elections, and promotes grassroots governance towards success.

Keywords: party building leadership, community governance, property committee election

1. Introduction

The deepening of urban housing system reforms has pushed the community governance structure from a "unit system" to a new model based on a "community system". In this process, the urban community space is gradually divided into private and public spheres, and the demand for connection between private property rights and public governance has given rise to owners' self-governance organisations, and owners' committees (hereinafter referred to as "Owners' Committees") have come into being. As one of the core subjects of community governance, the role of OCs has become increasingly prominent in the pattern of shared governance, not only as a key organisation for safeguarding the rights and interests of property owners, but also as an important guarantee for promoting grassroots democracy and enhancing the effectiveness of governance.2021 In April 2021, the Opinions on Strengthening the Modernisation of Grassroots Governance and Governance Capability explicitly proposed fostering grassroots social organisations of public welfare, service and mutual assistance, and supporting organisations with standardised management and sound party organisations to develop and promote their public welfare, service and mutual assistance. organisations with standardised management and sound party organisation to undertake government transfer functions. The Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee further stressed the need to improve the mechanism of mass self-governance led by grass-roots Party organisations, perfect the democratic system at the grass-roots level, and broaden the channels for various types of organisations and the public to participate in governance. It can be seen that

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strengthening the construction of industry committees and stimulating the enthusiasm of owners to participate has become a national consensus to promote the construction of grassroots governance community.

However, in practice, the standard operation and governance effectiveness of the industry committee still faces many challenges, especially in the election stage. Election is related to the legitimacy of the board, the trust of owners and the selection of governance talents. Existing research and practice show that the high procedural threshold, difficulty in selecting candidates, and lack of multi-dimensional coordination constrain the effectiveness of the subsequent governance of property management committees.

Specifically. Owners' committees are faced with the dual challenges of complex procedures and operational difficulties. First, the statutory threshold is high. According to Article 278 of the Civil Code, the convening of the meeting must meet the statutory threshold of "two-thirds" participation in the voting of the area of the proprietary portion and the number of owners, which is difficult to realise in districts with a large number of owners, unequal occupancy rates or high mobility. Secondly, the process of the industry committee is relatively cumbersome, the election process is cumbersome and professional, including the establishment of the election working group, voter registration, notice of meeting, candidate review, voting and objection processing, etc., any omission may affect the effectiveness of the election. Thirdly, manpower and resource constraints. The organisation work is time-consuming and heavy, requiring a large amount of manpower to "go door-to-door", but due to the low willingness of owners to participate, it is difficult to recruit volunteers; in addition, financial support is also required for venues, printing, public announcements and voting systems. Fourthly, the risk of compliance is obvious, as the organisation is mostly handled by temporary owners' representatives, who lack legal and deliberative experience, and are prone to flaws that may lead to owners' dissatisfaction or even legal disputes, resulting in invalid election results or long-term non-implementation.

Secondly, the "candidate problem" throughout the work of the industry committee, centred on the "difficult to recruit, difficult to select, difficult to employ" three dilemmas. "Difficulty in recruiting" is due to the fact that the work of the Board is a public service for volunteers, without material incentives and career paths, it is difficult to attract more professionals and workers; "Difficulty in selecting" is due to the fact that there are different levels of competence and motivation among the candidates, and without a set of scientific assessment and screening system, the result is often a lack of scientific and professional knowledge and experience. In the absence of a scientific assessment and screening system, the result will often be some candidates who may not be conducive to the normal operation of the property service management and the Board into the Board team; "difficult to employ" is reflected in the even if the establishment of the Board, but also due to the lack of professional competence of the members of the Board and time and energy constraints and other issues will lead to inefficiency in the work of the Board, the governance of the results are not good! The "difficulty of employing people" is reflected in the fact that even if the owners' committee is established, it will be inefficient and ineffective due to the lack of professional ability and limited time and energy of the owners' committee members.

Again, there is a lack of coordination and external support. Owners can not rely on their own strength of the owners of the election of the Board can be elected, but need to be property companies, community neighbourhood committees, the street office of the joint guidance can be completed. In reality, due to the poor interface between the various units and the lack of clarity of authority and responsibility, the election of the owners' committee is often faced with the situation of no one to guide, no one to assist, and therefore often "difficult to produce.

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The above problems not only hinder the legal establishment and survival of building committees, but also greatly restrict their actual governance effectiveness. The disordered operation of the election stage will lead to the difficulty of owners' consensus, the low rate of participation in public affairs, and ultimately the ineffective performance of the management of the board. Therefore, it is of great significance to explore the path of standardised election in order to stimulate the enthusiasm of owners to participate in the election, smooth the implementation of the election process, improve the mechanism of selecting and employing people, enhance the governance capacity of the board, and even develop grass-roots democracy.

