Selecting Within the Rules: Recent Experimentation with Township Elections

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Reports of the first direct election of a township head in Buyun, Sichuan Province, stirred great interest within China and abroad that this might mark the extension of direct elections from the village to the township level. However, the Buyun model was rejected as unconstitutional and, to date, higher-level party and state leaders have not sanctioned the direct election of township leaders. While the passage of the revised Organic Law on Village Self-Governance in November 1998 institutionalized village elections, how to deal with township government remains more complex.

Most importantly, the township forms the lowest level of state administration and thus its officials are state cadres. Their appointment, evaluation and approval procedures are decided within the set of relations between the township people’s congress and the county congress, the party committee for the township and that at the county level. Township leaders come under the party’s nomenclature list meaning that the party must oversee and

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2 The election was widely covered by the international press (see articles in New York Times, South China Morning Post, and Washington Post) following a report in China’s adventurous newspaper Nanfang zhoumo (Southern Weekly) on January 15, 1999. The most complete overview is the three-part series by Li Fan in Ming bao (February 11, 12, and 13, 1999). The Li Fan articles are translated in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report: China, February 16, 1999.

3 The election was criticized as unconstitutional in an article by Zha Qingjiu that appeared in the authoritative Fazhi ribao (Legal Daily), January 19, 1999. The direct election of township heads should not be confused with the direct election of representatives to the local people’s congress. Up to the county level, delegates to the people’s congress have been elected directly since the system was restored in 1980. See, Brantly Womack, “The 1980 County-level Elections in China: Experiment in Democratic Modernization”, Asian Survey, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1982), pp. 261-77; and J. Bruce Jacobs, “Elections in China”, Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs, No. 25 (January 1991), pp. 171-99. For new procedures that were introduced permitting direct elections up to the county level see “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo quanguo renmin daibiao dahui he difang geji renmin daibiao dahui xuanju fa” (Election Law for the National People’s Congress and the Various Levels of Local People’s Congresses in the People’s Republic of China), in Zhonghua renmin gongheguo falu ji youguan fagui huibian 1979-1984 nian (Collection of Laws and Related Legal Regulations of the People’s Republic of China, 1979-1984) edited by the Legal System Work Committee of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (Beijing: Fulu chubanshe, 1986), pp. 67-76. The law was revised in 1986.

4 For the text of the Villager Committees Organization law of the People’s Republic of China see Renmin ribao (People’s Daily), 5 November 1998, a translation can be found in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts: the Far East/3380.

sanction even those leaders who are to be elected through one means or another. The township is thus nested within the party and state networks and is the key interface between state and society. By contrast, villages are not part of the state structure and directly elected villagers’ committees were established in an attempt to fill the administrative vacuum caused by the dismantling of the commune and brigade structures in the countryside. In the early to mid-1980s, village management had collapsed in many parts of rural China or operated policies that were at variance with state demands on villagers. As Daniel Kelliher has pointed out, the starting point for gaining acceptance for villagers’ committees was to accept that there was a political crisis in the countryside that probably could only be resolved by allowing the villagers enhanced capacity for self-government.

Despite the hopes of reformers that the experience with direct elections could be directed up to the township level, the same logic does not apply. At the March 1999 Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference session, 35 members of an agricultural subcommittee proposed that the Legal Work Committee of the National People’s Congress should study and introduce a law to promote direct election of township leaders. The request went unanswered and in April 1999, Zhang Mingliang, the official in charge of village elections at the Ministry of Civil Affairs, stated that once uniform conditions were in place in the villages, direct elections could be initiated for the townships. However, as he acknowledged elections were still not functioning properly in 40 percent of villages it could still be a long wait. Further, the township elections will not necessarily be the responsibility of the Ministry of Civil Affairs but more likely will fall under people’s congress system. This

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6 For the nature of this process related to the people’s congress at the township level see Melanie Manion, “Chinese Democratization in Perspective: Electorates and Selectorates at the Township Level”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 163 (September 2000), pp. 764-82.
8 *South China Morning Post*, 9 March 1999.
will require establishing principles and understanding within an entirely different administrative system.

To date, the preference has been to deal with issues of government transparency rather than accountability at the township level. Thus, in June 1998 a joint Central Committee and State Council Circular recognized that government reform should be encouraged for the 45,000 towns and townships stating that the party should “seek proper ways to introduce the practice of open administration in government bodies at the township level”. This has become increasingly common practice with provinces such as Fujian, Hunan, and Shanxi, at the forefront of making township revenue and expenditures public and having an open system for government construction contracts. In Guangxi, townships have established supervisory groups to oversee administration. Such groups include members of the people’s congress, delegates from the party committee, the disciplinary and control commission, retired cadres, and villagers’ delegates. ⁹

The Joint Circular did not mention a role for direct elections for township officials. Despite this, innovation has taken place for the selection of township leaders and in 1999, two townships laid claim to being the first to hold a democratic election for a township leader: Buyun in Sichuan and Dapeng in Shenzhen. The latter election was deemed to fall within the current regulatory framework while the former was considered unconstitutional. However, this has not marked the end of experimentation more broadly nor within the Suining Municipality, where Buyun is located. In addition to the direct election in Buyun, Suining’s Shizhong (Central) District has experimented with other innovative measures to broaden civic engagement and increase competition in selecting township leaders, including

the party secretary and township head. In fact, Shizhong was among the first group of ten winners of an award for local government innovation. In particular, Shizhong was praised for developing a process within existing regulations that “increased transparency and competition in promoting cadres”. The term used by the local organization department is "public recommendation and public selection" (PRPS) (gongtui gongxuan). Unlike the direct Buyun election, this process does not contravene existing regulations and is more acceptable as it ensures a strong role for the local party and state institutions. PRPS is also used for the selection of party secretaries thus opening up the process to ordinary party members rather than restricting appointment to higher-level party officials. A degree of competition replaces secretive appointment from above.

In this report, we first outline briefly three main approaches experimented with to date for the selection of township leadership, and then focus in more detail on a fourth, PRPS. We shall then make some tentative conclusions on the basis of this experimentation about China’s on-going institutional transformation.

