

# Analysis on the Development and Evolution of China's Territorial Spatial Planning

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**Abstract**—In recent years, China has implemented the reform of land and space planning. As an important public policy, land and space planning plays a vital role in the construction and development of cities. Land and space planning throughout the country is in full swing, but there are still many disputes from all walks of life. The content, scope, and specific implementation process of land and space planning are also ambiguous, leading to the integration of multiple regulation problems such as unclear authority, unclear responsibilities, and poor planning results during the implementation of land and space planning. Therefore, it is necessary to sort out the development and evolution of domestic and foreign land space planning, clarify the problems and cruxes from the current situation of China's land space planning, and sort out the obstacles and countermeasures to the implementation of this policy, so as to deepen the understanding of the connotation of land space planning. It is of great practical significance for all planners to correctly understand and clarify the specific contents and methods of land space planning and to smoothly promote the implementation of land space planning at all levels.

**Keywords**—Territorial spatial planning, public policy, land space, overall planning.

## I. INTRODUCTION

LAND space planning is a major public policy that affects land space pattern, space development, utilization and protection, ecological civilization construction and other aspects. The reform of land space planning has had a huge impact on related affairs. China clearly defines that territorial spatial planning is the guide for national spatial development. As a comprehensive and developmental public policy, the land space planning in the new era is related to the construction of national ecological civilization, the high-quality development of economy and society, and the modernization of governance system and governance capacity. China has a vast territory, a complex geographical environment and a huge administrative division system. Therefore, as a systematic and comprehensive work, land spatial planning plays a very important role in guiding the land spatial pattern and the long-term development of urban and rural areas. However, it also means that the promotion of land and space planning reform with multiple regulations will face many obstacles. From professional education and technical learning to the organization and process of planning departments to the ideas and methods of relevant staff, they will all go through a round of baptism. The establishment of the overall working system of land and space planning, the integration and redistribution of responsibilities and authorities of department personnel, the planning

transmission among all levels, and the implementation guarantee of planning need to be adjusted and adapted [1]. China's land space planning at all levels is still in the exploration and preparation stage, and the concept category, work process and content as well as relevant technical methods related to land space planning need to be constantly improved and clarified.

## II. CATEGORY AND OBJECTIVE OF TERRITORIAL SPATIAL PLANNING

### A. Connotation of Territorial Spatial Planning

The concept of territorial spatial planning originated in western countries. Some developed countries have a long history of territorial spatial planning and rich and mature planning experience. However, due to the different actual situations in different countries and the differences in the models, methods and contents of the land space planning implemented, there is no unified understanding of the definition of land space planning internationally, but the purpose of land space planning is to achieve the balanced and healthy development of cities and populations. The Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Establishing a Territorial Space Planning System and Supervising its Implementation, issued in 2019, defines territorial space planning as a guide for national spatial development and a spatial blueprint for sustainable development, which are the basic basis for various development, protection and construction activities. It is a major deployment made by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council to establish a land spatial planning system and achieve "multi regulation integration", and strengthen the guidance and restraint of land spatial planning on various special plans.

China's newly issued land space planning guidelines define the land space planning system as "five levels, three categories and four systems", including national, provincial, municipal, county and township land space planning at five levels. "Three categories" refer to the classification of planning contents into three types: overall planning, detailed planning and relevant special planning; "Four systems" refer to the planning management and operation system, including four subsystems: preparation and approval, implementation and supervision, regulations and policies, and technical standards.

### B. Objectives and Tasks of Territorial Spatial Planning

The models and methods of land space planning in various countries are formulated in combination with specific national conditions. The land area, administrative divisions and national

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economic level have a relatively large impact on the form of land space planning. The national conditions are different, so the goals and specific work contents of land space planning in various countries are obviously different. However, in general, the most fundamental goal for each country to formulate its territorial spatial planning is to achieve its own economic development, rational development and protection of resources, and healthy and sustainable development.

The specific tasks of China's current land space planning include: First, adjusting and supporting the country's main functional areas and "three control lines", namely, dividing "three zones and three lines" based on the results of "double evaluation", to optimize the land space development and protection pattern. The second is to participate in the preparation of national and key regional (watershed) land space planning and special planning, and provide technical guidance and services for the preparation of land space planning below the provincial level. Third, we will conduct research on major issues affecting the development and protection of land and space, such as energy and resource security, water balance, disaster prevention and mitigation, soil security, climate change, urban underground space, clean energy, and strategic minerals. The fourth is to explore the "double evaluation" method for different spatial areas and carry out "double evaluation" at different levels. The fifth task is to promote the investigation, evaluation, development and utilization of underground space in large and medium-sized cities, providing basic support for the planning and coordination of underground space development. The final task is to establish a monitoring and early warning system for resource and environmental carrying capacity, supporting the supervision of the entire process of planning and implementation.

