

How is Property Autonomy Possible? —— Take J Community in Hohhot as an Example

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Abstract. This study takes J Community in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia as the research object, analyzing the status and changes of property management mode in J Community since 2000. It is found that the residents' "quasi-administrative" property autonomy management mode has been formed in the transition from unit system to community system in J Community. The realization of the autonomy model involves residents, residents' representatives, service providers and other parties, which is more cost-saving than the social property model. Moreover, the semi-acquaintance-style structure of J Community based on the industry-oriented crowd is also easy to manage autonomously. However, the study also found that residents' representatives bear a considerable amount of responsibility, and the inclination of responsibility to residents' representatives reflects the defects of the existing autonomy model of J Community.

Keywords: Residents' self-government; Unit systems; Community system.

1. The current situation of domestic research

From the planned economy era of last century to the socialist market economy era of this century, China's community construction has experienced a transformation from "unit system" management to "community system" management. Under the background of transformation, some scholars believe that the current urban grassroots governance in China can be roughly divided into two different levels: "resident autonomy" and "community co-governance" [1]. Some scholars also expect that after the transformation from unit system to community system is completed, the establishment of community residents' autonomy system will be a core link of urban community development in the 21st century [2].

By consulting the literature, it is found that the researches of Chinese scholars in the related fields of "resident autonomy" mainly focus on the ways of production, the existing autonomy dilemma and so on.

1.1 The way of autonomy

Some scholars believe that there are usually two ways to produce it. One is active emergence, which is more common in developed countries in Europe; Second, it is passive, generally established when the integration ability of grassroots government is weak or community co-governance cannot take shape [1]. Some scholars also believe that the implementation of "residents' autonomy" is because community residents are still accustomed to the "all-inclusive and all-in-one" life thinking under the unit system, and it is difficult to adapt to the socialized and market-oriented management mode brought by neighborhood committees. Therefore, they tend to set up residents' autonomy organizations through internal elections [3].

1.2 The existing dilemma of autonomy

To explore the dilemma faced by China's residents' autonomy, Li Lulu and other scholars have found that there are "residents' low willingness to participate and lack of public spirit" in China's residents' autonomy according to the binary Logistic regression analysis model [4]. In addition, the problem of "continuation of managed thinking" is prominent, which is different from the foreign power-centered participation model. Chinese residents usually use individualized strategies to obtain resources, and collective participation behavior is relatively lacking [5].

2. Research methods

This project adopts the method of in-depth interview as the main method and participation observation as the supplement for field investigation.

2.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth interview is also called semi-structured interview. The advantage of this method is that researchers can adjust questions and responses at any time according to the state of respondents. Before the formal in-depth interview, the researcher made a pre-investigation, made a field visit to J Community, and got in touch with some residents, so as to know the basic situation of J Community. In the pre-investigation stage, the researcher found that the subjects and events involved in J Community residents' autonomy have always been in a state of dynamic development and change for more than ten years. In order to understand the reason of J-community autonomy mode and clarify its operation mode, it is more helpful for researchers to grasp the time and space situation and sort out J-community autonomy mode from a historical perspective by adopting the method of "in-depth interview".

2.2 Participation in observation

Observation is more conducive to grasping the authenticity of this field. Researchers will go deep into the community, and explore the implementation process of the existing autonomy model by staying in the daily life of the community residents, participating in the meeting of the owners' committee, and observing the handling process of community affairs.

3. From unit management to residents' autonomy

3.1 The community under the unit management mode

The Finance Bureau of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has successively built four communities for the employees and their families to live in. J Community is one of the largest welfare housing units, covering an area of 5,320 square meters, which was completed in 2000. In 2000, almost all residents lived in the community. A total of 75 families of the Finance Bureau live in the community, with a population of 151. J Community is a typical old residential area. There are no elevator facilities in the residential area, but the surrounding environment is convenient. What's more, there are shopping malls, vegetable markets, supermarkets and parks. There are 20 bus lines and No.1 and No.2 subways in the residential area less than 500m, extending in all directions.

Once the J Community is completed, it will be directly managed by the unit of Hohhot Finance Bureau, and the unit will implement the "all-in-one" management method. The maintenance of public facilities and water and electricity in residents' homes in the residential area will all be handled by the unit affairs center. The unit affairs center of the Finance Bureau specially set up one person to make overall arrangements for the management of J residential area, and the financial department is responsible for handling the collection and expenditure statistics of property management fees. The property management fees collected by the Finance Bureau and the self-subsidized fees are mainly used in three aspects. First, it is mainly used for the management and maintenance of public areas in the community, mainly including the employment cost of the concierge in the community, the cleaning cost and the maintenance cost of public facilities. Second, it is used for the maintenance of residential homes. Third, large expenditures, such as the construction of large facilities in residential areas.