2. Literature review and theoretical basis

Existing research on industry committee governance has explored the influence of external factors mainly from two perspectives.

First, from the perspective of party building leadership, studies emphasize how grassroots party organizations provide support to BCs by leveraging party networks to channel resources and enhance organizational and operational capacity [1]. Party organizations are seen as fulfilling roles such as providing platforms, mediation, correction, checks, and supervision, thereby leading multi-dimensional collaborative governance. These analyses draw on theories of state-society relations, embeddedness, and meta-governance to explain how the Party fosters new collaborative governance dynamics through organizational strength, resource integration, and conflict resolution [2].

Second, from the perspective of governance structure, research highlights the allocation of authority and responsibility among community actors. Some scholars stress the importance of coordinating relations between owners' committees and neighborhood committees to achieve effective governance [3], while others focus on guiding social organizations to innovate in community participation and improve trust structures between residents and governance bodies [4]. Additional studies recognize the government's role in shaping social order by providing rules, knowledge, and institutional frameworks to embed various social organizations within the governance system [5]. Another strand of research, based on the "Troika" synergy approach, calls for clarifying responsibilities between property companies and property management committees to prevent overlaps in functions and jurisdictions [6].

While these studies offer valuable insights into how external factors enhance BC governance, most focus on the post-establishment phase. Research on BC elections remains limited, often emphasizing procedural aspects such as the ritualistic function of elections [7] or variations in election mechanisms [8], with little attention given to the standardization of BC formation. This study addresses this gap by integrating procedural democracy and embeddedness theory to construct a framework of "Party building embedded in BC electoral procedure," using BC elections as an entry point to explore how party leadership can facilitate efficient and standardized committee formation.

2.1. Procedural democracy theory

Democracy is a shared aspiration of humanity. Procedural democracy, a key branch of democratic theory, treats democracy as a process rather than a specific outcome, and emphasizes five elements: political equality, broad participation, procedural rule of law, transparency, and neutrality. In China, the election of a property management committee follows procedures set by the Property Management Regulations and the Civil Code, comprising four main stages: forming a preparatory group, nominating candidates, owner voting (requiring dual two-thirds approval), and public vote-

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counting with result registration. This framework is designed to align with procedural democratic principles and provide a lawful structure for grassroots self-governance. In practice, however, applying procedural democracy to committee elections faces challenges such as low voter turnout—which can prevent elections from meeting legal thresholds—and registration issues that hinder formal establishment. Given the limitations of a purely procedural approach in China's context, this study introduces Party-building values into each stage of the democratic process to develop a more practicable theoretical model.

2.2. Embeddedness theory

The concept of "embeddedness," introduced by Polanyi and advanced by Granovetter, posits that economic activities are inherently situated within social and institutional contexts [9]. This notion has since been extended to describe how political actors—such as party organizations—integrate into and influence social structures [10]. In China, the embedding of Party organizations into grassroots governance represents a micro-level form of "state embedded in society." This occurs through two main channels: establishing grassroots Party structures to link the state with communities and facilitate resource distribution, and exercising ideological guidance to align community development with Party principles [11]. The Party's embedding pathways include: Institutional embedding: shaping rules, assessments, and organizational systems [12]; Organizational embedding: mobilizing self-governing bodies and social groups [13]; Value embedding: disseminating Party concepts and socialist values via community activities and publicity; Personnel embedding: appointing representatives to embody Party authority in governance bodies [14].

2.3. Party embeddedness in democratic procedures

Based on procedural democracy and embeddedness theory, this study proposes integrating party organizational power into democratic procedures to facilitate effective Building Committee elections and select qualified candidates recognized by both owners and party organizations. The embedding mechanism operates as follows: Vote-raising stage, Value embedding through publicity and education to raise awareness and guide participation. Candidate selection, Institutional embedding via standardized assessment and screening processes. Voting stage, Organizational embedding by mobilizing volunteers and community forces for ballot collection. Vote-counting stage, Personnel embedding with party-authorized supervision to ensure openness and fairness.

Through this approach, the party organization sustains procedural momentum while adhering strictly to democratic processes—achieving precise, limited intervention at each stage. The specific mechanism is illustrated in Figure 1.

