

The Architecture of Political Reality: Participation, Opposition and Legibility in the Onopticon Regime

A Reality Paradigm-Based Theoretical Inquiry into the Infrastructural Imposition of Political Party Membership

Hakki Tan

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-8582-3132>

“My paradigm is not a paradigm of the Truth; it is a paradigm of Reality.”
— **Hakki Tan**

Abstract

This article reconsiders the phenomenon whereby individuals feel compelled to become members of political parties through the conceptual framework of Hakki Tan’s Reality Paradigm. Political party membership is commonly understood within modern political theory as an act of voluntary participation, ideological commitment or civic association. Yet in many political and social contexts, party membership may function not merely as an expression of belief, but as a code of recognition, protection, access, social survival and systemic legibility.

The article does not treat party membership as a uniform act of obedience. Rather, it examines it as a contested threshold between recognition, counter-recognition, strategic action, risk, temporal opposition, cartelised opposition, high electoral turnout, selective legibility, post-party energy management, antagonistic legibility, Onopticonic interruption and opacity. It applies the concepts of the Onopticon, Homovictimus, compulsory recognition, selective legibility, the imposition of the field of possibility, weak contestability, local Onopticons, temporal opposition, cartelised opposition, energy management, symbiotic reality, antagonistic legibility, Onopticonic interruption, infrastructural collapse, biological interruption and opacity to the domains of party membership and electoral reality.

The claim is not that party membership is always and everywhere compulsory. The more limited theoretical claim is that, under certain conditions, party membership may become a means through which the individual is compelled to translate themselves into the system, remain visible, become accessible, avoid erasure and produce recognisable codes of belonging. Opposition membership, moreover, does not automatically constitute counter-recognition. Opposition may function not as an exterior to power, but as a temporal position awaiting power, a cartelised partner of the status quo or a local Onopticon in its own right.

Finally, the article does not conceptualise the Onopticon as an absolute, divine or invincible structure. It argues that the Onopticon is a historical regime of reality that requires infrastructures

in order to operate. Event, interruption, infrastructural collapse and biological limits therefore mark the boundaries of Onopticonic power.

Keywords: Reality Paradigm; Onopticon; Homovictimus; political party membership; infrastructural imposition; compulsory recognition; selective legibility; counter-recognition; temporal opposition; cartel party; local Onopticon; post-party politics; antagonistic legibility; Onopticonic interruption; infrastructural collapse; opacity.

1. Introduction

Modern political thought usually treats political party membership as a voluntary form of participation. According to this assumption, the individual joins a party on the basis of ideological proximity, political conviction, civic expectation or strategic preference. Party membership is therefore regarded as one of the legitimate means through which the political subject expresses itself, seeks representation and participates in public life.

This assumption is philosophically insufficient. Whether an individual is genuinely free when joining a political party cannot be established merely by asking whether they were legally coerced. The fact that an action is formally permitted does not mean that it is ontologically free. An individual may not be directly ordered to join a party. Yet non-membership may expose that individual to vulnerability in relation to employment, resources, security, recognition, status, representation, reputation or social acceptance.

The central question of this article is therefore as follows:

Is political party membership genuinely an expression of free political choice, or does it function, under certain conditions, as an infrastructural necessity that preconfigures the individual's conditions of recognition, access, legibility and social existence?

This article does not offer an empirical hypothesis test. Its method is theoretical and philosophical conceptual analysis. It applies the conceptual resources of the Reality Paradigm to political party membership, candidate selection, discourses of high turnout, compulsory political participation, the temporality of opposition, cartelised opposition, post-party networks, selective legibility and Onopticonic interruption.

The article therefore does not attempt to prove the empirical existence of the Onopticon. Rather, it seeks to render the phenomena of party membership and electoral reality intelligible through the Reality Paradigm. This distinction matters. Otherwise, the analysis could easily become circular: the Onopticon would be invoked to explain party membership, while party membership would be used to prove the Onopticon. This is not the claim advanced here. The task is more precise: to show how, in certain contexts, political party membership may be understood as an Onopticonic mechanism of recognition and legibility.

The core argument may be formulated as follows:

Political party membership may, under specific conditions, cease to function as a voluntary expression of political belief and become a compulsory existential code through which the individual remains recognisable, legible and governable within the reality architecture imposed by the Onopticon.

This does not mean that all party membership is compulsory. Party membership may also arise from ideological commitment, collective struggle, strategic calculation, career expectation, identity formation or oppositional risk-taking. The contribution of the Reality Paradigm is not to reduce these different forms of membership to a single cause, but to ask under what conditions membership becomes an infrastructural code of recognition.

2. The Reality Paradigm: Not Truth, but the Conditions of Reality

The Reality Paradigm does not explain contemporary power solely through repression, surveillance, discipline or ideological manipulation. It asks a more fundamental question:

Under what conditions does the human being encounter reality?

This question differs from the question of truth. A truth-based reading tends to ask what a movement, party, candidate or political figure “really” is: Is it really free? Is it really oppositional? Is it really leaderless? Is it really outside the system? The Reality Paradigm asks a different question:

Through which infrastructures, codes of recognition, apparatuses of visibility, flows of energy and relations of power does this phenomenon acquire reality?

The Reality Paradigm therefore analyses not the truth of political phenomena, but the conditions under which they acquire reality. A movement may indeed be leaderless; but the question remains through which media, platforms, security structures, funding channels and lobbying infrastructures its leaderlessness becomes visible. A populist figure may indeed insult the system; but the question is through which attention economies that insult becomes valuable, visible and powerful.

The proposition that “reality does not precede power” is decisive here. It implies that reality cannot be conceived as a pure, neutral or power-free domain. Reality is pre-formed through institutions, technical-administrative arrangements, systems of recognition, classifications, mechanisms of access, media infrastructures, platform algorithms, security apparatuses and channels of contestation.

Freedom can no longer be understood merely by asking whether the individual is obstructed. The more fundamental question is this:

Does the field experienced by the individual as choice genuinely belong to them, or has that field already been imposed by an Onopticonic architecture of reality?

Political party membership must be reconsidered from this perspective. In some contexts, party membership is less an autonomous political preference than a condition through which the individual becomes capable of encountering social reality. By joining a party, the individual does not merely declare a political view. They may also become coded as recognisable, trustworthy, accessible, governable and system-compatible.

