

23 Interview with municipal politicians, April 16, 2002.

24 Interview with municipal politician, April 18, 2003.

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6 The multiple uses of local networks

State cultivation of neighborhood social capital in China and Taiwan¹

Benjamin L. Read

Ding Xiaoli is a gaunt but lively woman in her mid-sixties; Bai Zhengmin is a jowly and calm but opinionated man of about the same age.² She has retired from her job at a television parts factory; he from his position in a government forestry bureau. Both were born outside the capital city, but moved there in adulthood and have lived in their current neighborhoods for more than two decades. Both serve as leaders of these neighborhoods, in Beijing and Taipei respectively, acting as full-time intermediaries between an elaborate state bureaucracy and a constituency of many hundreds of households. As this chapter investigates the ultra-local governance systems of which Ding and Bai are a part, and especially the face-to-face personal ties that link them with those they represent, it is fitting to begin by briefly considering these real-life individuals and their human environments.

They arrived at these positions by rather different routes. Bai was elected to his post in 1998 in a 1,000-to-650-vote surprise victory over the three-term incumbent, a member of the Kuomintang (KMT), the party whose authoritarian rule Bai had unhappily endured prior to Taiwan's democratization. Bai won reelection by a larger margin in a 2003 grudge match, when the same opponent sought to reclaim the seat. Ding, on the other hand, has won only symbolic elections in which a few dozen associates raise their hands at closed meetings choreographed by government and Party officials. Despite this sharp contrast, they share a number of qualities that helped bring them to these posts. Bai knows how to negotiate the channels of city government as a result of his work experience in the public sector; Ding has similar kinds of savvy from her experience as a member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Both are competent and pragmatic problem-solvers, though she has only a middle-school education, while he has a college degree. Most of all, both are "people persons." Ding knows at least one member of perhaps three-quarters of the households she is responsible for, while Bai gives an estimate of 30 to 40 percent of a much larger neighborhood.³ They know how to listen patiently to the many visitors who seek them out. Strolling around their neighborhoods, they are frequently stopped by passers-by to exchange greetings.

Ding is the director and Party Secretary of her Residents' Committee (RC; *jumin weiyuanhui*). Bai's position is that of *lizhang*: the head of the neighborhood

(*li*) and its subneighborhoods or blocks (*lin*). These state-supported structures are examples of systems that I call *administrative grassroots engagement*, in which states create, sponsor, and manage networks of organizations at the most local of levels that facilitate governance and policing by building personal relationships with members of society.⁴ Ding and Bai are paid by the state to serve as its designated liaisons within the neighborhood. They facilitate and provide information for a wide range of state programs, from welfare to conscription to policing. At the same time, they also provide a range of services to their constituents, listen to and act on their suggestions and complaints, and organize social and volunteer activities for them to take part in if they choose.

While the RC and *li/lin* systems have many things in common, they also differ in important ways. The RCs are part of a few programs that do not exist or are much less restrictive in Taiwan, such as the family planning system. The coercive apparatus for which they gather information is capable of considerable repression, whereas the Republic of China respects basic civil liberties. The genuine electoral mechanism in the Taiwanese case puts teeth into what in the Chinese case are less tangible forms of accountability to constituents. Thus, while much of this chapter explores individual-level variation in how ordinary people get along with these organizations, it also ventures a cross-national comparison, exploring two cases that are similar in many ways but differ in the degree of accountability and in the potential intrusiveness of state action.⁵

This type of institution has received relatively little study within the social sciences. Yet it deserves attention for two broad reasons. First, it provides an important mechanism through which governments strive to accomplish their goals. Networks of deeply rooted local organizations are useful to the state in a number of different ways. They help it acquire information about people under its jurisdiction, allowing it more precisely and effectively to apply policy and interventions from police or other agencies. They convey information about laws, policies, campaigns, and initiatives to individual constituents. They embed state action within personal, face-to-face relationships, and thus endeavor to legitimize it. Finally, they encourage citizens to involve themselves in tasks that facilitate the work of the state.

Second, these grassroots institutions provide a set of structured opportunities and constraints that affect the way citizens express their interests, act to address problems and needs, and interact with others around them. They offer a channel – by no means the only channel, but one that is immediately at hand – through which individuals are encouraged to direct their inquiries, requests, and demands regarding local matters. As well, they invite constituents to participate in outings, festivals, and other activities that shape the social structure and cohesiveness of the locality.

In both cases, these institutions occupy an intermediary position between state and society that is not well explored in Western social science. This chapter establishes a theoretical framework within which to consider organizations of this type. It identifies as an especially important focus of inquiry the ways in which citizens perceive and interact with the individuals who staff the RC and *li/lin* systems, and

presents relevant empirical evidence. As discussed below, research on the political significance of interpersonal networks, sometimes termed “social capital,” has largely focused on the *non-state* organizations of civil society. Institutions of administrative grassroots engagement show one way in which dense community ties can also be drawn upon, and indeed shaped and cultivated, by *state-fostered* organizations, and put (for better or for worse) toward purposes related to governance and policing.

My research draws upon several sorts of data. I spent the 16 months from August 1999 to December 2001 carrying out research in Beijing. I gradually established ten neighborhood research sites around the city. With two exceptions, these sites were not arranged through official channels; I contacted them through “cold” visits or through informal personal contacts. I chose the sites in such a way as to obtain geographic dispersal and a variety of housing types and populations. Four of them are old neighborhoods, lying inside what was once the city wall. The others consist of post-revolutionary apartment blocks and new housing developments. I made a total of 116 visits to these ten sites, with each visit lasting a day or part of a day. In the summers of 2003, 2004, and 2007 I conducted follow-up research in eight of the neighborhoods.

In addition to my work in Beijing, I made short trips to six other cities (Qingdao, Shijiazhuang, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hengyang, and Benxi) in order to visit neighborhoods and learn how the committees vary from place to place. Finally, I conducted a series of private interviews with Beijing residents concerning their interaction with the RCs, and also was given access to a set of transcripts from interviews by two Chinese researchers, Dai Jianzhong and Li Guoqing, who were studying related matters.

With the assistance of the people and institutions mentioned in Note 1, I augmented this qualitative work with data from an original survey, the Beijing Law and Community study (BLC). Interviews for the survey were carried out in the summer of 2001, and produced a dataset containing responses from 1,070 individuals in 26 neighborhoods, scattered throughout seven of the city’s urban districts.⁶

My research on Taiwan has been patterned on my work in mainland China. Between 2003 and 2007 I spent a total of about three months there on three separate visits. Most of my research examined Taipei, though an additional trip to the city of Chiayi in the southern half of the island provided comparative perspective. During this fieldwork I interviewed and observed some 20 *lizhang*, and in five neighborhoods I was able to make several repeated visits over several years. Together with research assistants, I conducted in-depth interviews with about 30 residents of Taipei in order to understand their attitudes and interaction with the system of neighborhood administration. I also interviewed city officials at nearly every level (district staff, district chiefs, city civil affairs and social bureau officials), as well as national civil affairs officials. Yearbooks and election records provided detailed information on the city’s neighborhoods.

In late March and early April of 2006 I supervised a telephone survey of Taipei residents, aiming to replicate important aspects of the Beijing survey. As in Beijing, the questions assessed respondents’ perceptions of, interaction with,

and participation in the *li/lin* system. This resulted in 1,140 completed interviews with residents living in 372 of the city's 449 officially defined neighborhoods.

Social capital, local associational life, and the state

Social capital generally refers to networks of interpersonal relationships as well as the trust, reciprocity, and other norms that such networks can foster. Sociologists, naturally, have studied the significance of interpersonal networks for generations, whether under this specific term or otherwise, using such networks to try to explain a wide range of outcomes (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988, 1990; Woolcock 1998). In turn, political scientists have followed the lead of Robert Putnam's enterprising work on this topic by investigating the connections between social capital and representative democracy, the essential idea being that networks help mobilize political participation, which in turn elicits more accountability from government (Putnam 1993, 2000, 2002; Erehm and Rahn 1997; Rice 2001; Kwak *et al.* 2004; Rahn and Rudolph 2005; Campbell 2006). At the same time, political researchers as well as others have acknowledged that social capital facilitates many forms of collaboration, including those leading to undesirable outcomes as well as those producing more laudable results (Portes and Landolt 1996, 2000; Berman 1997; Kaufman 2002).

Urban residential communities are, of course, one setting in which people develop social connections with each other – though they are not necessarily the most important such setting. Sociologists have, over the years, reminded us that while city life need not mean the isolated existence Wirth called “urbanism,” residents' social networks are only partially (and often weakly) centered on the “community” in which they live (Wirth 1938; Wellman 1988; Forrest and Kearns 2001; Sampson 2004). Nonetheless, the kinds of interaction referred to as “neighboring” can and do support the local organizations that are common in liberal political systems like the United States, Britain, and Canada (Crenson 1983; Berry *et al.* 1993; Schmid 2001). They also can be part of what powers social movements that employ strategies of community mobilization (Warren 2001).

Often such neighborhood associations are seen as valuable, contributing to participatory democracy (Smith 2000; Thomson 2001). Sometimes they are seen as pernicious, prone to NIMBYism and self-isolation from the broader polity (McKenzie 1994; Caldeira 2000; Meyer and Hyde 2004). Either way, in liberal democratic contexts such organizations are more or less autonomous from the state. In a few cases, city governments may seek to stimulate neighborhood groups by providing funding and privileged access to municipal decision-making processes (Berry *et al.* 1993). It is largely up to residents themselves to organize or not as they please, and local governments refrain from trying to use them for administrative purposes. Thus we can think of these as corresponding to a pluralist model of local association, contrasting with the highly structured form of the RCs and the *li/lin* system.