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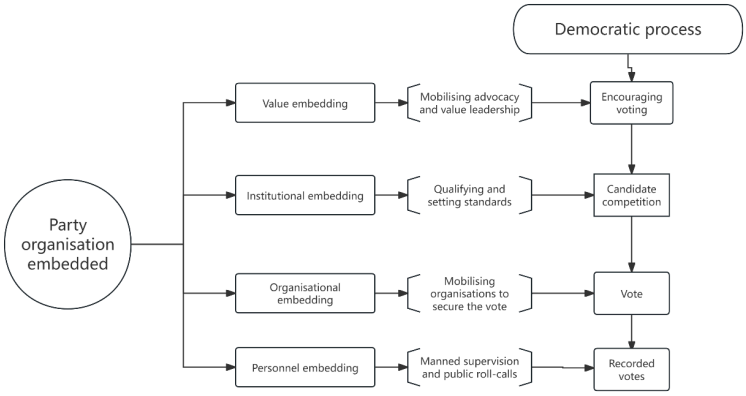


Figure 1. Framework diagram for analysing the embedding of party organisations in democratic procedures

3. Case analysis

In the current practice of community governance, the organic embedding of party organisations in democratic election procedures has become an important path to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of property committee elections. A series of creative practices have emerged in many places across the country. Based on the existing materials, this study extracts representative typical cases from different regions and different election processes to systematically demonstrate the theoretical feasibility and practical effect of embedding party organisations in the BC election.

3.1. Value embedding in election voting

Case 1: In Shanghai's Community K, home to around 40,000 residents, the Party branch led BC election efforts through a "value-embedded" approach. Online, they used WeChat groups and official accounts to broadcast election information; offline, banners and volunteer teams distributed leaflets and answered questions door-to-door. This boosted both awareness and credibility. The community also launched the "Partners for a Better Community" initiative, pooling professionals from property management, engineering, and legal services, while inviting housing authorities and legal experts to guide the election process, laying a solid foundation for all preparatory work.

Case 2: Community S in Shanghai, divided into four neighborhood committees, began election planning a year in advance. The community established a three-level working group and deployed over 200 cadres for household-level mobilization. The area was divided into micro-grids—each covering about 350 households—with a Party branch and grid leader in each to handle communication and appeals. Issues raised by residents were first addressed at the micro-grid level, with unresolved matters escalated to the neighborhood Party branch, ensuring orderly expression and support consolidation.

3.2. System-embedded election competitive voting

Case 1: In competitive elections, Community K adopts a "system-embedded" approach to screening candidates. The community party branch is responsible for the formulation of candidates for the election prerequisites test and the title, the design of the industry committee work in the common examination questions to test the candidates for the industry committee's job responsibilities, work norms and property management and other aspects of the degree of understanding. This system

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design not only reflects the candidates' professionalism and willingness to perform their duties, but also enables the Election Committee to clearly grasp the specific relationship between people and things, which is conducive to arranging the right people to the right positions; and those who are capable of doing so also have a clear understanding of their own abilities and qualities under the system to see if they are suitable for the requirements of the Board, thus enabling the entire team of candidates to be improved as a whole.

Case 2: Shanghai S community through the introduction of expert review system, invite professional legal advisers and the relevant functional departments of the district legal experts to set up a special team, the whole process to provide appropriate professional training, provide professional guidance and legal support; at the same time, in the replacement of written materials provided to the owners of all the proposed matters, are to be the rule of law to ensure that the rule of law safeguards the team's prior professional review, to ensure that the contents involved all the contents are in line with the requirements of laws and regulations to ensure that the procedures are legal and the wording is standardised to prevent administrative reconsideration or administrative litigation to the maximum extent possible.

3.3. Organising embedded voting

Case 1: Due to the large number of people voting in the BC election and the different working hours of the residents, it was difficult to vote in the community. To this end, the Shanghai C community to use an "organisational embedded" approach, by the community party organisation to mobilise in-service party members, community police, volunteers, building group leaders and other forces, divided into different groups to issue ballots, and to take a layered management, the approach of the package to the household. At night and on weekends, people are sent to the door to distribute the ballots. As most of the young owners work during the day, the staff took the initiative to adjust their working hours, and many cadres of the neighbourhood committees continued to work until after nine o'clock in the evening. In order to successfully complete the task of voting, the preparatory team repeatedly communicated with, and even actively contacted tenants and assisted in conveying the owners, stressing that the election is about their personal rights and interests. In the end, the voting ratio and the proportion of voting area among the 2,151 owners in the community exceeded two-thirds, successfully fulfilling the legal requirements and completing the voting procedure successfully.

Case 2: Community S in Shanghai relies on the three-tier structure of "neighbourhood - community grid leader - community grid member" to form a coherent organisational system of "neighbourhood party branch - micro-grid party branch - party group - building party group - all party members". "A coherent organisational system has been formed. From the announcement, door-to-door ballots to communication and explanation, co-ordination of the four neighbourhoods under the four, through the building group leader, neighborhood cadres, street social workers, community owners to form a group, one person to take the ballot box, one person to take the owners of the base book, one person to take the voting ballots, one person is responsible for the explanation, more than 100 groups to collect the ballots, so that the residents can participate in the vote, and ultimately, the industry committee election to recycle the votes accounted for the total number of owners of 71.54%, accounting for the total area of 72.87%, in line with the building 72.87% of the total area of the building, in line with the quorum requirements, the 15 members running for election were more than 80% of the consent vote.

