

# The Historical Changes and Evolutionary Logic of Transitional Community Governance in China

## -- Based on the Analytical Paradigm of Historical Institutionalism

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### ABSTRACT

Effective transitional community governance is an objective requirement for achieving efficient grassroots governance. Analyzing the basic context, internal logic, and development drivers of transitional community governance changes is of positive significance for promoting the modernization of the national grassroots governance system and governance capabilities. Based on the perspective of historical institutionalism, China's transitional community governance has roughly gone through three stages: a government led unitary control system, a core diversified system, and a community governance system. The basic logic of its transformation is from "management" to "governance", from "extensive" to "refined", and from "government led" to "diversified co governance". Further looking ahead to the governance of transitional communities, the main directions lie in three aspects: firstly, continuously absorbing diverse entities and balancing the governance structure of transitional communities; The second is to empower communities with technology through digital empowerment; The third is to promote community cultural construction and eliminate the tension of community governance.

### KEYWORDS

Historical Institutionalism; Transitional Community; Governance Changes.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

"If the foundation is not firm, the ground will be shaken." As the basic building blocks of grass-roots social governance, effective community governance is the key to perfecting the social governance system. Effective community governance, as the basic building block of grass-roots social governance, is the key to improving the social governance system. Therefore, we must continue to strengthen and consolidate the foundation of social governance at the grass-roots level. Strengthening community governance is, on the one hand, a way to improve the grass-roots governance system. Strengthening community governance is, on the one hand, a sine qua non for improving the grass-roots governance system and enhancing grass-roots governance capacity. On the other hand, it is a key requirement for ensuring the long-term stability of the country and the people's sense of gain and happiness.

Along with the accelerating process of urban renewal, a special form of community - transitional community - has emerged in China's grassroots society. Academics have not yet unified their views on what kind of community can be called a transitional community. Gao Qijie, from the perspective of changes in settlement patterns, defines a transitional community as a community formed by the aggregation of two or more natural villages or administrative villages after land acquisition and

demolition.[1] In contrast, Ji Fang, from the perspective of the management system, argues that the community formed after the transformation of the former administrative or central village committee into the self-governing organization of the urban community's neighborhood committee is a transitional community, and puts forward the view that the villagers' committee and the residents' committee share the same self-governance.[2] However, Xu Hongyu categorizes transitional communities into five types based on the type of construction: urban communities, urban-rural communities, "urban village" communities, "village to residence" communities, and demolition and resettlement communities.[3] From the perspective of structural attributes, Zhang Chen suggests that a community can only be called a "transitional community" if it possesses seven basic attributes: administrativeization, demographic complexity, cultural heterogeneity, de-farming, urban landscape, dynamic development, and security complexity.[4] Summarizing the views of scholars and considering the accessibility of the study, this paper defines transitional community as a new type of community formed by the structural reorganization of residential space through the authority and legitimacy of the state in the process of government-led urbanization.[5] It has the spatial characteristics of an urban community while retaining some rural community attributes, so it is a special social form in the middle ground that has shifted from a traditional rural community to a modern urban community, but has not been completely transformed.

Theoretically, the ultimate orientation of transitional communities is to be transformed into mature urban communities, where the status of villagers is changed to that of citizens and the governance system of urban communities is fully adopted. However, due to the time lag in the adjustment and transformation process of government governance, public services, farmers' living habits and public behavior, transitional communities will still maintain village life to a certain extent, forming spatial patterns and community characteristics different from those of urban communities. Transitional communities between urban and rural areas have both urban modernity and village vernacularity, and their spatial characteristics, social relations and governance features are both those of a "rural community" and an "urban community". The spatial characteristics, social relations and governance features are all characteristics of both "rural communities" and "urban communities".

The emergence of transitional communities has opened up a new field for many scholars in the study of community governance. Throughout the research, it can be found that the research hotspots of transitional communities mainly focus on the dilemmas and governance paths of residents, village organizations, spatial environments, collective economies, and governance systems,[6] and less on the historical development as the main axle to explore the changes and.

The paper puts the governance of transitional communities in the context of historical development. This paper places the governance of transitional communities in the context of social governance and urban renewal, aiming to study the governance of transitional communities in China through the analytical perspective of historical institutionalism. With the help of this analytical paradigm, it not only helps to reveal the changes in China's grassroots social governance model and the development trajectory of the governance of special grassroots community types, but also helps to accurately understand the logic and core elements of the governance of transitional communities.

