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# **CITY-COUNTY CONSOLIDATION AND THE (RE)CONCEPTUALISATION OF URBAN-RURAL PLANNING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TAICHUNG CITY AND TAINAN CITY, TAIWAN**

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## **Abstract**

The Taiwanese central government views city-county consolidations as an effective method to strengthen national competitiveness and to balance regional development. But for local governments, consolidation presents a series of planning challenges, especially in relation to the reconstruction of planning concepts and discourses in their new territories. Aiming to understand the process, this study first proposes a typology of regional planning concepts as a conceptual tool to explore whether and how the consolidated governments (re)construct their urban-rural planning concepts, and then it examines the factors that may influence (re)conceptualisation through a comparative study of Taichung City and Tainan City. The research results show that overemphasis on using the concept of competitive city regionalism to balance regional development at the national level may lead to a widening of rural-urban disparities at regional and local levels.

### *Keywords*

*Urban-rural planning, city-county consolidation, planning concepts, city regionalism, regional development*

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## 1. Introduction

Different forms of state rescaling and local government reorganisation – including city-county consolidation, annexation, mergers, interlocal agreements, and special districts – have been considered plausible strategies to deal with cross-boundary environmental and economic issues, such as urban-rural disparities, global competitiveness, smart governance, climate change, and watershed governance. In Taiwan, the national government relates city-county consolidations to the national strategic plan to strengthen national competitiveness and balance regional development (Executive Yuan of Taiwan, R.O.C., 2009).

The approach of the national government is underpinned by the concept of competitive city regionalism. In 2010, the Strategic Plan for National Spatial Development was announced. It detailed a national spatial structure at the regional level consisting of the northern city region (with the Taipei metropolitan area as its core), the central city region (with the Taichung metropolitan area as its core), the southern city region (with the Kaohsiung and Tainan metropolitan areas as its dual-core), and the eastern region, which is predominately rural (Council for Economic Planning and Development, 2010). At the end of 2009, three city-county consolidations were approved and conducted by the end of 2010, including the consolidations of Taichung City and Taichung County, Tainan City and Tainan County and Kaohsiung City and Kaohsiung County. For the national government, the three consolidated governments would play a leading role to promote city regional governance with their neighbouring counties and cities, and a regional growth pole to spur the development of surrounding areas.

On the one hand, the structure of the national strategic plan aims to balance the long-standing uneven North-South development of Taiwan. On the other, it implies a city-first perspective in which cities and their regions are considered the keys to competitiveness. The development of the core city (or cities) designated by the national government can foster prosperity, even in the most functionally disconnected and peripheral areas of the city region. However, previous studies have shown that the city-first perspective 'carries risks of addressing rural localities solely in terms of their relation to the urban, of disregarding any sense of an overarching, interregional rural condition' (Woods, 2009, p.853), or of 'marginalising (rural) spaces dislocated physically from an urban centre irrespective of whether they are functionally (dis)connected' (Harrison and Heley, 2015, p.1116). Therefore, the enlargement of urban-rural inequality at both national and regional levels is possible.

Nevertheless, city regionalism is likely to continue to take on various forms, and its consequences will depend not only on how the state manages its internal territorial structure, and prioritises the distribution of its expenditures (Jonas, 2013), but also on how the local governments respond to its conduct. In Taiwan, the state's city regional approach includes three consolidations, and two upgrades among them – those of Taichung City and Tainan City – through which the state expects each of the three consolidated governments to be a bellwether in their designated city regions. For the consolidated city governments, on the other hand, the consolidation raises issues of local finances, administrative efficiency, spatial governance, and development. Consolidation therefore has a direct influence on the lives of local residents through the quality of public services, and the development of urban and rural areas. From a spatial planning perspective, consolidation seems to bring many benefits. These include more appropriate and cohesive spatial development and land management in urban, peri-urban and rural areas, at least within their jurisdictions.

Despite the benefits, the consolidations have brought a series of spatial planning challenges to the consolidated city governments in relation not only to institutional arrangements and a shift in organisational culture but also through the need to reconstruct planning concepts and discourses in response to the newly consolidated territories. This process has variously involved a reconceptualisation of urban-rural relationships, and the manner in which this has been achieved influenced local urban-rural development and residents' lives. However, little attention has been paid to this issue in either city-county consolidation or city region planning debates.

This study explores the possible influences on local urban-rural development resulting from city-county consolidations. The factors which may influence the reconceptualisation of urban-rural divides are discussed through a series of questions. The first is whether and how the consolidated governments of Taichung City and Tainan City reconceptualised the overall principles of spatial organisation, urban-rural planning, and the

relationships between urban and rural areas. The second is connected with the underlying concerns of their spatial planning frameworks in relation to the rural. The third relates to the major similarities and differences between the consolidations in terms of urban-rural planning and their underlying concerns about (and perception of) urban-rural relations and development.

The city-county consolidations of Taichung and Tainan were selected as the case studies because, besides consolidation, they were upgraded at the same time. Kaohsiung City, another such consolidation, has been a special city since 1979. Its reorganisation was actually an annexation rather than a city-county consolidation. In contrast to Kaohsiung, Taichung City and Tainan City were originally provincial cities. After the consolidations, both of them were upgraded to the status of special municipalities, alongside Taipei City, New Taipei City, and Kaohsiung City. This creates a similar administrative situation and reorganisation challenges between them.

In this research, 18 in-depth interviews with planning officers of the two consolidated governments, document analysis, and discourse analysis are employed to examine the major similarities and differences of the cases in relation to their dominant planning concepts, major concerns, and their perceptions of rural spaces and urban-rural relationships. The examination is placed in the broader institutional setting of Taiwan's planning system and the local urban and rural development context of each case.

In the following sections, relevant literature in relation to the planning concepts of urban and rural areas is reviewed, and a typology is proposed as a framework. Then the two case cities are introduced and compared both before and after their consolidations according to the framework proposed. The major similarities and differences between the two cases are discussed in section four. The last section includes conclusions and suggestions for future research.

## 2. Underlying Ideas Guiding Urban-Rural Planning Activities

Faludi and van der Valk (1994) suggest that planning principles and planning concepts are interrelated and guide planning activities in a particular place. Planning principles concern 'the preparation of plans, their form, uses and/or effects', and are related to both the planning system and the planning professionals' (and/or the decision makers') understanding of how they can prepare plans and use the planning tools they have to realise their planning concepts.

Planning concepts refer to a body of thought related to the principles of spatial organisation, such as the Green Belts in the UK and the Green Heart in the Netherlands (Faludi and van der Valk, 1994). They are potentially powerful notions that can shape planning practices (van Duinen, 2015), articulate particular problems with certain solutions (Béland, 2005), and lead to changes of material reality (Healey, 2002); although the concepts may be underpinned by a set of taken-for-granted assumptions without any evidence to support them. They are, however, not static – and may simultaneously possess different meanings in different contexts (van Duinen, 2015). Concepts can also take different forms depending on the institutional setting and developmental trajectory of a given area (Huang and Fernandez-Maldonado, 2016).