In studies of the role of social networks in politics, interpersonal links have, for the most part, been understood as falling into one of two distinct categories:

horizontal and vertical. Horizontal ties are those that connect “agents of equivalent status and power,” while vertical ties bind together “unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence,” as Putnam puts it (Putnam 1993: 173). Many other scholars make the same distinction (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984; Rose *et al.* 1997: 91; Fox 1994). Correctly or incorrectly, it is usually taken for granted that voluntary organizations embody horizontal bonds. In his study of local government in Italy, Putnam argues that it is these kinds of relationships that are most likely to constitute social capital.⁷

What about vertical relationships, those involving power asymmetries? Two ways of thinking about such bonds, and their potential to embody social capital, have emerged in recent years. In one common view, vertical relationships are held to be very different from, and antithetical to, the trusting, egalitarian bonds that are said to connect peers. Putnam strongly delineates this distinction in an argument that equates vertical ties specifically with patron–client relations.⁸ “A vertical network, no matter how dense and no matter how important to its participants, cannot sustain social trust and cooperation,” he writes. There are two key elements to this position. The first is that the links connecting superiors and subordinates will be fragile and superficial. These connections will fail to develop norms of reciprocity because the subordinate cannot enforce them, and opportunism in the form of exploitation or shirking is likely. The second is that vertical ties work to divide subordinates, keeping them alienated from one another (Putnam 1993: 174–175).

Another school of thought contrasts with this point of view: the “state–society synergy” perspective, which I also discussed in the Introduction to this book. Scholars in development studies such as Peter Evans, Elinor Ostrom, and others have investigated types of networks linking society and the state that are beneficial rather than destructive to communities. The argument here, as Evans puts it, is that “active government and mobilized communities can enhance each other's developmental efforts” (Evans 1996: 1119).⁹ Specific examples depict community groups cooperating with public agencies to facilitate infrastructure and welfare programs and thus “co-produce” goods and services. Ostrom describes a Brazilian program that actively involves local citizens in the planning and maintenance of sanitation systems in their own neighborhoods (Ostrom 1996; see also Ostrom 1990, 1999). Wai Fung Lam analyzes the complicated ways in which the water resources bureaucracy in rural Taiwan interacts with local farmers through irrigation groups and particularly “water guards,” who draw upon their local knowledge and community seniority to help allocate water and resolve disputes (Lam 1996). Other scholars have echoed or pursued some of these ideas as well (Brown 1998; Grootaert 1998; Woolcock 1998; Woolcock and Narayan 2006). One analysis of the former Soviet Union employed a similar framework, seeing grassroots organizations as encouraging citizens to facilitate the work of the government in a form of co-production (Roeder 1989).

Unpacking the notion of synergy reveals three related but distinct sets of ideas. The first is that collaboration between the community and the government does not necessarily destroy internal networks of solidarity. Second, the state can

turn local social resources toward productive ends through coordinating efforts. And third, links to the external political world can provide opportunities that the community cannot create on its own. As Evans puts it, networks that link public officials and private actors can themselves be "repositories of developmentally valuable social capital rather than instruments of corruption or rent seeking" (Evans 1996: 1120).

In short, researchers hold conflicting views of the way in which horizontal, community-based networks interact with vertical authority. I submit that one reason this sharp contrast exists has to do with the atypical nature of the cases that are cited as examples. Putnam has Mafia organizations in mind as classic "vertical" groups (Putnam 1993: 146–148), while Evans and company seem, for the most part, to have sought out particularly unproblematic cases of state–community cooperation. The organizations discussed in this chapter are thus empirically well suited to push this debate forward. First, rather than constituting extreme examples of top-down control, or of unquestionably benign government involvement, they occupy a more typical middle ground. Second, these institutions are extraordinarily widespread and indeed are part of everyday life for millions of people.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the kinds of networks built by institutions like those in which Mrs. Ding and Mr. Bai serve, and to examine how different constituents perceive and respond to these local organizations. Do these networks involve a form of "synergy," are they simply patron–client ties, or are they something else entirely? Before proceeding, an empirical overview of the institutions in question is needed.

Institutions

Overview and historical background

Table 6.1 displays the basic organizational structure of large cities in China and Taiwan, and shows how administrative grassroots engagement forms a vast extension below the formal levels of municipal government. In Taiwan, large cities are divided into districts, and further divided into neighborhoods, known as *li*, each overseen by a *lizhang* like Mr. Bai.¹⁰ Taipei's *lizhang* are paid a monthly stipend of around US\$1,500 by the state, ostensibly to reimburse expenses but serving as a de facto salary. The cities of the Republic of China have approximately 4,800 such neighborhood heads in total. Each works hand in hand with an unelected civil servant (*li ganshu*) in carrying out his or her responsibilities to the state and to constituents.

The comparable institution in China is somewhat less centered on individual leaders but rather involves small groups known as Residents' Committees, recently relabeled Community Residents' Committees in many parts of the country (Whyte and Parish 1984; Choate 1998; Read 2000; Lei 2001; Read 2003; Benewick *et al.* 2004; Derleth and Koldyk 2004; Bray 2006; Yu 2006). Like the *li/lin* system, the RCs form an immense network covering almost all neighborhoods of China's

Table 6.1 Levels of urban administration and grassroots engagement in China and Taiwan

Mainland China (PRC)		Taiwan (ROC)	
Level	Chinese term	Number nationwide	Chinese term
City government	<i>shi zhengfu</i>	660	City government
District government	<i>qu zhengfu</i>	830	District office
Street office	<i>jiedao banshichu</i>	5,576	(no corresponding level exists)
Residents' committee	<i>jumin weiyuanhui</i> or <i>shequ jumin weiyuanhui</i>	91,893	Neighborhood head, Neighborhood office
Block captain	<i>jumin</i>	1,200,000	Block captain
(residents' small group, etc.)	<i>xiaozu</i> , etc.		<i>linzhang</i>
			35,119 (see note)

Sources and notes

General: The top three rows refer to levels of formal government administration; the bottom two rows refer to levels of administrative grassroots engagement. This categorization acknowledges, but considers irrelevant for current analytical purposes, the fact that mainland Chinese bureaucratic discourse identifies the Street Offices not as a "level of government" (*yi ji zhengquan*) but as a "delegated organ" (*paichu jiguan*) of the district government.

Mainland China data: The figures for cities, districts, and Street Offices come from the *China Statistical Yearbook 2003*, tables 1–1 and 11–1 (2002 data). The number of RCs comes from the *China Civil Affairs Statistical Yearbook 2002* (2001 data). The number of residents' small groups is from the *China Civil Affairs Statistical Yearbook 2000* (1999 data), p. 164.

Taiwan data: The figures are for 2004 and come from the *Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of the Interior*, available at www.moi.gov.tw/stat/. The numbers outside parentheses refer only to major cities, that is, those that are not administratively subordinate to counties (*xian*). Numbers in parentheses include such smaller cities (*xian xia shi*), which have no District Offices but do have *li* and *lin*. National-level figures, however, do not distinguish between *lin* in villages (*cun*) and *lin* in urban *li* for regions outside of the seven major cities. The total number of *lin*, including village *lin*, is 146,225.

cities, with the exception of some newly built housing developments and recently urbanized areas. Localities have, in recent years, been given a degree of latitude to experiment with slight modifications to the organizational structure, but this system's general features follow a single basic template. Large Chinese cities have three levels of government: the city government, district governments, and Street Offices (a level absent in the Taiwan case, sometimes called subdistricts or wards in English). The Street Offices directly organize and manage the Residents' Committees, which serve as their local contacts; the offices maintain a specialized staff to supervise the RCs, and frequently call the committee members in to attend meetings and receive instructions. As of 2001 there were almost 92,000 RCs around the country. Their members receive stipends that vary by locality but range from a few hundred to a thousand or more *yuan* (about US\$50–150).

Both the RC staff and the *lizhang* work out of offices, though in the latter case these offices are sometimes installed in the neighborhood leader's home (RC members once worked out of their homes as well.) In both cases the staff are on the job roughly full time, and also put in after-hours work responding to trouble and requests from constituents. In both cases they are assisted by a final layer of organizational structure that lies below them, made up of what I loosely translate as "block captains." The *lizhang* chooses a set of *linzhang* (about 20 on average, in large cities), who receive monthly subsidies of US\$30–70 and assist him in his duties. Similarly, China's RCs select several dozen people living around the neighborhood as their designated liaisons to the households in their immediate proximity. These are formally called residents' small group leaders, and in practice go under a variety of terms like "floor leader," "courtyard leader," and such.

Table 6.2 provides a sense of how intimately intertwined these organizations are with the residential fabric of the two capital cities. On average, a *lizhang* in Taipei oversees an area containing about 5,800 people, including children; the comparable figure for Beijing is approximately 3,700. This is a lot of people, but nonetheless the scale is small enough to make it possible for a Mrs. Ding or a Mr. Bai to be personally acquainted with a substantial fraction of this population. (In the case of China, the several members of the Residents' Committee are likely to know, between them, an even larger fraction.) The lowest level of organization – the *linzhang* and small group leaders – brings these institutions into even greater

proximity to constituents, with roughly 100 to 300 people residing within each such unit.¹¹

One might ask whether institutions of administrative grassroots engagement are truly a distinct category. To be sure, even in liberal democracies like the United States, governments strive to maintain certain kinds of personal links with constituents. Bureaucracies employ specialists to act as intermediaries with those who receive special state support or supervision. For instance, social workers establish relationships with welfare recipients; parole officers try to understand the circumstances of the parolees in their charge. Community policing efforts bring police officers into closer contact with the localities they serve, and initiatives like the Neighborhood Watch Program try to involve ordinary citizens in reporting suspicious activity to the state. The organizations considered in this chapter, however, are substantially more institutionalized than Neighborhood Watch groups, more deeply embedded in local society than most community policing initiatives, and more functionally diffuse than welfare caseworkers.