It also helps to accurately understand the logic and core elements of transitional community governance, thereby enhancing the capacity and level of community governance.

## **2. ANALYTICAL PARADIGM: HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM**

The analytical paradigm of historical institutionalism has great significance and applicability in analyzing institutional and policy changes. Based on this analytical paradigm, scholars usually start from the historical lineage and further reveal the characteristics and logic of institutional change based on the examination of key historical nodes. Utilizing the perspective of historical institutionalism to study the development history of transitional community governance helps to gain a deeper

understanding of the historical evolution of transitional community governance, clarifies the critical period of current development, provides valuable reference and guidance for current practice, and is of great significance to grassroots community governance in China.

## **2.1. The Meaning of Historical Institutionalism.**

The first elaboration of the academic concept of "historical institutionalism" can be traced back to 1990, when it was first introduced by scholars such as Serdar Skocpol, Kathryn Sillen and Sven Steinmeier at a colloquium at the University of Colorado, Boulder, United States of America. Since then, this analytical framework has taken shape and developed, and in 1992, the main papers from the symposium were published in a collection that formally declared that "historical institutionalism," in its broadest sense, represents an explanation of how the institutional environment regulates and shapes political struggles.[7] In contrast to the old institutionalism, which focused only on political institutions and regulations at the static institutional level and ignored actual political processes, historical institutionalism is more expansive.[8] It broadens the understanding of institutions as formal or informal procedures, rules, norms and practices embedded in the structure of the polity or political economy organization.[9].

As a highly recognized analytical paradigm in the academic field, historical institutionalism provides us with a unique perspective to deconstruct and understand social phenomena and changes. Its analytical framework is built on three core theoretical dimensions: historical context, critical nodes, and path dependence. First, the historical context, also known as the historical situation, emphasizes that the causes of social events and behaviors need to be placed in a specific historical context. In other words, events and behaviors should not be analyzed in a compartmentalized and isolated manner, but should be explored in depth by revealing their developmental vein in the course of time and their interactions with specific historical contexts. Secondly, the concept of key node is used to refer to a major moment or turning point in the process of institutional change.[10] This key moment has a significant impact on the formation, development, and transformation process. In the research process, the identification and analysis of key nodes help to reveal the important motives in the process of institutional evolution, as well as the key elements that determine the shape and characteristics of the institution. Finally, path dependence is a core concept in the theory of historical institutionalism, which describes a specific phenomenon: once a certain system has been identified, it triggers a self-protection and enhancement process in itself, leading to a gradual increase in the difficulty and cost of changing or abandoning the system as time progresses.[11] The existence of path dependence not only helps to explain the persistence and stability of institutions, but also provides a theoretical basis for interpreting the difficulty and cost of institutional change.

## **2.2. Implications of the Historical Institutional Paradigm for Transitional Community Governance**

With the deepening of the urbanization process, China's community governance system has undergone profound changes. In particular, the emergence of transitional communities, a special form of community, has had a significant impact not only on the governance system of traditional rural communities, but also on the governance system of modern urban communities. As the urbanization process continues to advance, governance changes in transitional communities are also continuing to deepen. An in-depth analysis of the diversity of governance in transitional communities using historical institutionalism will help to deepen the understanding of the course of governance change in transitional communities, clarify the current critical nodes and opportunities for transformation, and then promote the realization of governance transformation in a targeted manner, with a view to modernizing the community governance system.

Historical institutionalism emphasizes the importance of tracing the historical lineage, aiming to explore the influence of the past on the present, thus revealing the structural and historical causal

relationships in the course of events.[12] With the acceleration of urbanization, the transformation process of Chinese society has also accelerated, which provides rich materials for research based on the historical institutionalism paradigm. As a meso-level analytical paradigm,[13] historical institutionalism not only covers the study of the macro-level institutional structure, but also accommodates the study of the micro-level internal dynamics. Therefore, it can not only broaden the perspective of institutional research, but also analyze the path dependence behind the institutions implemented in a particular period from the perspective of endogenous dynamics.

For the study of transitional community governance change, the application of historical institutionalism can effectively make up for the shortcomings of other theoretical perspectives and is of great practical significance. Through the analytical paradigm of historical institutionalism, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the changes in the community governance system, reveal the stability of the system and the logic of change, and use this to guide the reform and development of community governance, which will help to promote the successful transformation of community governance and realize the modernization of the community governance system.

