Transition of Chinese urban-rural planning at the new-type urbanization stage

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New-type urbanization is not only a new national urbanization principle and policy, but is also a new stage of Chinese urbanization development. Such development presents a new vision for Chinese urbanization as well as new requirements for urban-rural development and planning in the country. In this light, the transition from old to new basic principles, planning systems, value orientations, and so on, is required.

1. Basic principle of Chinese urban-rural development and planning at the new-type urbanization stage

With regards a national new-type urbanization, a kind of urbanization that is people-oriented, ecologically civilized, intelligent, low-carbon, green, and ecological shall be followed. Moreover, the coordination among production as well as living and eco-spaces—including the synchronization of Four Modernizations—should be achieved to realize the “Chinese Dream” of building a beautiful and stronger China through its cultural development. These requirements, which target the resolution of phased problems emerging in the process of Chinese urbanization and the achievement of goals and pursuits of the long-term development of China, shall be reflected in the principle of urban-rural development and planning.

In other words, at the new-type urbanization stage, the following basic principles shall be considered with regards urban-rural development and planning in China.

1.1. Urban and rural overall and intensive development

First, the urban-rural socio-economic development, as well as relevant problems that must be solved, shall be included within the scope of unified planning. Second, urban and rural construction, especially land construction for urban development, should be carried out according to actual conditions to maximize the use of land resources. An overall regulation between the added quantity and the total quantity of urban land use scale shall be enforced scientifically, and urban development shall adopt the strategy of building “Compact Cities” with “optimized stocks.” The principle of high-density development (i.e., unplanned and blind extensive expansion shall be discontinued, suburban grassy areas shall be protected, and energy consumption shall be reduced), the combined utilization of lands (to reduce commuting traffic caused by rigid division of functions), and public transportation prioritization should also be implemented. Meanwhile, the connections among
urban eco-space, social space, and economic space shall be properly handled (Zhu, 2013) to achieve the balanced management of function coordination and spatial intensification.

1.2. Adjustment of measures to local conditions and connotative development

New-type urbanization reflects the basic requirements of adjusting measures to local conditions, with emphasis on “being cautious about cutting trees, putting an end to filling lakes, and lessening the act of tearing down houses.” In fact, this type of urbanization development is a permanently and globally common settlement construction principle that uses local materials, adjusts measures to local conditions, and emphasizes regional cultural expression. In the process of new-type urbanization, the bearing capacity of the environment shall be considered, regional features of nature shall be respected, and urban characteristics formed by unique natural resources shall be excavated. We shall sort out and summarize regional wisdom and conventional practices of construction in various regions that accord with natural and ecological elements, and apply them to the development of urban-rural planning and construction design. Systematic thinking, in this sense, concerns traditional settlement with respect to the overall planning of architectural forms, micro-environment, culture, material, and energy.

1.3. Institutional guarantee and sustainable development

Institutional improvement and guarantee is the key to a rational and orderly urbanization process. Such improvement should be carried out to establish relevant laws, regulations, and development institutions in accordance with the requirements of new-type urbanization. Such laws include the Householder Registration System; the Land Benefits Distribution System; the Rural Land Circulation System; the Bid, Auction, and Listing System of Construction Land; the Health Care System, and the Housing and Social Pension Security System, to name a few. The discrimination resulting from the dualistic urban-rural system shall be abolished one step at a time. Through the reformation of the Householder Registration System, such appellations as “migrant workers,” “floating population” and “unemployed migrant people,” as well as institutional distinctions should be abolished. Moreover, non-discriminatory national policies shall be implemented, including the unification of development, ecological, land and spatial planning, to achieve the goal of development, construction and, ultimately, a win-win situation for all those involved.

2. Reconstruction of the Chinese urban-rural planning system at the new-type urbanization stage

The current Chinese urban-rural planning system, established after the founding of New China, was created under the planned economy model (hence based on the urban planning experience of the Soviet Union) during the process of national urbanization. After the implementation of the Reform and Opening-up Policy, the urban-rural planning system was further perfected by absorbing the urban planning theories of Western countries at their industrialization stage. Such planning system, which adapted to the development demands of cities and towns at the stage of large-scale industrialization and rapid urbanization, can be considered a typical economic development-oriented city planning system (Wang 2015), as well as a growth-oriented planning system (Wu, 2015). In accordance with the connotation of new-type urbanization and under the guidance of new rural and urban planning principles, the transition of the overall framework and the core contents of rural-urban planning must be carried out. In that way, the authorities can better maximize the functions of this system as a powerful weapon with which to regulate and standardize spatial actions, to optimize the utilization of urban and rural spaces, and to resolve the rural and urban crisis (Wu, 2013).