Surprisingly, administrative grassroots engagement is not confined to one type of political system; variants can be found under democratic, semi-democratic, and authoritarian as well as state-socialist regimes. But the countries that develop these institutions do share a set of prerequisites. Establishing this form of grassroots presence requires considerable bureaucratic coherence and organizational capacity: a strong state. Countries that do so share a security-driven desire to monitor and influence society at the neighborhood or household level – even though security is only one of many purposes to which such institutions are put. Finally, they lack principled prohibitions on government organization of society. These preconditions do not suffice as an explanation of administrative grassroots engagement, but they help to show how some states are unable or unwilling to develop such institutions. Cases are thus absent, rare, or attenuated in the poorest and weakest of developing-world states, and also in countries with a longstanding liberal tradition.

They can, however, be found in a wide range of other states, in various parts of the world. Former state-socialist systems such as the USSR featured neighborhood-based organizations that were similar to the RCs (Friedgut 1979; Roeder 1989); Cuba has them to this day (Fagen 1969; Colomer 2000). They crop up in systems that are neither Leninist nor Asian; as Alfred Stepan described in his account of Peruvian corporatism, in the early 1970s authorities worried about political unrest among urban squatters created thousands of block-level neighborhood committees in the shanty towns of Lima and other cities (Stepan 1978: chap. 5). Yet some of the most elaborate and persistent examples of this type of institution are found in the countries of East and Southeast Asia. Indonesian society, as Aiko Kurasawa's chapter above explains, is finely subdivided into small units comprising clusters of households (*rukun tetangga* and *rukun warga*) whose leaders work closely with the state (see also Guinness 1986; Sullivan 1992). In Singapore, the government's People's Association runs an elaborate network of grassroots groups, such as the Residents' Committees discussed in Ooi Giok Ling's chapter below (see also Seah 1987).¹²

Table 6.2 Scope of administrative grassroots engagement in Beijing and Taipei

	Beijing			Taipei		
Level	Number of units	Average population per unit	Level	Number of units	Average population per unit	
District governments	8 in city core (see note)	848,250	District Offices	12	218,086	
Street offices	105	64,629	(no corresponding level exists)			
Residents' committees	1,822	3,724	<i>lizhang</i>	449	5,829	
Residents' small groups etc.	Estimate: 40,000–60,000	Estimate: 115–170	<i>linzhang</i>	9,458	277	

Sources and notes

Beijing: Figures for population and Street Offices come from the *Beijing Statistical Yearbook 2002* (2001 data). Figures for RCs come from unpublished data from the Beijing City Government, on file with the author. Population figures were rounded in the original source; they include only permanent residents and, for Chaoyang, Haidian, Fengtai, and Shijingshan districts include only "non-agricultural" residents. The outlying, substantially rural suburbs, including nine districts and two counties, that are part of the massive Beijing administrative region are not included. For notes on my estimate of the number of residents' small groups and similar units, see the text.

Taipei: Figures are as of September 2005 and derive from the information presented on the Taipei City Government Department of Civil Affairs web page, www.ca.taipei.gov.tw/civil/page.htm.

The prerequisites mentioned above figure prominently in both China and Taiwan (as well as in other cases like South Korea, Singapore, and Indonesia) for formative portions of the post-World War II era – strong states, security concerns, and collectivist rather than liberal traditions. In addition, rulers in each case had particularly robust historical templates to look to in constructing the machinery of ultra-local governance. The *bao-jia* established by China's Qing (1644–1911) and earlier dynasties grouped households into clusters so that roughly 100 formed a *jia* and ten *jia* formed a *bao* (Hsiao 1967: 28). The state designated headmen for each group and assigned them such tasks as keeping lists of the residents and reporting suspicious activity. Upon commencing their colonization of Taiwan in 1895, Japanese administrators adapted and tightened up the *bao-jia* system, freighting it with duties relating to public health, road construction, taxation, and more, in addition to surveillance and registration functions (Chen 1975; Ts'ai 1990; Yao 2002).

As Japan occupied and colonized other parts of Asia in the twentieth century, it established either *bao-jia* (as in mainland China) or differently named but substantively similar bodies (Chen 1984). Korea, whose dynastic heritage also included state-imposed systems of household registration and collective responsibility, was organized into small groups called *ban* in 1917.¹³ In 1940, these were re-dubbed “patriotic ban” (*segtukban*) (Seo 2002: 2). As one historian explains, “each association consisted of ten households, and this became the basic unit for a variety of government programs for collection of contributions, imposition of labor service, maintenance of local security, and for rationing” (Eckert *et al.* 1990: 321). Japan introduced similar units, called *tonarigumi*, to Indonesia during its wartime occupation (Sullivan 1992: 136).

One might imagine that anything associated with previous rulers (and the Japanese conquerors in particular) would have been rejected by the post-war governments of South Korea, Taiwan, and mainland China. But the ROK, ROC, and PRC each reestablished systems of ultra-local administration in both countryside and city. In Korea, the Syngman Rhee government kept the *ban* in place with another change in nomenclature, this time to “citizen's bar” (*kaungminban*) (Seo 2002: 2). While its heyday of mass mobilization came in the 1970s under Park Chung Hee's “revitalization,” the basic structure remains intact even now. The KMT, which itself had deployed *bao-jia* during its struggle with the Chinese communists, brought to Taiwan the administrative setup it had used to govern the mainland, including urban neighborhood units called *li*. Meanwhile, China's new regime purged the former *bao* heads as it cleansed the cities of KMT legacies, but soon formally mandated the establishment of neighborhood-based Residents' Committees in a 1954 law (Barnett 1964; Schurmann 1968).

In each case the new government hardly wished to acknowledge a debt to prior systems of political control. And the local institutions embodied substantial departures from their antecedents, far from merely aping them. The RCs in particular, in keeping with the CCP's style of mass mobilization and guided participation, took on a great variety of educational and other service tasks, such as literacy classes and newspaper reading groups. Nonetheless, the core functional

echo of the past – recruitment of local deputies to facilitate policing and governance through their ties with neighbors – could hardly be mistaken, and this micro-level organization of society persists today.¹⁴

Elections and staffing

Though according to law and official rhetoric the RC members are elected by their neighborhood constituents, in fact they are still essentially hand-picked by the Street Offices. In the large majority of cases, elections follow a pre-rehearsed script in which votes are cast only by a group of some 30 to 50 “residents' representatives” who are chosen for electoral duty by the Street Office and the Residents' Committee themselves, largely on the basis of their supportiveness. Street Offices determine the list of candidates in advance, sometimes in consultation with the RC incumbents. Generally there are no more candidates than there are positions to be filled, although sometimes two or three candidates compete for one or two of the RC positions. Arranging elections in which, for instance, there are eight candidates for seven RC slots (and the contestation involves only ordinary members, not the chair, vice-chair, or Party Secretary) is a way to create a superficial impression of democracy, and sometimes to get rid of a troublesome or unpopular incumbent.

A number of cities have experimented with electoral procedures by relaxing one or more of the above constraints, although not so far as to render the elections free and fair by any standards. In the 2003 round of RC elections in Beijing, a small fraction of neighborhoods (fewer than 10 percent) held votes where balloting was not limited just to residents' representatives. In 11 neighborhoods, all residents were eligible to vote; in 146 neighborhoods, one member of each household could vote – though no data are readily available as to how many actually voted in these cases or how well publicized the elections were. All told, only 9.5 percent of candidates failed to be elected, an indication of the very low level of competition involved.¹⁵

In Taiwan, elections for *lizhang* are real and became increasingly competitive as the hegemony of the KMT waned. Almost 38 percent of the electorate voted in the January 2003 round of *lizhang* elections in Taipei, a respectable turnout for local contests. Records show that neighborhood races that year pitted as many as six or more candidates against one another for a single post, with an average of just over three candidates per race. Thirty-five percent (157 out of 449) of Taipei neighborhoods ended up with new leaders replacing the previous incumbents. The proportion of KMT *lizhang* in the capital declined from 79 percent in 1998 to 59 percent, again indicating this institution's evolution from the days when it was almost entirely controlled by the Nationalists (Taipei Election Commission 1998, 2003).

Although the process by which RCs are constituted does not involve much electoral democracy, the state-led revitalization of the committees has made stipends somewhat larger, and therefore the hiring process has grown more competitive. Once staffed largely by homemakers with scant education who were paid little or nothing, the committees now employ middle-school and high-school

graduates who often have substantial organizational experience from previous jobs. Typically these are people who have been laid off or taken early retirement from ailing state-sector enterprises. Though RC workers are still not considered part of the municipal bureaucracy, nor do they have the type of professional identity one would associate with trained social workers, their compensation has risen significantly in cities throughout China.

Table 6.3 illustrates that RC staff, now as in the past, are far more likely to be female than male. The average RC employee in Beijing is a woman with a high school or vocational high school education – though, as the table indicates, significant numbers of people with college or vocational college degrees now serve in RCs. Unlike the stereotypical bound-footed old lady of yesteryear, the average staff member is in her mid- to late forties. Nearly 40 percent of RC staff are members of the Communist Party. This reflects diligent efforts by the authorities to maintain the Party committees that are associated with each RC, and to ensure that at least one of the leaders of each RC is a Party member.