Many regional development studies, such as that of Scott (2006), Tacoli (2003), Epstein and Jezeph (2001), and Douglass (1998), demonstrate that the regional development policy approaches are deeply influenced by the way policy makers and planners conceptualise rurality, urbanity, and the relationship between them in a particular region. Regional planning concepts can be categorised into three different sets of thought as a framework to examine how the two consolidated governments (re)conceptualised the urban-rural relationship within and beyond their jurisdictions and the extent to which the 'rural' figures in their spatial planning frameworks. The three different sets of thought are the 'urban-rural dichotomy', 'hub(s) and spokes', and 'regional networks' concepts (Table 1).

Table 1: A Typology of Regional Planning Concepts and Their Attributes

	<b>Urban-rural dichotomy</b>	<b>Hub(s) and spokes</b>	<b>Regional networks</b>
Urban-rural relations	Dichotomy	City-centred relations	Functional networks
Spatial system	A dual system consists of urban and non-urban areas.	Hierarchical, centred on one or a few dominant centres, usually identified by population size. Rural towns are put at the bottom of the system.	Horizontal, composed of a number of centres and their hinterlands, each with their own specialisations and comparative advantages.
Logic of rural development	Rural space is perceived as a place of nature resource-related production and living. Other economic activities and their potential in the rural areas are hidden from view.	The rural economy has to associate with urban economic processes, and rural areas are passive beneficiaries of 'trickle-down' from urban growth.	Both urban and rural areas make a contribution to the competitiveness of their region. It is sensible to look for synergy from reciprocal rural-urban and rural-rural partnerships.

The 'Urban-rural dichotomy' is the most conventional understanding of the physical structure of urban and rural spaces. Under this system, population size, density, economic structure, land use types, or a combination of these are commonly used as criteria to identify urban and rural areas. This cognition has been criticised on account that unhelpful differences between urban and rural areas can actually result from the drawing of comparisons. There is, after all, no absolute standard to distinguish between the 'urban' and the 'rural'. In fact, the standard varies according to the situation in a given country (Zonneveld and Stead, 2007). In short, this way of understanding provides an idea of a spectrum but is based on an assumption of binary opposition between 'urban' and 'rural'.

The dualist assumption has been challenged since the 1990s. Urban and rural characteristics are increasingly blurred and integrated. Agriculture and forestry have been industrialised, and many built-up areas and high-tech infrastructures are scattered in rural landscapes (Zonneveld and Stead, 2007; Caffyn and Dahlstrom, 2005). Some rural communities situated at or beyond the rural-urban fringe have been transformed by urban in-migration and the associated development of housing and recreational amenities (Woods, 2009).

In order to encompass these dynamics, the consideration of functional relations between urban and rural spaces has emerged and been addressed in political agendas. The 'hub(s) and spokes concept' and the 'regional networks concept' provide very distinct answers to the issues, and indicate very different spatial organisations and relationships among metropolitan regions, agrarian/resource-based regions, cities, towns, and villages (see Figure 1).

Indeed, the 'hub(s) and spokes concept' implies a city-first perspective. It is underpinned by the belief that a city (or cities) is (are) the locomotive(s) of national and (or) regional economic competitiveness. The rural areas adjacent to the city (or cities) subsequently benefit from trickle-down effects from city-centred strategies (Douglass, 1998; Ward, 2006; Pemberton and Shaw, 2012).

However, in practice, the concept is often implemented by identifying 'a hub (or hubs) before then indicating the metropolitan functions linked to them and which define the wider region' (Harrison and Heley, 2015, p.1123). This representation of the model can be misleading, especially since it conveys the notion that any place within the defined 'hub(s) and spokes' area can be easily integrated with, and prosper from, the hub(s) – even if they are the most peripheral and functionally disconnected places. Additionally, some rural spaces that are physically remote from the defined area, but are in fact functionally connected to the hub(s) and/or spoke(s), can become marginalised. Furthermore, the city-first perspective of the hub(s) and spokes concept overlooks the potential for agriculture- or generally rural-led development (Douglass, 1998), and defines the rural localities solely in relation to their place vis-à-vis the primary urban area rather than in their own right (Woods, 2009).

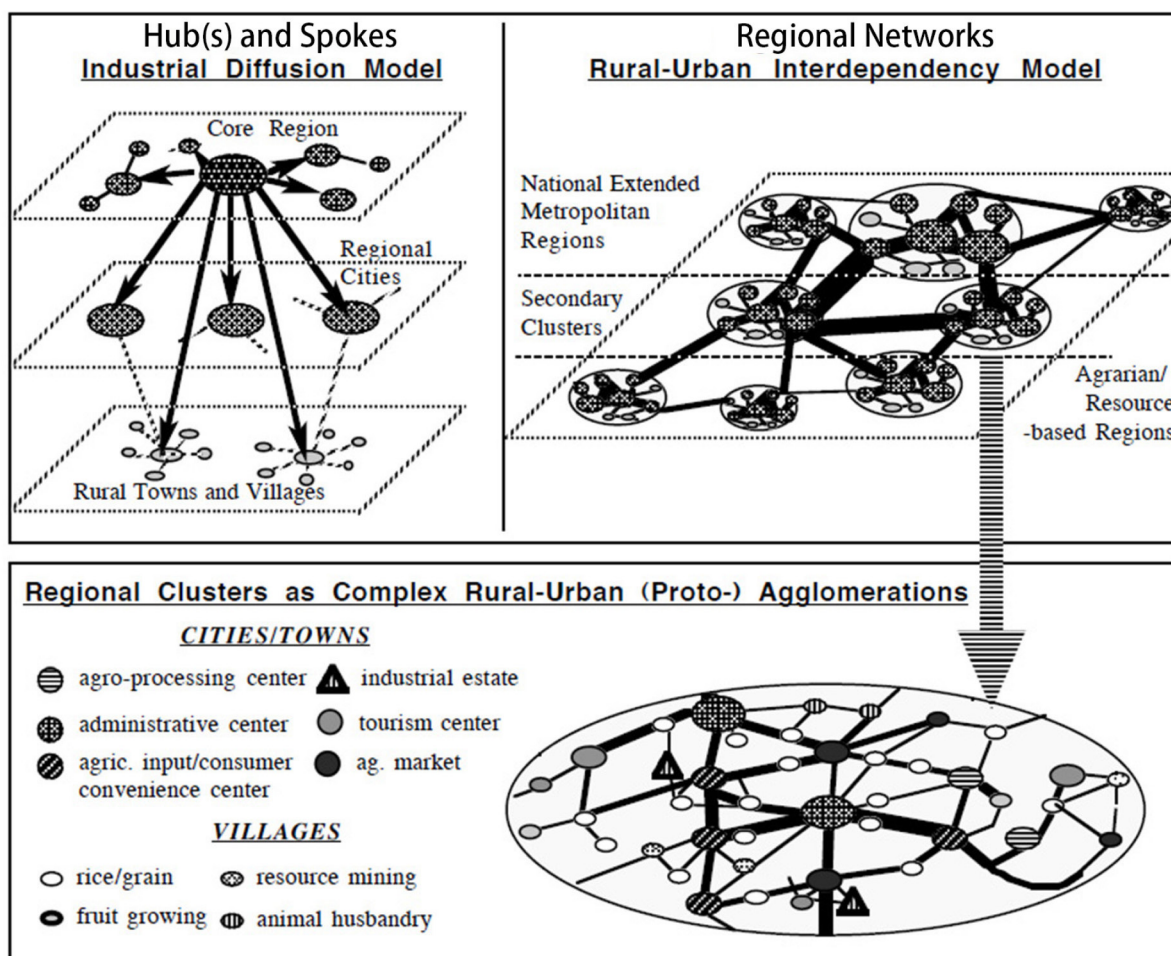


Figure 1 - Hub(s) and Spokes Concept Versus Regional Networks Concept  
Source: Douglass (1998)