New Methods of Township Leadership Selection

As noted above, the situation of the township is completely different from that of the villages where direct elections, with the exception of party leaders, have been institutionalized. Township cadres working on the lowest rung of the state ladder are

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10 Yu Keping (ed.), Zhongguo difang zhengfu chuangxin 2002 (Innovations in Chinese Local Government) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2002), p. 16. This program is jointly organized by the China Center for Comparative Politics and Economics under the Translation Bureau of the Central Committee and the Comparative Research Center for the Party under the Central Party School. Among other winners that were related to elections were: Qianxi County in Hebei Province for its direct election of delegates to Women’s Associations and Guangshui Municipality (Hubei) for its “Two-Ballot” election for party secretaries at the village level.

11 Nanbu County in Sichuan Province has also used this system but only for deputy heads. See Li, “An Investigation of and Thoughts on”, p. 73.

12 The Buyun election breaches Article 101 of the State Constitution that states “Local people’s congresses at the different levels elect and have the power to recall, at the corresponding level, governors and deputy governors, mayors and deputy mayors, heads and deputy heads of counties, districts, townships, and
recruited and paid by the state and are in full-time employ. Village leaders are part-time and are compensated for their work out of the village’s own finances. The social structure of the township is naturally more diverse than that of the village; making community-based politics more complex while population size, geographic spread, and employment mix makes the construction of participatory politics within the existing framework more difficult. It will require more careful institutional design, as well as political and financial support.

During the 1990s, it is clear that in many areas problems have arisen between local administrations and society and the township has been the focal point for unrest and conflict. The townships have many demands placed on them by higher-level authorities with little independent capacity or incentive to carry out programs that will benefit the local society. This weakens the capacity for comprehensive development by township governments. One set of Chinese researchers has even referred to the responsibilities of the townships being “dismembered” by the county. Most government agencies at the township level actually receive contracts for their work from the county and this undermines the township’s capacity to co-ordinate the work of their functional agencies as the administrative power in the township region does not belong to the township.\(^\text{13}\) Many of the quotas or tasks handed down are obligatory and township leaders will be reprimanded and their promotion chances diminished by poor performance. Failure to meet one of the hard targets will negate good performance in all other areas. This is referred to as “one ticket override”

(yípiao fōnjue). Failure to meet this target will result in public criticism, fines, transfer or demotion for the party secretary and township head.\textsuperscript{14}

However, the township does not have adequate financial resources to carry out its mandated obligations and its financial relationship to the county is not defined sufficiently clearly after the 1993-94 tax reforms. Thus the townships position is weakened further lacking not only power but also the necessary finances to carry out its mandates.\textsuperscript{15} With the various agencies under the direction of the county, township governments have little to no power to decide personnel arrangements, financial revenue and expenditures and the allocation of materials to the county branches in the township. For example in Laiwu (Shandong province), only five staff in 28 township governments offices were under the leadership of the township government. This had led some to dub the township government as a “big title” (paizi xiang), “many responsibilities” (zeren da), “with little power” (quanli xiao) and “difficult to deal with” (banshi nan).\textsuperscript{16}

The resultant system that comes from this contracting arrangement with limited financial resources produces a “pressurized system” (yalixing tizhi). This is defined as the “management mode of dividing up tasks and the system of conducting assessment by giving material awards adopted by the political organization at the county or township level in order

\textsuperscript{14} For more on this system see Maria Edin, Market Forces and Communist Power: Local Political Institutions and Economic Development in China (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2000); Rong Jingben et al, Cong yalixing tizhi xiang minzhu hezuo tizhi de zhuankan (The Transformation from a Pressurized System to a Democratic Cooperative System) (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 1998); Tony Saich, “The Blind Man and the Elephant: Analysing the Local State in China”, in Luigi Tomba (ed.), ; and Susan H. Whiting, Power and Wealth in Rural China: The Political Economy of Institutional Change (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

\textsuperscript{15} Duan Ziqiang, “Xiangzhang zui pa tizhi bu shun chulu sai yu dangzheng qihe—Beijing Changping xian xiang zhen jigou shezi qingzhuang diaocha baogao” (Head of the Township is Afraid of a Systemic Conflict. Resolution Lies in the Integration of Party and Government—An Investigative Report of Township Structure in Changping County Beijing) in Li, Wang and Tang, The Current Situation and Reform, p.12.

\textsuperscript{16} Dai Junliang et al, Zhongguo xiangzhen zhengquan jianshe gailun (Outline of Township and Village Government) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991), pp. 115-16.
to develop the economy and attain the targets set by the higher authorities”.

Essentially the party and administrative organizations at the county level divide up the tasks and set the targets for the organization and individuals at the lower levels and require them to accomplish them within a prescribed period of time. There are usually one, three and five year contracts. The higher level makes it decision on political and economic rewards and penalties for organizations and individuals at the lower levels according to how well they have accomplished these tasks.

This results in a number of specific problems. First, the burden of debt of townships has a tendency to increase. This has been compounded in recent years in some areas by the problems that the township and village enterprises have run into. Most townships cannot support the provision of an adequate level of public goods and services. Indeed in many townships revenues are insufficient to cover the salaries and expenses of officials. One survey showed that at the township level (with an average population of 40 000 with 100 staff), 35 percent of their salary is collected directly from farmers. With so much of the revenues tied up in salary and benefits for local officials, it is not surprising that a common name for township finances is “Eating finances” (chifan caizheng). Despite the unreliability of finance, most township governments are overstaffed as it still represents one of the best alternatives for employment and it does offer the opportunity for extraction. Official government surveys

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17 Rong Jingben et al, *The Transformation from a Pressurized System*, pp. 269-70. Xuedong Yang is one of the co-authors of this study. For more on the pressurized system see Xuedong Yang, “Liyi fenhua he baohu—xiandaihua yu shichang jincheng zhong de Zhongyuan nongcun” (Diversification and Protection of Interests: Zhongyuan Countryside in the Process of Modernization and Marketization), *Zhongguo shehui kexue jikan* (Chinese Social Sciences Quarterly), Spring 2000, pp. 13-24.

18 It is rare to use financial penalties for officials at the township level, as their salaries are considered too low. However, a failure to meet priority targets will lead to demerits on file, possible transfer and certainly to future financial gains forgone.

19 Guo Wei, “Jiakuai xianxiang jigou gaige, cong yuantou shang jianqing nongmin fudan” (Speed Up Organizational Structure Reform at the County and Township Level and Reduce the Farmers’ Burdens from the Very Beginning), *Liaowang* (*Outlook Weekly*), No. 43, October 26, 1998, pp. 34-35.
estimate that around 60 per cent of county level staff is effectively redundant. If this is true, redundancy at the township level must be even higher.