Turning back to Taipei, the *lizhang* are even more overwhelmingly male than the RCs are female. Part of the reason for this may be gender selectivity within the careers they come from; more than half are former public servants, and another quarter worked as merchants, often having run shops in the neighborhood. With an average age of 53, they are somewhat older than the RC staff. Their education levels are roughly comparable to those of their counterparts in Beijing.

Functions

The functions of the RC and *lizhang* system are similar in many respects, although they do not overlap perfectly. Both facilitate a wide range of state policies and programs. The most prominent among these include:

- Conveying information from the state. Whether in the form of government publications (books, pamphlets, bulletins) or briefings conducted by officials, the RCs and the *lizhang* regularly receive updated information about state laws,

Table 6.3 Descriptive data on RC members and *lizhang*

	Beijing	Taipei
Average age	46	56
Female	79%	12%
Party membership	48% CCP	59% KMT, 9% DPP, 31% nonpartisan
Post-secondary education	31%	29%

Sources and notes

Beijing: Unpublished figures from the Beijing City Government, on file with the author, current as of the end of 2003. Only data from the eight districts constituting the urban core of Beijing are used.

Taipei: The primary source is the official record of the January 2003 *lizhang* elections: Taipei Election Commission (2003). Figures on age, sex, and party membership have been updated to reflect several *lizhang* who had died or otherwise left their positions as of March 2006.

campaigns, programs, and policies. Part of their function is to help convey this material to residents and educate them on it. This is done through visual displays situated in public places throughout the neighborhood (whether simple bulletin boards, colorful chalkboard presentations, or illuminated panels) or through interpersonal contact with constituents. In China, the RCs sometimes conduct classes or education sessions in rooms in their offices.

Facilitating welfare programs. In both Taiwan and China, the staff of these organizations keep in touch with disadvantaged individuals such as those in certain categories of unemployment, those with disabilities, and elderly persons with no independent means of support. Based on what can be very detailed knowledge of residents' circumstances, they help the state determine eligibility for public assistance.

Public health. Grassroots engagement institutions regularly take part in things like clean-up drives and hygiene campaigns, and in Beijing are linked to a network of local health clinics. During the 2003 SARS outbreak, both the *lizhang* and the RCs helped with emergency measures, notably by keeping in touch with and assisting residents who had been placed under quarantine.

Assisting the police. In Taipei, the *lizhang* maintain close contact with police about neighborhood security matters. In Beijing, this cooperation is even tighter, more routine, and has a political dimension. Officers from the local public security substation (*paichusuo*) are assigned to cover one or two RCs on an ongoing basis. They visit the committee office regularly to find out about or respond to problems or crimes in the neighborhood. RC staff not only gather information on behalf of the police, but also accompany officers should they need to visit a resident's home. In the Chinese case, in addition to everyday problems like burglary, the committees also keep an eye out for political offenses and work with police to deal with dissent. For example, during the government's campaign against the *salun gong* sect, which was officially deemed an "evil cult" after it staged a large protest in 1999, RCs were tapped to identify followers and attempt to dissuade them from public activities.

Maintaining the system of household registry (*hukou*). Here again the two cases differ somewhat. In Taiwan, the *lizhang* are not centrally involved in updating the government's lists of who lives where, although their close partners the *li ganshi* are, and *lizhang* sometimes help them. In China, assisting the police stations' efforts to reduce the amount of inaccuracy in these lists is an important part of the RC's work. Controls on population mobility are not nearly as rigid as they were in the pre-reform era. City government and police nonetheless continue to maintain household registry rolls, which identify the residents at particular addresses, their ID numbers, and demographic characteristics. An important part of this comprises efforts to register and keep track of the large population of rural migrants.

Some functions are found only in the Chinese case. Most significantly, in China the RCs constitute one portion of the system through which the government implements its birth control policy. RCs maintain records on women of

childbearing age within the neighborhood. In principle these are supposed to specify such details as the method of birth control each woman uses, though in practice the committees only occasionally pester women for such information. They carry out educational programs, but also report unauthorized pregnancies to officials at higher levels.

It is important to note that the actual character of these state-assigned functions varies and most of them are ambiguous in their relationship to residents' interests. They could involve doing things that intrude or inconvenience, or otherwise strike people as noxious. Yet perceptions range widely and in many cases, as shown below, residents perceive these functions as beneficial. For example, RCs' policing-related tasks certainly help the authorities sniff out political dissent – a form of surveillance that some although not necessarily most residents object to. Yet the bulk of their work with the police revolves around efforts to prevent burglary, talking to former offenders in the neighborhood, and mediating disputes – all of which is quite likely to be seen in a favorable light.

Duties related to administration and policy implementation constitute only one facet of the work of these organizations. Another important aspect is organizing social and volunteer activities, in the following major forms:

- Voluntary service activities. RCs and *lizhang* help organize willing residents into various types of service roles. The *linzhang* and small group heads, mentioned on p. 128, are a prime example of this. The latter help the Residents' Committee with many aspects of its work, from disseminating announcements to keeping in contact with welfare cases. They may also make themselves useful to neighbors by doing small chores like going door to door to collect fees for sanitation, gas, or electricity; helping to deliver mail or newspapers; or cleaning up public areas. Neighborhood security patrols are another type of voluntary service that is found in both Beijing and Taipei.
- Group recreational activities. These take various forms. In China, some Residents' Committees lead singing groups, others dance classes. Quite prevalent are exercise groups practicing both the traditional *taiji* [tai-chi] and the newly popular *jianshenqiu*, a rubber ball attached to a bungee cord used to whack oneself therapeutically on the back in a series of synchronized movements. Like the *lizhang*, RCs also lead outings to parks and other attractions, and some maintain activity centers where residents can read books or play low-stakes *majiang* [mah-jongg]. In Taipei, the neighborhood heads often organize festivals around major holidays.
- In China, the RCs lead charity collection drives. In response to what are usually government-organized campaigns, the committees encourage residents to contribute to causes like relief for victims of floods and earthquakes. They sometimes go door to door to solicit funds, or post notices requesting that people come to the committee office to donate.

At the same time, these organizations carry out a number of other functions that are intended to be useful to constituents:

- Listening to input from residents, and conveying certain kinds of requests upward. The staff serve as sounding boards for all manner of complaints and suggestions from their constituents, usually over local matters: noise, waste disposal, and crime prevention are just some of the most frequent topics at issue. In both cases, these neighborhood institutions often attract the discontented, the lonely, and the troubled in considerable numbers, who simply come in search of someone to talk to.
- Mediating disputes between neighbors and within families. Usually at the request of one of the parties to the conflict, RCs intervene in squabbles between households over such matters as noise, shared utility bills, and the use of common facilities like kitchens and courtyards. *Lizhang* have similar responsibilities, although in Taipei disputes are often sent to more formal mediation centers in district offices.
- Providing a range of small goods and services, often free of charge. For instance, the RCs in Beijing have all been equipped with blood pressure meters and they give free tests to anyone who wants one. They sometimes purchase commodities like dish detergent and sell them to residents at bulk rate. The committees also were used in recent years to distribute free water-saving spigots to their constituents as part of a city resource conservation program.

In terms of "upward" representation, the *lizhang* have a greater ability to press demands upon the municipal bureaucracy than the RCs. In China, committee staff can provide suggestions and feedback to their higher-ups, and may be able to obtain action on some local problem by drawing their superiors' attention to it. Beyond that, they have a very limited capacity to make requests, and many committee members told me they felt that the Street Offices discouraged serious initiatives on their part. RC staff can be summarily dismissed for insubordination. The *lizhang*, on the other hand, have a mandate from their neighborhood electorate and cannot be fired in the same way. While there is no guarantee of success, they have more standing to ask the city government for assistance or special fiscal appropriations for things like sidewalks and parks. Even more tellingly, the *lizhang* have their own city-wide association, and have engaged in collective action – such as a 2003 protest over a reform program that led to an apology by Lin Cheng-hsiu, the director of the City's Bureau of Civil Affairs, and contributed to his being transferred to another job.¹⁶ This kind of clout is, at present, unthinkable for RCs in China.

These three broad areas of activity are closely interrelated. Most of these organizations' administrative duties depend upon the gathering of local knowledge to which bureaucrats in state offices far removed from the neighborhood would have no access. Maintaining household registry records, for instance, requires finding out who has moved into and out of the area, who is renting or subletting local homes, and so forth. Helping with police work calls for detailed information on neighborhood matters in order to watch for unusual activity and keep an eye on known offenders. The welfare-related duties require being well informed regarding the

needs of potential recipients of state aid, as well as the existing resources those families possess, such as assets, employment, or relatives, in order to assess their eligibility. The organizational and service functions of the RCs and the *li/in* system help them try to mobilize active support, to build a positive image in the neighborhood, and to create interpersonal ties with constituents, all of which may facilitate their administrative work to the extent they are successful.

Empirical evidence on networks and perceptions

As noted above, the essence of institutions of administrative grassroots engagement is that they are intended to suffice themselves throughout society, serving as conduits of information via myriad interpersonal ties. In order to carry out their duties efficiently and smoothly, the *lizhang* and the RC staff (and their block captains) rely heavily on personal contact and familiarity with their constituents. In part, this familiarity is based on existing ties with their neighborhoods, as many staff members in older parts of cities are longtime residents of the neighborhoods in which they serve. They also work to generate connections and goodwill anew, through their multiple roles, services, and activities.