3.2 Management changes hands

3.2.1 Consideration of management and abandonment

With the deepening reform of the state system, capable state-owned enterprises and institutions continue to subsidize the original unit property (Wan Lei, 2020). There are still many units that can't

afford the management of staff quarters and give up the management of quarters. From 2000 to 2007, due to the rising prices, the unit management model had a fiscal deficit. Therefore, since 2007, the Finance Bureau has increased the property management fee of the community where the unit welfare housing distribution is located, from the initial 2 cents per square meter per year to 4 cents per square meter per year. Even if the property management fee charged by the unit is twice the previous fee, it still needs a subsidy of 10,000 yuan from the unit. Due to the problem of funds, the person in charge of the unit chose to give up the management of J Community.

Under the background of the transformation from planned economy to market economy, the shift from unit management to social management has become the policy trend since 2000. At this time, the units no longer have legitimate reasons and reasonable names to subsidize the property management fees of the residential areas, and at that time, most of the residential areas were gradually transforming from unit management to social management, so the units of the Finance Bureau also decided to deliver the J residential area to the society. At the same time, the established owners' committee thinks that the property company belongs to the developer, and the interests involved are complicated. Choosing the community to manage the property itself will reduce all kinds of conflicts caused by interests. Therefore, J Community chose to conduct property autonomy.

3.2.2 Affinity and Game of Related Parties

In 2008, the person in charge of the unit officially decided to get rid of the community management and deliver the J Community to the society. There are two ways to deliver the community to the society: docking the property company or delivering it to the relevant community departments for management.

a. "Unit" and "Property company"

Due to the small scale of the community, small number of households and insufficient funds, it is impossible to hire a property company alone, so it is necessary to dock with an external property company. The financial bureau has consulted dozens of property companies, but the property companies are unwilling to provide property services in J Community because of their unprofitable, and the delivery of property means that the burden of residents in the community will double. Under the above two reasons, it is not feasible to deliver the community to the property company for management.

b. "Unit" and "Community"

From 2008 to 2009, the units of the Finance Bureau launched a tug-of-war with the community. At first, the community objected to the acceptance of J Community, but under the influence of national policies and the negotiation conditions between both parties, J Community was successfully delivered to the community.

An important reason for the success of the delivery is that the old residential area renovation policy provides certain construction funds. As early as 2007, China started the renovation project of old residential areas, but before, the focus was mainly on shanty towns and dilapidated houses, and the renovation of old residential areas progressed slowly. In the slow progress stage of the old community renovation (2007-2015), the J Community was included in the old community renovation category, and the comprehensive renovation project began.

During the transaction negotiation between the Financial Bureau unit and the community, the community proposed to take the idle second-floor house in the yard as an exchange condition, and at the same time, it could agree to take over the J Community while obtaining the right to use the second-floor house. Therefore, the person in charge of the unit held the owners' meeting to discuss the countermeasures with the residents of J Community. The person in charge of the unit proposed to turn the second-floor housing reform into a community base, and transfer the right to use it to the community. Most of the residents disagreed, but the person in charge of the unit of the Finance Bureau did not wait for a complete consensus, and he handed over the right to use the second-floor housing to the community. The community agreed to take over the J community and asked the unit to provide financial support for the renovation of the second-floor house. Negotiate with both sides of the

community, reach a certain transaction amount, and after the Finance Bureau allocates funds to the community, it will completely withdraw from the management of J Community.

4. Property Autonomy

4.1 The formation conditions

This survey found that the existence of the property autonomy model in J Community needs certain forming conditions, which are linked from outside to inside. Only by meeting these basic conditions can the orderly self-management within the residential area be realized.

4.1.1 The scale and personnel structure of the community

J Community can realize the mode of residential property autonomy, first of all, it must have some external conditions. There are 75 households in the residential area J, which is small in scale and small in number. The residential area belongs to the welfare housing distribution of the unit, and the residents are all employees and their families. The residents are familiar with each other with a high degree, so they belong to the industry-oriented crowd. J Community's small-scale and semi-acquaintance-style simple structure lays the foundation for residents to form a good self-management model.

