

# Research on Innovation of Grassroots Consultative Democracy Mechanism based on QCA Method

Jing Gao<sup>1,\*</sup>, Yuhan Sun<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Jilin Institute of Chemical Technology*

<sup>2</sup> *Harbin Institute of Technology (Shenzhen)*

\*Email: 836076585@qq.com

## ABSTRACT

Consultative democracy is an important component of the whole process of people's democracy, and represents the governance features and institutional advantages of socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics. Based on 60 cases of grassroots consultative democracy in China, this paper uses QCA method to analyze the configuration effect of 12 conditional variables in the three elements of consultative subject, consultative object and consultative system. According to research findings: first, there are four ways to reach a high degree of consensus and two ways to reach a low degree of consensus. Second, there are two substitution relations between the paths to reach a high degree of consensus. One is under the authority of unknown conditions leading, instead using professional third-party intervention. Another is that the decentralized principal-agent mode can replace the fixed platform mode to play a role in a certain environment. Thirdly, there is an asymmetric relationship between the influence paths that produce high and low consensus degree. In the future, institutional innovations adapted to China should be promoted to promote the prosperity and development of socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics.

**Keywords:** *grassroots consultative democracy, case, QCA,, innovation path.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Consultative democracy is an important means of realizing people's democracy throughout the process, and deepening reform of consultative democracy mechanisms at the community level is a source of driving force for building consensus among the people at the community level. In the new era, the research on deliberative democracy in China has gradually moved towards the path of localization, institutionalization, systematization and substantiation<sup>[1]</sup>. It is an inevitable choice to better adapt to the prosperity and development of people's democratic cause in the future to study the innovative path and practical logic of grassroots consultative democracy mechanism in China. Through the theoretical deconstruction, factor configuration analysis and logical sorting of the innovation cases of grassroots consultative democracy mechanism, we can find the innovation law of grassroots consultative democracy mechanism, which is conducive to further promote the stable, orderly and innovative development of China's grassroots social governance. At present, China's economic development has entered a "new normal". In future practice, how to balance "efficiency

and fairness" and "fairness and justice" will test the innovation ability of China's system and mechanism. In particular, the innovative practice of grassroots consultative democracy can inspire the whole society to promote wider and deeper fairness and justice.

Given the shortage of resources, conditions and capacity for grassroots consultative democracy, how to explore and form a new consultative democracy mechanism and enhance the consensus of grassroots consultative democracy has become a crucial issue.

## 2. MECHANISM ELEMENT

At present, most of the research results on grassroots consultative democracy innovation are literature review and case study, in which there are both single case study and multi-case comparative study. For example, Shu Jin (2011)<sup>[2]</sup> takes the discussion mechanism of Gulou District in Nanjing as an example and thinks that the operation effect of the discussion carrier "community Discussion Park" includes three aspects: expanding participation, resolving conflicts and promoting interaction. Ma Deyong and Zhang Hua (2018)<sup>[3]</sup> made an empirical analysis of Xindu, Wenling and Pengzhou

cases using multiple regression model, and proposed that institutional innovation could improve the level of institutional justice and consultative democracy. Xu Mingqiang(2018)<sup>[4]</sup>used the comparison method of multiple case types to investigate the three consultative democratic systems of autonomy, consultation and co-governance, and believed that co-governance consultative governance is the best embodiment of grassroots consultative governance in China. Taking Taicang city as an example, he proposed that "social organizations should be actively cultivated" and "orderly public participation should be expanded". To sum up, this paper summarizes and integrates the vast majority of variables involved in existing studies, and further summarizes and puts forward a conditional variable group of "three elements and twelve variables" formed by relevant variables through a large number of case studies, and takes the degree of consensus as the target variable to measure the effectiveness of deliberative democracy mechanism.

### **3. STUDY DESIGN**

#### **3.1. Research Methods**

Qualitative Comparative Analysis(QCA)is a research method based on "case orientation". The QCA method aims to solve the phenomenon of causal complexity and take into account external extension validity. This method regards cases as different combinations of conditional variables, integrates the advantages of case study and variable study, and can effectively answer the problems of multiple concurrent causality, causal asymmetry and multiple scheme equivalence<sup>[5]</sup>.Its basic idea is to explore how the combination of conditional variables causes the change of target variables by using set theory and Boolean operation rules, which effectively solves the analysis of the "combination" problem.It is the first time to solve the analysis problem of "innovation is a new combination of existing knowledge" proposed by Schumpeter. In recent years, QCA method has been applied more and more in the field of innovation and management<sup>[6]</sup>, both of which have achieved good results. As a new research method beyond qualitative and quantitative, it has been widely recognized in the domestic management circle.

#### **3.2. Data Sources**

The data of this study come from Selected Cases of grassroots Consultative Democracy. The compilation team selected 77 typical cases of grassroots consultative democracy, including vivid cases from districts, counties, communities, sub-districts and enterprises across the country. Through comparative study, material mutual verification and logical deduction, this study finally selected 60 cases with detailed explanations of various elements and conditional variables as the research

objects.