What is the basic nature of constituents' relations with their *lizhang* and RCs? Do residents shun or embrace these organizations which, in some sense, represent the eyes and ears of the state? The answer to these questions should begin with an overview of neighborhood-level power dynamics. In the case of mainland China, the overall political system remains dominated by the Chinese Communist Party, which places limits on public debate and imprisons stubborn dissidents. Popular views of the system among urbanites vary substantially and are shaped by multiple forces. On the one hand, many see the existing order as a vast improvement over the ultra-politicized and often lethally tumultuous Mao years; can see no concrete alternatives to the current regime; and tend to support the CCP insofar as it represents economic progress and the cherished idea of the Chinese nation. On the other hand, many are disillusioned with authoritarian rule, disappointed by the abandonment of the egalitarian ideals of socialism, and disgusted by the prevalence of official corruption.¹⁷

Turning from system-level perceptions to the level of neighborhood organizations, while in certain respects these entities are backed by the formidable coercive resources of the state, including the police, what this means to constituents varies. As evidenced by the interviews cited below, certain citizens favor a muscular state to the extent that it keeps order and controls crime. Moreover, the system operates in such a way as to minimize the use of overt coercion, reserving it for exceptional circumstances. Most importantly, the RC in fact has relatively few favors and sanctions that it can apply in dealings with constituents.¹⁸ For example, unlike the "work unit," the RC has no control over people's salaries or their access to housing. Residents can opt not to cooperate with it. Indeed, most of the time they can ignore it entirely if they choose.

The Taiwanese *li/in* system is also not positioned to wield significant power over constituents. Ever since democratization in the late 1980s, the government

of which it is an extension has, of course, become far more open and free than that of China. Even prior to the KMT's relinquishing its hegemony, the *lizhang* are said not to have formed an important component of the security apparatus, which employed separate channels of information-gathering and control. Instead, this grassroots network was part of the way the KMT mobilized support. As elections for legislative offices gradually became more meaningful, the *lizhang* encouraged voters to cast ballots for the party's candidates, not least through the use of cash gifts (Wang and Kurzman 2007). Although the KMT still maintains its historic strength at the neighborhood level, quite a few of these local leaders now belong to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and even more have no formal affiliation. In 2007, for example, 53 percent of *lizhang* in Taipei had been elected under the KMT label, while 39 percent were unaffiliated and 8 percent belonged to the DPP.¹⁹ *Lizhang* hold little if any coercive power, and although vote-buying continues in some parts of the island, interviews and the 2006 survey of residents found virtually no evidence of this practice in relatively cosmopolitan Taipei.

Citizens' interaction with RCs and the li/in system

Given this general milieu, what kinds of relationships do constituents have with these quasi-officials who live in close proximity to them? In the mainland China case, one rough measure of the degree of interaction that respondents have with RCs is the number of committee members with whom they have a personal acquaintance. Table 6.4 shows the number of RC members whom the respondents in the Beijing sample report knowing, with "knowing" defined in the questionnaire as having spoken to them before. About two-fifths of the respondents knew three or more committee members. Some 35 percent knew only one or two

Table 6.4 Number of RC staff members known (Beijing only)

How many of the staff members of this neighborhood's Residents' Committee do you know? What we mean by know is having spoken to them before (Question D7)	Percentage of respondents
0	19.2
1	14.0
2	20.0
3	13.9
4	7.8
5	8.9
6	3.9
7 or more	5.8
(Refused to answer or didn't know)	6.5

Source: Beijing Law and Community Survey (2001).

Table 6.5 Knowing the neighborhood leader's name (Taipei only)

May we ask if you know the name of the lizhang in [respondent's neighborhood]? Could you tell us his/her name? (Question 10)	Percentage of respondents
Knew full name of lizhang	42.6
Knew only given name or surname of lizhang	15.3
Could not state name	41.5
(Refused to answer or answer missing)	0.6

Source: Taipei Community Survey (2006).

Note

Telephone interviewers assessed the match between respondent's answer and the actual name of the lizhang of the respondent's neighborhood, which was pre-programmed into interviewers' computers.

members, and one-fifth of the respondents did not know any staff member at all. In Taipei (Table 6.5), the telephone survey ascertained whether each interviewee knew his or her lizhang's name. Fifty-eight percent of respondents there could volunteer all or part of the name of their neighborhood's elected leader, while another two-fifths could not.

This indicates that a large fraction of the population has at least a passing acquaintance with these local leaders. But we also want to know how frequently residents come into actual contact with their neighborhood organizations. The survey data show that a substantial amount of interaction takes place between RCs or lizhang and those they administer. In Beijing, residents reported an average of 48 instances of contact with RC members in a two-year period, while the corresponding figure for Taipei was 44. Table 6.6 shows that more than 75 percent of our Beijing sample (60 percent in Taipei) reported some degree of contact with the neighborhood organization in the past two years. For many residents this is sporadic and infrequent. But in Beijing around 30 percent reported contact with an RC staff member at least every other month or so, and in Taipei about 24 percent said the same regarding their lizhang. The thick tails in the distributions illustrate that a considerable fraction of citizens have quite frequent interaction with these organizations – though there are also significant numbers who remain wholly distant from them, even more so in Taipei than in Beijing. The data show the vast presence of administrative grassroots engagement as an interface between state and society: though far from universal in their reach, these institutions are at least loosely in touch with large numbers of constituents.

Respondents were further asked to characterize the nature of their encounters with RC or lizhang (Table 6.7). A large proportion in each city reported only seeing their neighborhood representative in order to "take care of business" (*ban shi*), meaning not merely business in the commercial sense but any kind of matter related to the organizations' work duties. Around 30 percent in Beijing and 20 percent in Taipei said that chatting might be part of such interactions.

Table 6.6 Frequency of contact with neighborhood organization

Instances of contact with RC members or lizhang in a two-year period	Beijing: percentage of respondents	Taipei: percentage of respondents
0	24.3	39.6
1–5	29.9	27.5
6–10	15.0	8.7
11–20	8.6	6.4
21–35	7.7	3.5
36–75	6.8	3.7
76–250	4.2	5.1
251 or more	3.6	5.6

Source: Beijing Law and Community Survey (2001) and Taipei Community Survey (2006).

Note

Contact refers to in-person or telephone interactions, no matter how brief. Because of rounding, columns do not sum to 100 percent.

Table 6.7 Nature of interactions with neighborhood organization

Which of the following best describes your contact with [the Residents' Committee/the lizhang (LZ)]?	Beijing: percentage of respondents	Taipei: percentage of respondents
I have never contacted [the RC/the LZ]	26.2	49.8
I only contact [the RC/the LZ] to take care of business	40.7	26.1
When I go to [the RC/the LZ] to take care of business, I may also chat with them	17.3	11.0
I may have a chat with [the RC/the LZ] whether or not there is any business to take care of (Refused to answer or didn't know)	13.2	10.8
	2.7	2.3

Source: Beijing Law and Community Survey (2001) and Taipei Community Survey (2006).

Note

Contact refers to in-person or telephone interactions, no matter how brief. Because of rounding, columns do not sum to 100 percent.

The surveys also provide indicators of just how often residents approach the staff of grassroots institutions in connection with specific service functions. One section of the Beijing survey listed a series of reasons, gleaned from fieldwork, why people might visit their local committee office, and asked the respondent whether he or she had ever done so for that reason (Table 6.8). Particularly notable is the frequency with which respondents visited the RC for such mundane purposes as paying fees, taking care of documents, and receiving low-cost goods or services. Nearly a quarter of the sample also reported having visited their committee to express an opinion on issues of local concern, such as neighborhood security. Much

Table 6.8 Visiting neighborhood organization for specific reasons

	Beijing: percentage of respondents	Taipei: percentage of respondents
to pay or discuss fees (such as fees for trash, water, gas, heating, electricity, cable television)	26.1	not asked
to discuss welfare-related matters (Relief Cards, minimum guaranteed income, aid, etc.)	7.5	not asked
to take care of documents and permits, or to get something stamped?	29.4	17.5
to discuss or give input on neighborhood issues for free or low-cost services or goods	23.6	22.7
because of a dispute with a neighbor	48.1	not asked
because of a dispute within the family	6.0	4.9
	2.4	not asked

Source: Beijing Law and Community Survey (2001) and Taipei Community Survey (2006).

Note

Some questions in this set were asked in Beijing but not in Taipei which the telephone interview format necessitated a shorter questionnaire.

smaller, but still considerable in absolute terms, are the numbers of people who have sought its assistance regarding a dispute of some sort – availing themselves of the committee's mediation function (Read and Michelson 2008). All told, only 36 percent of respondents had *not* been to a committee for one or another of these purposes. Some of these questions were replicated in Taipei, where it is somewhat less common to visit a *lizhang* for things like documents, but there is about as much contact with them for disputes and discussion of neighborhood issues. Citizens thus interact with these grassroots systems in a variety of modes, some of them purely bureaucratic, others involving much more substantive encounters.

In summary, comparing the two cities reveals considerable similarities. A majority of residents have at least some degree of acquaintance with these local state intermediaries and interact at least occasionally with them. Some 15 to 30 percent of the population are in quite regular touch with them, know them relatively well, and have more than a merely businesslike level of association with them. At the opposite end of the spectrum, large numbers in Beijing and Taipei have nothing to do with the RC or *lizhang* whatsoever.

Regression analysis on respondents' orientations toward their neighborhood organizations sheds light on what kinds of people are closer to these institutions and what kinds are more remote from them (Table 6.9). The coefficients on the two sides of the table – those for Beijing and those for Taipei – cannot be directly compared with each other, as there are differences in the survey questions that underlie the dependent variable as well as some of the predictors. Still, it is possible to compare which factors prove significant, their signs and their magnitudes relative to others in the same model. As in the previous tables, broad similarities emerge.