Last but not least these factors have created frictions between local officials and farmers. The burden of revenue collection is passed onto the farmers in the form of illegal fines and levies, commonly referred to as the “three arbitraries” (三乱—乱收费 arbitrary taxation, 乱罚款 arbitrary fines, and 乱摊派 arbitrary expropriation). At the same time that they are confronted with the inadequacies of the local administration, many farmers have become more aware of their rights through the mass media, the popularization of laws and regulations, and from the migration to the cities. With the existing system not providing any formal effective channels for redress of grievance the end result has often been violence, blockading townships or attacking township officials.

The recognition that township governing structures are failing them seems to be behind party leaders’ willingness to allow limited institutional experimentation to improve transparency and accountability. Thus, there is the recognition of the need for institutional innovation to deal with these problems and this might even provide the possibility for further political restructuring of local government. However, this process will not be allowed to proceed without strong oversight and thus capacity for far-reaching change remains circumscribed.

One area that has been subject to innovation is the selective of the township head. Yet, the options within the current administrative framework remain limited as the appointment of the township head lies with the people’s congress. In fact, the reality is that

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the candidate must be first nominated by the party committee at the next higher level (county or municipality). The process is not multi-candidate. With a lack of transparency this places enormous discretionary power in the hands of the party committee and often in those of the party secretary at the higher level. This places the selection procedure in a black box and distorts the incentives for one to become a township head. It is common for prospective candidates to spend most time catering to the whims of their superiors with little incentive to work for those of the people as they have no say in the process of selection. This has been behind the increasingly commonplace practice of “selling and purchase of official posts” (maiguan maiguan). Sayings such as the following have become commonplace in the countryside: “if you bribe your superior 10 to 20 000 yuan, you have just checked in. If you offer him 30 to 40 000 yuan, you have registered for promotion. If you give him 80 to 100 000, you will get promoted”. 23

Yet the county party authorities also have a stake in ensuring that their choice for candidate will be popular and will enjoy some modicum of a popular mandate. This would help strengthen the party’s legitimacy at the local level and would help it to rejuvenate itself by incorporating members who have local credibility. In addition, as in the villages it is expected that this will help with better implementation of unpopular policies. This train of thinking has legitimated experimentation with the selection of township heads. To date, there have been four main methods experimented with.

1) **Direct Election of Township Head**

According to current regulations, the direct election of a township head by the local residents is illegal. Despite this a few townships have held direct elections, the most widely publicized example being Buyun Township in Suining Municipality, Sichuan. At almost the

same time, Nancheng Township in Qingshen County, Sichuan also held a direct election for the township head and deputy. As there is more information for the Buyun case we shall use this here.

The entire process took about two months from preparation to the actual voting. In November 1998, the Party Committee of Shizhong District in Suining decided to hold direct elections in Buyun, a small township far way from the Municipality. It appears that the district party committee made the decision without consultation with higher levels and drafted an electoral constitution for direct elections. This outlined the process for nominating candidates. In addition to organizations (political parties, social organizations, and mass organizations), 30 voters could endorse a candidate for nomination. Following these procedures 15 candidates were nominated, some of who were members of the township party and government leadership while others had no party affiliation nor had any leadership position. These 15 candidates were then considered by a joint electoral committee consisting of 162 members drawn from village heads, village party secretaries, and three village representatives from each of the 10 villages, members of the township party committee and other leaders from the township party and government organizations. The candidates had twenty minutes to make a campaign speech and a further 10 minutes for questions and answers. Finally, two candidates were chosen for the election. The candidates, a schoolteacher who was not a party member and a village committee head, defeated those with posts in the party and government administration. To ensure that the district authorities were not entirely by-passed, they used their constitutional right of nomination to propose

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24 For information see [www.dajun.com.cn/xiangzhenxuanju.htm](http://www.dajun.com.cn/xiangzhenxuanju.htm), Li Fan, “A Brave Experiment with Electoral Reform in China; the Direct Election of a Township Head in Nanchang Township”.

25 Buyun has a population of around 16 000 living in an area of 32 square kilometers. Another 4000 people work outside of its jurisdiction. The average per capita income is 1636 yuan. It is less developed than other townships in the district. There are 10 villagers’ committees in the township.
that the Buyun Party Committee deputy secretary, Tan Xiaoqiu, be added to the list of final candidates. The voting date was fixed for December 31, 1998 giving the candidates about a week to visit the 10 villages and the central marketplace to campaign.\textsuperscript{26} During this phase of the campaign the official nominee, Mr. Tan, although not a township native enjoyed a distinct advantage being escorted from village to village by an official motorcycle entourage that was supplied by the township. This must have given the impression to the villagers of official support. The voting was still close and Mr. Tan won with 50.19 percent (6236) of the votes cast.\textsuperscript{27} Tan Xiaoqiu thus became the first directly elected township head to take office. He took his oath of office on January 4, 1999 after the township congress had approved the voting.

As noted above the election became a focal point of brief discussion before it was declared unconstitutional. This method has not been used since. The election also contained a number of other innovative measures including not arranging the candidates in alphabetical order on the ballot sheets. One-third of the ballot sheets had each candidate as the first name to ensure fairness and that if people simply voted for the first name thinking that this is what they were supposed to do, it would not unduly distort the results. In addition, photos of the three candidates were exhibited at the voting booths in order to help illiterate voters identify their candidate.

\textsuperscript{26} It is estimated that almost all of the inhabitants heard the various speeches and 650 raised questions. The questions ranged across topics such as agricultural production, farmers’ burdens, taxation, market building, environmental protection, family planning, social security and the construction of village roads and education.

\textsuperscript{27} The total number of eligible voters was 11 347 of whom 3700 were working outside of the township. Of those who had remained behind to vote, 81 percent cast a vote, giving a voter turnout rate of 54.95 percent.
2) “Three-Ballot” Election for Township Head

While Buyun was carrying out its election, Dapeng Township in the Longgang District of Shenzhen was preparing its own election for a township head. The method chosen resembles the *haixuan* principle (literally meaning from the sea) used in village elections that allows candidates to be put forward by local organizations or groups of individuals. The method is also based on that of the “two ballot system” that has been experimented with for the election of village party secretaries. In this process, party members and villagers or villagers’ representatives vote in the first round to decide who will be candidates for a second ballot within the party itself. All party members vote to elect the party secretary from the candidates presented. This process is often referred to as a “poll test” or “democratic recommendation”. It provides a chance to test the credibility of candidates among the broader populace while ensuring that the party itself keeps control over the final outcome.