### **3. JOURNEYS OF CHANGE: THE EVOLUTION OF TRANSITIONAL COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE**

The rise of transitional communities is closely related to China's urbanization process. Taking into account the overall evolution of China's social governance and the development process of urban renewal, the change of transitional community governance in China has gone through three important historical nodes: the founding of New China, the reform and opening-up, and the entry of socialism with Chinese characteristics into a new era. During the different historical stages, the form of transitional community governance and the concept of governance have changed, and there are differences in the division of labor and cooperation among multiple subjects, such as the government, party organizations, social organizations and residents, in influencing the structure of community governance. Based on the analysis of these elements, the evolution of governance in transitional communities can be divided into the following three stages: the government-led stage of monolithic control, the stage of monolithic and pluralistic governance strengthened by social participation, and the stage of communal governance in which multiple subjects govern together.

#### **3.1. Government-led One-dimensional Control Stage**

In the period from the founding of the People's Republic of China to the period before the reform and opening up, community governance was characterized by monism due to the single administrative management of the State. Under such a system, the government became the sole governing body, playing the role of planner and administrator of political, economic and social life, holding social resources, carrying out social management and organizing and providing public service products. During this period, rural community governance was dominated by the state, based on a collectivist economy, and adopted the governance model of "unity of government and society," in which the state and grass-roots governance in the countryside were fully integrated. By carrying out rural political campaigns, reforming rural elites and implementing rural collectivization reforms, the state has destroyed the original organizational foundation of rural society, which has been absorbed into a top-down hierarchical governance system, and is completely subject to the domination of state power. In the same period of urban community governance, the government-led organizational systems adopted were the "unit system" and the "neighbourhood system". Among them, the "unit system" was a special form of organization introduced in the light of the national conditions and socio-economic development of the time, integrating the three functions of government, economy and society, and with administrative, closed and unitary characteristics as its main features.[14] The "street and neighbourhood system", on the other hand, is a form of community governance led by street offices and neighbourhood committees, which, however, are not social organizations in which residents

exercise self-governance, but are to a large extent affected by the downward spiral of the State's administrative system.

During this particular period, local governments faced the dual pressures of a catch-up economy and a pressured system, while also pursuing a high rate of urbanization. In order to meet these demands, local governments began to develop land on a large scale, dominating the pace of transitional community generation and development. The characteristics of government-led transitional community generation are mainly manifested in three aspects: the coexistence of government planning, the rapidity of community change, and the slowness of social reconstruction.[15] First, the planning nature of the government strongly reflects its dominant position in the process of community generation and development. According to its own development strategies and goals, the local government carries out comprehensive planning for land use, community layout, and infrastructure construction to ensure that the development of the community is in line with its expected trajectory. Second, the rapidity of community "transformation" reflects the fact that under the leadership of local governments, the structure and function of the community undergoes significant changes in a relatively short period of time. Finally, the slowness of social reconstruction reflects the fact that while the structure and functions of the community change rapidly, the process of adapting to and reconstructing the lifestyles, values and interpersonal interactions of the community's residents is relatively slow.

As a nascent form of community, the transitional community of the period faced complex management problems. On the one hand, it was influenced by the rural community governance system of the period, which emphasized government domination and collective participation; on the other hand, it was also influenced by the urban community governance system of the period, which emphasized administrative and monolithic nature. Under the dual influence, the governance of transitional communities in that period was mainly carried out under a government-led monolithic control system. Under this system, the local government plays an unquestionable role as the "head of the family" in the process of community planning and governance. Whether it is a major issue, such as the construction of community planning and governance mechanisms, or a minor issue, such as the resolution of various trivial disputes, the local government plays the role of decision-maker and implementer.

### **3.2. Stage of Mononuclear Pluralism with Social Involvement**

Since the reform and opening up of China, Chinese society has entered a stage of profound institutional transformation, in which the vitality of the market and society has been unleashed, and the mode of community governance has undergone profound changes as a result. The original government-led monolithic control system has gradually shifted to a mono-core, multi-dimensional system, marking the beginning of the acceptance of more participants and more diversified modes of governance in community governance.