First, the planning model that separates urban and rural development shall be abandoned. An overall urban-rural planning system that is in accordance with the inner requirements of integrated urban-rural development at the new-type urbanization stage shall be established. Currently, China has amended some laws. Such amendments changed the original Urban Planning Law into the Urban and Rural Planning Law, which gives urban planning and rural planning the same status under the law, and changed the former unreasonable state of “only available for cities and not available for countries.” However, under the legal framework of the new urban-rural integrated planning system, the self-contained planning technology and operation systems that segregate urban and rural planning should be maintained.

In practice, however, many regions have started to explore the overall planning of cities and county towns, the overall planning of cities and countries, the integrated urban-rural planning and the overall urban-rural development planning, in order to replace the former urban overall planning with the above attempts. However, the lack of legal and technical support hinders the planning and management of these new systems. To this end, reforms in legal dimensions concerning regional or overall planning should be further carried out. Urban-rural overall planning must be defined as the mainstay principle in planning system; under the framework of urban-rural overall planning, specific construction planning shall be made in accordance with various construction demands and spatial features of cities and countries. Meanwhile, the sufficient unification of cities and countries with respect to technical planning standards and management systems should be considered. First, the deficiency or omission of technical standards and management systems in rural planning must be resolved; hence, the linkage, unification, and integration of technical systems for urban and rural planning should be carried out step-by-step.

Second, explorations should be made to determine green and sustainable planning systems. The overall development of people and nature is a comprehensive embodiment of the people-oriented and ecological civilization philosophy advocated under the new-type urbanization principle. Under this principle, urban and rural planning shall be gradually
transformed from being growth-oriented to being green, low-carbon and sustainability-oriented, and from expanding planning to optimized stocks planning, with full consideration for the optimization of the physical urban environment as well as various energy and climate factors.

Accordingly, such transition leads us to the alteration of current urban planning philosophies, theories, and methods. Instead of only considering the balance of functional city land, emphasis shall be placed on the balance of carbon and oxygen in the process of city development. Furthermore, in aspects of urban function orientation and development goals, industrial development strategies, city spatial layout, traffic organization, as well as other specialized city planning, the introduction of low-carbon oriented planning strategies and models should be highlighted. Moreover, city planning technical specifications should be gradually updated so that index systems can follow low-carbon requirements. This action can facilitate the transition of our country's city planning from a developmental planning model in the context of traditional urbanization to a low-carbon city planning model that is in accordance with the requirements of scientific development under the conditions stipulated under the new-type urbanization principles (Wang and Wang, 2011).

Third, explorations shall be made towards the establishment of a social development-oriented planning system. This work follows the analysis of Xingping (2015), who focused on “people-society-space” and considered the satisfaction of social development demands as the core of planning, social participation, and decision-making; the study further focused on nurturing basic urban and rural social units, such as the family, and introducing social research methods that combine large data with micro-data. Based on Wang Xingping's work, we highlight the spatial guarantee for education, health services, provision for the aged and vulnerable groups, and the planning of contents related to the quality of social development, such as the construction of quality public space and habitation space, all with the aim of promoting Chinese urbanization, the construction quality of cities and towns, and the overall development of the people (Wang 2015).

Finally, the inheritance and development of local culture should be highlighted in the process of planning. Building a stronger and more beautiful China through its cultural elements is an essential feature of the new-type urbanization strategy. As an important method of constructing human settlements, urban and rural planning should attempt to excavate the embedded human settlement construction wisdom out of traditional Chinese and regional cultures. Such cultural wisdom includes the traditional views of planning culture (e.g., the theory that man is an integral part of nature), and the construction of a ritual spatial order, which shall be carried forward with the times in the era of modern urban and rural planning construction. These traditional views shall become an important component of Chinese urban and rural planning.

In the context of a new round of globalization, Chinese urban-rural planning has made significant contributions to the success of the Chinese economy, and has served as an important guarantee for “China Speed.” We have accumulated some planning experiences that adapt to rapid industrialization and urbanization. This new stage of “Going Global” considers such experience to be worth sharing with other underdeveloped countries and those experiencing economic recession. In turn, such sharing can contribute to the “Chinese Experience” and “Chinese Model” for international urban-rural planning.

References


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