When this process is moved to the township level it becomes a “three-ballot” process. The main reason for this is that the township head must be elected by the people’s congress after a two-round process of recommendation. Thus, a third ballot is necessary.

In Dapeng the election process lasted for around four months. The Party Committee of Longgang District decided to hold the election on January 18, 1999. The electoral jurisdiction with 5300 eligible voters, of whom 5048 voted, was divided into 17 recommendation districts (*tuixuan qu*) on the basis of township party and government institutions, township enterprises, and villagers’ committees. The voters nominated 76 village leaders to be preliminary candidates. The Dapeng Township Party Committee then reviewed the qualifications of 6 nominees who had been recommended by over 100 voters.

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28 Dapeng has a population of around 50,000 spread out over 82.81 square kilometers. The per capita income is 4900 yuan. There are 6 village committees and 2 residents’ committees.
Five were then proposed for the next stage, one was excluded as he was over 50 years of age and thus disqualified in terms of the recommendation requirements. Campaign speeches and question and answer sessions were held on January 27, after which a group of 1086 representatives voted for which candidate would be put forward as township head. The incumbent township head, Li Weiwen, won 76 percent (813) of the votes and was recommended as the only candidate to the township congress. There was then a delay before the final election by the congress was held on April 29. Two reasons caused the delay. First, delegates to the new congress were elected on April 9 and it was felt that new rather than old delegates should approve the vote. Second, Dapeng submitted a report on the township election to both the Guangdong People’s Congress and the National People’s Congress for their approval. The final vote of the township congress was unanimous (45 votes) in its support of Mr. Li as township head.

The election was widely promoted by the Shenzhen authorities as an institutional breakthrough that was consistent with current regulation. Shenzhen also held a national meeting to disseminate the experience of Dapeng as a model for others to follow. This was consistent with discussions in Shenzhen about their need to become an experimental political reform zone to follow their status as an experimental economic reform zone.

However, it seems that the experiment will not be continued. From a participatory viewpoint, there are clear drawbacks in this process. First, the representative group clearly does not select the township head and furthermore it cannot represent all of the voters. The

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30 The representatives comprised all party members within the township, township and village officials and household representatives. As there are 1500 households in the township, not all would have been represented. However, the numbers are unclear, as some of the categories may have overlapped.
31 Discussions with Shenzhen party leaders, July 2001.
32 According to information provided to a colleague of ours from a leader of the organization department of Longgang District, August 2001.
fact that there is only one candidate provided to the congress rather than multi-candidates weakens the competitiveness of the final election. Last but not least, the desire to remain within the existing regulations seriously circumscribes the extent to which the election can be considered genuinely democratic.

3) “Two-Ballot” Election of Township Head

This method was adopted in Zhouli Township, Linyi County in Shanxi province in 1999. This area is well known for its two-ballot village party election. As in Longgang, this method derives from this but in addition to the township head it is also used for the party secretary and chair of the people’s congress. With selection of a new township leadership pending, the county leaders wanted to get some feedback from public opinion about the current leadership.

As a result, the Party Committee of Linyi County drafted the “Implementation Plan for Opinion Polls in Zhouli Township on Leading Officials” on April 10, 1999. Between April 10 and 16, the county and township made its preparations and a work report conference was held on April 16. At this conference the incumbent party secretary, the township head and the chair of the presidium of the people’s congress presented their work to 500 representatives. There was no chance to raise questions. Two days later (April 18) a vote was held with some 9000 voting at 17 different polling booths. Voters were presented with three choices for each candidate: have confidence in (xinren), have basic confidence in (jiben xinren), or no confidence in (bu xinren). Any candidate who received less than a 50 percent level of support in the first two categories was not to be recommended by the

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33 Zhouli has a population of 13,228 spread over an area of 48.05 square kilometers. There are 8 villagers. Committees and the average per capita income is 2450 yuan.
34 See Li, “The Two-Ballot System in Shanxi province”.
35 These included township government cadres, village party cadres and members of villagers’ committees and some village delegates. The Linyi party Committee also invited a number of other guests to listen to the
township as a candidate for the next party and people’s congress elections. In fact, all three gained sufficient support.

Although this system is commonly referred to as a “two ballot” system, the second ballot is not public. The township election does not follow on directly from the first vote. The result of the first vote is only used as reference for the county leaders to consider when appointing the new leadership at the township level. It is also difficult to know the role the work report meeting actually plays in the first ballot. While all eligible voters are entitled to vote to evaluate the township leaders, they were not entitled to listen to their presentations.

These three methods of election all try to broaden the scope of participation in the selection of township leadership and seek to provide some feedback on the views of villagers. The direct election method in Buyun is the most open and competitive with the party guiding the process rather than being the decision-maker. The latter two methods that fall within the current regulations are weaker in providing a direct link between voter preferences and outcomes. Both rely on the choice by a few on behalf of the whole. This may lead to disillusionment with the process of feedback. Essentially people are mobilized to vote for a process that boils down choice to a single candidate and that is in any case only in the form of a recommendation. In this context, it is interesting to look at the fourth method (public recommendation and public selection) as a way to provide better input within the framework of existing regulations

4) Public Recommendation and Public Selection (PRPS)

meeting and to disseminate its ideas. These included cadres from higher levels, some scholars and some reporters.

The precise origins of this method are unclear.\textsuperscript{37} As far as we are aware, however, the Shizhong District of Suining Municipality in Sichuan first implemented it on a systematic basis. The Shizhong District organized its PRPS during the first half of 1998 and in addition to the township head, the process also involved the selection of the party secretary.\textsuperscript{38}

Clearly PRPS is not an election but rather a process that uses some electoral procedures to enable a representative group broader than the township people’s congress to have a strong role in the selection of the candidates. It is different from the traditional way of party selection of officials through the \textit{nomenclature} as it entails a higher degree of openness and competition. However, it is true to say that it is more open than it is competitive. Consequently the PRPS method can be viewed as a transitional institutional process situated between the conventional process of party nomination and congress ratification and a direct election. It is more open and competitive than traditional practice but is less open and competitive than a direct election in terms of public participation.