In contrast to the hierarchical and city-first hub(s) and spokes concept, the regional networks concept proposes a horizontal spatial system that is composed of a number of centres and their hinterlands – each with its own patterns of specialisation and comparative advantage (Douglass, 1998). Specifically, the regional networks concept is connected to a more equal, and horizontal, network view of rural-urban relations, and it highlights the particularity of each small town and its socioeconomic and spatial linkages to both large urban centres and surrounding villages (Tacoli, 1998). It recognises the various sizes and performance of rural and urban areas, as well as the diversity of rural-urban interrelationships in different functional regions.

The typologies of urban-rural interrelationships and the physical appearance of regional networks proposed by OECD (2013) give the concepts a clearer form. Studying its member states, the OECD (2013) classified three types of physical appearance for a region - including metropolitan regions, networks of small- and medium-sized cities, and sparsely populated areas with market towns – and five types of interrelationship between rural and urban areas – including demographic linkages, economic transactions and innovation activities, the delivery of public services, exchange in amenities and environmental goods, and multi-level governance interactions. These two typologies together characterise a variety of functional regions.

Regarding the fundamental logic of rural development, the three spatial concepts link to three different lines of reasoning respectively; namely local natural resources, urban economic processes, and urban-rural partnerships (see Table 1). In the urban-rural dichotomy concept, the rural space is perceived as a place of nature and resource-related production. Its traditional view ignores the diversification of current rural economies and excludes non-agricultural economic activities in rural areas (Ward, 2006).

The hub(s) and spokes concept considers rural areas to be passive beneficiaries of city-centred strategies, and imagines the rural economy solely in relation to urban economic processes (Harrison and Heley, 2015). As Scott (2011, p.858, 859) argues, many rural areas and small towns lying within them have 'become increasingly articulated with the rhythms and cultures of the modern metropolis..., either by physically exporting their products to external markets or by serving as centres of an increasingly profitable tourist trade'. This logic is related to the present dominant geographic imagination of rural areas as consumption and leisure spaces for urban dwellers (Hadjimichalis, 2003). Under this city-centred logic, how the relative isolation, heritage, and natural features of rural areas conform to urban tastes and preferences has become essential for rural development (Morrison, 2016).

In the regional networks concept, both urban and rural areas can make a contribution to the competitiveness of their regions (Ward, 2006). It is sensible to look for synergy from complementary and reciprocal rural-urban and rural-rural partnerships, because 'a cluster of well-connected and highly interactive rural and urban settlements may be better able than a single growth pole to provide a level of agglomeration and economic diversity to act as an antipode to the growth of core metropolitan regions' (Douglass, 1998, p.13). Under this logic, the focus of regional development would be to identify and optimise the existing interrelationships among villages, towns and cities within the particular region.

### **3. Comparative Study: Taichung City and Tainan City**

The current spatial planning system in Taiwan follows the Regional Planning Law, promulgated in 1974, which is expected to be fundamentally changed in 2022 according to the new Spatial Planning Act promulgated in May 2016. These two laws indicate different underlying definitions and planning principles for urban and rural areas in Taiwan. The former develops a dual land management system, while the latter aims to integrate the dual system into one cohesive system. The fieldwork and interviews for this research were conducted from 2016 to the beginning of 2018. This was a moment of transition, and the possible influence of the new Spatial Planning Act on planning practices is taken into consideration when assessing whether and how the consolidated governments reconceptualised, and continue to conceptualise, the spatial dimensions to urban-rural planning. At the end of this section, a comparison between the two cities is drawn. This leads to cross comparisons and discussions in the next section.

#### **3.1. Planning System in Taiwan**

Since the enforcement of the Regional Planning Law in 1974, a dual land management system – an urban planning system and a non-urban land use control system – has been active in Taiwan. Under the system, urban land is located within an area where an urban plan has been issued, and non-urban land is everything else. There are three types of urban plan, including the city (town) plan, countryside street plan, and special district plan. Except for the special district plan, which might be formulated for conservation purposes, all of the city (town) plans and countryside street plans are formulated to provide legitimacy to develop the definite area according to the plan.

Spatial planning and development practices in urban and non-urban land follow different regulations under the Urban Planning and the Regional Planning Laws respectively. Urban plans promote development, while the protection of agricultural land is the aim of non-urban plans. The dual system therefore provides very different tools for planning and managing these two kinds of places. Skills and knowledge are non-transferrable. For example, urban planners struggle to handle the planning practices of non-urban areas, without prior experience (Chief of Regional Planning Division of Tainan City government, personal interview, 22nd June 2016).

The dual land planning system also plays an important role in shaping how planners and governments recognise urban and rural areas. In general, the former refers to urban land and the latter refers to everywhere else, but most rural areas have countryside street plans for the seat of townships or areas where the population has reached 3,000 and the industrial and business workers account for more than 50% of the population.

In other words, the division between urban and non-urban areas is theoretically clear in Taiwan's land management system, but a rural district may consist of an urban planning area where a countryside street plan or a special district plan has been issued. The institutional design creates a kind of urban-rural dichotomy – not only in practices but also in planners' minds – complicated by a fragmented project-oriented planning approach which lacks a comprehensive long-term vision and ignores the interrelationships between rural and urban areas.

In light of the deficiencies of the dual land management system, the central government was eager to promote the establishment of a city/county comprehensive plan at the end of the 1980s. It also sought the formulation of a legally binding city/county regional plan at the beginning of the 2010s, on the basis of the Regional Planning Law together with the series of city-county consolidations. The hope was to achieve more balanced urban-rural development while anticipating a new spatial framework in the Spatial Planning Law. But with the exception of New Taipei City and Taichung City, Taiwan's cities and counties did not complete their regional plans by the time of the promulgation of the Spatial Planning Law in 2016. Since then, cities and counties in Taiwan have decided to work on their own local spatial plans instead of continuing the drafting of their regional plans. The central government expects the local governments to complete their local spatial plans by around 2022.

