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SYSTEMS AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT: ANALYSIS AND CASE
STUDIES

**RECONFIGURING COLLECTIVE INSTITUTIONS THROUGH TERRITORIAL
GOVERNANCE: EVIDENCE FROM AN URBANISING VILLAGE IN CHINA**

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Rapid urbanisation has profoundly reshaped rural territories in China, often accompanied by the assumption that collective institutions inevitably dissolve as villages become integrated into expanding urban economies. The objective of this paper is to examine how collective institutions are reconfigured and sustained through territorial governance practices in an urbanising village.

The study draws on qualitative fieldwork conducted between June and September 2025, including in-depth interviews with village cadres and residents, as well as participant observation of everyday coordination and decision-making processes. Focusing on how collective affairs are organised in daily life, the paper analyses governance arrangements that mediate between formal

institutional restructuring and locally embedded social relations within a specific territorial context.

The analysis leads to three main conclusions. First, collective institutions do not persist as static legacies from the past but are actively reassembled through governance mechanisms that coordinate state policies with local needs at the territorial level. Second, everyday practices, such as informal coordination, negotiated compliance, and role differentiation, play a crucial role in sustaining collective functions beyond formal institutional designs. Third, while these governance arrangements generate a degree of social resilience that supports territorial stability, they are uneven and conditional, producing tensions and forms of exclusion among local actors.

By approaching governance as a practical and relational process of coordination, this paper contributes to debates on local productive systems and territorial development. Empirically, it offers a case study from China that complicates linear assumptions of institutional dissolution in urbanising rural territories. Conceptually, it highlights the importance of analysing how governance practices shape collective action and development trajectories under conditions of institutional complexity.

Palavras-chave: rural governance; collective institutions; urbanising villages; territorial development; social resilience.