

Research on the “Co-construction, Co-governance, and Sharing” Governance Model for Elevator Retrofitting in Old Residential Communities of Megacities — Based on a Case Study of an Old Community in Chongqing

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Abstract: The installation of elevators in old residential communities is a crucial component of modernizing grassroots governance. Due to its involvement in multiple factors such as resident interest coordination, government support, and community consultation, it has become a typical challenge in urban governance. This paper takes the elevator retrofitting project in a certain old residential area in Yuzhong District, Chongqing, which serves as a demonstration area for the renovation of old residential communities, as the research subject. Utilizing the multi-center governance theory, the theory of consultative democracy, and the concept of co-construction, co-governance, and sharing, this paper constructs an analytical framework of “multi-subject co-discussion, co-governance, and sharing.” It explores the process where policy support, resident consultation, and multi-party governance coordination jointly influence the construction of public infrastructure. It reveals how the elevator retrofitting project is completed through negotiation mechanisms, governance networks, and interest-balancing strategies in grassroots governance. Furthermore, it demonstrates a feasible path for community consultative governance, optimized policy guidance, and improved public infrastructure construction. This case provides practical reference for the renovation of other old residential communities, aiming to offer significant reference value for optimizing public policies in the modernization of grassroots governance.

Keywords: Elevator retrofitting; Multi-center governance; Deliberative democracy; Co-construction, co-governance, and sharing

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1. Introduction

During his inspection in Chongqing, the President of the CCP pointed out, “Chongqing is one of the largest city in China in terms of both administrative area and population size. Deeply implement the concept of a

people's city and actively explore new paths for the modern governance of megacities." Urban renewal, as an epitome and leverage point of megacity governance, is a crucial aspect in promoting the modernization of urban governance capabilities. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China also clearly stated, "We must enhance the level of modern governance in megacities and supercities, improve the level of urban planning, construction, and governance, and implement urban renewal actions." Chongqing, with its highly dense urban space, highly concentrated population, and highly complex structure, has always been guided by the Party's policies and principles in carrying out urban renewal projects tailored to local conditions. In February 2025, Chongqing announced the "2025 Plan for the Demonstration Zone of Modern Governance in Megacities", which aims to create a "livable and workable" urban environment, implement actions to enhance urban quality, change the previous large-scale demolition and construction model, and upgrade old residential communities. Among these, elevator retrofitting naturally stands out as a major livelihood issue in the process of urban renewal. However, elevator retrofitting involves the interests of different groups, and in the specific implementation process, it is inevitable that different opinions will affect the smooth progress of the project. How to effectively coordinate the interests of different groups under policy guidance and promote the smooth implementation of the project has become an important challenge in current grassroots governance practices. Therefore, this article focuses on Chongqing, a typical megacity, by analyzing the governance path it has demonstrated in elevator retrofitting in old residential communities, and discusses how Chongqing constructs a "co-construction, co-governance, and sharing" governance model for megacities to promote the smooth progress of infrastructure renovation in old residential communities, with the hope of providing reference for other cities to promote old residential area renovation projects.

1.1. Current research on the renovation of old residential communities abroad

The concept of urban renewal first appeared in the Housing Act of 1949 in the United States, followed by a large-scale urban renewal movement in the country. However, early renewals often focused on large-scale demolition and reconstruction, leading to numerous social and environmental issues. After entering the 1970s, urban renewal gradually shifted towards emphasizing gradual reconstruction and community neighborhood renewal, with an emphasis on humanization, sustainability, and cultural preservation. In foreign research, the transformation of old residential communities is generally referred to as urban housing renewal. Some scholars have focused on studying the factors that affect the smooth progress of urban renewal. Brown, M. E., & Baker, B. L. (2021) believe that residents' trust, sense of community, and cohesion, as well as residents' participation and collective action, all have an impact on community transformation ^[1]. Therefore, in the process of community transformation, a people-oriented approach should be adhered to, and residents' needs and concerns must be understood based on their own experiences. Kshetrimayum, B. et al. (2020) argue that community environment and public facilities affect residents' satisfaction, thereby influencing the sustainable development degree of old community renewal and transformation ^[2]. There are also scholars who mainly focus on the evaluation of the effect of urban renewal. Dean, K. and Trillo, C. (2019) point out through empirical analysis of housing association projects in northern England that current sustainability assessment tools for housing-led urban regeneration projects generally ignore environmental and social spillover benefits ^[3]. In addition, some scholars focus on community participation in urban renewal, paying attention to how stakeholders can more actively participate in the decision-making process of renewal projects and cooperate with each other fairly ^[4]. These studies not only enrich the research on urban renewal but also provide diverse

perspectives and operational paths that can be referenced for contemporary urban governance practices.