Table 6.9 Orientation toward neighborhood organization

	Beijing		Taipei			
Predictor	Coef.	Sig.	Predictor	S.E.	Sig.	S.E.
Female	-0.0085		Female	0.0545		0.0521
Age	-0.0028		Age	0.0033		0.0022
Education (years)	-0.0041		Education (years)	0.0098		0.0095
Income (log)	-0.1262	**	Income (log)	0.0510		0.0435
Owns home	0.0798		Owns home	0.0560		0.0654
Out of workforce	-0.0459		Out of workforce	0.0608		0.0665
Household reg. is correct	0.1031		Sub-ethnicity (mainlander)	0.0732		0.0647
Party member (CCP)	-0.0080		Party ID (KMT+)	0.0671		0.0557
Approval of police, courts	0.2222	***	Trust in city government	0.0301		0.0430
Years in neighborhood	0.0026		Years in neighborhood	0.0023		0.0024
Close to neighbors	0.0447	***	Neighbors known (log)	0.0171		0.0323
Sociability	0.0854	*	Sociability	0.0454		0.0318
High-rise building	-0.2091	*	High-rise building	0.1073		0.0658
Constant	4.0316	***	Constant	0.4046		0.2532
Obs.: 961. R-squared: 0.09			Obs.: 803. R-squared: 0.09			

Source: Beijing Law and Community Survey (2001) and Taipei Community Survey (2006).

Note

OLS regression results on orientation toward neighborhood organization, measured as an index combining questions measuring respondents' satisfaction with this institution and its perceived usefulness. Robust standard errors are reported. Significance: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Despite the strongly gendered nature of this institution both historically and currently (mostly male in Taiwan, mostly female in China), the sex of respondents does not predict their orientations toward it. But other demographic characteristics do explain some of the variation. In both cities, the neighborhood organizations tend to have somewhat more salience among lower- rather than higher-class respondents (measured through education and income).²⁰ Social and political characteristics have more explanatory power. In neither case – perhaps surprisingly – does one's formal political status such as Communist Party membership or KMT affiliation matter. But attitudes toward government strongly color one's views of the neighborhood organizations.²¹ Those who are closely tied to their communities (measured through length of residence or closeness with neighbors) tend also to be warmly disposed toward the RC or *lizhang*.²² In both cities, living in low-rise rather than more anonymous high-rise housing also is a positive predictor. Moreover, people who generally mingle a lot with others

tend to be on close terms with these local state designees. This suggests that the state-organized system of grassroots engagement is quite well integrated into neighborhood networks of sociability.

Active participation

Beyond merely *interacting* with these grassroots organizations, a smaller subset of individuals *actively participate* in their various programs and initiatives. There are striking similarities between these programs in the two capital cities. Both RCs and *lizhang* organize neighborhood security patrols, for example. As noted earlier, they also recruit people to serve as what I call block captains, i.e. the *lizhang* in Taiwan and "courtyard heads," "entryway heads" or the like in the mainland. Many also join in social activities that these institutions sponsor.

I have argued elsewhere that in today's urban China, those who engage in this type of participation do so out of much the same motivations that drive volunteering in many societies: because it is seen as making a useful contribution to the locality, and because security patrolling and holding neighborhood posts often provide a sense of empowerment, relief from boredom, and a way to spend time in the company of others (Read 2001). Volunteers also gain the opportunity to address problems around the neighborhood, and at times they may even have an impact on the selection of RC staff. This contrasts with many other forms of state-mobilized activism throughout the history of the PRC, which have been understood as arising largely out of either ideological commitment or the self-interested pursuit of rewards that can be bestowed by authorities, such as career advancement.

Table 6.10 shows data from Beijing and Taipei on participation in neighborhood activities. In only two of the six categories was it possible to ask directly comparable questions; for instance, RCs commonly run charity fund-raising drives while few *lizhang* indicated doing the same (for fear the residents would suspect them of fraud, they said). Taiwan, in turn, features categories of participation that currently have no direct counterpart on the mainland, such as community development associations (*shequ fazhan xiehui*), which can be independent of the *lizhang*, and indeed sometimes center on past or aspiring challengers to the incumbent. The survey shows that the proportion of those participating often in neighborhood social activities is more than twice as high in Taipei as in Beijing – perhaps because *lizhang* have incentives to involve as many voters as possible in their festivals and other gatherings, while RC events are sometimes geared toward a narrower circle of committed activists. Our survey captured more volunteer post-holders in Beijing than *lizhang* in Taipei.

In both cases, the pattern that emerges is one of a core of individuals – not an immense percentage of the population, but large nonetheless when multiplied by the total number of neighborhoods – contributing some degree of spare time and energy to these organizations. In Beijing, these pursuits tend to pull in women and retirees disproportionately. For example, well over 70 percent of those who take part in security patrols and hold neighborhood volunteer posts are women, and well over 80 percent are retirees. This partly stems from the fact that retirees have more time on their hands for such activities, but fieldwork suggests that these numbers also reflect the social affinity between the RC staff themselves and those who participate in activities they sponsor. These figures further imply that the aggregate numbers of people who contribute their time to programs generated by the Residents' Committees and the *li/in* system are quite substantial.

Table 6.10 Participation in neighborhood activities

Participation categories	Beijing: percentage of respondents	Taipei: percentage of respondents
Donates to neighborhood organization's charity drives	62.2	not asked
Participates in social events of the neighborhood organization	10.7	22.0
Has attended neighborhood meetings or hearings	not asked	14.0
Participates in community development association	not applicable	17.5
Participates in neighborhood patrols	12.5	not asked
Holds a neighborhood volunteer post	4.9	1.0

Source: Beijing Law and Community Survey (2001) and Taipei Community Survey (2006).

Note

In the first, second, and fifth of the above categories, participation was measured in multiple categories, and the reported percentages combine those who participate "frequently" and "sometimes." "Neighborhood volunteer post" refers to *lizhang* in Taipei and to several types of post in Beijing, including *jumin xiaozu zuzhang*, *louzhang*, *loumenzhang*, *cengzhang*, etc.

General attitudes

Moving beyond the core of active participants discussed above, we also want to know about the attitudes held toward these institutions by the majority who have less intense interaction with them. This sub-section draws on interviews conducted in private with residents of Beijing and Taipei, then turns back to survey data to examine the relative prevalence of the different perspectives.

Some residents harbor grudges against their neighborhood organization because of specific things it has done or failed to do. One woman in northwest Beijing, for instance, was resentful because, on the very day of the interview, her RC had told her to rip out the patch of melons that she had been growing in the small garden outside her first-floor apartment.²³ In both cities, it is common to hear complaints having to do with the RC or *lizhang*'s relationship with nearby businesses. Some in Beijing charged that the committees aimed too much at earning revenue by sponsoring commercial activity, bringing migrants into the neighborhood as proprietors or employees.²⁴ One Taipei resident was convinced that her *lizhang* had been bought off by vendors operating food stalls, which she said produced offensive smells and oily waste that clogged drainage pipes.²⁵

Many Beijingers fault their RC for having limited ability or willingness to solve residents' most pressing problems. "Mine doesn't do much. It's just an empty shell," said a 38-year-old woman working for a foreign company. All that she knew for certain that her committee did, she continued, was rent out a room or two to make money. Earlier in the year her sleep had been disturbed by the crowding of a rooster that someone in her building was raising. "I went to the RC, but they didn't want to do anything about it; they didn't want to hurt their relations with the person."²⁶

The RCs were originally meant to administer and tend to only those residents who had no "work unit." Although their mandate is broader now, it is still the case that people who are of working age and occupied with their careers have less interaction with them. "The RC's work is mainly taking fees for sweeping the streets and for cable television. They have little contact with people like us who go to work," said a 52-year-old low-ranking cadre in a state enterprise.²⁷ But those who are unemployed do not necessarily think more highly of the committees. One laid-off worker pointed out that the RC could not do anything to get him a job.²⁸

Some felt that today's RCs fared poorly in comparison with those of the pre-reform era, like this man in his forties:

The Residents' Committees aren't as effective (*guanyong*) as they once were. In the past, they would mediate disputes, and keep an eye on things. They knew everything about everyone in the area: where they worked, what kind of attitude (*bixiaozhan*) they had. Now they don't care as much. [I asked about mediation.] In the past, they would not only break up the dispute and tell the people not to argue, they would also get involved and arbitrate who was right and who was wrong. Nowadays, if you actually killed someone the police would come after you. Short of that, [the RCs] don't get involved much.

(Interview, July 21, 1998)

I asked this man: Isn't it better not to have the committees bothering you? No, he insisted, he liked them better the way they were before. "It's better to have them involved in neighborhood matters."

Among the most politicized of Taiwanese, perceptions of the *lizhang* are clearly colored by party affiliation. Supporters of the DPP sometimes cited the neighborhood system's history of domination by the KMT. In Taipei's Zhongshan district, one retired business executive, a strong DPP partisan, detested his previous "blue" *lizhang*. But when a "green" was elected in 2003, espousing strong "Taiwan consciousness," he became an enthusiastic participant in community life, even volunteering as a Japanese language teacher in the neighborhood office.²⁹

This partisan dimension does not apply to mainland China, but the fundamental question raised by administrative grassroots engagement – the role of the state in local associations – certainly is at issue in both settings. A number of Beijing interviewees who were critical of the RC pointed to the fact that the committees are so closely tethered to the government:

RC elections aren't done all that conscientiously; if you wanted to vote the bad ones out, you wouldn't be able to. No one realizes that this is [supposed to be] an autonomous organization of the masses.

(Dai/Li interview, July 13, 2000)

In the past, the RC cadres were all small-footed old women. Whether or not they were given money, they all dared to speak up and even were able to uphold justice. The mother-in-law of Director Li next door did RC work for 18 years and never got a penny. Now they're on a salary system, and they're afraid to take things on. They're paid, but they end up not daring to speak.