According to the institutional arrangements for plan-making in Taiwan, the central government plays a key role in determining the content of local spatial plans through a review process. But at the local level, the mayors of the cities and counties have the power to resolve the draft content of spatial plans before submitting them to the central government. The decisive role of the mayor in plan-making results from his or her administrative power, which is embodied not only in chairing the local planning review committee but also in deciding the committee's members. This institutional design can ensure that the spatial plan of a city or county is in line with its mayor's policy, but at the same time, the central government's review can prevent the mayor from abusing his or her administrative power and prevent the plan from deviating from national interests, such as environmental conservation or farmland preservation.

### 3.2. Introduction of Taichung City and Tainan City

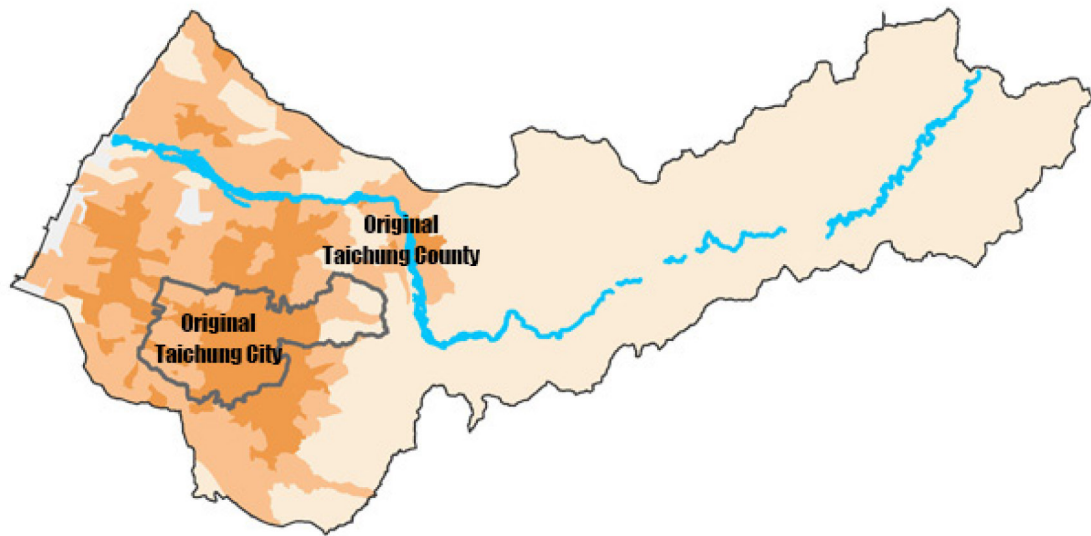
Before consolidation, the two case cities were classified as urban land, while the two counties consisted of both urban planning land and non-urban land. As shown in Table 2, the consolidated Taichung City is more urbanised than the consolidated Tainan City in terms of population density and the percentage of non-agricultural workers in the population. The population growth rate (0.72%) of Taichung City is much higher than the growth rate (0.03%) in Tainan City and the average growth rate (0.13%) in Taiwan in general. Since July 2017, Taichung City has been the second most populous city in Taiwan. It also has a more concentrated and monocentric spatial structure than Tainan, which is more multi-centric in structure (see Figures 2 and 3).

Table 2: Statistics of Taichung City and Tainan City

	Consolidated Taichung City	Consolidated Tainan City
Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	2,215	2,192
Population (person)	2,767,239	1,886,033
Density (persons/ km <sup>2</sup> )	1,247	861
2017 Growth Rate (%)	0.72	0.03
Non-agric. population of total population (%)	93	84
Industrial distribution of employed persons (1,000 persons)	1,307 (100%)	957 (100%)
Primary industry	44 (3.4%)	69 (7.2%)
Secondary industry	507 (38.8%)	402 (42.1%)
Tertiary industry	757 (57.9%)	485 (50.7%)

Source: National Development Council (2017)

### Consolidated Taichung City



### Consolidated Tainan City

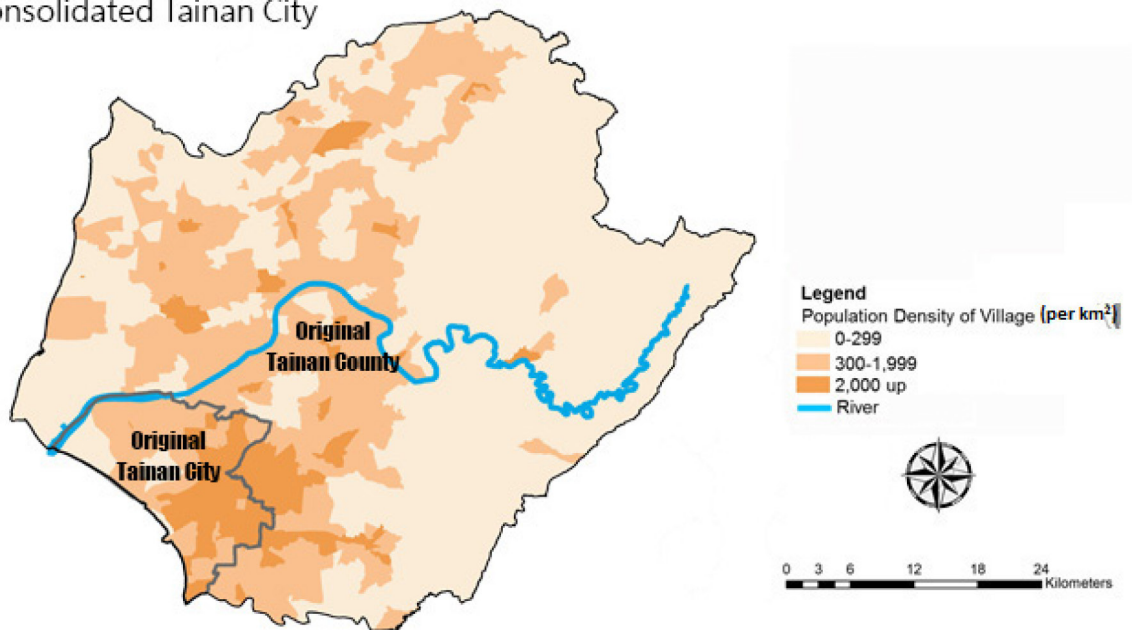


Figure 2 - The Distribution of Population in the Two Cities  
Source: based on SEGIS ([https://segis.moi.gov.tw/STAT/Web/Portal/STAT\\_PortalHome.aspx](https://segis.moi.gov.tw/STAT/Web/Portal/STAT_PortalHome.aspx)), accessed in January, 2018.