1.2. Current research on the renovation of old residential communities in China

With the continuous advancement of China's urbanization process, the renovation of old residential communities has become an important part of urban renewal. In the "Guiding Opinions on Comprehensively Promoting the Renovation of Old Urban Residential Areas" issued by the State Council in 2020, the installation of elevators in old residential communities was included as a key renovation project in urban renewal. Up to now, the issue of old residential area renovation has still received widespread attention from academia and policy circles. In domestic research, academic studies on old residential area renovation have gradually shifted from the early focus on "physical space renovation" to "governance capacity reshaping." Existing research mainly revolves around dimensions such as renovation paths, governance mechanisms, and resident participation.

In research on transformation paths, Wang, Zhenpo. et al. (2020) analyzed the attributes and characteristics of upgrading and transformation of urban old residential communities in China ^[5]. Taking the interactive relationship among multiple stakeholders in the transformation of old residential communities as the logical starting point, they constructed a theoretical framework for collaborative governance among "government-market-society", systematically analyzed the core issues faced by various implementation links in the current transformation of old residential communities in China, and further proposed optimization paths such as improving the institutional normative system, strengthening platform support functions, and cultivating community self-governance capabilities. It is worth noting that with the innovative development of urban governance theory, the concept of resilience governance provides a new analytical perspective for the transformation of old residential communities. Duan, X.H. et al. (2023) explored the practical dilemmas of the transformation of old residential communities and proposed implementation paths from the perspective of resilience governance, including building a resilience governance community, improving a grid-based resilience governance structure, optimizing an adaptive resilience governance process, and strengthening digital empowerment for resilience governance ^[6]. At the governance mechanism level, the academic community has paid extensive attention to the possibilities and paths of collaborative participation among multiple stakeholders. Multiple governance entities, including streets, communities, social organizations, and enterprises, have been gradually incorporated into the governance system. Xing, H. et al. (2022) proposed a "cooperative production" model, emphasizing the role of social enterprises in resource integration and service provision ^[7]; Cao, H. et al. (2022) constructed an issue negotiation mechanism based on "embedded governance", strengthening the institutional foundation for community participation ^[8]. At the same time, the concepts of "micro-renewal" and "flexible governance" have gradually become popular. An, J.M. et al. (2022) pointed out through case studies that gradual, resident-led small-scale renewal can enhance acceptance and governance efficiency without significantly disturbing the community structure ^[9]. Resident participation, as a core aspect of improving transformation quality and democratic governance level, has received great attention from researchers. Xu, S.T. et al. (2023) explored the mechanism of how residents' perceived value affects their willingness to participate ^[10].

Overall, current research on the renovation of old residential communities has achieved relatively rich results in terms of theoretical framework construction and practical path exploration. Research in the field of old residential area renovation should focus on the transformation of research paradigms, shifting from

single physical space renovation to comprehensive governance capacity building, highlighting governance resilience and community autonomy. However, existing research also has some shortcomings, such as the lack of local research. Most research focuses on the governance experience of first-tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, while there is relatively little analysis on the regional differences and institutional innovation paths in the governance practices of megacities in western regions, especially typical “mountainous cities” like Chongqing. In addition, existing research generally lacks sufficient research on the “co-construction, co-governance, and sharing” model. Although concepts such as “collaborative governance”, “co-production”, and “resilient governance” have provided strong theoretical support for research, at the practical level, most research still remains at the level of describing governance frameworks or summarizing case outcomes, with insufficient attention paid to procedural mechanisms such as how various actors engage in game theory and coordination, how residents participate and provide feedback, and how systems dynamically adjust during the governance process.

Therefore, this study focuses on the renovation practice of old residential communities in Chongqing, a megacity with typical mountainous city characteristics. Taking elevator retrofitting as a breakthrough point, it adopts a case study method to deeply explore the practical mechanism of the “co-construction, co-governance, and sharing” governance concept in grassroots governance units of megacities, reveals the operational logic of grassroots governance in the complex social environment of megacities, and fills the gap in existing research regarding the focus on grassroots governance practices in megacities. The aim is to propose a replicable and scalable urban governance optimization path suitable for mountainous cities, serving the national urbanization strategy and the goal of modernizing grassroots governance.