(Dai/Li interview, July 14, 2000)

Often, however, residents of Beijing and Taipei are quite comfortable with these state-sponsored organizations. Interviews commonly revealed an attitude of neither hostility nor participatory support, but rather a moderately approving orientation. People articulating such positions tended to feel that overall the committees were occasionally and in modest ways useful to them, notably through the service functions discussed previously, or else that they played a valuable role in certain contexts, such as emergencies or social welfare.

Field research in neighborhood offices revealed that residents came to talk to their local state liaisons about a remarkable variety of questions and problems. Sometimes these pertained to the committee's role as a link to the urban bureaucracy – as when residents would inquire about how to apply for welfare benefits, for example. But often they had to do with other matters entirely, ranging from lost dogs to problems with neighborhood infrastructure to complaints about corruption. As Table 6.8 shows, mediation of disputes is not the most common reason for seeking help from an RC, but the committees in many areas do handle a steady trickle of interpersonal altercations. In other words, residents often see their neighborhood organization as a potentially helpful resource on many types of issues.

In interviews, citizens often voiced appreciation for the fact that the committees were available in these ways. "We have an RC director living in our courtyard. Whenever there's a problem everybody goes looking for her, and when there's a problem in other courtyards people come looking for her too," said a laid-off worker in her forties.³⁰ A state cadre in his fifties noted that "if it's noisy outside, or if someone's selling things [in an unwanted fashion], or if construction work nearby is going on at odd hours, you can go to the RC."³¹ One man pointed out that it can be convenient to obtain the committee's help in finding someone's home in an unfamiliar neighborhood.³² The proprietor of a photography shop said of the neighborhood across town where he lived:

There are four or five people working in my RC. I know them pretty well. They are neither a big nuisance, nor a big help, to people. They are not very

important for people's livelihood. But they are useful, for instance for telling people where I am if someone is looking for me.

(Interview, September 21, 1999)

One Taipei resident in her late sixties cited memories of World War II air raids, as well as more recent crises such as the September 1999 earthquake, to support her view that *lizhang* are especially needed in times of emergency. In such circumstances, she said, relief workers require cooperation and information from them in order to do their jobs well.³³ She and others also felt that some of the everyday activities of the *lizhang* proved their worth, such as counseling thoughtless neighbors not to dump trash, and helping to plant trees on a nearby mountainside. A newspaper editor approvingly mentioned that his new neighborhood leader installed fire extinguishers and repaired the children's slides in the playground.³⁴

In Beijing, too, constituents often take a favorable view of the RCs' keeping an eye on things around the neighborhood and looking out for residents' interests. There is widespread concern among Beijingers about robbery, burglary, and other crime. Whether justified or not, this concern often focuses on rural migrants:

In the past the floating population was smaller, and security was better; in the evenings we went to sleep without even closing the doors. Now the floating population is big and its character (*suzhi*) is poor. They come to the city looking for money, and the public security administration can't keep up with them. In the past when there was the *bao-jia* system, you needed a *luyin* to get into Beijing, which was like what we now call a letter of introduction. But now people can come and go as they please, so things like bicycle theft happen all the time.... My family has had things stolen twice: one year during the Spring Festival we had a television set stolen and a bicycle too.

(Dai/Li interview, August 26, 2000)

Interviewees sometimes singled out for praise the work the RCs do in keeping track of migrants. "China is too chaotic these days, and peasants don't stay on the land like they should. It's right to have someone taking charge of (*guan yi guan*) and controlling the floating population."³⁵ Even though there is considerable skepticism about the effectiveness of some of the RCs' specific anti-crime measures such as the volunteer security patrols, many people appreciate the fact that their duties include monitoring these feared outsiders.

Residents in both cities thus hold a range of attitudes toward their neighborhood organizations, from highly positive to highly negative. Survey data help us to assess how these attitudes are distributed among the urban population. Table 6.11 presents the results from a simple question assessing approval or disapproval of the respondent's RC or *lizhang*. In this question, interviewees were presented with a forced choice between positive and negative assessments, though neutral answers were recorded.³⁶ The similarity in the distributions of opinion in the two cities is

Table 6.11 Approval of neighborhood organization

Overall, are you satisfied with the [RC/lizhang] in the neighborhood where you live?	Beijing: percentage of respondents	Taipei: percentage of respondents
Very unsatisfied	2.1	7.0
Somewhat unsatisfied	8.5	14.8
(Neutral)	16.8	3.5
Somewhat satisfied	55.1	50.5
Very satisfied	6.5	10.3
(Refused to answer or didn't know)	11.0	13.9

Source: Beijing Law and Community Survey (2001) and Taipei Community Survey (2006).

Note

"Neutral" was accepted as an answer but not offered by the questioners.

Table 6.12 Perceived dispensability of neighborhood organization

Suppose a place had no [RC or lizhang]. Do you think that, for the residents, this would...	Beijing: percentage of respondents	Taipei: percentage of respondents
lead to no particular trouble or inconvenience?	5.8	18.9
lead to a few small inconveniences?	12.1	30.3
(Neutral)	7.2	not applicable
lead to a certain amount of trouble?	40.0	17.7
lead to big trouble?	30.9	27.4
(Refused to answer or didn't know)	4.0	5.8

Source: Beijing Law and Community Survey (2001) and Taipei Community Survey (2006).

Note

"Neutral" was accepted but not offered as an answer in Beijing; it was neither offered nor accepted in Taipei. Because of rounding, not all columns sum to 100 percent.

striking. In each case, 25–27 percent gave a neutral or negative response, while more than 60 percent gave a positive response.

Table 6.12 presents the results of a question that sought to measure how useful (or conversely, how dispensable) residents perceived these neighborhood institutions to be. One might, after all, grudgingly accept them, but only given the fact that they are a constitutionally mandated feature of the urban world that individual citizens can hardly do away with. The question wording posited the existence of a neighborhood without an RC or a *lizhang*, and asked respondents to what degree they felt the lack of this institution would cause "trouble." In Beijing, only a quarter of the interviewees indicated that such a situation would lead to "no particular trouble or inconveniences" or just "a few small inconveniences." More than 70 percent believed that at least "a certain amount of trouble" or "big trouble" would arise. In Taipei, by contrast, opinion was more evenly split

between perceptions of usefulness and dispensability. (In the Taipei case, the survey also asked directly whether the *li/in* system should be abolished or kept; fully 69 percent wanted it kept, as opposed to 25 percent who would scrap it.)

These aggregate numbers provide a rough idea of the contours of residents' attitudes toward and interactions with these institutions, and how they vary. The RCs and *lizhang* have plenty of detractors, but also enjoy even more widespread approval, though this approval is generally thin rather than enthusiastic. A majority appear to feel that the organizations are of some usefulness, or at least that their absence would cause problems. The primary staff members (all *lizhang* and many Residents' Committee members) come from within the neighborhood, whether by election from below or selection from above. They choose what we might call an inner core of associates (*lizhang*, small group heads, and the like). Together, all these people possess an existing stock of connections with the full pool of neighborhood residents; they also build upon this in the course of their duties. They further expand this network by reaching out to a self-selecting outer core of volunteers who choose to participate in the system's service, educational, and charitable activities.

Conclusions

The nature of the interpersonal ties that link the primary staff members, their associates, and the residents at large varies greatly from person to person, as we have seen, but it is possible to step back and point out general implications. The relationship between, say, Mrs. Ding and one of her constituents is not strongly "vertical." The investing of a certain amount of state authority in figures like the RC chair and the *lizhang* hardly destroys their ties with neighbors. As discussed above, in most circumstances the practical authority that she wields is small, and with some exceptions she is not in a position to act as "patron" to "clients." At the same time, neither is the relationship always fully "horizontal"; in many respects she speaks for, and acts on behalf of, the state.

The system as a whole, however, is deeply enmeshed in horizontal, neighborly ties, such as between the *lizhang* and those who live in their immediate vicinity. The social capital that is embodied in these ties can potentially be drawn upon by autonomous neighborhood groups and social movements; indeed, in Taiwan and to a lesser extent in mainland cities, independent groups like homeowner associations and NGOs do take root in urban communities. But in administrative grassroots engagement, it is selectively put to work in ways that center on the *lizhang* and RC staff. Much of the time people interact with them on a one-to-one basis, thus reinforcing social links that radiate out like the spokes of a wheel, from the center of the structure, through core participants, to the neighborhood population as a whole. This has something in common with classic "vertical" patterns. Yet the system works in some ways to reinforce wholly horizontal ties, as with its sponsorship of local festivals and exercise groups. Thus, the truth lies somewhere between the idea that vertical and horizontal ties are radically at odds, and the idea that they mesh unproblematically.

Organizations involved in grassroots administration are in many respects tools of the state. The state hires their members, pays them, and directly oversees them; it thus determines their basic purposes, shapes the tenor of their activities, and constrains them to a large degree. Yet they function by creating networks of subtle interconnections with citizens, who vary widely in their reactions to these institutions. The fact that they carry out government-assigned duties first and foremost leads some residents to look upon them with indifference or hostility, as we have seen. Many others welcome these attentions. Moreover, the organizations leave their public image by (sometimes) responding helpfully to the requests of individual constituents; by providing a variety of minor services; and by offering residents ways to join with their neighbors in recreational and public-spirited activities. In the Taiwan case, this is further strengthened by genuine electoral accountability.

These institutions play an important role in governance and policy implementation; indeed, from the state's perspective this is their principal raison d'être. The *li/in* system and the RCs facilitate a particularly extensive set of administrative functions. The outcomes that these contribute to can be unequivocally benign or considerably oppressive (especially in the Chinese case), and are commonly somewhere in between. For example, the role that local informants play in assisting the police provides one means of addressing the problem of urban crime, while also making it easier for the state to repress political and religious dissidents. Administrative grassroots engagement can help keep authoritarian regimes in power just as it helps bolster public health and social welfare. Yet the Taiwanese case, as well as South Korea's *tong/ban* system, shows there is nothing inherently authoritarian about it.