With regard to the governance of rural communities, the Central Government's Document No. 1 of 1983 was a key policy turning point. The document proposed the implementation of a new model of rural grass-roots governance in which "government" stood for the Government and "society" stood for the people's commune. The original people's commune was reorganized into a villagers' committee or villagers' group, which marked the beginning of a shift in the main body of rural community governance from the government to the villagers themselves. The Organic Law of the Villagers' Committees (for Trial Implementation), adopted in 1987, emphasized the "rule of the village by the township government", which furthered the separation of the state's administrative power from the power of village self-government and made rural community governance closer to modern democracy. This has brought rural community governance closer to the concept of modern democracy. In terms of urban community governance, the community system has begun to emerge gradually and has gradually replaced the original unit system and neighborhood system. The

community system is an integration of the unit system and the neighborhood system, which retains the administrative functions of the unit system and inherits the residents' self-governance functions of the neighborhood system.

Transitional communities are situated between rural and urban communities, and their governance systems are heavily influenced by both. After a period of one-dimensional government control, the governance of transitional communities has begun to shift towards greater openness and pluralism. This shift is driven not only by changes in the external environment, such as the transformative pressures on rural and urban community governance, but also by the development orientation and needs of the transitional communities themselves. With the decline of the government's monolithic control system, various other actors have begun to actively intervene in community governance. In this stage of transitional community governance, government organizations and their sending agencies are no longer the only governing bodies. Various kinds of autonomous organizations, private enterprises and even individual residents have gradually begun to participate in the process of community governance and take corresponding participation actions. This change reflects the trend of diversification of the main body of community governance, and also demonstrates the profound transformation of the transitional community governance model. The government has played an important guiding and coordinating role in this process, and its role has gradually changed. The government not only encourages and guides other subjects, such as social organizations, to participate in the process of community governance, but also gives them more space for participation through interaction and consultation, in order to improve the efficiency of community governance and ensure the fairness of the governance process. In terms of management concepts, transitional community governance at this stage begins to focus on the concept of governance. This means that community governance is no longer just about management and control, but is more concerned with service and support. This shift reflects a renewed understanding and reshaping of the goals and means of Transitional Community Governance, and better adapts to changes in the needs and context of social development. Transitional community governance at this stage reflects a shift from monolithic government control to pluralistic participation, and a deeper transformation from management orientation to governance and service.

### **3.3. Stage of Community Governance with Pluralism**

At the critical stage of the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) clearly emphasized the need to adhere to the pattern of social governance based on the principle of "building, ruling and sharing", stating that it was necessary to "strengthen the construction of a community governance system, promote the downward shift of the focus of social governance to the grassroots level, explore the role of social organizations, and realize the benign interactions between governmental governance, social regulation and the self-governance of the residents".[16] At the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, it was also proposed that "we must strengthen and innovate social governance, improve the governance mechanism centered on party leadership, government responsibility, democratic consultation, social coordination, public participation, and safeguards under the rule of law, and build a community of social governance in which everyone has responsibilities, everyone fulfills their duties, and everyone enjoys their rights, so as to ensure that people can live and work in peace and contentment and society can be stable and secure. to build a community of social governance in which everyone has responsibilities, everyone is accountable and everyone enjoys rights, so as to ensure that people can live and work in peace and contentment, society can be stabilized and orderly, and to build a higher level of peace and security in China."[17] Under this influence, community governance systems are facing higher requirements for change and development.

With regard to the governance of rural communities, the report of the nineteenth Party Congress proposes the construction of a rural governance system that combines three types of governance. In

this system, "autonomy" is regarded as the core, emphasizing the autonomy and subjectivity of rural communities; "rule of law" serves as a safeguard, highlighting the importance of rules and justice; and "rule of virtue" is regarded as a bridge, focusing on enhancing the moral and spiritual life of rural communities. The "rule of law" is regarded as a guarantee, emphasizing the importance of rules and justice; and "moral governance" is regarded as a bridge, focusing on enhancing the moral and spiritual life of rural communities. These three forms of governance are not isolated, but influence and promote each other, forming a pluralistic structure of rural governance. Under this "combination of three governance" model, local governments, social organizations, village elites and other governance subjects have their own roles, and the "combination" requires that these subjects organically integrate together and participate in rural governance. The governance of urban communities emphasizes the socialization and autonomy of community affairs at the grassroots level. In this process, community self-governance organizations and professional community service agencies play an important role. They have not only assumed some of the Government's responsibilities, but have also given full play to the strengths of communities, social organizations and social workers, realizing their complementarity and synergy.