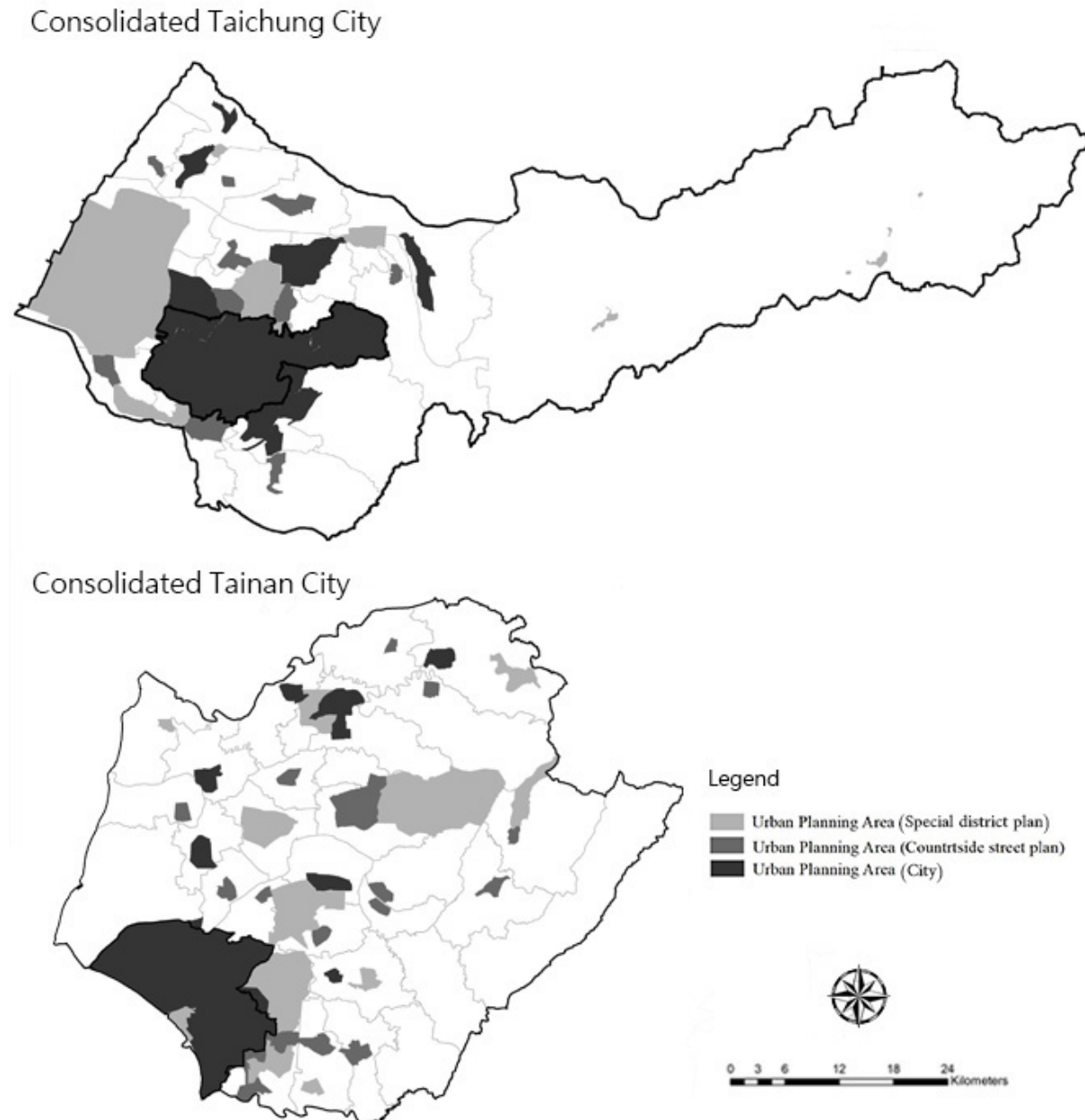


Figure 3: Distribution of Urban Planning Area in the Two Cities  
 Source: Comprehensive Review of Urban Plans and Urban Development Strategies in Taichung, 2013;  
 Tainan Regional Plan (Draft), 2014.

### 3.3. Comparisons Between Before and After Consolidation of Each Case

Between 2000 and 2002, the governments of Taichung City, Taichung County, Tainan City, and Tainan County formulated a revised comprehensive plan for their own jurisdictions as a reference to lead local development and sectoral plans. After the consolidations, the two consolidated cities also started to formulate their own respective regional plans to guide local urban and rural development. The six documents provide a useful lens through which the consolidated governments' reconceptualisation of the relationships between urban and rural areas can be examined.

### 3.3.1. Taichung City

The revised comprehensive plans for Taichung City and Taichung County both show a bias in favour of the urban centre and consider the centre as the growth pole (see Table 3). The consolidated Taichung City government not only continued this city-centred view but also directly indicated that several rural areas were to be considered to be the 'front yard of Taichung city' or the 'backyard of Taichung city' in the Taichung City Regional Plan (Taichung City Government, 2018, p.4-11).

Table 3: Planning Concepts of Taichung Before and After Consolidation

	Taichung City	Taichung County (21 townships)	Consolidated Taichung City
Dominant Regional Planning Concept	Urban-rural dichotomy	Hub and Spokes	Hub and Spokes
Urban-rural relations	Urban-rural dichotomy	City-centred relationships, but the County government had various tools to assist the development of agricultural areas.	City-centred view with a goal to strengthen international competitiveness. The development of each district is positioned in accordance with the goal.
Spatial System	A dual urban-rural system with a monocentric view	Hierarchical, Taichung City played the dominant role and three sub-cores in the county area were identified and linked by a ring-like road system. The role of the airport and the seaport were addressed.	Hierarchical, the city centre plays the dominant role. Three sub-cores are identified and linked by a ring like railway system. The role of the airport and the seaport are addressed.
Logic of rural development	No clear idea about rural development. It viewed its rural areas (Dakeng of Touko mountain area) as the backyard of urban dwellers.	Mainly focusing on central place and consumption/amenity relationships; rural areas' specialisations were addressed, but in the long-term led to tourist development. Cross-boundary urban-rural partnerships were formed among townships.	Indicating central place, consumption and amenity, economic transactions, and environmental goods provision relationships. Cross-boundary urban-rural partnerships are formed at the regional level.

Source: Based on Revised Taichung City Comprehensive Plan (Taichung City Government, 2001); Revised Taichung County Comprehensive Plan (Taichung County Government, 2002); and Taichung City Regional Plan (Taichung City Government, 2018).

Moreover, the Urban Planning Bureau of consolidated Taichung City – which is in charge of the formulation of the Taichung Regional Plan – argues that they do not have any tools to assist the development of agricultural areas (Chief of Comprehensive Planning Division of the consolidated Taichung City government, personal interview, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017), although the Revised Taichung County Comprehensive Plan (Taichung County Government, 2002) demonstrated the various tools which are available, such as farmland and rural community land adjustment. Together with the city-centred view, the spatial system identified in the regional plan is hierarchical, and narrows the potential for the development of rural areas to mere consumption and leisure spaces for urban dwellers. In addition to the consumption and leisure imagination, the planning focus of rural areas centres around preserving agricultural lands in order to secure urban food supply.

The identified spatial systems of Taichung County and consolidated Taichung City are similar: 'one ring, two ports, three sub-cores, and one core centre' are the major spatial elements (see Figure 4) – though the ring concept has altered from a road system to a railway system together with a transport-oriented development (TOD) mode. Moreover, benefiting from consolidation – which makes the international airport, seaport, and the urban core centre fall under the same jurisdiction – the consolidated government considers that the city now has favourable conditions to strengthen its international competitiveness. Competitiveness was the priority when positioning each district's future development goals (previous Chief of Urban Planning Bureau of the consolidated Taichung City government, personal interview, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017).