In late-1997, the Shizhong District Party Committee launched a plan to accelerate reform of its cadre system, recognizing that the current system did not meet the demands of the more complex environment. They decided that the reforms should ensure the recruitment of more highly qualified officials and encourage more participation. In January 1998, the fourth party plenum of Shizhong District presented its work report that included the PRPS method. Initially, it was the party’s intention only to use the PRPS for a limited number of appointments to its functional bureau and it did not include township heads.

\textsuperscript{37} In part this derives from the fact that local officials often lack the resources to promote innovation. However, it also stems from the fact that some local officials do not wish to disseminate such experimentation widely to prevent undue attention and pressure from higher levels.

\textsuperscript{38} The case mentioned by Liu Xitang in Nanbu County, Sichuan occurred four months after that in Shizhong. In addition it only covered the position of township deputy-head. However, the process was extensive with the selection to find 178 deputy heads for 79 townships, although the final number selected was 175. Liu, “An Investigation of and thoughts on”, p. 73. Liu is an editor of the magazine \textit{Xiangzhen luntan} (Village and Township Forum) that is affiliated with the Ministry of Civil Affairs.
In May, an event happened in Baoshi Township that changed the minds of the District party leaders. Both the party secretary and the township head were removed from office because of corruption and it appeared that a further 20 township officials were involved, including the chair of the township congress. The previous evaluation of the township leadership had been positive, as they had presided over strong economic growth. Now the District’s judgement was called into question and they realized that there were problems with the traditional closed system of appointment. In addition, because of the host of problems left behind by the disgraced leadership, they could not find a suitable candidate who was willing to work in Baoshi. Consequently, the Shizhong District Party Committee decided to extend the PRPS method of official selection to the position of Baoshi Township head.39

Not surprisingly such a decision was contentious. Some district leaders felt that as the use of PRPS to select a township head in Sichuan was unprecedented it would be risky and might lead to unforeseen problems and failure. The organization department that was to oversee the process lacked experience and the necessary skills to operate the selection. It had to try to learn quickly from others while, at the same time, developing some new measures to deal with problems as they emerged. There was also suspicion among the general public that the process might not be as open and competitive as was suggested and that the party might have already decided upon the candidate in secret, as was usual practice. Some of the remaining township officials were also unhappy with the turn of events, as they had anticipated promotion that would now be challenged by the implementation of PRPS.

39 Such a shift can be deciphered from the decision issued by the party in May. In addition to the township head (zhengke), the other eight positions are all at the deputy level (fuke). Interviews with local leaders in Shizhong in September 2001 confirmed this.
Despite this opposition and uncertainty, the decision was made to move forward at the end of May.

On May 12, 1998 the District Party Committee adopted a formal decision to hold the PRPS and a leading group was established to oversee the process. Although the District organization department implemented the selection process, others were represented in the leading group and did participate in the process. Members of the leading group were drawn from the discipline and inspection committee, the propaganda department, the standing committee of the people’s congress, the people’s political consultative conference and the district government. This helped build an initial consensus and reduce opposition to the process.

The formal procedure began on May 25 with a process of public application. In addition to nominated cadres, party secretaries and village heads in certain townships were allowed to apply if they met certain basic criteria. Of the 69 who applied, 67 were considered to be qualified and in June they took a written exam. The top six candidates from the written exam then had an oral exam on June 22. The oral exam was held in front of a group of 149 representatives who whittled the list down to two after all six had finished the question and answer session. The two remaining candidates were then recommended to the township congress for final selection. This selection was held on the same day. Xiang Daoquan, who was only 29 years old at the time, was elected with 46 of the 49 votes of the township congress delegates.

40 The most important were that they had to be born after June 1, 1960, have graduated from high school and be in good health. There was no requirement concerning official position.
41 This group included all 49 township congress delegates, 68 officials from the villages and the township and 32 officials from the district level.
42 Xiang was actually fourth after the written exam. The person who was first after the written exam was placed last after the oral exam.
What was seen as the successful outcome of this experiment provided the District leaders with both the confidence and the experience to extend its application. Importantly, higher-level authorities did not criticize the PRPS and the provincial organization department invited representatives from Shizhong to present their experience at a provincial conference. The PRPS was also reported in detail by the Sichuan Daily and on Sichuan television. The District Party Committee then decided to extend PRPS to the township party secretary and this process began in September 1998. Dongchan and Lianhua townships were chosen as the trial sites.

The basic procedures for the selection of the township head and the party secretary are essentially the same. Here we shall describe the four-stage process for PRPS for the township party secretary. **Stage one: application and qualifications.** A set of criteria were established for all potential applicants of which the most important were that they should have at least a college degree, an administrative rank of at least deputy section head (fuke) and be born after September 30, 1958 (thus, under 40). The requirements for party secretary were more stringent than those for township head as village officials were allowed to participate even though they do not enjoy a formal bureaucratic rank. Despite seemingly strict criteria, there were 99 applicants for the two positions revealing a relatively large pool of candidates.

**Stage two: written examination.** This was considered the most objective phase of the selection process. A special group established by the organization department was responsible for designing the examination and it made secret visits to other counties for this purpose. All the questions were kept confidential until the exam and covered areas such as

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43 Leading Group for Public Selection in Shizhong District, Suining Municipality, “Suining shi Shizhongqu gongxuan Dongchan zhen, Lianhua xiang dangwei shuji jianzhang” (General Regulations for the Public
Deng Xiaoping Theory, theory of a market economy, public administration, leadership, laws, science and technology, history, official documents, and agricultural production. The highest possible score was 150 points. The questions were structured in different ways. For some questions it was necessary to fill in the blank spaces, others were multiple choice while yet others required short reasoned judgements. The case method was also stressed with two cases presented. One case involved investigation by the leader into flood prevention work while the other concerned a case of the villagers suing the government. These were realistic cases for the aspiring leaders to grapple with. In 1998, the Yangzi River area suffered from serious flooding and Sichuan constitutes the vital up-stream area. Thus, flood prevention is an important part of local government work touching on questions of security, development, and livelihood. Sichuan has also become well known for the severity of its rural disturbances in recent years with numerous cases of conflict between the farmers and the local government. Thus, we can see that the written examination did contain some substantive issues that were based on possible real life situations. Review of the written examination led to the selection of the top six candidates who then participated in the oral examination. The organization department also set up for them a two-day investigation of the relevant township.