3. The Onopticon: From Surveillance to Infrastructural Imposition

The concept of the Onopticon must be distinguished from the Panopticon and from classical theories of surveillance.¹ The Panopticon disciplines the individual by making them visible. The Onopticon, by contrast, determines in advance what the individual can see, access and inhabit as a world.

The Onopticon is therefore not merely a form of power that observes. It is a regime that imposes the field in which reality is encountered. The individual is situated within a particular world before they are watched. In that world, routes, doors, conditions of passage and codes of recognition have already been established. The individual often experiences this architecture as reality itself.

In the context of political party membership, the Onopticon operates as follows: the individual is recognised, classified and positioned within fields of possibility through party affiliation or proximity. Membership becomes not merely a political preference, but a sign through which the individual is placed within the social order.

The compulsion at work here does not necessarily take the form of overt repression. No one may explicitly say: “Join the party.” Yet the individual learns, through experience, what kind of reality they will inhabit without membership, through which codes they will be read and to what conditions of passage they will be subjected.

The Onopticonic regime therefore does not simply reduce a pre-existing set of options. More radically, it constructs the field that the individual can experience as a set of options and then imposes that field as reality itself.

4. Beyond Classical Theories of Power

The Reality Paradigm is not simply an additional concept within classical theories of power. It proposes a more radical break. It understands power not merely as something that acts upon the individual, but as that which constructs the very world in which the individual appears.

Foucault’s Panopticon operates through visibility. Deleuze’s control society describes the individual as continuously modulated. Heidegger’s Gestell considers the technological enframing

¹ In this article, the English term “Onopticon” is retained. It does not denote a continuation or variation of the Panopticon, but a distinct regime centred not on visibility but on the imposition of the conditions under which reality is encountered.

of being. Spinoza understands freedom in relation to the individual's capacity to realise its own power of being, or *potentia*.²

The Onopticon is related to these lines of thought, but cannot be reduced to them. Its fundamental question is not “Who is watching the individual?” but rather:

Who imposes the reality within which the individual can appear?

This article does not reject the literatures on clientelism, patronage or ideological interpellation. However, these approaches tend to focus on resource distribution, loyalty relations, ideological subjectivation and forms of political attachment.

Althusser's notion of ideological interpellation is especially relevant here insofar as it explains how the individual is constituted as a subject through ideological state apparatuses. Yet the Reality Paradigm moves towards a level that precedes interpellation itself: the question of the reality-field within which the individual can be called, recognised and processed. The issue, therefore, is not only that the subject is interpellated by ideology, but that the field in which such interpellation becomes possible has already been constituted. Althusser thinks interpellation and subjectivation together; this article examines the infrastructural reality-field in which interpellation takes place (Althusser, 1971).

Put differently, whereas clientelism asks “who gives what to whom?”, the Reality Paradigm asks:

Who can appear as an addressable subject, and under what conditions?

Political party membership is therefore not merely a matter of political affiliation or interest exchange. At a deeper level, it is a philosophical event that reveals how the individual's own power of being may be substituted by mechanisms of recognition and classification.

5. Material Necessity and Infrastructural Imposition

The compulsion to join a political party is not merely an abstract matter of recognition. In many contexts, it is directly entangled with material needs: obtaining employment, securing a public position, accessing social assistance, receiving contracts, finding protection, avoiding exclusion or sustaining everyday life. The Reality Paradigm must therefore not be understood as a philosophical vocabulary that aestheticises or replaces material necessity.

Infrastructural imposition shows how material necessity is translated into political codes of recognition. People do not always approach party networks in order to be “ontologically

² This comparison refers to Foucault's account of the Panopticon, Deleuze's discussion of control societies, Heidegger's concept of *Gestell* and Spinoza's notion of *potentia*. The central argument of this article does not depend on detailed exegesis of these traditions, but on the Reality Paradigm's concept of infrastructural imposition.

recognised”; they may do so simply in order to survive materially. Yet this is precisely why the issue is ontological: when the conditions of livelihood are tied to infrastructures of recognition and affiliation, the individual’s encounter with the world is already organised through political codes.

Infrastructural imposition is not an abstract philosophical concept that replaces material necessity; it is the concept through which material necessity is shown to be translated into mechanisms of recognition, access and legibility.

Employment, aid, credit, contracts, public appointments, security and the material conditions of everyday life are not external to the Reality Paradigm. They are among the most concrete and brutal layers of infrastructural imposition.

6. Systemic Incorporation and Compulsory Legibility

Political party membership can be understood as the political form of a broader necessity of systemic incorporation. The modern individual is not merely a citizen. They must also be registered, recognisable, classifiable, relationally identifiable and calculable.

This becomes especially visible in relation to party membership. Membership does not merely mean belonging to a political organisation. More deeply, it allows the individual to become legible to the system. When someone joins a party, they do not simply say: “I am close to this view.” They also signal:

I can be recognised, classified, associated and calculated.

Under certain conditions, party membership therefore becomes a sign of compulsory legibility. The non-member is not merely unaffiliated. They may appear to the system as uncertain, incomplete, unreliable, risky or illegible.

Yet this claim must not be universalised. In late-capitalist digital societies, individuals are often read through credit scores, data profiles, educational credentials, professional networks, passports, biometric identities and algorithmic traces. Party membership is not the sole or universal code of the contemporary Onopticon. The more precise formulation is this:

Party membership is not the universal code of the contemporary Onopticon; it is a local-partisan form of Onopticonic legibility under specific political conditions.

Party membership therefore does not function everywhere as the central code of recognition. Yet it may become a powerful code of legibility in the domains of public employment, candidacy, local power networks, resource distribution, political loyalty and public visibility.

7. Selective Legibility: Recognition and Non-Recognition as Two Forms of Imposition

The Onopticon is not only a mechanism that compels recognition. It can also operate by refusing recognition, by not registering, or by rendering certain subjects invisible. The question is

therefore not merely whether one is read or unread. The deeper question is who is read for what reason, and who is left unread for what reason.

Late-capitalist state and market arrangements intensively record, classify and monitor some subjects. Yet other subjects may be rendered invisible in order to avoid costs, rights-claims, social obligations or legal responsibility. The extremely poor, irregular migrants, precarious workers and informal labourers may in certain contexts be kept outside the field of full recognition.