Recent studies of public-private "synergy" in the area of development, as noted previously and in this volume's Introduction (pp. 5, 125), explore ways in which states form partnerships with local communities. The RCs are not instances of synergy in the way that Evans and his collaborators propose this idea. Rather, they show that the basic logic and processes that these authors identify have a much broader relevance than originally envisioned. The examples that are showcased in the synergy literature are special cases, perhaps rare ones.³⁷ The outcomes are wholly felicitous, and the developmental projects are essentially unobjectionable to all involved. These are partnerships between communities and restrained branches of the state that are respectful of their counterparts' right to organize themselves. If state actors intervene in the locality, it is mainly to help empower the citizens.³⁸

Systems of administrative grassroots engagement are also mechanisms through which states achieve the kind of embeddedness that promotes development in the examples above. But these institutions go well beyond the phenomenon of synergy in terms of functional scope, representing a more comprehensive form of state-society integration. They differ in two respects. First, while some of the outcomes they contribute to are developmental, such as birth control and public health, they facilitate general administrative and political programs as well, such as policing, welfare, and migration control. These can involve containing and

even repressing society, not just giving it a helping hand. Second, the nature of the links they forge between state and citizen are more comprehensive and enduring. These are not just ways in which bureaucracies form partnerships with communities to accomplish jointly an agreed-upon project. Here, states engage with societies in a sustained and pervasive fashion, forming dense networks reaching a large proportion of the population at an individual level and involving some measure of personal familiarity.

Beijing's RCs are a different species of animal from civil society organizations, not just in that they are under the authorities' control but in many of their modes of operation as well. The committees do not employ in their repertoire of activities some practices that would seem to be obvious ways of developing solidarity: for instance, they hardly ever hold open public meetings in which all residents freely discuss neighborhood matters. Taipei's neighborhood organizations have more in common with civil society, as they are more accountable to constituents, yet they too must be distinguished from independent organizations without full-blown state backing and administrative functions.

Both the *li/in* and RC systems offer residents opportunities to interact together and take part in collective undertakings, although they encourage certain types of people particularly, specifically those who are more disposed toward assisting and supporting city governance. From the perspective of individuals seeking ways to take part in group activities that are enjoyable and convey a sense of meaning, what such organizations provide has considerable overlap with what autonomous organizations might offer. In other words, these groups may, in effect, compete with civil society, acting as a dispersed set of sponges soaking up citizens' participatory energies. Why form your own local association or neighborhood watch group when there is one already organized for you right outside your apartment building? This effect is presumably magnified in a setting like China, where civil society is embryonic and frail. This siphoning effect could be one ground for normative critique of such institutions.

It should be noted that the state-managed nature of the *li/in* system and the RCs, while limiting them in certain respects, also bolsters their appeal as a locus for popular participation, in some obvious and some less obvious ways. The scale of government investment in these groups means that they are readily accessible in virtually every neighborhood. Their standing as government liaisons and their links to higher levels of the bureaucracy make them a source for authoritative information or resolutions of local problems. And finally their official status increases (rather than decreases) their appeal to certain types of volunteers, for whom participation provides a sense of taking part in an important civic project and a national mission.

Research on social capital has had the salutary effect of (re-)attuning us to the importance of social networks in political life. While attention has mostly been focused on relatively independent organizations like NGOs or self-governing local groups, it is not only in such entities that networks play a central role. Interpersonal relationships at the neighborhood level are potentially double-edged and can be mobilized toward a diverse variety of purposes. Community networks can

bolster wholly autonomous organizations that constrain and influence government. They also support highly state-managed groups like the *li/in* system and the RCs. The Chinese RCs suggest that even in the absence of electoral accountability, a significant portion of urban constituents may be positively disposed toward this type of state institution, even as others treat it coldly. The case of Taiwan – and South Korea as well – indicates that state-fostered local institutions do not necessarily wither away even in the kind of far-reaching regime transition that took place in the late 1980s and 1990s. The *lizhang*, finally, point to a way in which such institutions can evolve from authoritarian origins into highly democratic practices, all the while fitting snugly into a system of close state-society ties.

Notes

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- 2 To maintain anonymity, names have been changed and exact numbers rounded. Ding had stepped down from her RC position by 2008; I have nonetheless kept this passage in the present tense.
- 3 The area officially defined as Ding's neighborhood began with about 300 households and was later expanded to more than 600. Bai's contains more than 2,300 households.
- 4 Such grassroots administrative organizations constitute a subset of the broader "straddler" concept discussed in this volume's Introduction. In many cases, such as those covered in Chu and Hannah's chapters, governments undertake partnerships with organizations and seek to monitor them but do not freight them with broad administrative duties.
- 5 Regrettably, space limitations here preclude much discussion of neighborhood-by-neighborhood differences within cities.
- 6 For the analysis in this chapter I disregarded all responses from individuals who themselves work in Residents' Committees; therefore the sample size is slightly smaller than the full BLC dataset.
- 7 There is debate over the degree to which interpersonal networks per se are a necessary part of the civil society argument. Some point out that citizens' organizations can be effective in pressing for their political goals even when they do not involve face-to-face interaction among members, but instead rely upon the activities of a professional staff paid by donations and dues from a dispersed set of supporters. See Berry (1999) and Skocpol (1999).

- 8 Clientelist relationships are generally understood to involve particularistic connections between relatively powerful patrons and relatively weak clients, who exchange material or instrumental resources in enduring, voluntary patterns. See Scott (1969); Hall (1977); Landé (1977); and Eisenstadt and Romiger (1984).
- 9 The several papers on synergy in the June 1996 issue of *World Development* were reprinted in Evans (1997).
- 10 The *li* are sometimes referred to in English as "boroughs." The official duties of the *lizhang* are defined in articles 3 and 59 of Local Systems Law (*difang zhidu fa*) of the Republic of China, implemented in 1999, available at www.moi.gov.tw. Little has been written on them in English, but their role as local activists (*tiaou-a-ka*) in the KMT's mobilization apparatus is discussed in several places in Rigger (1999); see also Wang and Kurzman (2007). Chinese-language sources include ROC Ministry of the Interior (2002) and Hsi (2003).
- 11 In the case of Beijing, exact figures on residents' small groups were not available. The conservative estimates given in Table 6.2 are based on the author's fieldwork in ten RCs, suggesting an average of 20–30 such units per RC.
- 12 The website of the People's Association, www.pa.gov.sg, contains further information.
- 13 Choson dynasty (1392–1910) systems organized households into units of five, and required subjects to carry identification tags (Lee 1984: 184).
- 14 South Korea's 57,993 urban *tongjang*, appointed by the state rather than elected, broadly parallel the Chinese and Taiwanese systems discussed above. They are assisted by 349,034 volunteer *barijang*, who resemble the *lizhang* and small-group heads. These figures, current as of December 31, 2003, were provided by officials of the South Korean Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs in an interview with the author.
- 15 These figures come from an unpublished Beijing City Government report, on file with the author.
- 16 Interview with Lin Cheng-hsiu, December 18, 2003; Chang (2003).
- 17 Recent efforts to assess the popular legitimacy of the CCP include Tang (2001), Chen (2004), and Tang (2005).
- 18 This is not equally true for all residents, of course. Those who depend on state welfare support, for instance, may require the RC's favor. Also, in a few cases within any typical community, migrants or long-term residents will need the RC's imprimatur (granted in exchange for rent or fees) in order to run a shop or other small business in the neighborhood.
- 19 These figures come from results of the December 30, 2006 *lizhang* elections in Taipei, temporarily posted on the website of the Taipei Election Commission, on file with the author.
- 20 In Taipei, identifying as a *waishengren* – coming from a family that arrived from the mainland around the time of the Kuomintang influx of the late 1940s – is not significant, suggesting that this much-debated subethnic cleavage was not relevant to this institution by the time the survey was conducted. More generally, it supports the notion that the *li/lin* system, from the early years of KMT rule on Taiwan, was used as a way to mitigate (rather than exacerbate) polarization along these lines.
- 21 This was operationalized through an index of attitudes toward police and courts in the Beijing case and a question measuring trust in city government in the Taipei case.
- 22 In Beijing, living where your household registration card says you live is a positive predictor of interaction with the RC system, or, to put it the other way around, the system is not so deeply rooted among those who have migrated from outside the capital (or even from across town).
- 23 The committee was trying to tidy up the neighborhood in preparation for the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic. Interview, September 3, 1999.
- 24 Interview, July 11, 1998.
- 25 Interview, March 14, 2006.

- 26 Interview, August 3, 1998.
- 27 Dai/Li interview, August 27, 2000.
- 28 Interview, Shanghai, July 25, 1998.
- 29 Interview, March 25, 2006.
- 30 Dai/Li interview, July 20, 2000.
- 31 Interview, July 11, 1998.
- 32 Interview, August 5, 1998.
- 33 Interview, March 16, 2006.
- 34 Interview, March 19, 2006.
- 35 Interview, June 20, 1998.
- 36 In all tables, answer categories in parentheses were not suggested to respondents by interviewers, but were accepted if volunteered.
- 37 In an analysis drawing on a comparison of neighborhoods in South Korea and Thailand, Douglass *et al.* (2002) point out that "synergy" may be quite difficult to obtain in many settings.
- 38 This generalization does not apply to every scholar working in the "synergy" framework. For example, Fox (1996) explores both empowerment and demobilization.

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