Stage Three: Oral Examination. This phase more or less resembled a campaign speech with a representative group voting to make a final selection of candidates after listening to speeches and raising questions. Naming this group proved difficult under the existing institutional arrangements and the local organization department simply decided to


44 Obviously two days is too short for the candidates to get to know the township where they might work. It is also too short a period of time for the township residents to interact with the candidates. This was later recognized by the District authorities who stipulated in the “Interim Provisions for the PRPS for Township
call it a defense meeting.\textsuperscript{45} The voting process was called “democratic recommendation” (\textit{minzhu tuijian}). The representative groups, of course, widened participation from traditional methods and comprised: heads of the district party committee, the district government, the people’s congress and people’s political consultative conference, the heads of various government entities, township-level cadres (party members), village officials (party members), village party members, and heads of district level sectors. In the Lianhua Township, the number of members in the representative group totaled 278.

There were four questions of which one was known and could be prepared ahead of time. The other three questions were not made known. Voting took place following the oral examination with the two candidates who received the highest number of votes recommended to an enlarged meeting of the standing committee of the district party committee.

\textbf{Stage four: nomination and announcement.} The enlarged meeting respected the results of the vote and thus the candidate who had the highest number of votes was nominated as township party secretary and was announced on the spot. However, the process for confirmation of the party secretary and township head is different. The party secretary needs to be approved by the higher-level party committee while the township head needs to be “elected” by the people’s congress. Eventually Xia Xiantong and Tang Konglun were elected party secretaries of Lianhua and Dongchan townships with 122 and 321 votes respectively.

\textsuperscript{45} Heads of the Shizhong District of Suining Municipality” that the time for investigation in the township should not be less than seven days. This was drafted on the basis of the first three experiments. In the three experiments there was no definitive process for stipulating how the representative group should be formed and what its composition should be. The “Interim Provisions” state clearly that the total number of representatives must exceed one percent of the township population (it was to exceed one percent in large and medium townships and two percent in small townships). The total number of cadres from the district level was not to exceed 10 percent of the representatives.
PRPS as a Mechanism for Broader but Controlled Participation

Clearly PRPS broadens the scope of participation in selection of local leaders in contrast with traditional methods but it retains the Leninist concern for control of the process should anything deemed untoward happen. Two institutional adjustments are made to broaden participation. First, the criteria for application are lowered. In the case of township head, village officials and lower-ranked cadres (below deputy section chief 責科) are permitted to participate. Having a farmer’s status is not a barrier to being able to compete for a formal bureaucratic position that is financed out of the state’s budget and which oversees a larger geographic terrain than the village. More younger officials can participate because the requirement for level of bureaucratic rank is lower than usual. For example, among 67 applicants in Baoshi, there were 20 (29.9 percent) cadres ranked at just below that of deputy section chief, namely at the 顾 level, with another 28 (41.28 percent) who were ordinary cadres or village officials. In terms of age, the number of applicants under 33 years formed the majority (41 or 61 percent).

The second institutional innovation is that the voting by the representative group is decisive. This modifies the party’s dominance of the entire selection procedure of the township head. Under the old process, the organization department would provide a name list for the party standing committee should positions in a township become vacant. The standing committee of usually seven to nine members would then convene to discuss the recommended candidates. A meeting of the party secretaries would usually precede this meeting. This meeting is the quintessential bargaining and deal-making session where a

46 In county-level politics, it normally takes five or more years to be promoted from 責科 rank to 職科 (i.e. township head). This means that it is almost impossible for an official ranked below 責科 to be able to jump up to the 職科 level.

47 The Party Statutes do not stipulate that such a meeting be held but it has become common practice. It provides a strong institutional mechanism for the party secretary to monopolize the power of decision-making.
basic consensus is formed after people horse trade their favorite candidates. The decision is then presented to the standing committee that is highly unlikely to raise criticism of the proposed choices. The final decision is approved and issued in the name of the standing committee. The process is then shifted from the district to the township level. The candidate for party secretary will then be elected party secretary by the township’s party congress while the township head will be elected by the people’s congress.

Beginning in the 1990s, this traditional process began to be modified with adoption of the process of “democratic recommendation”. This meant, in practice, that the organization department called together some staff from a work-unit to request their evaluation of their head. However, this process was more one of form than content as the evaluation did not necessarily have an impact on the decision of the higher level. The work of a township head could potentially affect all in the township but virtually none had input on their appointment. This is also the case with “democratic recommendation” as it is an internal process and excludes the villagers themselves.

This is different with the recommendation group in the PRPS process even though the old name of “democratic recommendation” is retained. First, it is the representative group not the standing committee that makes the final decision on the candidates. Second, more ordinary cadres participate in the group and not just the district’s leading cadres. For example, in Baoshi ordinary cadres comprised 68 of the 149 representatives (45.6 percent). If we include the number of ordinary cadres who were township congress delegates then the total would top 50 percent. This is the same with PRPS for the party secretary. Village officials play a decisive role in the final selection because they dominate the representative group. In Lianhua there are 198 village officials (about 71 percent) out of a group total of 278. In Dongchan there were 237 (about 61 percent) village officials out of a total of 388 in
the group. This means that any person who wishes to win the election must gain the support of the village level officials. Without this support, no candidate could emerge as a winner even if she/he did well on the written examination and was the preferred choice of the higher-level authorities.

The size and structure of the representative group makes it hard for the party to influence the voting. This can be seen by analyzing the voting behavior of the representative group (see tables 1 and 2). The distribution of the votes is interesting with an obvious divergence between the district level and the village level officials in terms of their choice of candidate. We should keep in mind that all members of the standing committee of the party are district level cadres. In Lianhua, almost half of the 32 district-level cadres voted for Yuan Jie (15 votes) but Yuan received only 8 votes from the village level officials. By contrast, Xia Xiantong received a total of 87 votes even though he received only 7 district-level votes. He still won in Lianhua Township. In Dongchan the contrast is even clearer. The eventual winner, Tang Konglun, won 164 of the 237 village level official votes (over 60 percent), while only 23 of the 44 district-level cadres voted for him. The third placed candidate, Zhang Jiwu, received 32 votes from the district level cadres but only 46 votes from the village level. Given this situation, it is difficult for the party to manipulate the results of the election.