This does not contradict the Reality Paradigm. In such cases too, the conditions of encountering reality are determined not by the subject but by infrastructure. Recognition and non-recognition are both imposed. The individual may be subjected either to compulsory recognition or to compulsory non-recognition.

The Onopticon does not merely recognise by force; when necessary, it strategically refuses recognition. Recognition and non-recognition alike are decisions of infrastructure, not of the subject.

In the context of political party membership, the question is therefore not only “who is recognised?” One must also ask: Who is left unrecognised? Who is considered too costly to recognise? Who is kept informal? Who is counted during elections but remains invisible in relation to everyday rights?

The concept of selective legibility broadens the account of the Onopticon. The Onopticon is not simply that which makes visible; it is that which determines the conditions, limits and costs of visibility.

8. Critique of the Voluntarist Assumption of Party Membership

The assumption that political party membership is a voluntary act is one of the strongest premises of modern political theory. According to this assumption, the individual joins a party on the basis of political belief or interest. Yet this approach insufficiently interrogates the social ground on which the decision is made.

An individual may indeed join a party. But within what architecture of reality does this membership occur? Has non-membership been made available as a valid form of existence? Can the non-member access the same codes of recognition, the same sense of security, the same representational possibilities and the same social visibility?

These questions show the inadequacy of treating party membership as a purely individual preference. Freedom is not merely formal permission. Genuine freedom concerns whether the field in which the subject encounters reality has already been imposed through particular codes of belonging.

The issue is therefore not simply whether an individual was forced to join a party. The deeper question is this:

Was a reality-field in which the individual could appear without joining a party made possible in the first place?

9. Compulsory Recognition: Party Membership as a Code of Recognisability

The first mechanism of the Onopticon is compulsory recognition. Compulsory recognition means that the individual becomes visible to the system only through certain codes. These codes may take the form of identity, status, risk profile, affiliation, suitability, loyalty or political proximity.

In this respect, political party membership may become a code of recognisability. The phrase “may become” is important. The article does not claim that all party membership is a code of compulsory recognition. It argues more narrowly that in some contexts party membership may assume this function.

At that point, the meaning of party membership changes. Membership no longer merely means: “I am close to the ideas of this party.” It may come to mean: “I am visible”; “I am trustworthy”; “I can be translated into the language of the system.”

The philosophical problem emerges precisely here. If the individual is recognised not as a human being but through a code of affiliation, their political existence is diminished. Who the person is, what they think and what they need become secondary to the political affiliation through which they are read.

10. The Imposition of the Field of Possibility: The Preconfigured Cost of Non-Membership

The second mechanism of the Onopticon is not the narrowing of options in the conventional sense. The “foreclosure of possibility” should not be understood as the later closure of previously open options. Rather, it refers to the prior configuration of the field within which the subject can experience anything as a possibility.³

In the context of political party membership, this mechanism appears when the non-member is placed in a differently structured field of reality. The individual may not be explicitly told: “You cannot do this.” Yet the code through which they can enter the system, the networks in which they can be recognised and the applications that will be taken seriously may already have been preconfigured.

³ “Foreclosure of possibility” is used here not only in the sense of closing previously available options, but also in the sense of preconfiguring the field within which something may appear as a possibility. For this reason, the article sometimes uses “the imposition of the field of possibility” rather than “foreclosure of possibility”.

What matters is that foreclosure is not necessarily a punishment imposed afterwards. Non-membership may already be associated with weaker recognition, diminished access, uncertain status or fragile visibility. Thus, when the individual does not join a party, they do not simply lose a right. They experience that no alternative valid field of reality had been meaningfully constructed for them.

The philosophical formulation is as follows:

The non-member may not be punished; but the field in which they can appear may already have been constructed through conditions of weak recognition and reduced access.

11. Weak Contestability: Exclusion without an Identifiable Agent

The third mechanism of the Onopticon is weak contestability. This refers to the difficulty the individual faces in effectively contesting disadvantage, rejection or exclusion.

This mechanism is crucial for analysing political party membership. An individual often cannot prove that they were excluded because they were not a party member. They were not hired, but the reason given is lack of merit. They did not gain access to resources, but the reason given is procedure. They were socially excluded, but there is no written decision documenting that exclusion.

The individual thus experiences injustice but cannot name it. Because they cannot name it, they cannot effectively contest it. Because they cannot contest it, they internalise the compulsion.

The infrastructural imposition of party membership therefore differs from direct repression. Direct repression identifies its agent. Infrastructural imposition often conceals it.

12. Homovictimus: The Subject Compelled and Then Counted as Free

The concept of Homovictimus is central to the philosophical analysis of political party membership. Homovictimus names the subject who is held responsible for their actions after being deprived of the conditions of agency.

In the context of party membership, Homovictimus appears as follows: the field in which the individual could appear validly without membership has already been compromised. Without membership, the individual is placed in a vulnerable position regarding recognition, security, access to resources or social acceptance. Yet the system still treats them as someone who freely joined the party.

The paradox is stark:

The individual is compelled, but the compulsion is recorded as free choice.

This is the tragedy of Homovictimus. The subject makes choices within an imposed architecture of reality, yet is fully held responsible for those choices. The conditions for establishing their own field of agency have been removed, but the system nevertheless says: “You chose.”

Political party membership is therefore not merely a political behaviour. It is a philosophical event that reveals the fragility of the subject before power.

13. The Limits of Onopticonic Imposition: Not All Party Membership Is Compulsory

This article does not claim that political party membership is always infrastructurally imposed. Party membership may emerge from ideological commitment, collective struggle, strategic calculation, career expectation, identity formation or oppositional risk-taking. The claim of the Reality Paradigm is not that these different forms of membership can be reduced to one cause. The claim is narrower: party membership becomes Onopticonic when it functions as a condition through which the individual can appear as recognisable, accessible, protected or selectable.

Not every instance of party membership should therefore be read as Onopticonic imposition. For membership to acquire the character of infrastructural imposition, at least three conditions must be present:

First, party affiliation must become a code of recognition.

Second, those without such affiliation must be rendered vulnerable in relation to access, visibility, resources or representation.

Third, effective channels of contestation against this vulnerability must be weak.

