

## *Interests and Political Participation in Urban China: The Case of Residents' Committee Elections*

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### *Abstract*

Authoritarian governments carry out elections to gain legitimacy. However, people in these regimes usually lack confidence in the managed elections and are reluctant to participate. Therefore, state mobilization is necessary for these elections to be implemented. Yet, people in such regimes may participate in the elections without state mobilization. In urban China, some homeowners have actively participated in elections for the residents' committee, although they do not interact directly with the committee. This article, which is based on fieldwork in about 20 communities in Beijing, analyzes the reasons for such participation. The residents' committee influences the formation of a homeowners' committee, which is the only legal representative of homeowners in a community. To protect their rights, homeowners are required to at least create a neutral residents' committee to establish a functional homeowners' committee. Consequently, the homeowners' stake in their community motivates them to participate in the election. This interest-driven participation has important implications for understanding political participation in China.

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