When we compare the voting behavior of the village level officials and the township cadres, we find much greater congruence. In Lianhua, Xia Xiantong polled the highest vote among both the village and the township officials, while in Dongchan, Tang Konglun received the highest village vote and was second to Yi Pengfei for the township votes (44:57). Two cases are not sufficient to make any robust conclusions but we can make one tentative suggestion about these voting outcomes. The main reason for the convergence is probably that township cadres maintain close working relationships and interact frequently
with village officials. This means that a consensus on the candidates is more likely than
between the district and the village. In the villages, the candidate’s practical capabilities rather
than their speech-making capacity are considered more important. By contrast, district level
cadres might pay more attention to a candidate’s rhetoric and their alignment with the
policies of the party and the Shizhong District in particular. Some villagers commented that
they preferred a person they saw as honest, credible and modest even if they were not a
good public speaker. They felt that it was easier to communicate with such a person.

However, this does not mean that the party has foregone its control and its Leninist
predisposition is still apparent. We are not dealing with open representation but a process of
a controlled opening to gauge public receptivity to proposed candidates. The last thing the
party wants is to put forward a slate of candidates that will be rejected by those they will be
overseeing.\textsuperscript{48} The representative group is much smaller than the potential voter pool. It is
elite rather than popular participation. It is limited within the system and is not inclusive with
most representatives being drawn from among officialdom at different levels.

It should also be remembered that the party controls the selection of the township
heads even though it cannot decide directly who the candidates are let alone which candidate
will win. The party exerts its influence in at least three ways. First, it is the only rule maker
for the PRPS and monopolizes the privilege of setting the criteria for application, reviewing
the applicants, designing the exams, and drafting the voting procedures. The party can
manipulate the criteria on age, education level, and years of work to limit the scope of
applicants to find those potential officials who fit with its defined needs. In this case, there
was a need to provide younger and better-educated officials. As the rules were

\textsuperscript{48} As Manion notes when looking at the process for electing people’s congress delegates, the system is
designed to align preferences of selectorates and electorates. The party wants to select candidates that can
institutionalized, in fact, the criteria for application were tightened. Thus, in Baoshi Township the party allowed all cadres below the fuke level to participate but this was limited in the “Interim Provisions” of November 3, 1998. The provisions both raised the years of necessary work experience as well as the level of administrative experience. It was deemed that the candidate should hold a guji position, have a college diploma, and have at least five-years’ work experience. If the applicant was a farmer, he or she should have worked as a party secretary or village head for more than three years.

Second, the party can still move the township officials elected by PRPS at will. Xiang Daoquan, the township head elected in Baoshi through was moved to Hengshan Township to be party secretary after just one year in office. This showed that the party was not bound by the desire of the representative group, especially not that of its local participants. Whatever it may be the PRPS process is not an institution to promote democracy. Its primary role is to increase the talent pool and vet effective cadres. This could undermine the longer-term effectiveness of the process. In fact, some cadres in the organization department were also concerned about the speed with which Xiang was moved. They felt that local residents would not believe that PRPS was effective and that township heads might not devote themselves to their work sufficiently if they thought that they could still be moved at will. Some villagers and Xiang himself thought that it would have been better to work longer in Baoshi as he had become familiar with the township and as he had been “elected” for the job.

Last but not least, most officials are still party members meaning that their ties of loyalty are still to the party organization rather than the local community. Most applicants are party members. For example, In Baoshi 52 of the 67 (77.6 percent) of the applicants were
party members while only two applicants came from the other (“democratic”) political parties.

Concluding Comments: Institutional Innovation and Economic Development

At first glance it may seem strange that these innovations have taken place in Suining, a small municipality in the west of China that lags economically behind the more developed areas of the East. More conventional wisdom on the relationship between economic development and political reform would suggest that Suining is an unlikely candidate to be a pioneer of political reform.

Of course we are dealing with institutional innovation rather than democratization but still it is interesting to note that a number of key innovations in China since the 1970s have occurred in less economically developed areas. Two prominent examples from rural China are the household responsibility system and the villagers’ committee elections. The former was initiated in a poor village in Anhui province in 1978. The village election program began in two Guangxi counties in late-1980 and early –1981. Both these experiments led to the development of national policy and made a decisive contribution to change in rural China.

In poorer areas, the impact of a crisis is likely to be felt first and this can cause innovation by the local government. This was the case with Suining. Both general factors and some specific causes explain Suining’s decision to undertake institutional innovation. First, local governments in many poor areas lack the revenue to meet basic public needs or to respond to crises. This can create the need to innovate with existing institutions. Opening up the political system or broadening public participation is likely, however, only to be a measure of last resort. Second, local communities in poorer areas may be less riven by
interest groups and the forces of pluralism. This may facilitate consensus building about alternative solutions. Third, innovation initiated by government might be accepted more readily. Local societies might not have much information about alternatives, especially if migration is not particularly significant. Under these circumstances the combination of remoteness would allow for more experimentation, as it does not fall under such strict scrutiny from the political center. At the same time, the innovation is liable to be within existing institutional frameworks as access to information on alternatives will be limited.

In the specific case of Suining, the economic scandal caused by the corruption of local cadres pushed the District leadership to reconsider the method through which they selected township officials. The fact that PRPS appeared successful in Baoshi led them to broaden the process to other townships and to the selection of the party secretary. The use of PRPS for the selection of the party secretary is more significant than that of township head because it opens up the internal operations of the party to a broader but albeit limited public. Even though participation was limited, the oral examination and the structure of the recommendation group would result in most inhabitants knowing a lot more about prospective candidates than would normally be the case.

Leadership is also important in promoting or resisting change. In many localities, and insightful and strong-willed individual leader can play a crucial role in initiating and implementing reform. This was clearly the case in Shizhong with Zhang Jingmin, the former party secretary who has now been promoted to vice-Mayor of Suining Municipality. She played a key role in initiating and sustaining momentum for PRPS. Importantly, she had experience outside of Suining having worked in the Sichuan provincial committee of the

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49 For more on this see Xuedong Yang, (Region, Individuals and Institutional Innovation: A Case Study of Qindu District in Shanxi Province) in Rong Jingben et al., (A Re-study of the Transformation from the
Youth League and been an intern in the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing. She was enthusiastic about reforming the traditional cadre system and persisted over the objections of some members of the party standing committee. Her continued support enable the trial sites to complete the work and the success in these areas then gave confidence to other district leaders to persist with the reform.\textsuperscript{50}