With regard to transitional communities, the original transitional communities have basically entered the latter stages of their transition to urban communities, or have even completed the transition process and integrated into the urban governance model. Newly established transitional communities have also adopted a governance system of shared governance by multiple actors in the context of "building a community of social governance". Under the guidance of this system, the relationship between the government, social organizations, residents and other subjects has become clearer, and the boundaries of the powers and responsibilities of each subject of governance have become clearer. This also means that each subject has equal status and power in the process of community building and governance, and is able to participate in community building and governance together.

#### **4. BASIC LOGIC AND DEVELOPMENT MOTIVATION OF TRANSITIONAL COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE CHANGES**

The course of transitional community governance in China has undergone a logical change from "management" to "governance", from "rough" to "fine", and from "government-led" to "pluralistic shared governance". The process of "management" has undergone a logical change from "management" to "governance", from "rough" to "fine", and from "government-led" to "multi-dimensional co-management". There are two main motivations behind this change. On the one hand, changes in the deep institutional structure, such as the social background, economic background, political background and cultural concepts, have pointed out the direction of governance change at the macro level. On the other hand, the intrinsic motivational mechanisms of the participating subjects of governance in each community also play an important role, acting as a catalyst in triggering governance change.

##### **4.1. Basic Logic**

First, from "management" to "governance". Changes to the community governance model all presuppose the role of "functional change" - a function of improvement, i.e., in a specific historical context, through changes to the community governance model to improve the fit between the governance model and the current situation in the community, and to increase the effectiveness of grass-roots governance. As an important and unique component of the grassroots governance system, the governance of transitional communities has undergone a transformation from "control - management - governance". This transformation covers three levels, namely, the main body of community governance, the philosophy of community governance and the goals of community governance, i.e., the main body of governance has changed from single to multiple, the philosophy of governance has changed from passive to active, and the goals of governance have changed from

exogenous to endogenous. In the process of the transformation of the main body of governance, the government's single core position gradually began to weaken, and is no longer the only body of governance, but with social organizations, residents' self-governing organizations and other pluralistic subjects to participate in community governance activities. In terms of the transformation of the concept of governance, the relationship between the government and other governing bodies before the reform and opening up was one of "the government governs and other bodies are governed". However, as the practice and exploration of the community governance system by the state and the community continue, the government has begun to decentralize its own powers and responsibilities and move closer to the mode of governance. The state has gradually shifted from the high profile of the administrator to emphasizing consultation and cooperation with the governed in order to resolve social conflicts and solve governance problems. Residents have also gradually changed from passively accepting and relying on government management to actively participating in governance activities, and the status of each subject involved in governance has gradually become equal. As for the goal of governance, management emphasizes the maintenance of social stability and social order in the corresponding period through coercive external forces and institutionalized means. Governance, on the other hand, emphasizes the realization of public interests and governance effectiveness through the endogenous efforts and pursuits of each subject of interest. Guided by this goal, the governance process emphasizes the initiative and activeness of each subject as well as consultation and dialogue on an equal footing.

Secondly, from "loose" to "fine" governance. The transition from traditional "loose" governance to more "refined" governance is not only an innovative achievement in the change of community governance, but also reflects the refinement and implementation process from the macro-governance concept to the specific system, highlighting the transition from loose governance to refined governance. This is not only an innovative achievement in the change of community governance, but also reflects the process of refining and implementing the concept of macro governance to the specific system, showing the change from rough governance to refined governance. This is both an inevitable need and trend of governance modernization, and also reflects the pursuit of greater efficiency and effectiveness in the governance model. In addition, the emergence of transitional communities itself marks a shift from the "fragmentation of villages" to the "regularization of communities". This transformation is achieved through the merger, restructuring, and centralized resettlement of townships or villages to achieve the unified reorganization of scattered villages, and then to form a new type of community with a clear structure, thus realizing the transformation and development of villages. The process of "clarification" makes this transition more explicit and provides a clear operational path for governance. The governance of transitional communities, on the one hand, is faced with the challenge of morphological transformation from rural to urban communities, and on the other hand, it is also in the context of a comprehensive change in the social governance system. Driven by the double pressure of internal morphological transformation and external governance change, the tasks, subjects and means of community governance need to be adjusted accordingly to adapt to the changing environment and better cope with the challenges. In the current Chinese community governance model, although the governance model of transitional communities is still in the exploratory stage, the whole community governance model has been gradually transcending the original paradigm and developing in the direction of more refinement and effectiveness. This development trend not only enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of community governance, but also provides new possibilities and directions for the modernization of community governance.