4.1.2 Responsible owners' committee

After meeting the external conditions, it also needs to meet the requirements of the internal leader. Owners' committee is the intrinsic key to the success of self-management of residential property. The members of the owners' committee are unpaid, and some of them are part-time. They are responsible for collecting all the property fees of residents in the community to build and manage the community. The unpaid members of the owners' committee are motivated by their dedication to public affairs and the trust and admiration of residents. Most of them are selfless and serve the residents silently. The residents are very satisfied with their work, so they actively cooperate with their work, which is conducive to the self-management of the community and makes it possible for the property autonomy of the old community.

4.1.3 Residents' cooperation

It is not enough to have a responsible owners' committee, because this is only a small number of people in the community, and most of them are still residents. Only when residents cooperate and assist the work of the owners' committee and jointly contribute to the governance of public affairs in the community can the owners' committee provide better services for residents.

However, even with this series of forming conditions, there is no guarantee that a community will achieve a good autonomy effect. The most important thing is the active cooperation of all interactive parties. Only by actively solving problems can the self-managed property autonomy model be realized.

4.2 The multi-governance mechanism of the property

The realization of property autonomy involves different subjects, mainly including residents, owners' committees, residents' representatives and people who directly provide property services. It is found that the property autonomy model of J Community is mainly developed according to two clues: "the election mechanism of the owners' committee" and "the interaction among residents' representatives, residents and service providers".

4.2.1 The emergence of "delegates"

a. The election mechanism of the owners' committee

After the Financial Bureau unit took off the administration of J Community, the neighborhood office where J Community is located asked J Community to set up an owners' committee for the record. This has become an opportunity for the emergence of "owners' committee" in J Community,

and also laid an organizational foundation for the formation of "quasi-administrative" property autonomy mode in J Community after the withdrawal of unit management. On the day of the election, the owners of each household gathered in the meeting room of the neighborhood committee to democratically vote for the residents' representatives. The voting is in the form of one vote per household, and the owners of each household can vote "yes", "no" or abstain from voting. After statistics, a total of five residents' representatives were produced. These five residents' representatives formed the first-generation owners' committee of J Community, which acted as a property company and managed the community. Among the five people who initially served as resident representatives, all the elected resident representatives came from the Financial Bureau, and most of them won a large number of votes and the trust of most residents because of their excellent qualities such as charisma, seriousness and responsibility.

b. "Excellent and reliable" resident representatives

By visiting a resident representative in J Community, the researcher learned that a representative who can be praised by residents needs certain conditions and qualities, and the researcher summarized it as "excellent and reliable". In terms of "Excellence", the current resident representative was originally an employee of the Financial Bureau unit, and his ability was very outstanding during his work, and he had a wide network of contacts. When residents encounter repair problems in water, electricity and gas, he can find suitable personnel for repair. In terms of "reliability", he said that he would not refuse others, and would always try his best to accomplish what everyone expected him to accomplish. Outstanding working ability, wide contacts, reliability and other excellent qualities have become an important reason for this resident representative to stand out from the owners' committee and be widely recognized by residents. The effect of his charming personality has also ensured the stability and autonomy of the community for a long time.

4.2.2 Residents' representatives, residents and service providers interact with each other

The process of property autonomy needs the participation of all parties, and it can only be realized through constant games. The interaction and participation of residents' representatives, residents and service providers together constitute a relatively closed autonomy model.

a. Residents and resident representatives

In the two-way interaction between residents and residents' representatives, residents play a more "supervisor" role, supervising and evaluating the residents' representatives' decision-making in dealing with the affairs of J Community. At the same time, it is also a problem provider, reflecting the problems existing in the community and their own homes to residents' representatives. While resident representatives act as mediators and problem solvers.

Every time the J Community encounters a thorny problem, the owners' committee will be held, and each household will send the owners to attend the meeting. At this time, the owners will act as decision makers and participants to make suggestions for the community affairs. When the owners' committee makes a final plan for an event, the owners become evaluators of decision-making to evaluate the plan of the owners' committee and point out the shortcomings, and the owners' committee modifies and perfects the plan. In daily life, the owner acts as a supervisor and supervises the work of the owners' committee. If some owners report that the owners' committee is not serious and responsible for its work, the owners' committee needs to organize another owners' meeting to discuss the future of a certain member, so as to ensure the working efficiency and quality of the owners' committee.

b. Residents and service providers

There are two main sources of service providers in the J Community. One is the concierge who is stationed in the community, responsible for controlling the access control of the community, cleaning up the sanitary environment in the public areas of the community, and also responsible for simple electric power maintenance. Second, when residents encounter major maintenance problems, residents' representatives hire professional maintenance personnel from outside. As professional maintenance personnel always interact with residents through the medium of "residents' representatives", there is little interaction with residents themselves, so it will not be discussed here.