The Revised Taichung County Comprehensive Plan (2002) demonstrates how partnerships between networks of small- and medium-sized towns and sparsely populated areas with market towns can be achieved in relation to agricultural products processing, logistics and marketing, as well as tourism development. The Taichung City Regional Plan (2018) also shows close collaborations between consolidated Taichung City and its surrounding counties since the establishment of a regional governance platform in 2015; but the previous partnerships between towns within the consolidated area have disappeared because the towns are no longer self-governing. After consolidation, district offices replaced township offices as branches of the city government.

The consolidated city government now plays a critical role in deciding each district’s development with the goal of strengthening the international competitiveness of the city as a whole. This may hinder the development of agricultural districts.

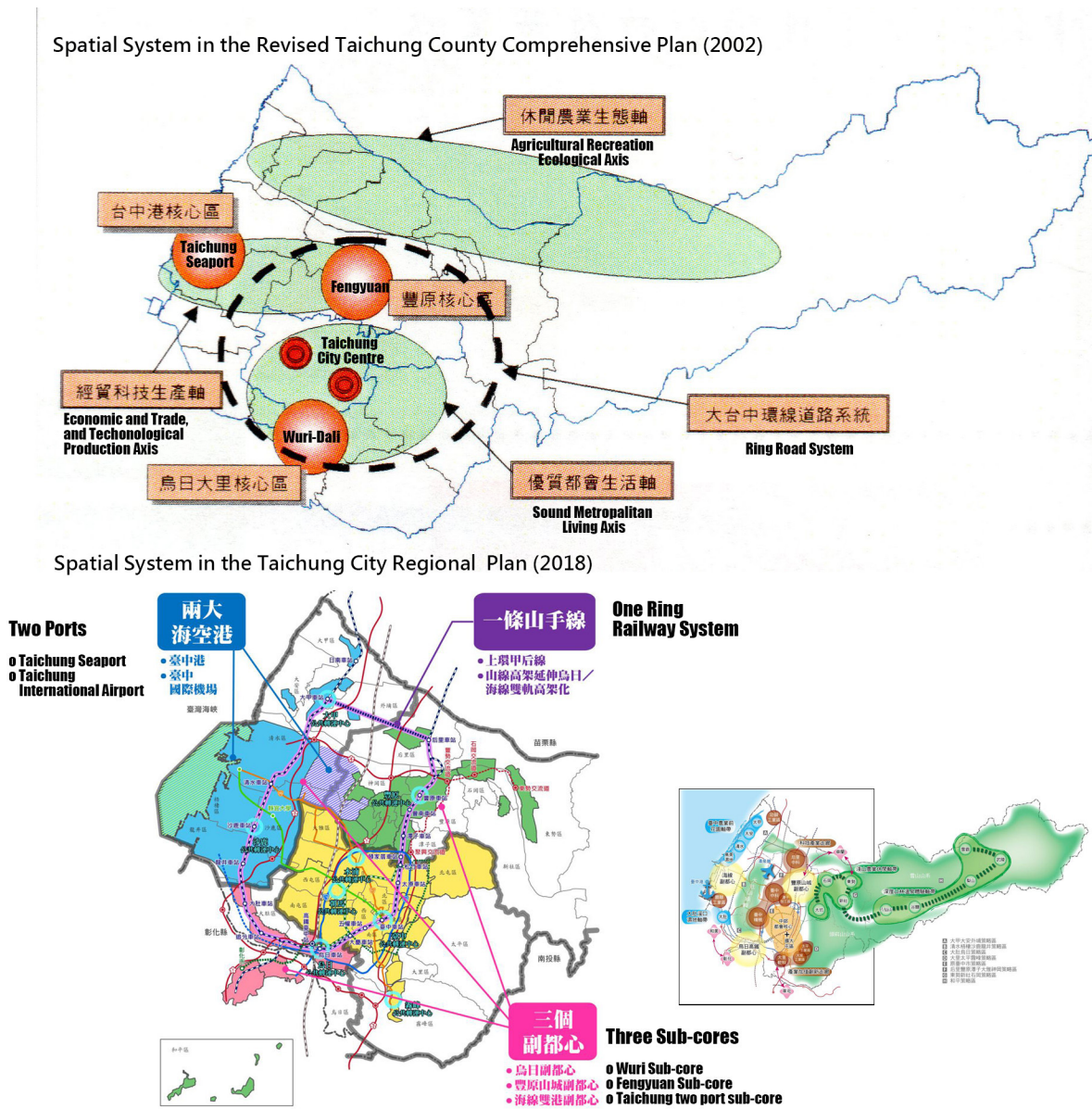


Figure 4 - Spatial Systems of Taichung County and Consolidated Taichung City  
 Source: These pictures are mere extracts from the Revised Taichung County Comprehensive Plan (2002) and Taichung City Regional Plan (2018) with a translation of their main captions.

### 3.3.2. Tainan City

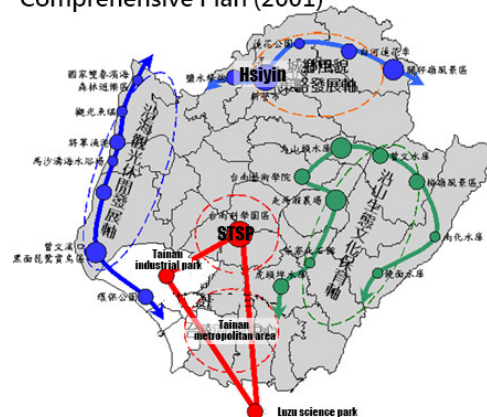
The Revised Tainan City Comprehensive Plan (Tainan City Government, 2002) showed a bias in favour of the city centre, and a gap between the plans at county level and local level can be seen in the Revised Tainan County Comprehensive Plan (Tainan County Government, 2001) (which consists of three volumes – the Comprehensive Plan at County Level, Sectoral Plan, and Comprehensive Plan of Every Township). At the county level, a more city-centred and growth pole view dominated, while at the local level the township’s own specialisations were the main focus in order to strengthen competitiveness. The county, by contrast, aimed to promote the development of two growth poles, including Hsiyin in the north of Tainan County and the Southern Taiwan Science Park (STSP) in the middle of Tainan County to reduce the backwash effect of Tainan

City. The plan also identified three corridors, but these were mainly based on the road system for the purpose of tourism development. Moreover, the interrelations between the corridors and the growth poles were not clear (see Figure 5).

