

## Theoretical Construction and Development Trend of the Implementation of Urban and Rural Planning in China in the New Period

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**Keywords:** public policy; transformation and development; implementation of urban and rural planning; the new period.

**Abstract:** Urban-rural planning is a new discipline developed with the rapid progress of urbanization over the past 30 years. With the establishment of this discipline, public policy becomes the essential attribute of urban and rural planning. Based on the logical origin of the state's political system as well as its transformation and development, and taking the operation of modern public policy as the analytical framework, this paper discusses issues about "urban and rural planning", "public policy" and "implementation". The paper places "implementation" into the operational link of urban and rural planning to grasp the research content of "the implementation of urban and rural planning", and puts "implementation" into the political environment of urban and rural planning to grasp the operation mode of "the implementation of urban and rural planning". The paper also discusses "implementation" in the context of the transformation and development of urban and rural planning, so as to grasp the target of "the implementation of urban and rural planning". It tries to establish the theoretical framework of "the implementation of urban and rural planning" from the three aspects of research contents, the operation mode and target, in order to meet the trend of discipline development in the future.

### 1. Introduction

Urban and rural planning is a new subject developed with the rapid development of urbanization in China over the past 30 years. Since the reform and opening-up in 1978, the reform process, starting from the reform of economic liberalization, has enabled administrative and social reforms to be carried out and promoted one after another on the basis of economic restructuring. Before the reform and opening up, urban and rural planning activities are government behaviors with features of unified planning, unified management and unified implementation in the exploration and management of urban space. With the deepening of reform and opening up, the role of urban and rural planning has changed from the space implementation tool of the engineering, technology and economic development plan to public policies which safeguard the fairness of urban public space. At present in China, the compilation, implementation and management of urban and rural planning constitute the work of urban and rural planning. However, due to the long-term influence of traditional disciplines and working thinking, the phenomenon of attaching importance to planning and compilation rather than implementation and management has always existed. The implementation of urban and rural planning is in the weakest position, and there are many practical problems in the process of operation. From the perspective of the public policy attribute of urban and rural planning, the implementation process should directly correspond to the implementation of public policies. It is of theoretical and practical significance to build a theoretical framework of urban and rural planning implementation to meet the trend of discipline transformation and development in the future.

## **2. Operation of Public Policy**

### **2.1 Overview of public policy**

The existence or phenomenon of policy is the result of social practice in the development of human society. In 1951, Harold and Daniel put forward relevant concepts of policy science in their book *Policy Science: Recent Advances in Research Areas and Methods*, which laid the foundation of policy science.<sup>[1]</sup> In modern society, due to the modern democratic political system, the concept of policy has become public policy by adding the attributive attribute. As a social phenomenon, public policy has a history of thousands of years. But it has not been included into the field of scientific research for a long time. So far, public policy still lacks perfect conceptual system and influential theoretical assumptions.

Public policy covers many aspects in various fields of society. Thus, the academia has provided too many definitions on the basic meaning of public policy. It is generally believed that public policies are codes of conduct formulated by the government, non-governmental organizations and the public in the process of implementing common management of social public affairs. From the development trend of the world today, the importance of public policy has been recognized by most countries and regions, and has been confirmed in a wide range of policy practice. Since the 1930s, countries around the world, especially developed countries, have abandoned the traditional thinking mode of free market economy. Public policy has become an important measure for the government to regulate and control the modern market.

### **2.2 Operation of public policy**

In his book *Policy Making in Britain*, Richard argues that public policy is composed of a long series of several connected activities and the consequences of such activities, rather than isolated and static decisions. It can be seen that the dynamic process of public policy is the dynamic operation process of public policies from the beginning to the end; the operation process of public policy is composed of a series of links. From this point of view, the dynamic operation process of public policy includes the identification of policy issues, the planning of policy programs, the legalization of policy, the policy implementation, the policy evaluation and the policy termination. All links are related to the effective solution of policy issues and the successful implementation of policy. In the process of policy operation, policy implementation is an important process to realize the policy programs and policy objectives. It is one of the keys for public policies to play a practical role and solve problems. That is to say, the real solution of policy problems depends on the policy implementation. At the same time, policy implementation is also a practical method which can test the perfect degree of policy programs; it is also the realistic basis for policy evaluation and revision.