### III. THE DEVELOPMENT COURSE OF CHINA'S TERRITORIAL SPATIAL PLANNING

#### A. Origin of Territorial Spatial Planning

The exploration of the relevant content of land space planning originated in the ancient Greek era, mainly including the vision of Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and other philosophers for the ideal state, whose ideas are concentrated in Plato's book: *The Ideal State*. He emphasized that the ideal country was established by an absolute rational and mandatory order. He advocated that urban order should be established based on the division of labor and the classification of social roles, and that citizenship should be divided into such classes as philosophers, warriors, craftsmen, farmers, and slaves. Philosophers were regarded as the most intelligent people and were given the right to govern the country. This idea directly inspired the later Hippodamus and other urban planning models, and became an ideal form of urban planning. However, the planning exploration in this period mostly stayed in the imagination stage, with a strong ideal nature. To a greater extent, social awareness and spiritual level were considered, and the comprehensive consideration of urban functions, density and other factors as well as the long-term development of the city in the future was lacking, which had certain limitations of the

times, but played an important role in promoting the awareness and ideological dissemination of urban land space planning later.

#### B. The Development of International Territorial Spatial Planning

The exploration of the theory of territorial spatial planning system in foreign countries started early, but it was not until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the formal practical work and theoretical exploration of territorial spatial planning began. The economic crisis in the 1920s caused a large number of social problems in western countries, such as the closure of factories, the loss of population unemployment, the decline of urban economy, and dysfunction. Many countries realized that space planning alone with cities as closed units could not solve urban problems, so they began to expand the scope of planning, and took regions as research objects for land space planning. All thinkers, planners, architects, philosophers and sociologists have made attempts and explorations for nearly a hundred years, constantly improved the construction of the theoretical system of territorial spatial planning, and enriched its concept and connotation.

Germany was the first country to formally carry out systematic land and space planning. The land and space planning of Germany divided its land and space into four levels: federal, federal state, regional and local, and formulated space development strategies at each level respectively. However, this kind of planning only proposed basic principles and regulations, and did not provide and guide information indicators. Therefore, the binding force of this planning is not strong. The spatial planning system established in the United Kingdom after World War II focuses on "development planning" and brings the regional level into the statutory planning system for the first time. The Netherlands is also one of the countries that carried out land space planning earlier. Its planning, represented by the Lanstad Development Planning Outline, is world-famous and has become a typical form of urban development, laying the groundwork for the land space planning prepared later. From 1960 to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Netherlands has carried out five times of land space planning preparation work, making the land space planning work of the country increasingly mature. Japan is one of the countries in Asia that started land space planning earlier. In response to the depression and decline of the national economy after World War II, Japan proposed land development plans at all levels in the Comprehensive Land Development Law in 1950. Since 1961, Japan has carried out seven national land space plans, covering regional coordination, land security, social, economic, cultural and other aspects.

#### C. The Development of China's Territorial Spatial Planning

##### a. Embryonic Stage

Before the reform and opening up, China did not form a systematic concept of territorial space planning, but simply borrowed from the Soviet Union's regional planning. Influenced by the Soviet model, regional planning at that time focused on the functional zoning of cities, mostly in the form of

joint factory selection and group layout. In the 1980s, in response to the sustainable development strategy proposed by the World Commission on Environment and Development and the global problem of deteriorating ecological environment, China actively carried out research and evaluation on the comprehensive productive potential of water resources, land resources and other resources, and preliminarily divided agricultural regions. At the same time, the tasks and requirements of land consolidation were put forward, and plans for resource development and economic development at the regional level were formulated, which laid the foundation for China's land space planning.