2. Theoretical basis and analytical framework

2.1. Theoretical basis

2.1.1. Multi-center governance theory

The concept of “polycentricity” was initially proposed by Michael Polanyi, who delved into it in his book “The Logic of Freedom”^[11]. “Polycentricity” represents a distinct social order from “spontaneous order” and “centralized order”^[12]. American scholar Elinor Ostrom introduces this concept into public management affairs, giving rise to the theory of polycentric governance, which emphasizes equality, cooperation, and mutual trust as key elements. The core proposition of this theory is to adopt a diverse institutional setup that is graded, layered, and phased, thereby enhancing the coordinated co-governance capabilities of government, society, and the market^[13]. As a new option for public governance, Chinese-style polycentric governance offers an innovative path for social governance^[14].

2.1.2. Deliberative democracy theory

The study of deliberative democracy theory originated from foreign scholars’ reflection and analysis of the design of American constitutionalism. This theory is a review, description, and reflection of Western political systems, as well as an improvement, supplement, and transcendence of the existing Western political systems^[15]. It emphasizes that citizens are the participating subjects of democratic systems, advocating that public policies must go through a process of public consultation, and that public policies are decisions that can meet the interests of more citizens, derived from discussions, dialogues, and debates among citizens^[16]. In academia, deliberative democracy is often understood from three different perspectives: first, in terms of

organizational forms; second, in terms of decision-making forms; and third, in terms of governance forms^[17]. In China's governance system, deliberative democracy is not limited to the system of the People's Political Consultative Conference, but also widely penetrates into urban and rural community governance, giving rise to various grassroots democratic consultation mechanisms, such as democratic discussion meetings, democratic financial management meetings, and participatory budgeting. These forms of deliberative democracy developed at the grassroots level have become important political carriers and avenues for coordinating the relationships between citizens and the government, enabling the interests of various social groups arising from social differentiation to be reflected and protected through various forms^[18].

2.1.3. The governance concept of co-construction, co-governance, and sharing

At the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the President of the CCP first proposed the idea of "building a social governance pattern featuring joint construction and sharing by all people." Subsequently, this concept was applied to many areas of China's domestic and foreign affairs. In the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the President of the CCP further elaborated on "joint construction and sharing" as "joint construction, co-governance, and sharing", and proposed an overall plan for building this social governance pattern^[19]. The governance concept of joint construction, co-governance, and sharing has important practical value in China's social governance system, especially in urban grassroots governance, where it has been widely applied. With the acceleration of urbanization, issues such as the renovation of old residential communities and the installation of elevators have become increasingly prominent. How to promote public affairs decision-making in an environment with diverse interests and complex demands has become a key challenge for grassroots governance. Against this backdrop, the governance concept of joint construction, co-governance, and sharing has gradually become the core idea for solving grassroots governance problems.

2.2. Analytical framework

The theory of multi-center governance emphasizes the joint participation of multiple stakeholders in governance to enhance the efficiency of public affairs management. In this case, the government provides policy support, community organizations engage in consultation, residents engage in decision-making as stakeholders, and property management companies are responsible for subsequent management, initially forming a multi-center governance structure. The theory of deliberative democracy emphasizes resolving conflicts of interest through rational negotiation, making public decision-making more inclusive. In this case, the community has organized multiple courtyard meetings and mediation sessions to facilitate residents' expression of their demands, ultimately leading to the smooth installation of elevators, reflecting the role of deliberative democracy. The concept of co-construction, co-governance, and sharing emphasizes the joint governance of the government, community, and residents to achieve the rational allocation of public resources. In this case, this concept is reflected in the multi-party collaboration model where the government provides policy support, community organizations engage in consultation, property owners make autonomous decisions, and property management companies are responsible for management.

Based on the aforementioned theories, this study constructs a new analytical framework, which takes multi-center governance as the foundation of the governance structure, promotes resident decision-making through deliberative democracy, and forms the ultimate governance model through the concept of co-

construction, co-governance, and sharing (**Figure 1**). Within this framework, key elements such as policy support, negotiation mechanisms, resident autonomy, and property management work together to enhance governance efficiency, reduce game costs, and optimize the implementation effectiveness of renovation projects such as elevator retrofitting in old residential communities.