Finally, from "government-led" to "pluralistic shared governance". The community management system encompasses the relationship of power and responsibility between the main bodies of community management and a series of institutional components. It essentially reflects the distribution of power and the relationship of responsibility between the main bodies of community management. The way public power is configured and the logic of operation between community management subjects directly determines the direction and path of community management system reform. With the deepening of the reform of the market economic system, the role of the market

mechanism is becoming more and more significant, and the structure and function of social management has also changed. In this process, the role and functions of the government have been repositioned, and the momentum of decentralization has become increasingly evident. In the field of community governance, this is mainly manifested in the shift from a government-led monistic control model to a model of shared governance by multiple subjects. Under the monolithic community management system, the political, economic and cultural trinity of the community was highly systematized and integrated within the national administrative system; the role of social organizations was compressed, and the autonomy of the community was limited. However, with the rise of the community building movement and the growing strength of social forces, the boundaries of social functions began to extend outward, and the government's monolithic model of control and management gradually revealed itself to be ill-suited to social change. Against this background, the government began to decentralize its power to specific social organizations, returning to society the power that originally belonged to it, and handing over to society the management of matters that were not suitable for government control or were not well controlled by the government. State power began to be gradually decentralized to society, and social organizations were able to gradually participate in community management. The process of decentralization brought about a reconstruction of the relationship between the State and society, providing more possibilities and broader space for cross-level governmental collaboration and cross-organizational cooperation. This process has encouraged the formation of values such as democracy, consultation, participation and cooperation in community management, thus further promoting the optimization of the power structure of grass-roots management and the sound development of the management system in China.

#### **4.2. Motivation for Development**

The first is the macro-level analysis of institutional structure. At the macro level, institutional structure is undoubtedly an important factor influencing governance changes in transitional communities. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, both rural and urban communities in China have implemented a government-led monolithic governance system in line with the highly centralized planned economic system, which has had a profound impact on the governance model of transitional communities. However, there is a non-negligible problem with this model, namely, that the government's excessive control over the community's public governance resources restricts the space for market and social organizations to participate in the governance of the community on an equal footing, thus impeding the full release of the intrinsic vitality of the market and the community.[18] In the context of government domination, this management system and philosophy has led to an overdependence on the government. With the changes in social ownership structure and the socialist market economy brought about by reform and opening-up, the government-dominated governance system began to gradually disintegrate. The one-core, multiple community management system, although to a certain extent subverting the original management system, attempts to give more power and responsibility to the community. However, in the actual process of community governance, the phenomenon of misalignment of power and responsibility still exists due to the limited change in the power relationship between the state and society. Entering the new era, on the one hand, the main contradiction of society has changed and is reflected in community governance, on the other hand, the people's sense of ownership has gradually awakened, and there is a stronger willingness to participate in the community governance that involves the personal interests of the people, which stimulates a new impetus for the reform and change of community governance. The important goal of community governance is to realize the smooth interface between the governance system and the governance process, so as to achieve good governance. However, the realization of this goal can not only rely on the government's dominant and coercive power, but also need to rely on the wisdom and joint efforts of multiple subjects.

The second is the analysis of endogenous motivational mechanisms at the micro level. The transformation of transitional community governance in different periods depends not only on the