The biggest difference between the concierge and social property companies in the J Community lies in whether there are human association with residents. Because the service providers' basic necessities of life in the community, which is highly coincident with the residents in time and space, the concierge and the residents in the community are more like neighbors than employees. There will be a certain interaction between the two, and it is easier for residents in the community to recognize the concierge. At the same time, residents, as the service users, will supervise the concierge to some extent, and have the right to reflect to the residents' representatives whether the concierge is suitable for staying on.

c. Resident representatives and service providers

Compared with residents, residents' representatives have closer contact with service providers. In the interaction between residents' representatives and service providers, residents' representatives, as a "seeker", should find a relatively suitable service provider along their personal network according to residents' expectations, which means hiring a service provider with strong working ability at a relatively cheap price. All the concierges in the J Community are hired by the owners' committee, and the residents' representatives coordinate and determine the concierge's salary according to the concierge's workload, market conditions, the surrounding communities and residents' recognition. Most of the concierges recruited in J Community are composed of husband and wife, which is a form of family security, that is, all the families live in the concierge and work together. Moreover, each generation of concierges has considerable homogeneity: their scale is greater than or equal to 2 people, they have no fixed property in the city, their family conditions are poor, and they are older. However, the concierge who successfully applied for J Community can live at the house of the community, and the cost of water and electricity is exempted, which has great attraction for the elderly families with poor family conditions.

4.3 The dilemma faced by property autonomy

Due to the individualization and fragmentation of the community structure, there are difficulties in property management, which mainly include two aspects:

4.3.1 Difficulties faced by residents

Basically, all the residents' problems are solved by the owners' committee. Most of the water, electricity and heating maintenance problems at home are repaired by repairmen recommended by residents' representatives. Most residents do not solve their own problems, and rely on the owners' committee as an intermediary, thus losing the ability of "self-help" and completely relying on "other assistance" to solve them, which is not conducive to the establishment and improvement of a good residents' autonomy model.

4.3.2 Difficulties faced by residents' representatives

Residents face many responsibilities, but little power. In the past, most residents in the community were employees of the Finance Bureau, who knew each other and were easy to manage. With the change of time, the living members of the community are complicated nowadays, with two thirds of the rooms rented or sold, and only more than 20 old residents are left. Faced with the complicated personnel situation, some residents blindly believe that residents' representatives are obliged to serve them, so property management becomes a difficult problem. In addition, there is an obvious tendency of responsibility in the owners' committee. Although there are many members in the owners' committee now, in fact, all of them are mainly responsible by one person. Moreover, most of the responsibilities are inclined to the residents' representatives, and the community neighborhood committees share less responsibilities, often paying more attention to the work of propaganda and political forms.

5. Conclusion

The property management of newly built residential quarters in Hohhot is relatively perfect, but the problems of property management of old residential quarters, especially the self-built dormitory quarters of units, are prominent. In this investigation, as a relatively successful residential area with self-government, the property income and expenditure of J Community are basically flat, and its property self-government mode has the characteristics of "quasi-administration", that is, administrative hierarchical management exists, and democratic consultation is adopted when solving problems, but it is still a situation where a few people decide the final measures.

The "quasi-administrative" autonomy model of J Community is that a certain number of residents jointly manage social affairs in public areas according to certain laws and regulations. They share a set of symbolic value system internally within a certain area, and coordinate the interaction with external parties, thus forming an autonomous and non-profit "quasi-administrative" autonomy model. From the vertical time dimension, this kind of "quasi-administrative" mode is reflected in the election of each generation of owners' committees: in the process of each household sending its head of household to participate in the voting, the hierarchical relationship that used to be in the workplace gradually entered the election mechanism. Although the election is in a democratic form, hierarchical infiltration cannot be avoided. From the perspective of horizontal management, the "quasi-administrative" mode is reflected in the inclination of responsibility to residents' representatives: once the owners' committee is born, residents will push the responsibility to the committee, and the power and responsibility within the owners' committee cannot be completely equal. Or because individual residents' representatives lack the sense of responsibility, or because some people are marginalized by the organization, a "quasi-administrative" responsibility distribution situation is formed within the owners' committee, and finally only a few people assume the management responsibility.

Property autonomy is one of the ways to manage old residential areas. With the successful introduction of property autonomy in some residential areas, this way is highly respected by the government, and more residential areas are willing to try this novel way to manage residential areas. However, not all communities are suitable for property autonomy, and there are still some unresolved problems in the property autonomy model, which need to be further improved.

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