Where these conditions are absent, party membership should not be treated as infrastructural imposition in the strict sense. It may instead be understood as ideological, strategic, collective, pragmatic or oppositional participation.

Oppositional and radical party memberships make this distinction especially important. In repressive regimes, individuals who join oppositional parties often do not do so to access resources, but to risk themselves in order to establish an alternative field of recognition against dominant codes. Yet not all oppositional party membership is counter-recognition. Opposition itself may reproduce its own architecture of recognition through candidacy, membership, loyalty and resource distribution.

Three forms of party membership may therefore be distinguished:

Conformist membership: incorporation into dominant codes of recognition in order to remain visible, trusted, acceptable or accessible.

System-internal oppositional membership: opposition to the governing power while reproducing similar mechanisms of candidacy, loyalty and resource distribution within another party network.

Counter-recognitive membership: an attempt to interrupt dominant or local codes of recognition and construct an alternative field of political existence.

This distinction reduces the risk of turning the Reality Paradigm into an overdetermining model. The individual is not always a passive victim. Sometimes the individual acts strategically, uses the system, takes risks or confronts dominant recognition with another field of recognition. Yet this capacity for agency does not eliminate the need to ask within which architecture of reality such agency operates.

This article does not reduce all causes of human action to the Reality Paradigm. Ideology, interest, class, affect, identity, fear, anger and strategy remain independent factors. The task of the Reality Paradigm is not to replace these factors, but to show the field of recognition, access and legibility within which they operate.

14. The Temporality of Opposition: System-Internal Opposition, Local Onopticons and Energy Management

Classical political language usually imagines opposition as an exteriority to power. In this view, power governs and opposition resists. From the perspective of the Reality Paradigm, this distinction is insufficient. Power is not merely the act of governing. It is the architecture of reality that determines under what conditions one can be recognised, selected, accessed and represented.

Opposition is therefore not always spatially outside power. In many cases, opposition is situated within the field of power while not yet occupying the office of government. Opposition thus functions less as a spatial outside than as a temporal waiting room.

Opposition is often not the outside of power, but power's form of waiting.

This becomes visible in electoral processes. Until elected, opposition may speak the language of objection, change, accountability and the people's voice. Once elected, however, it may rapidly begin to speak the language of administration, responsibility, stability, institutions, process and state reason. This transformation is not simply inconsistency or betrayal. More deeply, it reveals the temporal structure of opposition: opposition is not outside power, but situated in the time of transition towards it.

Being against a government therefore does not necessarily mean being against the architecture of reality through which power operates. An opposition party may oppose the government while reproducing candidate selection, leadership hierarchy, membership loyalty, local resource distribution, the invisibilisation of those outside the list and the suppression of difference within itself. From the perspective of the Reality Paradigm, such opposition is not the opposite of power but a local or secondary Onopticon.

Three distinctions are necessary:

Dominant power: the state, government, ruling party, central resources and mechanisms of recognition.

Temporal opposition: an opposition that has not yet governed, but seeks to occupy the

centre of the existing architecture of power.

Counter-recognition: a political rupture that does not reproduce dominant or local codes of recognition, but interrupts the rules of recognisability.

This distinction prevents the romanticisation of opposition. To be oppositional is not automatically emancipatory. If an oppositional movement reproduces the logic of representation, leader-cult, candidacy monopoly, loyalty networks and membership-based recognition, it produces not counter-recognition but secondary Onopticonisation.

15. The Cartel Party and Cartelised Temporal Opposition

The concept of temporal opposition does not imply that opposition always genuinely wants power. Some opposition parties may prefer not to dismantle the architecture of power or occupy its centre, but to secure a comfortable and permanent share within it. As the cartel party literature suggests, mainstream parties may in certain contexts become less dependent on social representation than on state resources, public funding and organisational continuity.

This does not refute the thesis of temporal opposition; it complicates it. Temporal opposition refers not only to a party organisation's desire to govern, but also to the future it offers to voters. Even a party that does not truly seek power may continually sell a deferred future to its electorate: "the next election", "the right time", "patience", "process", "change is coming".

In such cases, opposition becomes not a subject waiting for power, but a mechanism that keeps the promise of power waiting.

Two forms of temporal opposition must therefore be distinguished:

Successor temporal opposition: an opposition that seeks to occupy the centre of the existing architecture of power.

Cartelised temporal opposition: an opposition that does not truly seek to take power, but prefers to preserve the institutional, financial and local benefits of being opposition.

Both forms are exhausting for voters. Successor temporal opposition disappoints voters when it comes to power and quickly adopts the language of power. Cartelised temporal opposition exhausts voters by indefinitely postponing the promise of power and trapping accumulated political energy in permanent waiting.

The cartel party does not refute temporal opposition; it is its most stagnant and exhausting form. Here opposition does not wait for power; it sustains its share of the status quo by appearing to wait for power.

Cartelised opposition is therefore not merely failed opposition. At a deeper level, it is the institutional suspension of political hope.

16. Elections, Energy Management and Short Circuit

The electoral process renders temporal opposition visible. Elections are not merely mechanisms for selecting representatives. They are also processual technologies through which accumulated anger, hope, fear, desire for change, expectation of justice and collective tension are channelled into a controlled release. Social energy is converted into campaign, campaign into ballot, ballot into number, number into result and result into recognisable governance.

Elections therefore do not eliminate political energy; they render it processable:

Anger becomes vote; hope becomes campaign; objection becomes turnout; desire for change becomes candidate support; collective tension becomes electoral result.

This is an Onopticonic operation. Social energy is translated not into rupture, but into an outcome that the system can recognise, count, manage and diplomatically process.

Opposition may thus function not as counter-power but as an energy channel. Accumulated social energy is attached to the possibility of system-internal transfer through opposition. When opposition converts this energy into manageable succession rather than rupture, it becomes Onopticonic.

Yet the transformation of social energy into processable form is not always complete or successful. In some cases, elections intensify rather than absorb anger and collective tension. Post-electoral uprisings, riots or attacks on institutions reveal moments in which energy is not fully domesticated.

Such explosions do not directly refute the thesis of energy management. They indicate moments in which the ungoverned remainder becomes visible. Elections do not always absorb social energy; but they remain among the principal technologies through which such energy is converted into countable, recognisable and conclusive form.