## **3. The Attribute of Public Policy in Urban and Rural Planning**

Broadly speaking, policy is a broad concept, which includes laws, measures, regulations, plans, programs and projects proposed by the management department. Therefore, urban and rural planning should be part of the public policy of the urban and rural department.<sup>[2]</sup> On the legal level, Article 3 of the *Urban Planning Compilation Measures*, which was implemented on April 1, 2006, clearly points out for the government, urban planning is one of the important public policies; it can regulate urban spatial resource, guide urban and rural development and construction, and safeguard social equity, as well as public safety and public interests. To express it more precisely and completely, urban and rural planning is a kind of public policy in space; or, urban and rural planning is the spatialization of public policy. The planning is different from general public policies; it should be implemented in specific human settlements or the construction environment. When we identify the commonness between public policies and urban and rural planning, we should not ignore the spatial characteristics of urban and rural planning. Spatial issues should be the core of the urban and rural planning discipline, and planning theory should be the theoretical basis for formulating specific spatial policies.<sup>[3]</sup>

Since the 1960s, urban and rural planning has changed the meaning of planning from the compilation of planning maps to the emphasis on the planning process. It is believed that the key of planning lies in the implementation. In this process, the planning map plays the role of guiding future goals, while the policy guides us to carry out actions and achieve the goals step by step. In the context of Western democratic society, urban and rural planning is a kind of public policy that the government controls to intervene through allocating space resources when the market fails.<sup>[4]</sup> Urban and rural planning plays an important role in the macro-control.

Urban and rural planning fully conforms to the conceptual meaning of public policy, that is, to make up for the market's or government's failure, to solve public problems and to maintain and coordinate urban public interests. Urban and rural planning is the space use policy formed by the government and other relevant stakeholders through consultation; the planning is guaranteed by the government.

## **4. Public Policy Implementation and Urban-Rural Planning Implementation**

### **4.1 Public policy implementation**

The implementation of public policy is one of the important links in the policy cycle. It is the only way to transform the ideal of public policy into the reality, and to transform the goal of policy into the benefit. From the perspective of foreign related research, the research on policy implementation began in the 1970s. In 1973, Wildavsky and Pressman co-authored the book, *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland*, which aroused people's attention to the issue of policy implementation, and also heralded the beginning of relevant policy implementation research. Concerns about policy implementation research have broadened the scope of policy science research. It is of cross-era significance and value to re-integrate the "policy implementation" link, which has been neglected by the academia and the public into the perspective of policy analysis science.<sup>[5]</sup>

The implementation of public policy is an active process in which the policy executors transform the contents of policy ideology into actual effects by establishing organizational structures, using various policy resources, and adopting various activities such as explanation, propaganda, experiment, implementation, coordination and monitoring, so as to achieve the established policy objectives.<sup>[6]</sup>

Public policy activities contain many links and elements, among which the implementation of public policy is the central link of public management activities; it is also the most direct and important activity which is most frequently used to achieve the goal of public policy.<sup>[7]</sup> The implementation of urban and rural planning is the core of urban and rural planning management. Since urban and rural planning is a kind of public policy, and the transformation of the attribution of urban and rural planning management from administration to public management, we can naturally get the corresponding relationship between the implementation of urban and rural planning and public policy implementation. Therefore, discussing the implementation of urban and rural planning from the perspective of public management is the analysis and research on the implementation of urban and rural planning.

### **4.2 Theoretical paradigm for the implementation of urban and rural planning**

#### **4.2.1 Research contents on the implementation of urban and rural planning**

Urban and rural planning is the overall arrangement on the future development of cities and the countryside based on realistic and public urban and rural spatial problems. It is the mobile revision and adjustment of the prediction on the future development pattern of cities and the countryside. Any planning issue is essentially a practical problem. Urban and rural planning is an applied discipline. Only by putting "implementation" in the operational link of urban and rural planning, and grasping the essence of "implementation of urban and rural planning", can the urban and rural planning reflects its social value. Administrative means are the most basic means of public policy implementation; administrative organs adopt rules, regulations, orders and instructions to promote

the implementation of public policy.

As a kind of public policy, urban and rural planning should be formulated from the perspective of public policy. It must be regarded as a political process which is guided by value rationality. We need to pay attention to the value judgment, the decision-making mechanism and the power operation of urban and rural planning, and attach importance to the interests of each participant, so as to realize the scientific and democratic formulation of urban and rural planning.

With the vigorous advancement of new urbanization and the transformation from traditional urban planning to urban and rural planning, some chapters in the Urban and Rural Planning Law of the People's Republic of China especially discuss the implementation of urban and rural planning. Generally speaking, it is a series of related works to ensure the implementation of the approved scientific and rational urban and rural planning. It can be seen that the implementation of urban and rural planning in China is based on the Urban and Rural Planning Law of PRC, with the core content of the management of urban and rural planning implementation, and with the local people's governments at all levels and the competent departments of urban and rural planning as the main body; it is a series of specific work contents to ensure the realization of urban and rural planning objectives.