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3.4. Personnel embedded in the election counting

Case 1: To address the challenge of collecting votes from residents with varying schedules, Community C in Shanghai adopted an "organizational embedded" approach. The community Party organization mobilized in-service Party members, volunteers, and building leaders to deliver ballots in groups, using a door-to-door strategy during evenings and weekends. Committee cadres extended their working hours until late at night to reach young owners. Through persistent communication—including contact with tenants—the preparatory team emphasized the election's relevance to homeowners' rights. Ultimately, participation rates among the 2,151 owners met the two-thirds legal threshold, ensuring a valid election.

Case 2: Community S established a three-tier organizational structure—"neighborhood–grid leader–grid member"—integrated with Party branches at each level. Over 100 teams were formed for ballot collection, each comprising personnel responsible for carrying the ballot box, verifying the homeowner registry, distributing ballots, and providing explanations. This systematic effort led to a 71.54% voter turnout by headcount and 72.87% by property area, fulfilling quorum requirements, with over 80% approval for all 15 candidates.

4. Common experiences

Based on the above case studies, it can be concluded that to effectively promote the smooth running of the BC election, the organisers need a considerable degree of professional competence as well as strong organisational and mobilisation skills. Based on the author's observation and research, the key reason why party organisations can play a significant role in the embedding process is that they make full use of their own organisational characteristics to introduce multi-party resources into the BC election, breaking the predicament of the BC election, and making the election a public affair in which all parties in the community participate together. Generally speaking, the common experience of party organisations in promoting the standardisation of BC elections through embedding includes the following aspects:

4.1. Party organisations play a central role in leadership

Whether or not the election of an industrial committee can be promoted smoothly lies in whether or not the party organisation is bold enough to lead and whether or not it is able to play a central role in leadership in a practical manner. Whether in the early stage of publicity and mobilisation, or in the later stage of system implementation, ballot paper collection and vote counting supervision, if the Party organisation fails to take up the responsibility of co-ordinating the whole situation, the election work will easily fall into an arduous situation. For example, large-scale publicity and door-to-door ballot collection operations must rely on extensive "door-to-door" visits to ensure that the election covers all residents. Such time-consuming, labour-intensive and difficult tasks require strong organisational drive to ensure implementation. In China's current community governance structure, only the party organisation can effectively promote the implementation of such work by virtue of its organisational authority and mobilisation mechanism.

4.2. Adept at introducing professional power

As a channel and hub for upward and downward linkage of resources, party organisations can embed corresponding professional power in the election work. For example, in important aspects such as election preparation, candidate qualification examination and formulation of rules of

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procedure, the party organisation can invite a team of legal advisers and professionals from relevant functional departments to provide professional and technical guidance. This practice essentially builds an "Election Advisory Panel", which can provide professional guidance and supervision on ballot design, voting process, confirmation of results, etc., to make up for the owners' deficiencies in self-organisation and enhance the legitimacy and credibility of the election.

4.3. Organise and mobilise different community bodies

The party organisation plays the function of co-ordination and actively mobilises the participation of multiple bodies in the community, and builds an effective platform for co-operation and co-rule by linking up different bodies such as neighbourhood committees, property companies, owners' representatives, community social organisations and volunteers. The co-operation of all subjects can significantly alleviate the problems of insufficient personnel and lack of resources faced during the election process. Through the unification of command, the existing resources in the community can be fully integrated to strengthen the sense of responsibility and participation of all kinds of subjects, so as to focus on promoting the election and forming a collaborative force.

5. Conclusion and discussion

The formation and standardization of owners' committees represent both a practice in grassroots democracy and an effort to foster effective community governance. Current explorations in party-led standardization of committee elections offer valuable cases for studying socialist grassroots democracy with Chinese characteristics. By embedding party involvement into each procedural step of democratic elections, the Party helps address key challenges such as difficulties in forming committees and low standardization, thereby establishing a more orderly and institutionalized framework.

Leveraging its organizational strength, institutional authority, and social credibility, the Party supports the complex election process, enhances the legitimacy and quality of member selection, and helps form a competent and widely recognized committee.

However, such embedded governance should avoid becoming administrative or overly intrusive, as excessive intervention may undermine owners' autonomy, breed distrust, and contradict the original goal of promoting grassroots democracy [15]. The Party should adhere to democratic procedures, guiding rather than controlling, supporting rather than directing, and supervising without interfering. Through such precise embedding, it can improve the overall quality of committee governance without compromising self-governance.

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