#### b. Exploration and Development Stage

After the reform and opening up, China's urbanization process accelerated, and the urban construction and economic level continued to improve. At this time, the theoretical system of land planning was introduced from Western Europe, Japan and other countries. In order to promote land planning, the Land Administration Law was implemented in 1987 to determine the preparation of the overall land use plan. In the same year, the measures for the preparation of land planning were issued to clarify the specific tasks of land planning. In 1990, China compiled the Outline of the National Territorial Master Plan (Draft) with reference to Japan's territorial planning model. Although it has not been fully implemented, the major projects formulated therein, such as the South to North Water Diversion Project and the Three North Shelterbelt Project, have been implemented, which has had a profound impact on the development and protection of territorial space. In 1998, China formally established the Ministry of Land and Resources, standardized the land and resources management system, and provided a strong guarantee for the implementation of the national 97 land space planning. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China has gradually carried out the pilot work of land and resources planning. In 2001, the Ministry of Land and Resources issued the Notice on Issues Related to the Pilot Work of Land Planning. Since then, it has carried out pilot work of land planning in Shenzhen, Tianjin, Xinjiang, Liaoning, Chongqing, Guangxi, Fujian and other places. In order to better optimize the land spatial pattern and coordinate the urban and rural spatial layout, the Urban and Rural Planning Law was promulgated in 2008 to replace the Urban Planning Law. In 2011, the National Major Functional Area Plan was officially released, which divided the land space into four major functional areas: priority, key, restricted and prohibited development, and proposed the actual development strategy of each region.

#### c. Comprehensive Reform and Improvement Stage

In 2014, the ministries and commissions jointly issued the Notice on Carrying out the Pilot Work of "multi compliance" at City and County Levels, and began to implement the work of "multi compliance" at the city and county levels, but the results were poor. With the proposal of the concept of ecological civilization construction, higher requirements have been put forward for achieving standardized and unified planning with

clear levels. In 2017, the State Council issued the National Land Planning Outline (2016-2030), which made overall arrangements for the development and protection of land and space. In 2018, the Ministry of Natural Resources was established to uniformly exercise the responsibilities of "control over the use of all land and space", and promote "multi compliance", which makes the land and space planning more orderly and perfect. In 2019, the State Council issued several opinions on establishing the Territorial Spatial Planning system and supervising the implementation, which defined the overall requirements, framework and compilation requirements of the territorial spatial planning. So far, the multi compliance work has been officially implemented, and the territorial spatial planning work has been comprehensively carried out [2].

### IV. THE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHINA'S TERRITORIAL SPATIAL PLANNING

#### A. The Practical Significance of Territorial Spatial Planning Reform

In the land space planning, the sea and land areas will be considered and planned as a whole, and the three constraint bottom lines of permanent basic farmland protection red line, ecological protection red line and urban development boundary line will be defined to divide the three core functional areas: ensuring the national land resources and food security; ensuring a good ecological environment and reasonable urban density and order; promoting the balanced development of ecological and economic benefits. At the level of urban internal economic development, the layout of urban and rural construction, the layout of productive forces, the layout of transportation networks, and the arrangement of land remediation projects in the land space planning are important investment guidelines and business opportunities for enterprises, which help to better integrate the development of enterprises with the needs of the country, and greatly reduce blindness. At the level of urban and rural development, the "one map" of land space planning takes cities and villages as a whole and makes a unified plan, which is of great significance for promoting the integrated development of urban and rural areas and implementing the rural revitalization strategy.

#### B. The Relationship between Territorial Spatial Planning and "Multi-Planning"

At present, there are many problems in China, such as too many types of planning, overlapping and conflicting contents, complex approval process, long cycle, and changing local planning day after day. The contradiction between land use planning and urban and rural planning is the most prominent. Land use planning is in charge of land use, especially farmland protection, and urban and rural planning is in charge of land development, especially urban development. The former reflects the land use constraints of the state on local development from top to bottom, focusing on protection, while the latter reflects the land development needs of local development from bottom to top, focusing on development. The two plans belong to different departments, and the value orientation of the plans is inconsistent, which leads to the two

plans often "fighting".

The implementation of land space planning reform has promoted the planning system from "coexistence of multiple planning" to "integration of multiple planning", and the planning system of "five levels and three categories" has been constructed. Land spatial planning is the integration of the original land planning, urban and rural planning, ecological protection planning, land use planning and other plans. It reduces the type and number of planning, reduces a large number of overlapping planning work, and alleviates the problems of unclear rights and responsibilities of various planning departments at all levels and planning conflicts during the "coexistence of multiple plans" period.

#### V. PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES IN CHINA'S TERRITORIAL SPACE PLANNING

##### *A. Discipline Development and Educational Model Lag Behind*

Land space planning is not only a public policy, but also a comprehensive and systematic discipline. Facing the reform of planning mode, there is a certain lag in the existing theory and working system reserves in both the industry and professional education fields. Not only the professional staff need to adjust their working methods and cooperation models, but also in the field of education and training, urban and rural planning and other related disciplines need to be reintegrated. From the preparation of professional theories and tutorial systems to the absorption of professional students' theory, technology and methods, and the practical operation of teaching, the entire teaching system needs to be adapted from top to bottom. This will inevitably lead to a large number of exchanges, discussions and ideological collisions. At the same time, it is necessary to comprehensively consider the new national development concept, the new economic normal and the new development pattern [3].