Explosion is not the refutation of energy management; it is the visibility of the remainder that could not be managed.

Electoral reality must therefore be understood in two directions: it converts social energy into number and result; but when that conversion fails, it produces overflow, crisis and short circuit.

17. Candidate Selection: The Election before the Election and the Imposition of Selectability

Understanding political party membership as infrastructural imposition raises a deeper question concerning elections themselves. If the individual is placed within a particular architecture of recognition through party membership, does the voter encounter a genuinely open field of representation on election day?

Democratic elections are usually defined through the voter's choice at the ballot box. According to this view, the voter selects one candidate among others and thereby expresses political will. Yet this narrative obscures a more fundamental process that takes place before election day: candidate selection.

When the voter arrives at the ballot box, they do not encounter an unlimited field of political possibilities. They encounter a preconstructed field of options. This field is constituted by parties, electoral laws, candidacy procedures, central party decisions, internal hierarchies, list rankings and mechanisms of candidate approval.

Elections therefore do not begin on polling day. They begin with the determination of who can become a candidate. Who may enter the list, who may be placed in an electable position and who will be rendered politically invisible are all decided before the voter casts a ballot.

The philosophical question is this:

What does the voter choose: their representative, or one among the options that the party has already rendered selectable as representation?

In closed-list systems this problem is especially clear. Candidates are elected according to a pre-established order; if a party wins six seats, the first six candidates on the list are elected, and the vote for the party is read as approval of that list. Open-list systems allow voters more influence over individual candidates within party lists.

Yet even there, the voter chooses only among those who have already been made candidates. The voter cannot elect the non-candidate. The voter cannot transform someone excluded from the list into a representative. A person whom the party has not allowed to appear within political reality cannot be made present by the ballot.

Candidate selection is therefore not a technical detail of electoral systems. It is the infrastructural construction of political reality. The question is not merely "who will be a candidate?" The deeper question is:

Who is allowed to appear as a selectable political being?

A threefold architecture appears:

The party nominates.

The electoral system processes.

The voter legitimates.

The elected person is therefore not simply "the person chosen by the people". More precisely:

The elected person is the person nominated by the party, processed by the electoral system and legitimated by the voter's ballot.

This does not mean that independent candidacies or extra-party movements are impossible. On the contrary, it explains why they may be politically disruptive. When an independent candidate or extra-party movement attempts to enter from outside the architecture of selectability, it produces not merely candidacy but an interruption of the nomination order. If successful, this interruption may transform the ballot into a field of tension that partially fractures the preconstructed candidacy architecture. Yet such exceptions do not show that the architecture of candidacy does not exist; they show that it can sometimes be strained.

The variation among primary systems in the United States also illustrates that candidate selection is not uniform. Closed, semi-closed, open and mixed primary systems distribute access differently. In closed primaries, voters are generally expected to be registered members of the relevant party in order to participate in the party's candidate selection contest. Party affiliation may thus become a code of access to the pre-electoral moment in which selectability itself is produced.

18. Post-Party Energy Management: Leaderless Networks, Symbiotic Reality and Antagonistic Legibility

To conceptualise political party membership as infrastructural imposition does not mean that all political visibility is constituted through party membership. Contemporary political life includes forms that exceed the party-form, reject leader-centred organisation or generate political subjectivation without electoral expectation. Leaderless protest networks, climate movements, digital communities, temporary solidarities and decentralised organisational forms may produce political visibility without party membership.

These phenomena reveal the limits of a party-centred analysis; they do not invalidate the Reality Paradigm. On the contrary, they show that the Onopticon operates not only through parties, candidacy and elections, but also through post-party forms of energy management.

The key distinction is once again between truth and reality. A truth-based reading asks whether such movements are really leaderless, really free or really outside the system. The Reality Paradigm asks:

Through which infrastructures do these movements become visible, circulable, suppressible, fundable, representable or manageable?

Leaderlessness is not infrastructurelessness. A movement may be leaderless, but it acquires reality through media, platform algorithms, security apparatuses, funding networks, NGO environments, lobbying structures and international norm-production centres. To exit the party-form is not to exit the Onopticon.

Leaderlessness is not infrastructurelessness.

These movements are often not pure political energies independent of power. They operate in symbiotic relations with government, market, media, platforms, security bureaucracies, civil-

society funding structures, international norm networks and lobbying formations. Symbiosis does not necessarily mean direct command. At times, the system represses such movements; at other times, it makes them visible, funds them, criminalises them, represents them, absorbs them or uses them to legitimise its own orientations.

Leaderless movements may therefore be read not as the absence of the Onopticon, but as networked forms of energy management beyond the party-form. When social energy is not attached to party, candidate or ballot, it does not disappear. It is managed, absorbed, multiplied or short-circuited through streets, networks, platforms, hashtags, funding, media and security relations.

The concept of **symbiotic reality** is necessary here. Symbiotic reality refers to the way a political movement may acquire visibility and effect not through direct subordination to power, but through reciprocal relations with governmental, media, platform, lobbying, funding and security networks. Such relations do not automatically nullify the movement's truth; but they determine the conditions under which it becomes real.

The same applies to anti-political populist figures. Such figures may reject party affiliation, institutional political language and established codes. Yet through anger, scandal, norm violation, enemy production and virality, they may become among the most legible objects of the attention economy. The populist figure is therefore powerful not because they are unreadable, but because they are hyper-legible.

To insult the system is not to be outside the system.

This can be called **antagonistic legibility**. Antagonistic legibility is the acquisition of visibility and recognition not by appearing compatible with the system, but by attacking it, violating norms, producing scandal or constructing enemies. Here the subject appears to refuse translation into the system, yet is in fact highly translatable into the codes of attention economy, algorithmic circulation, media scandal and populist polarisation.

Compliance and violation alike become forms of legibility if they can be processed by the system.

Post-party politics is therefore not the end of the Onopticon. Rather:

Post-party politics is the extension of the Onopticon into non-party regimes of recognition and energy management.

Leaderless networks, climate movements, digital communities, populist figures and influencer politics do not collapse the argument. They strengthen the central claim of the Reality Paradigm: political reality is constituted not only through party membership, but also through post-party energy management, platform visibility, symbiotic reality and antagonistic legibility.