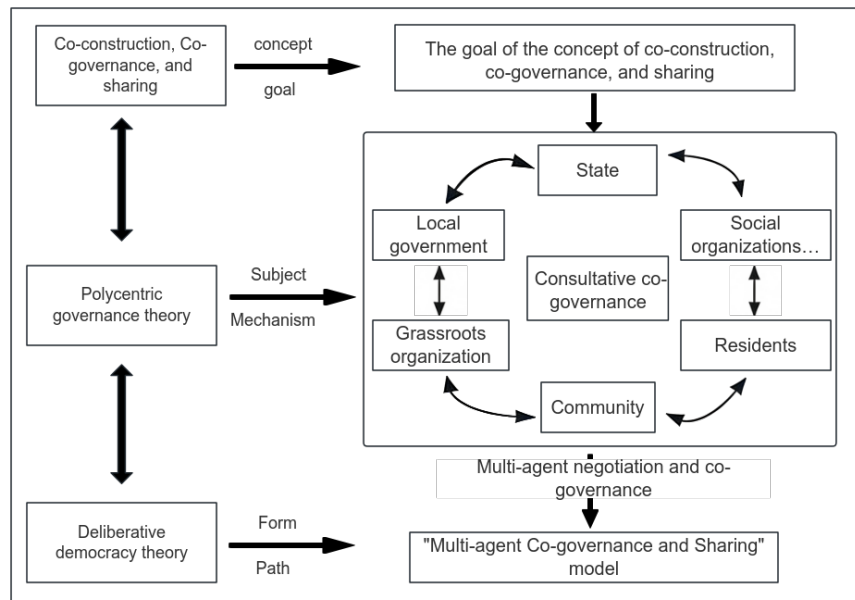


Figure 1. Analysis framework of this article: “Multi-agent Co-governance and Sharing” model

3. Case summary and analysis

3.1. Case selection

As the core area of the city, Yuzhong District in Chongqing has a large number of old residential communities, which generally suffer from problems such as outdated buildings, aging facilities, and a high proportion of houses without elevators. With the advancement of urban renewal, Yuzhong District has explored various models in the renovation of old residential communities, especially in the installation of elevators. The government has issued the “Management Measures for Adding Elevators to Existing Residential Buildings in Chongqing”, providing financial subsidies and optimizing approval processes to promote residents’ independent installation of elevators. However, due to complex issues such as fundraising, interest coordination, and subsequent management, the process of installing elevators in many residential areas has not been smooth, presenting typical characteristics such as multi-party games, negotiation promotion, policy support, and governance innovation. The governance experience of old residential communities in Yuzhong District not only serves as a demonstration for the local area but also provides practical reference for similar renovations in other cities across the country.

The case selected in this study is an old residential area in Daping Sub-district, Yuzhong District, Chongqing. During the process of elevator retrofitting, the community went through key stages such as resident autonomy game, multiple rounds of community negotiation, proposal and failure of shared solutions, and ultimately multiple units’ autonomous installation, fully demonstrating the interactive mode

of government, community, residents, property, and other parties in governance. The case not only reflects the theoretical application of multi-center governance, consultative democracy, and co-construction, co-governance, and sharing, but also exposes practical problems such as information opacity, insufficient resident autonomy, and limited execution of governance mechanisms.

3.2. Case analysis

3.2.1. Government

In the process of installing elevators in old residential communities, the government plays the role of policy maker, supporter, and guide. It not only provides institutional support, but also adjusts strategies in multi-game to guide the formation of a negotiated governance model. The government has introduced financial subsidy policies and optimized approval processes to provide funding and administrative convenience for elevator retrofitting, reducing the economic burden on residents and making the project feasible. The financial subsidy policies of Chongqing and Yuzhong District played an important role in the early stages, motivating residents to promote renovation. However, the implementation of government policies still faces practical challenges in the later stages. Due to differences in residents' autonomy, although the government provides support, it is difficult to directly intervene in the complex game between homeowners, resulting in multiple deadlocks in the project.

3.2.2. Street community

In the process of installing elevators in old residential communities, communities and streets play a role in policy promotion, information dissemination, conflict resolution, and governance promotion, attempting to promote consensus among residents through consultative democracy. However, the case shows that the imperfect information disclosure mechanism, insufficient residents' negotiation ability, and low execution of negotiation governance mechanisms have put the governance work of communities and streets in a difficult situation. Despite their efforts to promote negotiations, the governance process went through multiple rounds of twists and turns, and ultimately, the conflict was resolved through the promotion of resident autonomy.