The implementation of urban and rural planning is the key link of urban and rural planning, and the main link of realizing urban and rural planning contents and achieving planning objectives. The implementation of urban and rural planning is also the process of construction in which main departments should act in accordance with the planning approved by law. The main contents of urban and rural planning implementation include the urban and rural planning implementation management, the planning implementation supervision and inspection management, and the operation mechanism of urban and rural planning management, among which the "one book, three certificates" management system is an important part of the implementation of urban and rural planning in China.

#### **4.2.2 Operation modes on the implementation of urban and rural planning**

Under the current management system and mode, a common problem in the implementation of urban and rural planning management in China is the lack of an effective post-approval management, supervision and inspection mechanism. There are no effective means to supervise the operation of construction projects after the issuance of "one book and three certificates". Thus, the "one book, three certificates" system still needs to be improved. It can be said that the post-approval management is a weak link in the process of implementation and management of urban and rural planning. In order to ensure the effective implementation of the planning, we must establish and strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system for the implementation of urban and rural planning. Planning supervision, as an important means to ensure the implementation of planning, must be attached importance to and improved under the operational mode of urban and rural planning implementation.

At the same time, the evaluation of urban and rural planning implementation cannot be ignored. As far as urban and rural planning is concerned, the evaluation can comprehensively analyze the results and processes of planning implementation, effectively detect and supervise the implementation process and the effects of established planning, and form feedbacks on this basis of relevant information, so as to put forward suggestions for the revision and adjustment of planning content, as well as the framework and operation of policy design and planning. Thus, a virtuous circle on the operation of urban and rural planning can be created. Therefore, in the modern urban and rural planning operation system, the evaluation of planning implementation should be an important and indispensable component that runs through the whole process of urban and rural planning.<sup>[8]</sup>

The implementation and management of urban and rural planning are important parts of urban and rural planning management; but in China, it is also a weak link in the reform of urban and rural planning system.<sup>[9]</sup> With the deepening of reforms in the administrative management system, the housing system as well as the administrative examination and approval system, the establishment

and improvement of the “making government affairs public system”, the public participation system, the announcement system and the social supervision system, the degree of social participation in the implementation and management of urban and rural planning has been greatly increased, and the urban and rural planning management mechanism combining government with society has been gradually taken its shape. Therefore, we should focus on the new situation and requirements in the future, and learn mature and useful experiences from foreign countries. We should reform and innovate the operation mode of urban and rural planning implementation in China by establishing and perfecting the examination and controlling mechanism, the supervision and inspection mechanism, the public participation mechanism, the legal guarantee mechanism and the self-restraint mechanism of urban and rural planning management.

#### **4.2.3 Targets of the implementation of urban and rural planning**

The implementation of public policy is the key link in the whole process of public policy operation. However, due to many factors in the process of implementation, the effect may deviate from the original expectations to varying degrees. In extreme cases, policy implementation may go out-of-control.

The implementation of urban and rural planning refers to the process that, in accordance with legally formulated and approved urban and rural planning, as well as relevant regulations and specific provisions of urban and rural planning management promulgated by the state and governments at all levels, the department needs to adopt legal and scientific management methods on administration, economy and the society, make overall arrangements on the usage of urban and rural lands and current construction activities, so as to guide and regulate construction undertakings in urban and rural areas to develop orderly and coordinately, and to guarantee the implementation of urban and rural planning.<sup>[10]</sup>

Urban and rural planning is a kind of public policy. Scholars have reached consensus in that opinion. However in China, when it comes to the specific implementation process, the implementation of planning is not linked with public management in legal norms, in the management process and in ideology, thus making urban and rural planning a kind of “superficial” public policy.

Under the current planning management system, the content of planning is out of line with the requirements of planning implementation; the procedure cannot be linked up with planning management quickly; the basis of management is often too simple and principle-oriented. It cannot meet the requirements of large-scale and wide-ranging urban construction activities; it does not reflect the characteristics of urban and rural planning implementation management under the condition of market economy. This is the goal and value orientation of urban and rural planning implementation; it is also the inevitable trend of establishing the theoretical framework of urban and rural planning implementation.

### **5. Conclusion**

At present, China is in a period of rapid urbanization. The implementation of urban and rural planning has important significance and values in such a special era. However, there are problems in the implementation of specific planning. These problems have great impacts on the social and economic development of urban and rural areas in China. Urban and rural planning is a kind of public policy. The implementation of urban and rural planning corresponds to public administration. Meanwhile, the implementation of urban and rural planning is directly related to the integration and redistribution of relevant space and social resources, as well as the efficiency of increasing social interests. In the new era, re-examining urban and rural planning from the perspective of public policy, researching the implementation of urban and rural planning based on the policy analysis, and establishing a theoretical framework of “urban and rural planning implementation” from three aspects of research content, operation mode and the target, will become important methods to cater for territorial spatial planning.

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