shaping of the governance system by the institutional structure of the corresponding period, but is also driven by the intrinsic motivation mechanism of governance subjects. As practitioners of institutional change, the intrinsic behavioral motivation of each subject directly affects whether it plays a role in promoting or hindering institutional change. In the early stage of the generation of transitional communities, the government faces the pressure of integrating all kinds of governance resources in the community and restoring the normal social state and community order, so it tends to adopt a monolithic governance system. At this time, residents were willing to voluntarily accept the government's unified control, hoping that their own demands would be met and that they would be integrated into an orderly social life. However, with the advent of the reform and opening-up process, the labor, social security and household registration systems began to undergo drastic changes, coupled with the rapid advancement of urbanization, the community boundaries of transitional communities gradually opened up, and the movement of the community population intensified. The traditional unitary, monolithic control system became rigid, and it became increasingly difficult for the government to manage the floating population. Residents who have moved from rural to urban communities are also eager to enjoy the dividends of urbanization. Under the combined effect of multiple factors, many management functions are gradually tilted towards society, increasing the demand for social organizations. Against this background, a model of one-core, multiple governance has emerged. This model provides a space for multiple governance subjects to play their roles, so that governance problems can be solved at the community level. As socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, the transformation of residents' perception of their own identities and community identities has accelerated, and they have a stronger desire to participate in community life and wish to be personally involved in the governance activities of their own communities. Against the backdrop of the natural exclusion of informal governance subjects and the inability to achieve pluralistic interaction in traditional governance, a community governance system has been further developed to achieve synergy and complementarity among governance subjects and to better promote the modernization process of community governance.

## **5. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSITIONAL COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE**

### **5.1. Inclusion of Governance Actors: Balancing Community Governance Structures**

"Absorbing the main actors of governance" emphasizes that, in the process of transitional community governance, the Government should change its functions and roles from being the main body to being an auxiliary body, simplifying the administrative process, decentralizing power and other forms so as to allow more main bodies to be absorbed into community governance, and gradually downplaying the management model that is controlled by the Government alone. Community grass-roots party organizations should be clearly defined as the core of governance, playing the role of organizing all aspects of the main body to participate in community governance, and to ensure the correct direction of governance. At the same time, community social organizations, as a supplementary force, should actively absorb community governance activists and professionals to expand the governance team. In other words, a "principal-assistant-complementary" governance structure of "party building, government and community social organizations" should be formed to prevent the alienation and imbalance of community power space.

Historical experience has shown that ensuring the effectiveness of grass-roots governance and the people's subjectivity in community governance requires adherence to the core leadership of the Communist Party of China. Party leadership has become an important institutional arrangement for promoting synergistic governance among multiple actors and enhancing the overall governance capacity of the grassroots governance system, and is strategically important for promoting service-oriented government reform, leading the orderly development of public nature in Chinese society, and realizing the full coverage of the governance network.[19] First, adherence to Party leadership

can ensure that transitional communities always adhere to a people-oriented and fairness-oriented approach to governance. Through Party leadership, it can ensure that the direction and goals of community governance work are consistent with the interests of the people, while emphasizing the implementation of the principle of equity. Secondly, transitional communities are mainly composed of residents with a certain degree of traditional vernacular, who have a natural trust in the Party organization. Taking the party organization as the core is conducive to integrating and deploying governance resources, while softening conflicts in community governance and providing strong support for community governance. Finally, the party organization has strong influence and appeal, and has a natural advantage in absorbing multiple subjects. In balancing the governance structure of transitional communities, the party organization can play a regulating role to guide and promote the further development of transitional community governance.

## **5.2. Digital Empowerment: Empowering Community Governance with Technology**

The ambiguity, complexity and triviality of governance issues in transitional communities in the process of governance have raised higher requirements for the refinement of the governance process. However, the simple governance of the past "sectional style" has constantly exposed its shortcomings in the face of complex governance issues, and has been unable to meet the complex needs of the newborn, therefore, the transformation from simple governance to refined governance has become an inevitable trend. The rapid advancement of Internet technology provides tools and ways to realize refined community governance. It can be used to establish a digital management and service platform in the community, innovate the way of providing government services and public services, eliminate the technological gap that digital society creates between different groups of people in a transitional community, enable community residents to enjoy intelligent community services in an equal and convenient way, integrate rigid management and flexible governance, build a service bridge to eliminate the digital divide, and help residents to smoothly realize the real society in their daily lives and network society in their daily lives.

In practice, on the one hand, it is possible to eliminate information barriers and provide integrated services by launching an information integration data platform, linking information nodes for government affairs, economy, culture and other information nodes, and promoting the synergy of multiple departments such as party building, government affairs, and comprehensive services, and providing service information and resources through new media and public media terminals to provide service information and resources for residents in the community, so as to promote the "seamless" combination of digital technology and community governance. "On the other hand, it is possible to establish an e-commerce platform to provide community residents with service information and resources. On the other hand, the digital economy can be utilized to broaden the production and living space of community residents by establishing an e-commerce platform. Data from the White Paper on the Development of China's Digital Economy (2022) shows that the scale of China's digital economy reached 45.5 trillion yuan in 2021, accounting for 39.8% of GDP, and the scale of industrial digitization reached 37.2 trillion yuan, which has accounted for more than 80% of the scale of the digital economy, becoming the main battlefield for the development of the digital economy. In transitional communities, the process of transforming digitized information into production tools should be fully promoted with the help of digital platforms, giving full play to the market function of the Internet, big data and other information technologies, and supporting residents of transitional communities, especially farmers who have lost their land, in obtaining richer information on employment and ways to increase their incomes through new media platforms.