#### **3.3.A Variable Measure**

Twelve conditional variables were measured according to previous literature review and case studies. In this study, considering that different environments of different cases would cause fuzzy set assignment distortion, twelve conditional variables were assigned according to the dichotomy attribution principle of csQCA, and all variables were assigned according to the principle of "unity in the conditional domain and comparability outside the target domain". In other words, the same attributes in the same environment(such as districts and counties)are assigned with batch calibration, and the consensus degree in different environments is assigned with a broad understanding, so that it has comparable significance<sup>[7]</sup>.The specific logic is:presence=1, lack=0 or yes=1, no=0. All the original data after the assignment are compiled into truth table for QCA analysis.

### **4. Crisp-set QCA**

#### **4.1. Analysis of Necessary Conditions**

In QCA analysis, a necessary condition is treated as a super set of results. The necessary condition is naturally interpreted as a "core condition". Through analysis, the necessity of the existence of authority dominance, the existence of platform construction and the existence of public opinion aggregation for high consensus degree is all greater than 0.9, constituting a necessary condition. This means that a high degree of consensus can be achieved only if three conditions exist(theoretically, at least two conditions can make the total coverage more than 1), indicating that the mode of "authority-led-platform construction-public opinion aggregation" is to some extent regarded as a common practice for the mechanism innovation of consultative democracy across the country. This minimalist model is an important means to support a high degree of consensus. At the same time, the necessity of most conditional variables for non-high consensus is lower than 0.9, which does not constitute a necessary condition. As far as the actual situation is concerned, the lack of subject aggregation will undoubtedly reduce the consensus of consultative democracy. Therefore, the lack of subject aggregation is also regarded as the core condition(necessity 0.862)in this study, and the configuration of generating two kinds of consensus degree is explored.

#### **4.2. Configuration Analysis of Typical Cases**

The intermediate solution was obtained through crisp-set QCA. In general, the intermediate solution is superior to the other two simplified and complex

solutions<sup>[8]</sup>. The intermediate solution is obtained by counterfactual analysis, that is, it is assumed that the presence of each condition variable improves the consensus and the absence of each condition variable reduces the consensus. Through crisp-set qualitative comparative analysis, four configurations (paths) with high consensus degree and two configurations (paths) with low consensus degree were screened. Next, six typical cases represented by configuration are analyzed respectively.

#### *4.2.1. "W Mode" of Grassroots Consultation in Liaoning Province*

("Authority--platform--agents--micro issues" model). This configuration path indicates that the establishment of a consultative democracy platform under the authority can solve micro-issues among the masses through delegation and agent, regardless of whether public opinion is aggregated or not, so as to achieve high consensus through consultation. W Sub-district of Liaoning Province fully emphasizes the institutionalization, procedure and standardization of deliberative democracy. With the guarantee of institutional authority, a leading group of grassroots deliberative democracy "Three Modernization Construction" has been set up. On the basis of the "1+X" working model of grand party building, the studio platform of "five groups linked ten projects" and "two representatives and one committee member" has been put forward. Through the formation of a volunteer team of party members for the convenience of the people, an official delegation organization has been formed in grassroots consultative democracy, which is specifically responsible for connecting with grassroots people and implementing the spirit of the Party's mass line. W Street has been awarded "Top 10 Streets", "Harmonious Community" and other honors for its outstanding innovation of grassroots consultative democracy.

#### *4.2.2. Beijing H street "Community Chamber"*

("Full body--platform--direct participation--public issues" model). This configuration path shows that high consensus can be achieved by aggregating stakeholders to discuss with colleagues at the same time and place, allowing residents to sign up and directly participate in the discussion of public issues and express their real preferences. H Street in Beijing promotes "community meeting hall" in 20 communities under its jurisdiction, allowing residents to directly sign up for discussions and create participatory consultation. Through the issue collection, issue determination, procedure, implementation after discussion, issue record and tracking, public evaluation to make residents participate in the whole process of discussion. It can bring residents face to face with relevant subjects. This mode gradually

weakens the function of the neighborhood committee, strengthens the enthusiasm and ownership consciousness of residents to participate in public affairs. Through effective communication, consensus was reached and social benefits were maximized.

#### *4.2.3. Hubei S County "Assistant System"*

("Authority--agency--supervision--micro issues" model). This configuration path indicates that high consensus can be achieved through a large number of decentralized principal-agent solutions and democratic supervision under the authority, regardless of whether there is a fixed platform. Hubei province selects 3736 village affairs assistant as the entrusted agency, they are the "face" of the masses, and become the village cadres "contacts". They not only serve as a platform, but also have flexible and decentralized characteristics that traditional platforms do not have, opening up the "last kilometer" of rural public services. In terms of supervision, the village assistant secretary not only accepts the guidance of the village "two committees", but also supervises cadres on behalf of the villagers in the region. Under the practice of Hubei province, the success rate of contradiction adjustment reached 95%. It is a representative case of practicing mass line in rural consultative democracy.