##### *B. Low Cohesion of Planning at All Levels*

The preparation of China's land spatial planning is at the initial stage. Although the planning work system of five levels, three categories and four systems are highly integrated and commanding, due to the short time of department and specialty adjustment and consolidation, the workload of statistical integration and proofreading of land spatial data information is large, and the staff's policy interpretation and digestion and work cooperation are still lacking, resulting in a low degree of planning cohesion between all levels. The planning process requires a combination of top-down coordination and bottom-up feedback. It is difficult to maintain a unified pace of planning at all levels. In addition, the contents and methods of territorial spatial planning are still at the exploratory stage, which is unstable and uncertain, and lacks unified implementation specifications. For example, in 2020, the Guidelines for the Preparation of Provincial Land Spatial Planning (for Trial Implementation) proposed that the provincial land spatial planning should be the basic basis for the next level land spatial planning. As a link between the preceding and the following, the city and county planning

should implement the indicators and spatial pattern arrangement of the provincial land spatial planning. In 2019, the Guidelines for the Preparation of City County Land and Space Master Plan also pointed out that city county planning is the detailed implementation of the upper level land and space planning blueprint. However, as far as the actual planning work is concerned, the national land space planning (outline) has not yet been released, and the results of the provincial land space compilation are not yet mature. However, the cities, counties, and villages and towns are simultaneously preparing their plans, and the transmission and connection of superior and subordinate plans are greatly improved. This seems to contradict the five levels and three categories of planning process system. Neither top-down leadership nor bottom-up adjustment feedback has achieved interaction and coordination, which also leads to the current implementation effect of land and space planning difficult to achieve the desired effect.

##### *C. Incomplete Laws and Regulations System*

Although China's land and space planning has been continuously promoted, due to the lack of long-term top-level design before multi compliance, division of labor and jurisdiction of multiple planning, division of departments, decentralization of powers and other issues, the planning results are disorderly. Only a clear and effective management system can ensure the effective implementation of land space planning. Although some relevant laws, regulations and policy documents have been issued for China's land and space planning, a unified and complete effective security system has not been formed. For example, in the "three regulations", only the Urban and Rural Planning Law (the latest revision in 2019) defines the legal status of urban and rural planning; although, the Land Management Law (the latest edition in 2017) has prepared the content of land use planning, it has no special legal and regulatory basis compared with the urban and rural planning, which is less restrictive. At the same time, the imperfect legal and regulatory system has also led to the weak awareness of ecological security in some regions, so the response planning results also lack effective binding force and executive force, which is difficult to implement.

#### VI. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The establishment of a territorial spatial planning system and the formation of a "multi regulatory integration" are important reforms to improve the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity [4]. In the future, the land space planning will continue to serve as a basic public policy to guide urban construction and optimize the land space pattern. However, there are many obstacles and problems to be faced in the process of "multi compliance", which requires a change of thinking and management operation mode in the whole field. First, at the administrative level, it is necessary to clarify the responsibilities and authorities of each department as soon as possible, clarify the work processes of the superior and subordinate, form a closed loop from the planning preparation approval to the implementation evaluation, clarify the tasks and regulatory requirements for the preparation of land and space

planning, and speed up the supplement and improvement of relevant laws and regulations and other security systems. Second, in terms of discipline education, the traditional professional education theory system needs to be reorganized and adjusted in combination with the actual situation of the planning reform, and speed up the connection between the training methods and the specific planning work. Third, the land and space planning work requires relevant staff to have more comprehensive knowledge, master more comprehensive theories and methods, and also enhance the learning and application of new technologies. For example, GIS technology plays an important role in the evaluation of resource and environmental carrying capacity and suitability of land and space development, which almost becomes the basic technical method that planners need to master. In addition, in the process of promoting land spatial planning, it is necessary to speed up the statistical proofreading and entry of geographic information data at all levels, build a national unified information database, and provide accurate support for the implementation of land spatial planning results. The reform of the territorial spatial planning system and the construction of the system are not tasks that can be accomplished overnight [5]. While constructing the theoretical system, we need to continue to practice and explore experience to constantly supplement and adjust. Therefore, it requires each relevant professional to overcome difficulties, continue to learn, and patiently explore.

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