**Appendix**

**Appendix A. Village Descriptions**

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| **Village** | **Introduction** |
| Yanba (Y) | Yanba village has a population of 2,127 villagers; 1,385 work outside the village all year. After the reform and opening-up, 16 original production teams （生产小队） were integrated into 5 villager groups. However, villagers continued to delineate their identity by production team. In 2017, Yanba village was further divided into 10 grids, based on the 5 village groups; this was the smallest unit of village governance. Yanba receives a medium level of project funding, and has a high level of social capital in the village. |
| Lanyachong (L) | In 2021, Lanyachong village was merged with two neighboring villages. After the merger, the village retained the original name, with a population of 3,034 and 1,021 households. The merged village was divided into 16 village groups. The village re-elected new village officials. Lanyachong is the core tea-growing area of the county; almost every household grows tea trees. The village has 12 small tea co-operatives. The village has a low level of available resources; the social capital level is also relatively low. |
| Baijiazui (B) | Baijiazui village has 3,032 villagers and 949 households. In 2022, Baijiazui village merged with three neighboring villages. The level of village project resources is lowest among the five case villages, and is the most significant constraint to village development. However, village social capital is at a high level. To address governance problems in an “unmanaged” boundary area, Baijiazui village organized villagers to set up a governance group, which was widely publicized and reported by the media. |
| Qizhao (Q) | Qizhao village has a population of 8,600, and is a famous “model village” and “industrial villages” in the county. In 2018, it was awarded as a “Province-level Ecology Civilization Village” and “Model Village of Beautiful Countryside Construction.” The village is conveniently located close to the town. It has a high level of industrial development, and the village operates a large-scale agricultural product planting and processing companies, B&B industries, and tourism and sightseeing bases. The young village Secretary works to bring in resources for village development. The collective economy of the villages is in good condition, with favorable welfare benefits and relatively high average income levels for the villagers. The social capital of villages is at a medium level. |
| Pingyangba (P) | Pingyangba village has a population of 1,706 villagers, many of whom work outside the village. It is divided into 10 village groups. The village has well-preserved traditional architecture and has many tourism and cultural resources. Village officials get along well with villagers. However, after the merger of a neighboring “bad village” in 2019, whose villagers did not trust village officials, village governance has become more difficult. The villagers became indifferent and were alienated against village officials. The situation has gradually improved, with villagers giving spontaneous farewells to the first Secretary when he left. |

**Appendix B. Introduction of rural program cases for study**

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| **Case** | **Introduction** |
| Case #1 | Decisions requiring villager consent included a land-saving eco-cemetery project construction decision, land acquisition, and the relocation of graves along a tourism route. |
| Case #2 | Officials persuaded villagers to support the first Nuo Cultural Art Festival in the town, which included raising funds, providing free accommodations and building materials, and participating in volunteer activities. |
| Case #3 | After obtaining a road-hardening quota, officials needed villagers near the road to raise funds to widen the roadbed. Rural regulations did not allow for compensation for occupying mountains and farmland. |
| Case #4 | Villagers designed and manufactured micro-landscapes in the courtyards, and the government provided 30% of the investments. Grassroots officials persuaded villagers to agree to pay the remaining 70%. |
| Case #5 | To construct B&Bs, the government invested in repairing the external walls, while villagers consented to invest in renovating the interiors, such as building bathrooms and repairing interior walls. |
| Case #6 | Courtyard improvements included ground-hardening, constructing a flower bed, and planting flowers and grass. The government provided cement, flowers, and grass based on the area; villagers needed to provide surplus resources, including tools, labor or payment for labor.  |
| Case #7 | B&B construction needed to meet four conditions: safe housing, sanitary toilets, a healthy kitchen, and a beautiful courtyard. The government provided project funding of 80% for costing below 30000 yuan, and 50% for those above 30000 yuan. The total subsidy was no more than 50000 yuan. Villagers consented to participate in this project and pay the rest.  |
| Case #8 | During courtyard hardening, the government project subsidized 25 yuan per square meter, with the total subsidy not exceeding 800 yuan. Villagers consented to participate in this project and pay the rest. |
| Case #9 | After completing the “Fairy Tale Town” parent-child amusement park, the village cadres mobilized villagers to invest and construct the entertainment facilities in the park. |
| Case #10 | A tour trail occupied the villager tea plantations on both sides; the rural regulations did not allow for compensation for occupying this forest and farmland. |
| Case #11 | Villagers needed to consent to a land-saving eco-cemetery project construction decision, land acquisition, and the relocation of graves along the tourism route after completion. |