#### *4.2.4. "Social Conflict Resolution Studio" in Gansu Province*

("Full body--tripartite intervention--platform--micro issues" model). This configuration path indicates that high consensus can be achieved by the intervention of the professional third department and the gathering of subjects to discuss and solve micro issues on a fixed platform, regardless of whether there is authoritative dominance or not. "Social Conflict Resolution Studio" is a non-profit private unit strictly examined and registered by Tianshui civil affairs Bureau. The studio accepts the feedback and delegation from the masses, negotiates and conciliates simple cases. Field visits and questionnaire surveys were conducted on special cases and third parties such as deputies to people's congresses, members of CPPCC committees, experts and scholars were invited to participate in consultations. Moreover, they communicate and guide the hot spots of public opinion and become the link and bridge of communication between the masses and the government. None of the cases that the studio has accepted have been petitioned again, which is a typical case of non-public units full-time promoting consultative democracy under the leadership of the Party.

#### *4.2.5. Practice Problem of X Village in Shanxi*

(Lack of subject--lack of specialty--jumbled hierarchy--issue confusion). This configuration path

shows that the lack of main body, low professional literacy (lack of third-party guidance) and too many decision-making layers make it difficult for the masses to participate in complex issues, resulting in low consensus of consultative democracy. X village in Shanxi Province has a seven-step procedure, a consultation involves discussion and voting at a village committee meeting, a village cadre meeting, a party member meeting, and then a village representative meeting. Most crucially, due to the lack of professional literacy and low enthusiasm for participation, the village has developed a huge loophole "voting system". That is, the number of participants must reach 60%, and the voting result is subject to 60% opinions. This means that a minimum of 36 percent ( $0.6 \times 0.6$ ) of the vote is required to pass the vote, which seriously reduces the consensus level of grassroots consultative democracy.

#### 4.2.6. Practice Problem of L Village in Anhui

(Lack of subject--lack of information--split opinion--issue confusion). This configuration shows that it is difficult to deal with multiple issues and maintain the mechanism under the condition of lack of subjects, lack of necessary experience and information, and internal opinions of subjects are inconsistent, resulting in low consensus of deliberative democracy. The L village council in Anhui Province is at the early stage of construction and there is no unified operation mechanism and mode. There also did not clarify the relationship between the villagers council and the villagers committee, its lack of management experience, positioning and consultation is in a state of "Summarize as you go along". The specific deliberative democracy effect was not significant, the villagers' participation is low.

## 5. CONCLUSION

60 cases of grassroots consultative democracy were selected as samples. Starting from 12 conditional variables at the level of negotiation subject, negotiation object, and negotiation system. This paper applies qualitative comparison method to explore multiple concurrent causality and innovative practice logic with consensus degree under the framework of configuration. The conclusions are as follows: 1) There are four ways to achieve high consensus degree. "Authority--platform--agent--micro issues", "full body--platform--direct participation--public issue", "authority--agent--supervisor--micro issues" and "full body--tripartite intervention--platform--micro issues". 2) There are two ways to achieve non-high degree of consensus, namely, "lack of subject--lack of profession--jumbled hierarchy--issue confusion" and "lack of subject--lack of information--split opinion--issue confusion". 3) There are two substitution relationships among the paths to reach high consensus,

one is that professional third-party intervention is used instead of authoritative dominance, the other is that decentralized principal-agent mode can replace fixed platform mode in a certain environment. 4) There is an asymmetric relationship between the influence paths of high and low consensus degree.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Ben Ma, Zimeng Ye, The main trend of deliberative democracy in the new era, *J Part Schl Centr Comm C.T.C.*, 2018, (04) pp. 91-97.
- [2] Jin Shu, Theoretical correspondence and practical exploration of social management and deliberative democracy, 2011, (05) pp. 67-71.
- [3] Deyong Ma, Hua Zhang, Value and detail in system innovation: empirical analysis of three cases of grassroots democracy innovation, *Probe*, 2018, (01) pp. 38-51.
- [4] Mingqiang Xu, The problem dimension and system supply of grassroots consultative democracy, *Theory Monthly*, 2018, (05) pp. 107-113.
- [5] Yunzhou Du, Configuration perspective and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA): A new path for management research, *management world*, 2017, (06) pp. 155-167.
- [6] Yuanyuan Guo, etc, Research on supply model of s&T innovation policy portfolio based on csQCA method, *Soft Science*, 2019, (01) pp. 45-49.
- [7] Fiss, Building better causal theories: A fuzzy set approach to typologies in organization research, *Academy of Management Journal*, 2011, (02) pp. 46-49.
- [8] Benoit Rihoux, Charles C. Ragin, *Configurational Comparative Methods*, SAGE Publications, Inc, 2017.