The Tainan City Regional Plan (Draft) (Tainan City Government, 2014) takes the specialisations of each district and the interrelationships between networks of small- and medium-sized towns and sparsely populated areas with market towns as a starting point. At the same time, it strengthens the density of urban planning areas, which may be located in rural areas according to the dual land management system, in order to avoid urban sprawl. As shown in its spatial concept in Figure 5, it is inclined towards the regional networks concept but with a growth pole view. In the industrial development part of the regional plan both the manufacturing sector and agricultural sector are considered important industries. The importance of the agricultural sector can also be seen in its spatial system, which includes three major growth poles, two rural resource centres, and five regional clusters (see Figure 5). The two resource centres include the Yujing Agricultural Product Distribution Centre in the North-east hilly area and the Beimen Aquatic Product Distribution Centre in the North-west coastal area.

In short, the spatial concept of urban-rural planning and its spatial system have altered from a city-centred concept to a combination of regional networks and a growth pole view (see Table 4). The local government takes each area's own specialisations into account when making the regional plan (previous Chief of the Urban Planning Department of consolidated Tainan City, personal interview 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018), which indicates a polycentric spatial system in the whole territory, although the polycentric system is rather hierarchical.

Spatial System in the Revised Tainan County Comprehensive Plan (2001)



Spatial System in the Tainan City Regional Plan (Draft) (2014)

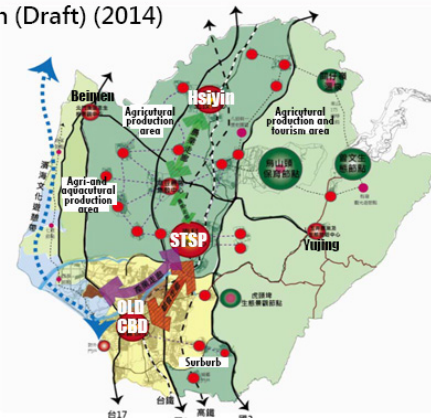


Figure 5 - Spatial Systems of Tainan County and Consolidated Tainan City

Source: These pictures are mere extracts from the Revised Tainan County Comprehensive Plan (2001) and Tainan City Regional Plan (Draft) (2014) with a translation of their main captions.

Table 4: Planning Concepts of Tainan Before and After Consolidation

	<b>Tainan City</b>	<b>Tainan County (31 townships)</b>	<b>Consolidated Tainan City</b>
Dominant Regional Planning Concept	Hub(s) and spokes	Hub(s) and spokes concept at the county level; regional networks concept at the township level	A combination of a regional networks concept and hub(s) and spokes concept
Urban-rural Relationships	City-centred relation	At the county level, it has a more city-centred and growth pole view; at the local level, the township's own specialties are the main focus.	Functional networks
Spatial System	A dual urban-rural system with a monocentric view	Aims to promote the development of two growth poles in the county to reduce the backwash effect of Tainan City.	Hierarchically polycentric system; three major growth poles in the middle corridor, two rural resource centres in remoter areas, and five regional clusters are identified.
Logic of rural development	No clear idea about rural development. It views urban fringe as a place reserved for urban expansion.	At the county level, a trickle-down effect from the STSP was expected; at the local level, some townships near to the STSP tend to emphasise their possibility to provide housing, while many of the rest focus on their own specialisations.	Indicating urban-rural partnerships and taking each area's own specialisations and comparative advantages into account.

Source: Based on Revised Tainan City Comprehensive Plan (2002); Revised Tainan County Comprehensive Plan (2001); Tainan City Regional Plan (Draft) (2014).

#### 4. Cross Comparisons and Discussions

In comparing the trajectories of the two cases before and after their consolidations, three major similarities and one influential difference can be recognised. The first similarity is that the core city centre and growth poles are always the major elements that constitute the framework of the spatial system, while the positioning of rural areas may differ according to the planning style or the spatial concept of the particular government. The growth pole could be a central business district, industrial centre (such as a science park or a technology park) or an important transport hub (such as an airport, a seaport or a high-speed rail station). The prominence of that way of thinking shows the influence of the growth pole model.

The second is that there are three ways to conceptualise urban-rural relations in both cases before or after the consolidations. The first is a model in which urban areas provide public and business services for their hinterlands, and the level of services depends on their urban hierarchies. In the second, the peri-urban areas, which are close to the growth poles, can have a home-work relationship and economic interactions with the growth poles. In the third, the areas which are far from the growth poles or are environmentally sensitive, are seen as consumption, leisure and open spaces, or providers of environmental goods for urban dwellers. The economic relationships in these cases are related to urban expansion for industrial activities or residential demands, but there is a slight difference. Different from Taichung, the consolidated Tainan City government takes into account the primary industrial relationships between sparsely populated areas and their market towns. The ways governments structure the spatial system of their territory – and how they conceptualise urban-rural relations – both imply their priorities.

Finally, a common emerging trend of transition from the decentralised planning style to the centralised planning style can be identified in both cases, emanating from their consolidations and administrative status upgrades. Before the consolidations and upgrades, Taichung County and Tainan County consisted of 21 and 31 townships respectively; afterwards, the townships became district offices, which are branches of the consolidated governments. As a result, the townships lost their planning authorities, and the consolidated governments have become unified regulatory authorities responsible for spatial planning over their whole territories. On the one hand, this change eliminates the competitive relationships between townships, and may create a more efficient administrative system to integrate and allocate resources at the city level. On the other hand, the consolidated governments may easily ignore local demands and their particular features. Although city councillors might represent their electoral districts and play a mediating role, township councils have been abolished – weakening local voices.

Despite some similarities, one influential difference can be identified – namely the spatial concept behind urban-rural planning in the two case study areas. The consolidated Taichung City government continued Taichung City and County's urban centred view, while the consolidated Tainan City government has paid more attention to the endogenous economic potential of rural areas and their towns than before. The different trajectories of the two cases may result from: 1) the distinct urban hierarchy and characters of the cities; 2) their mayors' and planning bureau chiefs' perceptions of urban-rural disparities, and of their cities' positions in the regional/global context; and 3) whether the chiefs of the planning bureau see the urban land and non-urban land of the same district as a whole, and are familiar with the legal planning and development tools used in non-urban contexts.

Taichung is larger than Tainan, and it has an international airport and seaport. These ingredients give credence to the notion – which has been adopted by its politicians – that the city has world-class potential (previous Chief of Urban Planning Bureau of the consolidated Taichung City government, personal interview, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017). This perception reinforces the urban-centred view and development-oriented planning concept. As the Chief of the Comprehensive Planning Division of consolidated Taichung City mentioned:

We had no clear spatial image over the whole territory. The only thing we wanted to do was to conduct urban development, so we tried to transform all the farmland to buildable land. But we had to follow the restrictions and development principle in the National Regional Plan. Additionally, while taking the development status of the three sub-cores into consideration, the pattern of urban-rural development was gradually defined. In fact, the previous mayor was more focused on development. He was only concerned with future development possibilities in-between urbanised areas, while the current mayor is more concerned with the development of sub-cores and the implementation of the TOD concept. (Personal interview, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017; translated by author)