## **5.3. Culture Building: Dissolving Community Governance Tensions**

Transitional community governance tension arises from the collision of deeply rooted vernacular culture with modern urban cultural concepts. Under certain spatial and temporal conditions, people's values, cognitive frameworks, behavioral styles, and corresponding cultural traditions, such as local

customs and festivals, which are gradually formed through livelihood activities, are often a stable structure with far-reaching impacts on individuals through cultural nourishment. When the spatial and temporal environment is stable, local culture becomes an important cultural resource. However, once the spatial and temporal environment changes drastically, the original traditional local culture may become an obstacle to the further development of culture because it cannot be coupled with the new spatial and temporal environment. Because of its relatively stable structural characteristics, culture shows strong self-sustainability. The significant difference between urban and rural cultures will undoubtedly lead to many governance challenges for transitional communities that are in the process of transforming from rural to urban communities. Therefore, strengthening community culture and enhancing its adaptability to urban civilization is also an important part of effective governance in transitional communities.

First, local culture must be preserved in cultural development. Community spaces lacking historical and cultural traditions may become purely market resources and areas of power. Vernacular culture is a perfect combination of vernacular space and vernacular humanity, and it plays an important role in cohesion of group consciousness and spiritual inculcation. On the one hand, it can revitalize traditional cultural resources with the help of popular elements and realize the organic integration of traditional and modern culture. On the other hand, material cultural facilities can be upgraded, and cultural symbols with landmarks can be created based on the spatial physical layout of transitional communities, thus broadening the channels for community residents to participate in a wide range of cultural activities in the community and activating their enthusiasm for cultural construction.

Furthermore, there is a need to appropriately regulate the operation of business practices in cultural construction in order to emphasize and enhance the cultural heritage of the community. Although the goal of transitional communities is to complete the transformation from rural to urban areas, when building community cultural spaces, it is not possible to simply imitate urban cultural spaces, but should pay sufficient attention to cultural heritage and its embedded emotional value. On the one hand, it is necessary to rationally guide the expansion of commercialized operations in community spaces, change the planning and policies of cultural spaces that aim at profitability and government performance, improve the community public cultural service system, ensure the basic cultural rights of residents, and create modern cultural spaces full of humanistic care and rich in functions to satisfy the unique and diversified cultural needs of residents. On the other hand, it is necessary to stimulate residents' endogenous cultural innovation. For example, by organizing public cultural activities, calling on community literary and artistic backbones to establish literary and artistic teams, carrying out cultural competitions, organizing community cultural festivals, etc., to arouse the residents' enthusiasm for community cultural construction, enhance the community's cultural heritage and spirit, so as to achieve effective integration of transitional community culture.

## **6. SUMMARY**

In reviewing the evolution of transitional community governance, from the founding of New China to its reform and opening up to the new era, it has gone through three phases: government-led monolithic control, social intervention with a single nucleus of pluralism, and community governance with the participation of a plurality of subjects. In this evolutionary process, the means of governance have been constantly advanced and improved, and the effectiveness and sustainability of the transitional community governance system have been significantly enhanced.

However, transitional communities have their special "transitional" attributes, carrying the dual structural characteristics of modern urban communities and traditional villages. Their governance structure and mode of governance are undergoing the transformation from rural to urban communities at the micro level, and the changes in China's grass-roots social governance at the macro level, so the impacts are complex and profound. In particular, since transitional communities were initially

established to realize the transition to urban communities, their governance system is inevitably influenced by the governance system of urban communities.

Considering the above constraints, this study adopts the paradigm of historical institutionalism to analyze the changes in governance of transitional communities, with a view to enriching and expanding the ideas and perspectives of research on the governance of transitional communities. As for how the governance practices of transitional communities have a specific impact on the governance system and its effectiveness, further in-depth research and studies are needed.

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