19. High Turnout and the Diplomatic Recognition of Electoral Reality

Electoral reality is not constituted only at the ballot box. After elections, it is reconstructed, classified and rendered processable through the language of recognition used by national and international actors. Diplomatic statements concerning electoral processes should therefore be read not merely as gestures of courtesy, but as discursive infrastructures that reveal which indicators render an election recognisable.

A statement reported by Anadolu Agency on 15 May 2023 is instructive. The report states that Deputy Spokesperson of the US Department of State Vedant Patel described Turkey as having a “longstanding and proud democratic tradition” and expressed confidence that the electoral process would be completed in accordance with Turkish law, OECD commitments and NATO alliance expectations. The question posed by the Anadolu Agency correspondent also emphasised turnout approaching 90 per cent. Patel congratulated the Turkish people for their participation and stated that the United States was ready to work with whoever was elected.

From the standpoint of the Reality Paradigm, the crucial point is that “high turnout” is not used merely as a quantitative electoral datum. High turnout becomes a code of legitimacy suggesting that electoral reality is functioning, that the people have entered the process and that the result is recognisable. In other words, turnout does not merely indicate how many people voted; it also shows how the election is rendered legible within diplomatic language.

High turnout generates the following chain of meaning:

High turnout = popular participation
Popular participation = democratic vitality
Democratic vitality = legitimacy
Legitimacy = recognisable electoral result
Recognisable electoral result = workable government

The European Union’s comments on the same elections make this chain still more visible. According to Anadolu Agency, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen described the high turnout in Turkey’s elections as “good news” and a “great achievement”, linking it to the Turkish people’s commitment to exercising democratic rights and valuing democratic institutions. European Council President Charles Michel also praised Turkish citizens for their high participation.

Such statements show that high turnout operates not only as diplomatic recognition, but also as an indicator of democratic value. Turnout strengthens the recognisability of electoral reality rather than explaining its internal conditions. High turnout does not by itself prove that the electoral field was freely constituted. It shows that voters entered, in large numbers, the electoral reality already presented to them.

The crucial distinction is therefore:

High turnout may show that electoral reality is functioning; it does not explain how that reality was constituted.

Or, more sharply:

Mass entry into the ballot box does not absolve the architecture of reality that preceded the ballot box.

The US and EU statements are therefore not electoral analyses in a strict sense; they are statements of recognition. They do not examine the infrastructural conditions of the election. Instead, they translate the process into the language of “democratic tradition”, “legal conformity”, “high turnout”, “commitment to democratic rights” and “respect for institutions”. The election thereby becomes not only a domestic political event, but a diplomatically recognisable and processable reality.

For the Reality Paradigm, the implication is clear: an electoral process is constituted not only in the act of voting, but also at the moment when it is recognised as “normal”, “legitimate”, “democratic” and “workable”. High turnout is one of the indicators through which this constitution occurs. Yet it may also obscure how selectability was produced, how the field of candidacy was constructed and through which infrastructural conditions political reality was offered to voters.

20. Party Membership as the Local-Political Module of the Global Onopticon

To understand political party membership as infrastructural imposition is not to reduce it to local clientelism, patronage or favouritism. Clientelism explains relations of resource distribution, loyalty and reciprocity among persons and groups. The Reality Paradigm addresses a deeper issue: how the individual appears within reality, through which codes they are recognised and by which systems they become legible.

Within the global Onopticonic regime, the individual is recognised not merely as a citizen, but as a passport holder, credit-scored subject, digital identity, registered profile, traceable entity, classifiable person and risk object. Political party membership may function as the local-political module of this global architecture. It does not merely disclose political opinion. It locates the individual within local power networks, social classifications, resource channels and mechanisms of recognition.

Party membership, however, is not a purely technical-mathematical code like a credit score, passport or digital identity. It is more organic, affective and local. Yet this does not weaken its Onopticonic function. On the contrary, the strength of party membership lies precisely in the way it bridges technical classification and social belonging.

A credit score renders the individual financially legible; party membership renders the individual politically and socially legible. One operates as an algorithmic code, the other as a biopolitical

and relational code. Both allow the subject to appear not as themselves, but as a sign processable by the system.

Nevertheless, party membership is not the universal code that replaces the digital-financial Onopticon. Rather, in some contexts, it may become a lifeline for groups insufficiently integrated into digital-financial systems or dependent on local networks for access to public resources. Party membership is therefore not the central code of the global Onopticon, but a local, partisan and often class-saturated module of legibility.

The article's claim may be sharpened as follows:

Political party membership can be understood as the local-political module of the global Onopticon: it renders the individual recognisable, classifiable and governable through a specific code of affiliation.

21. Empirical Indicators: Contexts in Which Party Affiliation Becomes a Code of Recognition

This article does not conduct empirical case analysis. Nevertheless, certain indicators can help render the abstract concepts of the Reality Paradigm more visible. These examples are not used to prove the thesis, but to illustrate how party affiliation may become a code of recognition, legibility and selectability.

In the Chinese case, the role of the Communist Party in cadre management indicates how party affiliation can matter not only as ideological commitment, but also as institutional recognition and administrative legibility. Burns's classical analysis of the Chinese nomenklatura system shows the role of party committees in appointments to important positions and the significance of this system as an instrument of party control. Since the study is historical, it cannot by itself explain contemporary China. It is used here only as an indicator that renders conceptually visible the relationship between party affiliation, cadre power and recognition.

The Hungarian case illustrates how party affiliation may operate less through formal membership than through proximity to the ruling party, media ownership and networks of public visibility. Reporters Without Borders has noted the scale of media concentration linked to KESMA, an organisation associated with the pro-government media environment. This shows how political-economic proximity may shape the conditions of public visibility.

A more cautious example from democratic regimes is the closed primary system in parts of the United States. In some states, voters wishing to participate in closed primaries are generally expected to be registered members of the relevant party, while independent or unaffiliated voters may be excluded from party candidate-selection contests. Party affiliation can thereby become a code of access to the pre-electoral moment in which candidacy is shaped.

Statements by the United States and European Union concerning Turkey's 14 May 2023 elections further show how high turnout operates within the diplomatic language of recognition.

In the US statement, high turnout was read alongside democratic tradition and willingness to work with the elected government. In the EU statement, high turnout was associated with commitment to democratic rights and democratic institutions.