In contrast to Taichung, the degree of urbanisation in consolidated Tainan City is low, and many of its districts located in what was the county part are rural (see Figure 4). The consolidation removed administrative boundaries as well as the competitive relations between Tainan City and Tainan County. The government officers and residences that used to be divided by city and county boundaries can now offset the negative impacts of the polarisation tendency when considering the city and county as a whole. This also makes the issue of urban-rural disparity visible (Chief of Urban Planning Bureau of the consolidated Tainan City government, personal interview, 26<sup>th</sup> December 2016). Different from the urban-centred view of the Taichung government, the regional plan of Tainan City is made on the basis of the following understanding articulated by the chief of the Regional Planning Division:

The mayor does not want to make the whole territory become urbanised area entirely. He really thinks agriculture is one of the major features of Tainan. It is important for us, so we have to preserve good farmland. But we cannot limit ourselves to farmland preservation solely. We have to help farmers...for example, through establishing agriculture production districts... (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2016; translated by author)

The strategy that the Chief of the Urban Planning Bureau of consolidated Tainan City proposes is to take each district's own specialisations and comparative advantages into account – regardless of its rural-urban composition – and help each of them to develop its own position and vision:

It is not easy to get rid of the issue of marginalisation...we now change our way of thinking. We do not intend to reverse the marginalisation phenomenon using a strong hand. In fact, citizens have their own considerations when deciding where to live and what to do. It is not possible to make them change their decisions just through a single public policy. We first have to review the functional position and distinguishing features of each rural area, and then deliberate over what the area can be and what are its possibilities. We now do not assume we can let the population of a village to grow from thousands to more than tens of thousands. (Personal interview, 26<sup>th</sup> December 2016; translated by author)

The Section Head of the Urban Planning Division of consolidated Tainan City further explains the new planning approach:

After consolidation, when we conduct periodical overall reviews of an urban plan (in rural districts), the first step now is to formulate a comprehensive plan for the whole district, which is beyond the boundary of the urban plan. The comprehensive plan also has to take the relations between the district and its surrounding districts into consideration. We expect to explore which role the district can play and what kind of resources it has in the non-urban areas before deliberating what the urban planning area can do for the district and what kind of issues we can deal with through the reviews. (Personal interview, 6th June 2016; translated by author)

This indicates that the planning bureau of the consolidated Tainan City government sees every rural district as a whole – even when it consists of both urban and non-urban land. This approach indicates a breakthrough for the concept of urban-rural dichotomy which has been embedded in the spatial planning system of Taiwan for more than four decades. The change corresponds to the promotion of the local regional plan since 2010, and the spirit of the new Spatial Planning Law of Taiwan promulgated in 2016.

By contrast, the planning bureau of the consolidated Taichung City government, which is in charge of formulating the regional plan, does not have any strategy to assist an agricultural areas' development.

Urban planning does not take agriculture into consideration; only for a very few cases... It should be part of agricultural policy rather than the urban planning policy of Taichung. It is not possible to use urban planning tools to help agriculture... what we normally do is to increase the building coverage ratio or floor area ratio. Everyone (in the urban area) would think the increase is good. But you cannot use the same tools in agriculture areas... when we formulated the regional plan, we were at our wits' end with agricultural development. The only thing we can do in the regional plan is to preserve the farmland. (Chief of Comprehensive Planning Division of consolidated Taichung City, personal interview, 7th November 2017; translated by author)

This implies that the planning officers are not aware that all of their rural districts have at least one countryside street plan and/or one special district plan (see Figure 3). Despite this, planners actually can review and try to explore the possibilities to use the embedded urban land to provide space for agricultural production related activities and infrastructure development. This also shows that the planning bureau of the consolidated Taichung City government is unfamiliar with the legal tools which exist in relation to farmland readjustment and rural community land adjustment. This, in turn, suggests a lack of cooperation with other relevant bureaus, such as the Agriculture Bureau, to assist in the development of agriculture areas. The urban-rural dichotomy planning principles, thus, limit the planners' imagination and the development possibility of rural districts.

Moreover, the mayors' and chiefs' spatial concepts for urban-rural planning also influence the planning style adopted. Due to the administrative upgrades, the planning authority is centralised in the hands of the consolidated city governments, but consolidated Tainan City remains concerned with each district's own specialisations and comparative advantages and the interrelations between districts. The role of the city government is considered to be a facilitator and a broker to link and build partnerships between districts (Section Head of Urban Planning Division of consolidated Tainan City, personal interview, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2016). Taichung City, by contrast, applies a top-down approach with the priority of being a world class city when positioning each district's future development. The focus of partnership building is at the cross-boundary regional scale rather than between districts. This inclination fits the national government's intention to promote competitive city regionalism.

## 5. Conclusion

Through investigating the two cases, this research finds that city-county consolidations in Taiwan do offer an opportunity for the reconstruction of planning concepts and discourses. This reconstruction involves articulation between certain problems or visions and given solutions, but outcomes vary. Tainan and Taichung

cities have ended up on different trajectories, and this has had differing implications for urban-rural disparities. In all, overemphasis of the concept of competitive city regionalism to balance regional development at the national level is judged to potentially lead to an enlargement of rural-urban disparities at regional and local levels.

Although the administrative boundaries and local competitive relations are removed by consolidations, the two consolidated cities have different perspectives on the nature of the change. The consolidated Taichung City government considers the consolidation as a precondition to becoming a world-class city. This has intensified urban-centred and development-oriented views. On the other hand, Tainan City's government recognises the historic disparity between Tainan City and Tainan County, and is trying to improve the situation by taking each rural district's specialisations and comparative advantages into account. This fundamental difference fosters distinct planning concepts and discourses. The distinct trajectories result from not only the existing urban hierarchy and characters of the cities but also how their mayors and planning chiefs position the cities, perceive urban-rural disparity, and place the 'rural' in their spatial planning practices.

The cases show that an overemphasis on the role of cities in the development of national and regional competitiveness runs the risk of not only marginalising rural concerns, but also of putting the rural economy in the shadow of urban economic process, and thus losing the opportunities to bring rural-led development into play. This overemphasis often results from ignorance of the rural world and its contributions to the regional economy. In order to fully capture the benefits and reach a more balanced urban-rural development model, policymakers and planning officers of the cities need awareness as to the specialisations of rural areas and the diverse urban-rural, rural-urban and rural-rural interrelationships which exist or have the potential to develop. Carefully listening to local voices, actively encouraging local engagement, and constructively exchanging knowledge between city planners and county planners would be effective ways to stimulate the imagination of urban-rural relations and help the reformed government take each area's own comparative advantages into account.

In short, the typology of regional planning concepts this study proposes provides a useful framework to assess how (and if) the governments (re)conceptualise the spatial dimensions to urban-rural planning. The comparative study also demonstrates that institutional design in relation to the spatial planning system may be one of the factors affecting how planners understand urbanity, rurality, urban-rural relationships, and their roles in urban-rural planning practices. In other words, the planning concepts and planning principles are interrelated and together guide the planning activities in a particular place. Different perceptions of how the spatial plan can be prepared, and the form plans ought to take, can lead places down different paths even under a single national planning system. In light of this, the institutional design of the spatial system in a particular place, as well as how planning practitioners in that place perceive and use their planning tools, should be taken into account in future studies of urban-rural relations or partnerships.

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