Regional competition also played a role in pushing ahead innovation. Some scholars have argued that competition among local governments wishing to improve economic growth has been a major force promoting fast economic growth.\textsuperscript{51} While political innovation is much riskier than economic, competition also exists in this area. Localities can be willing to act as trial sites for experimentation because of potential recognition and benefits higher levels might bestow on them. If experimentation is successful, local leaders might be promoted more quickly. In Suining, the PRPS process attracted attention from the Sichuan provincial party committee and also some scholars based in Beijing. Zhang Jingmin, as noted above, made a presentation to the provincial organization department in September 1998 that promoted the experiment. Through discussions with the scholars at present she became aware that Dapeng in Shenzhen was planning to hold a direct election for township head. As a result, she decided to speed up the process for the direct election in Buyun to ensure that it would be the first in China. Cadres in Suining were very proud to be known as the first to

\textsuperscript{50} Others confirm this in their analysis of the Buyun election. He Baogang and Lang Youxin noted, “In the course of making the decision, Zhang Jingmin, the party secretary of Shizhong District, played a key role. She not only has a pioneering spirit but also is also open-minded and is good at theoretical analysis. Her determination finally promoted the direct election in Shizhong District. See (Buyun Dilemma: An Investigation of the Direct Election of a Township Head), \textit{Ershi yi shijie} (The Twenty-First Century), No. 64 (April 2000), pp. 125-36.

hold a direct election while those in Shenzhen were disappointed by the news that they had been beaten.

Crisis might produce a one-time experimentation but it is more difficult to ensure sustainability of a new institutional innovation. Once the perceived crisis is past there is a tendency to set aside the innovation. However, in the case of PRPS momentum has been maintained. A September 2001 document issued by the Sichuan Provincial Organization Bureau required all counties, with the exception of those in minority autonomous regions, to carry out the PRPS method of selection in at least one third of the townships by the end of that year.° While this process has been accepted at the provincial level, and even here there is uncertainty about institutionalizing the representative group, it has not been adopted as national policy. National policy has favored a similar process called “open selection” (gongkai xuanba). However there are two principle differences. First, in general “open selection” is only used for the position of deputy. Second if some head positions are selected through this process, it is within functional sectors and not within the administrative organs.

PRPS is just one of the innovations that have been introduced to reform the cadre system since the 15th Party Congress (September 1997) and we can expect more with the rising concern about corruption within party ranks. Party leaders are worried of a drift of qualified party members out of leading party and state positions to the foreign and private sector and where not only pay is higher but where promotion can be more rapid. Within this context, the use of selection methods such as PRPS is seen as a way to improve promotion chances for younger people. Under the traditional system, it is virtually impossible for a person under 40 or 45 years of age to head a township. In Suining, many township heads are

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° Organization Bureau of Sichuan Province, “Zhonggong Sichuan shengwei zuzhibu guanyu zuohao xiang (zhen) cun huanjie xuanju gongzuo de tongzhi (Announcement of the Organization Bureau of Sichuan
below 30 and the youngest head was only 26 years old at time of selection. However, some older cadres have not been so pleased with the outcomes and have tried to obstruct its implementation. Many cadres working in the county level administration who are around 45 years old can now find it difficult to gain promotion to head a township and some have to retire early.

It offers new opportunities to the individual while providing the party with the chance to unearth good local talent. Individuals can make a case for selection without having to rely solely on currying favor with existing leaders. One deputy party secretary of Shizhong commented that he was surprised to find so many talented people in the district. It has also proved beneficial to the organization department who has better sense of who are qualified candidates that enjoy a broader credibility. Some of those who did not win in the final vote have subsequently been considered good enough for promotion elsewhere.

However, in terms of institutional design, PRPS has a number of shortcomings. First, the application criteria are still restrictive setting age, education and administrative ranking requirements that limit the scope of applicants. Second, there are problems with the technical implementation of the voting. For example, there are no voting booths that provide privacy and there is no open count of the vote. Third, higher levels can still remove those elected during their term of office.

The development of a process such as PRPS represents a local attempt by the party to deal with what a number of observers see as a process of institutional decline resulting from economic reforms.53 It is an attempt to deal with the evolving reality at the local level
and to improve the quality of the officials that are appointed to key posts. Certainly, there was a demand with over 60 applicants for each position, revealing that in a poorer area such as Suining a job in the bureaucracy is considered a good thing.\textsuperscript{54} It also provides the party with feedback from society about the kinds of individuals that it is selecting and in this sense provides a modicum of democratization within the local party apparatus. PRPS allows more party members at the grass-roots level to participate in the choice of party secretaries at the next higher level. In fact, they dominate the representative group. This process can help broaden the base of the party’s legitimacy at the local level.

This does not mean that the party’s Leninist predilection has been abandoned nor is there any indication that processes such as PRPS are seen as a stepping stone to direct elections at the township level. The organization department remains in control of the reform of the cadre system and the relationship between the representative groups, the people’s congress and the party committee remain unclear. The party will still guide the process of selection and, as we have seen, can still remove or transfer those selected whenever they choose to do so. Senior party leaders have vacillated on the question as to whether direct elections at the township level would be a good thing or not. On balance they have tended to resist this move. The Central Secretariat of the CCP issued a document in September 2001 that called for experimentation with township elections to be postponed as the existing legal framework did not provide adequate legitimacy for this.\textsuperscript{55} However, while

\textsuperscript{54} In part this highlights the fact that the local state is too large in most localities. It might also point to the fact that many feel that not only the official benefits of office holding are good but also the unofficial perks are attractive.

\textsuperscript{55} There seems to be some confusion about this document and its status. Officials who are familiar with the document said that while the document had been issued in the name of the Central Secretariat, it had not been drafted by the Secretariat but rather by officials in the National People’s Congress. They claimed that it did not necessary reflect the intention of the party as the drafters were not familiar with the process of the
the Center vacillates, local governments and party institutions have to find real solutions to
the problems that confront them. Perhaps the biggest problem is that of legitimacy of the
governing organs themselves. This would suggest that we might see more local institutional
innovation that tries to walk the fine line of broadening civic participation while retaining
Leninist organizational control. This may seem a contradiction in terms but without any
clear direction from the Center the only solutions for localities are those that operate within
existing institutional guidelines and exploit the grey areas to enhance local representation.

elections at the township level and had just heard a number of complaints about the process. The
complaints had formed the basis for their draft.
Table One: Voting Results for Lianhua Township

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<th>District votes</th>
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Source: Organization Department of Shizhong District, Suining Municipality

Table Two: Voting Results for Dongchan Township

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Source: Organization Department of Shizhong District, Suining Municipality