**Appendix C. Interviewees**

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| **Village** | **Code** | **Interviewee** | **Identity** |
| Yanba (Y) | Y1 | Rui Qianfeng | Villager (Bed and Breakfast - B&B owner) |
| Y2 | Li Ang | The first Secretary |
| Y3 | Yang Pengfa | Village Secretary |
| Y4 | Yang Changqi | Village cadre |
| Y5 | Wang Zhongcheng | Village cadre |
| Y6 | Cao Jun | Peasant activist |
| Y7 | Chen Demin | Chairman of the Elderly Association |
| Y8 | Chen Wenchi | Village women representative |
| Y9 | Dong Shuo | Village cadre |
| Y10 | Song Guangming | Peasant activist |
| Y11 | Xie Wen | Group leader |
| Y12 | Ma Guihong | Village cadre |
| Y13 | Bai Xinyi | Social organization staff |
| Y14 | Li Shi | Villager |
| Y15 | Zhang Yuting | Villager |
| Y16 | Cui Pingyong | Villager |
| Y17 | Zhou Qinglai | Group leader |
| Lanyachong (L) | L1 | Liu Baoxing | Township official |
| L2 | Tian Suzhen | B&B owner & Town CPPCC[[1]](#footnote-1) member |
| L3 | Feng Kaibing | Members of the B&B Association |
| L4 | Liu Chengang | Village cadre |
| L5 | Zeng Guanghe | Village Secretary |
| L6 | Zhai Jicheng | The first Secretary |
| Baijiazui (B) | B1 | Hou Chenxiang | Village Secretary |
| B2 | Zhang Wujiang | Group leader |
| B3 | Guo Yongmei | Villager |
| B4 | Hou Chunmei | Peasant activist |
| B5 | Ran Zhengtu | Group leader |
| Qizhao (Q) | Q1 | Wen Quanhui | Village Secretary |
| Q2 | Chen Puliang | The first Secretary |
| Q3 | Wei Yiming | Villager |
| Q4 | Zhang Yuguang | Villager |
| Q5 | Mou Laigang | Peasant activist |
| Q6 | Guo Zhong | Villager |
| Pingyangba (P) | P1 | Li Rengao | The first Secretary |
| Note: To protect the interviewees, names have been anonymized and are presented above as pseudonyms. |

**Appendix D. Open coding categories and concepts**

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| **Categories** | **Initial concepts** |
| Capture villager’s hearts | Do rapport; Build a good cadre persona |
| Solve thought problems | Ideological education |
| Shape behavioral norms | Game of high-scoring |
| Cultivate lower-level agents | Co-opt key actors; Construct collaborators |
| Foster an atmosphere of consent | Say the right words; Design scenarios |
| Divide and conquer | Mobilize‌ allies; unite and utilize the majority |
| Contextualize rules | Rule Absorption; Rule Association |

**Appendix E. Concepts and categories by open coding**

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| **Categories** | **Initial Concepts** | **Text** |
| Capture villager’s hearts | Do rapport | I have a good personal relationship with a lot of people in the village. We drink a lot together. I had more than fifty rural banquets last year. Many things in the village also rely on people helping. (Y3-10+41+43) |
| Build a good cadre persona | It is important to have a good core to lead. I, the first Secretary, and the village Secretary, we definitely have to take the lead. We have to take the lead in doing good things, when there is suffering, and in improving the cadre-villager relationship. The two of us have already done that. Especially after work, whenever the villagers have something to do, we definitely help them. (Y2-23) |
| Solve thought problems | Ideological education | Normally you gather the villagers together and care for them. The main thing is to understand the dynamics of their minds and track their thoughts. Once you understand their thoughts, it helps carry out your work. (B1-10) |
| Shape behavioral norms | Game of high-scoring | The purpose of our score management system is to lead the villagers to change bad habits and behaviors. (Y2-28) |
| Cultivate lower-level agents | Co-opt key actors | It is definitely not enough to rely on village cadres alone to develop villages. It is important to absorb more activists and put them to use. (Y9-20) |
| Construct collaborators | We took them (a dozen group leaders) to a red education base. We studied there during the day, and at night we all exchanged what we had learned. (Q7-33) |
| Foster an atmosphere of consent | Say the right words | We reasoned with the villagers and changed their minds to support our planning. (Q2-15) |
| Design scenarios | I took the plan and showed it to them the first night. I said, if you think this is okay, then you should come out and take the lead at the meeting tomorrow. They were doing well. They said at the meeting: ‘What a great project! Look at our village; basically no projects came during the poverty alleviation period. Since the new work team came, the first project was put in our village. How long do we have to wait if we don’t support it and stand up for it now?’ He drove everyone, and they all agreed. (P1-8) |
| Divide and conquer | Mobilize‌ allies | You are the group leader/party member/grid member, you should take the lead first. (L2-1) |
| Unite and utilize the majority | Unite the majority, utilize the median, and isolate the minority. (P1-21) |
| Contextualize rules | Rule Absorption | When the village held the Nuo cultural arts festival, I provided free wood to build the stage. This act gave me some points, I was awarded the title of “civilization star.” (Y10-25) |
| Rule Association | I told them, “If you don’t support me in such a simple matter, I will not feel comfortable helping you in terms of policies [tied to your interests] in the future. You get the policy benefits you can apply for. If you can’t apply for them by yourself, I am not willing to do my best to help you fight for them.” He thought this was reasonable and agreed. (P1-14) |

1. Town Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference [↑](#footnote-ref-1)