The common point across these examples is that party affiliation or political participation does not always function merely as individual preference. In certain contexts, these may become preconditions through which individuals or processes appear as recognisable, selectable, visible or legitimate. The contribution of the Reality Paradigm lies precisely here: the question is not what the individual chooses, but under which infrastructural conditions the selectable and the recognisable have already been constituted.

22. Party Membership as a Trans-Regime Question

This article does not claim that compulsory party membership operates in the same way and with the same intensity across all regimes. The more limited claim is that party membership can be understood as a mechanism of recognition and legibility that appears differently across regime types.

In democratic regimes, party membership usually appears as free participation. Yet candidate selection, closed primaries, local party networks or mechanisms of representation may indirectly transform party affiliation into a code of recognition. In authoritarian regimes, party membership may more explicitly become a sign of loyalty. In hybrid regimes, the language of freedom and the practice of necessity may operate simultaneously: formal choice is preserved, but the safe, advantageous or reasonable choice is infrastructurally preconfigured.

Post-party movements also belong to this trans-regime analysis. Political visibility is no longer constituted solely through party membership; it may emerge through platform visibility, network mobilisation, lobby-supported campaigns, media framing, algorithmic circulation and antagonistic populism. For the Reality Paradigm, the central issue is therefore not party membership as such, but the architecture of reality within which the political subject becomes visible and processable.

23. Compulsory and Voluntary Voting Regimes: Legal Imposition and Infrastructural Conditioning

In several countries, voting is not merely a right but a legal duty. International IDEA notes that, in a number of systems, voting is compulsory under constitutional or electoral law and that non-voters may be subject to sanctions.

Australia is a strong example. The Australian Electoral Commission states that those who fail to vote in federal elections, by-elections or referendums may receive a non-voter notice and may be required to pay an administrative penalty.

Belgium is among the most historically significant cases of compulsory voting. European Parliament information for the 2024 European elections stated that voting was compulsory for Belgian citizens aged 16 and over. Yet Belgium also shows that compulsory participation regimes are not uniform: the scope of the obligation and the practical enforcement of sanctions may vary by electoral level and institutional context. EACEA's Youth Wiki notes that unauthorised absence may lead to warning or fine, with higher penalties for repeated non-participation, while also observing that such sanctions are rarely applied in practice.

In Brazil, voting is generally compulsory for citizens over 18, while optional for those aged 16–18, those over 70 and those who are illiterate. The Brazilian Superior Electoral Court also states that citizens above 18 have electoral obligations, with the above exceptions.

By contrast, in countries such as the United States, voting is not legally compulsory. USA.gov states that no one is legally required to vote in local, state or presidential elections; voting is a right, but not a legal obligation. In Germany and the United Kingdom, too, voting is regulated as a democratic right rather than as a compulsory duty, and non-voters do not face national sanctions comparable to those found in Australia or Brazil.

For the Reality Paradigm, this comparison is important. Compulsory voting regimes show that political participation can be imposed through explicit legal norms. Voluntary voting regimes show that the absence of legal compulsion does not imply the absence of infrastructural conditioning. Voting may be legally free, while access to political reality remains preconfigured through candidate selection, party registration, electoral systems, media visibility, campaign finance and codes of recognition.

Compulsory voting and compulsory party membership therefore operate at different levels. In compulsory voting, the state imposes an obligation to attend the ballot box. In compulsory party membership, the issue is the code through which the individual becomes recognisable within political reality. The former is legal-participatory imposition; the latter is infrastructural-legibility imposition.

Compulsory voting is the obligation to attend the ballot box; compulsory party membership is the obligation to remain recognisable within political reality.

This distinction clarifies the central claim of the article. Political necessity is not produced only by legal command. It may operate as explicit legal obligation or as an architecture of recognition, access and legibility.

24. The Limits of the Onopticon: Event, Interruption and Infrastructural Collapse

The Reality Paradigm must not conceptualise the Onopticon as an absolute, divine or invincible structure. The Onopticon requires infrastructures in order to operate: registration systems, media arrangements, bureaucratic continuity, security apparatuses, energy networks, platforms,

classification mechanisms and codes of recognition. The limit of the Onopticon begins where these infrastructures are interrupted.

The first limit is the event. In a Badiouian sense, the event may be understood as a rupture that catches existing codes of recognition and classification unprepared. In such moments, the system cannot immediately name, process or classify the political energy that emerges. This produces Onopticonic interruption. Onopticonic interruption is not the absence of the Onopticon, but the temporary failure of its existing codes.

However, if the event is to endure, it must construct its own architecture of reality. Revolutions, uprisings and major ruptures may tear the old order of recognition; but when successful, they produce new institutions, new names, new legitimacy codes and new infrastructures. The event may rupture the old Onopticon, but once it acquires reality, it risks producing a new architecture of recognition.

The event may tear the old Onopticon; but once it endures, it constructs its own architecture of reality.

The second limit is infrastructural collapse. War, state failure, ecological crisis, energy breakdown or institutional disintegration weaken the conditions under which the Onopticon operates. The Onopticon is not merely an abstract logic of power; it is dependent upon technical and institutional infrastructures. Where there is no registration, no network, no energy, no continuity of security or media, Onopticonic operation cannot continue in the same form.

The third limit is biological interruption. When infrastructures collapse, the individual is often pushed back from political codes of recognition to codes of survival: hunger, shelter, flight, bodily security, water, disease and bare life. This does not mean liberation. It means that Onopticonic legibility is replaced by a harsher survival regime.

The Reality Paradigm must therefore avoid political nihilism. The Onopticon is not an absolute machine that absorbs everything forever. It is powerful insofar as it operates; but it reaches its limits in the face of event, interruption, overflow and infrastructural collapse. These limits are not solutions. They show that the Onopticon is historical and infrastructural, not divine.

The Onopticon is not absolute; it operates only insofar as it is infrastructurally able to operate.

This also means that the Reality Paradigm does not render political action meaningless. Action is not meaningless; but no action is infrastructureless. The Reality Paradigm does not kill politics; it asks within which architecture politics becomes possible.

25. The Threshold of Opacity: The Impossibility of Total Capture

Opacity is not a policy proposal within the Reality Paradigm. It is not a political programme, strategy or institutional reform model. Opacity names the threshold at which the subject cannot be fully translated into the system.