3.2.3. Residents

In this case, the owner, as the direct stakeholder of elevator retrofitting, is both the promoter and the main player in the game. Due to the differences in interest demands among the owners of each unit, coupled with the insufficient autonomy of residents, the negotiation process is full of twists and turns, resulting in increased governance costs and decreased decision-making efficiency.

3.2.4. Property management

The case shows that property management faces problems such as unclear role positioning and limited governance capabilities in the governance process, making it difficult for it to effectively fulfill its management functions. This issue reflects that in the grassroots governance system, if property companies lack clear functional positioning and governance capacity support, they will find it difficult to adapt to the needs of residents' autonomy and negotiation governance models.

3.2.5. Analysis of governance models under multi-subject interaction

The case shows that the government provides policy guidance but is difficult to intervene directly,

communities promote negotiation but have limited governance authority, residents have complex games and insufficient autonomy, property roles are vague, and governance capabilities are limited. These factors collectively affect governance efficiency, resulting in repeated games and negotiations for elevator retrofitting.

4. Governance countermeasures for elevator retrofitting in old residential communities of megacities

4.1. Improve the consultation and governance mechanism to enhance residents' autonomy

In order to enhance residents' autonomy, communities should establish formal negotiation platforms to ensure transparency and standardization of public affairs decision-making. It is suggested to establish a community council and invite representatives of homeowners, property management companies, community workers, etc. to participate together, forming a fixed communication mechanism. Through institutionalized negotiation mechanisms, the authors aim to enhance residents' ability to make collective decisions and reduce conflicts caused by information opacity or poor communication.

4.2. Optimize precise government policies and improve the adaptability of fiscal subsidies

It is suggested that the government establish a "differentiated financial support" model, adjust subsidy standards according to the specific situation of different communities, and improve the efficiency of fund utilization. At the same time, the approval process for fiscal subsidies should be optimized to reduce unnecessary administrative steps and improve policy implementation efficiency. In addition, the government should play a coordinating role by strengthening information sharing during policy implementation, ensuring that residents can fully understand subsidy policies, and promptly mediate disputes to reduce governance resistance.

4.3. Further optimize the property management model and enhance community governance capabilities

It is suggested that the community establish an owners' supervision committee to regularly evaluate the management performance of property companies, and link the assessment results with contract renewals to motivate property companies to improve their service levels. At the same time, it is possible to explore the introduction of market competition mechanisms. When property management is inadequate, the owners' meeting can be allowed to introduce a higher-quality management team through open bidding, forming a market-oriented management model of survival of the fittest.

4.4. Establish a long-term sustainable governance mechanism to ensure the stable continuation of the transformation results

It is suggested to establish a special public facility maintenance fund, with the government providing partial financial support and residents paying fees in a reasonable proportion to ensure the long-term maintenance of infrastructure. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the culture of community governance, regularly organize democratic consultation meetings, promote long-term participation of residents in community affairs, and enhance community cohesion. In addition, the government, communities, and social

organizations should form a collaborative governance mechanism and explore more sustainable community governance models, such as introducing social capital for public service supply, to enhance community self-management capabilities and improve the overall level of grassroots governance.

5. Conclusion

The case demonstrates that the governance of old residential communities is not merely a matter of infrastructure renovation, but also involves the negotiation among multiple stakeholders, reflecting the complexity and challenges of grassroots governance in the process of modernization in China. The promotion of elevator retrofitting faced numerous setbacks, but ultimately, it was implemented through multi-party negotiation among the government, community, property management, and residents, showcasing the significant role of the “co-construction, co-governance, and sharing” model in addressing grassroots public affairs.

From this case analysis, it can be seen that consultative democracy, polycentric governance, and the concept of co-construction, co-governance, and sharing have practical guiding significance in the renovation of old residential communities. Establishing a transparent and efficient resident consultation mechanism is the key to enhancing community autonomy; precise policy implementation by the government in policy formulation and financial support is an important guarantee for the smooth implementation of projects; optimization of property management and refinement of public services are necessary paths to enhance grassroots governance capabilities. Therefore, in the future governance process of old residential communities, it is necessary to further improve the community consultation mechanism, enhance policy adaptability, promote innovation in property management models, and build a sustainable governance system to improve the overall governance level of the community and promote social harmony and stability.

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