A serious objection arises here: if Homovictimus is deprived of the conditions of agency, how can such a subject refuse? The question is valid. In this article, opacity is not understood as a strong voluntarist act, but as the minimal ontological remainder that reveals the impossibility of total capture. Opacity is not a complete organisation of resistance against the system. It is the fact that the system cannot fully read, consume or reduce the subject to codes of affiliation.

In the context of political party membership, opacity appears when the individual does not provide a fully translatable answer to questions such as: Which party are you close to? Which network are you part of? Through which affiliation should you be read? This may not always be a conscious refusal. It may appear as silence, ambiguity, double meaning, non-relation or the withholding of the code expected by the system.

Opacity therefore differs from privacy. Privacy usually demands the protection of data. Opacity names the threshold that refuses the reduction of the individual to data, profile, affiliation, classification and partisan code.

Opacity must also be distinguished from apolitical indifference. The depoliticisation of broad populations by the system is not opacity. In that case, the subject becomes invisible not because they remain unreadable, but because their political energy has been neutralised. Within the Reality Paradigm, opacity is not passive indifference, but the ontological remainder that cannot be exhausted by codes of recognition.

Opacity is not a solution; it is the last opening against the complete closure of imposed reality.

This threshold shows that Homovictimus is not merely a victim. Homovictimus may be deprived of the conditions of agency, but by naming imposed reality as imposed, they cease to be merely exposed to it and become one who reveals it. Their revolt does not lie in presenting a ready-made alternative order, but in disturbing the naturalness of the order imposed upon them as reality.

26. Conclusion: The Dark Side of Free Membership

This article has reconsidered political party membership through the Reality Paradigm. Its central claim is that party membership cannot always be understood as free political participation. Under certain conditions, it may become an infrastructural necessity tied to recognition, protection, access to resources, avoidance of exclusion, legibility and the possibility of constructing a future.

This does not mean that all party membership is compulsory. Party membership may also take the form of ideological commitment, collective struggle, pragmatic strategy or oppositional risk-taking. What matters for the Reality Paradigm is not membership itself, but the architecture of recognition within which it operates.

The discussion of opposition is decisive. Opposition is not always the opposite of power. Often, opposition is not spatially outside power but temporally waiting for it. Until elected, opposition may speak the language of objection; once elected, it rapidly produces the language of administration, order, responsibility and institutions. This transformation is not merely political inconsistency; it is the structural effect of temporal opposition.

Cartelised opposition further sharpens the diagnosis. Some forms of opposition do not genuinely seek power; they indefinitely defer the promise of power while retaining a share of the existing status quo. Voter energy is thus exhausted not only on the path to power, but in waiting itself.

Candidate selection deepens this diagnosis. The voter chooses at the ballot box, but the architecture of selectability has already been constructed by parties and electoral systems. The voter's will is not denied. Rather, the question is within which architecture of reality that will operates. The party nominates, the electoral system processes and the voter legitimates.

Post-party movements extend the limits of the discussion. Leaderless networks, climate movements, digital communities and decentralised organisations may produce political visibility without party membership. Yet this visibility is not infrastructureless. It acquires reality through symbiotic relations with media, platforms, security, funding, lobbying and norm-production networks. Leaderlessness is therefore not the absence of the Onopticon, but one of its non-party forms of energy management.

Populist hyper-visibility must be read in the same way. To insult the system is not to be outside the system. The anti-political figure may reject party codes while being fully translated into the codes of attention economy, virality, scandal and antagonistic legibility. The populist figure is powerful not because they are unreadable, but because they are hyper-legible.

High turnout reveals another aspect of this architecture. Turnout may show that an electoral process is functioning, but it does not explain how the electoral reality into which voters entered was constituted. US and EU statements that treat high turnout as evidence of democratic tradition, commitment to rights and respect for institutions show how electoral reality is made diplomatically recognisable.

The comparison between compulsory and voluntary voting regimes shows that political necessity is not produced only by explicit legal norms. Voting may be legally compulsory in some countries and voluntary in others. Yet legal voluntariness does not guarantee that political reality has been freely constituted. Voting may be free, while candidacy, party registration, media visibility and representation have already been preconfigured.

Selective legibility clarifies the broader conclusion. The Onopticon does not only impose recognition; it may also impose non-recognition. Some subjects are registered, others are left invisible. In both cases, what matters is not the subject's free choice but the infrastructural decision to recognise or not recognise.

Nevertheless, the Onopticon is not absolute. Event, interruption, infrastructural collapse and biological limits demonstrate its historical and infrastructural character. The Onopticon is powerful insofar as it operates, but it operates only insofar as its infrastructures function. When registration, energy, media, security, institutions and classification networks collapse, Onopticonic imposition is interrupted. Such interruption may not bring freedom; it may reveal the harshness of a survival regime. Yet it shows that the Onopticon is historical, not divine.

Homovictimus is the dark subject of political party membership. This subject is pushed towards membership and then treated as if membership were freely chosen. Yet Homovictimus is not merely passive. Oppositional membership, counter-recognition, strategic withdrawal, selective invisibility, networked energy management, Onopticonic interruption and opacity all show that the subject is never fully captured.

This article offers no programme of solution. But this does not mean that it is a passive diagnosis. Within the Reality Paradigm, diagnosis is the first threshold at which imposed reality ceases to appear natural. Opacity names that threshold. It shows that the subject remains not fully readable, not fully classifiable and not fully reducible to partisan codes.

The article's final question is therefore this:

When an individual joins a political party, are they truly choosing, or has the field experienced as choice already been imposed by an Onopticonic architecture of reality?

A second question follows in relation to opposition:

Does opposition disrupt the architecture of political reality, or does it organise itself as the future owner or cartelised partner of that same architecture?

A third question concerns post-party politics:

Are leaderless, networked or populist movements genuinely outside the Onopticon, or do they acquire reality within non-party regimes of recognition and energy management?

Finally, a fourth question marks the limit of the theory itself:

At what event, interruption, infrastructural collapse or biological limit does the Onopticon cease to operate?

The answer to these questions is not a solution, but a threshold:

What is called freedom may sometimes be the most successful form of imposed reality; opacity is the last opening that prevents that success from becoming complete.

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