

The Semantic Evolution and Contemporary Mission of Urban Planning

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Abstract. An accurate understanding of urban planning requires examination from three dimensions: governmental function, professional practice, and academic discipline. Each has followed a distinct evolutionary path. For a considerable period, urban planning in China exhibited a "three-dimensional isomorphism" among these dimensions. Although this configuration supported rapid urbanization, it can no longer meet the demands of Chinese modernization and generates inherent tensions with governance modernization in value orientation and utility assessment. Beyond this three-dimensional perspective, urban planning today should be understood as a governance instrument through which the Party and the state advance the broad project of Chinese modernization. Its effectiveness depends on reconstructing production relations among stakeholders, examining institutional conditions and governance foundations before planning elements are supplied, and evaluating the sustainability and performance of implementation and operation afterward. The urban planning system should therefore be improved by establishing a people-centered urban governance mechanism grounded in people's rights.

Keywords: urban planning; governmental function of urban planning; urban planning discipline; urban planning profession; urban work

Chinese Library Classification: TU984. Document code: A.

DOI: 10.16361/j.upf.202405003.

Article number: 1000-3363 (2024) 05-0018-11.

1 Three Dimensions of Urban Planning and the Dilemma of "Three-Dimensional Isomorphism"

1.1 Evolution of the Basic Meaning of "Urban Planning"

Like many terms, the meaning of "urban planning" has evolved continuously since its emergence. This evolution reflects the social needs of different historical periods as well as the gradual enrichment of the field's scientific content.

No study has yet established the origin of the Chinese term for urban planning. Wu Tinghai [1] argues that the statement in the Biography of Yuwen Kai in the History of the Sui Dynasty - "all that was planned was devised by Kai" - may be China's earliest expression of urban planning. The term *guihua* (规画) meant both "to devise" and "to arrange." It referred not simply to construction, but to a progression from land to city that combined site appraisal with city building. The location of settlements and the arrangement of functional areas had to respond to geographical and environmental conditions; planning was therefore a concrete instrument of governing the realm.

From the late nineteenth century onward, the introduction of Western municipal institutions and knowledge of municipal administration brought into Chinese usage such terms as "planning," "plan," "metropolis," and "city." Since the first recorded use of "municipal plan" in 1914, more than sixty planning-related terms have appeared, many of them newly coined or first applied to urban construction [2]. The principal modern term was metropolitan planning (都市计划, also written with variant characters), alongside city planning. Developed within a system that separated urban and rural areas, this approach addressed the design of the city's "material environmental composition" and other urban problems. It emphasized civil engineering, architecture,

environment, sanitation, and related public concerns [3], focusing on the construction and improvement of the urban physical environment rather than on major questions of national governance.

When China launched its First Five-Year Plan in 1953, "urban planning" replaced "metropolitan planning." Urban planning served the development plan, and together they became foundational institutions of the young People's Republic. Planning retained the content of earlier metropolitan plans but also required the advance arrangement or detailed preparation of building locations, construction schedules, and programs of use, thereby incorporating design into its remit from the outset [4]. The close coordination of urban planning and economic planning established the basic political-economic framework of national governance, a period later described as the "first spring" of Chinese urban planning [5].

Urban planning was abandoned during the Cultural Revolution but returned after reform and opening-up. Under the 1984 Regulations on Urban Planning, it was defined as the objectives and plan for urban development over a specified period, the comprehensive deployment of urban construction, and the basis for managing such construction. As a form of work, urban planning was divided into master planning and detailed planning [6-7], separating its administrative function from professional practice. To address the lack of strategic positioning in urban development, China incorporated the domestically developed practice of urban system planning into urban planning.^① A defining feature of planning at the time was its service to the principle that "development is the overriding priority": planning supported economic growth and investment attraction at the regional, citywide, and intra-urban scales, becoming an important lever and catalyst of reform and opening-up.

At the beginning of the new century, rapid urbanization and the expansion of urban land prompted the central government to strengthen macro-regulation of the real-estate market. To promote integrated urban-rural development, the urban planning work system was transformed into an urban-rural planning system. In legal terms, "urban planning" became one level within a five-tier system of national, provincial, municipal, town or township, and village planning. It thus returned to the city scale and came to mean "the planning of the city" [8]. In this context, the academic discipline was renamed Urban and Rural Planning.^② The central government explicitly defined urban-rural planning as a fundamental means by which government guides and regulates urban-rural construction and development [9], and declared that such planning was an important responsibility of people's governments at all levels, with mayors and county heads bearing administrative leadership responsibility for implementation.

In the new era, General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the strategic guiding and binding regulatory roles of urban planning in urban development. The 2015 Central Urban Work Conference required municipal Party committees and governments to formulate specific objectives and work programs, clarify implementation steps and safeguards, strengthen leadership over urban planning, construction, and management, and provide the necessary funding [11]. At the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Xi Jinping called for adherence to the principle that "cities are built by the people and for the people" and for improvements in urban planning, construction, and governance [12]. Urban planning is therefore no longer merely departmental administrative work or a technical plan. It has become an umbrella term for all plans at the city level, a major instrument through which the CPC conducts urban work in the new era, and a fundamental means of implementing the governing concept of the People's City, with the Party committee assuming primary responsibility.

In sum, the meaning of "urban planning" has moved among institutional, technical, and operational levels (Table 1). This semantic change is not merely linguistic; it reflects transformations in China's political institutions, cycles of economic development, changes in the level and speed of urbanization, and the growing understanding of cities across society, especially among governing authorities.

To analyze this semantic evolution and clarify the mission and status of urban planning in different periods, this paper proposes that urban planning be understood from three dimensions: governmental function, professional practice, and disciplinary development.

Table 1. Historical evolution of the meaning of "urban planning" in China

Period	Term	Positioning	Core meaning
Ancient period	Guihua (规画)	Part of the national governance system	Appointment of officials and governance of the people; site appraisal; city building
Modern period	Metropolitan planning	Urban construction under an urban-rural separation system	City building; urban design
1950s	Urban planning	Institutional support for the planned economy	Master planning; new urban development and reconstruction
1980s	Urban planning	Technical lever for economic growth	Urban system planning; master planning; detailed planning (regulatory plans)
2000s	Urban planning	Administrative function of municipal government	Master planning; detailed planning
New era	Urban planning	Key instrument of the People's City concept	All types of plans at the city level

1.2 Urban Planning as a Governmental Function

The Rites of Zhou is China's earliest systematic account of state institutions and the division of governmental functions. Centered on strengthening centralized authority and solving the problems of governing a vast polity [12], it provides a starting point for understanding urban planning as a governmental function. It includes the Artificers' Record, which describes the form and structural models of built cities [13], and records an official system organized on a spatial basis [14]. An ideal spatial order required corresponding officials to realize it, enabling political rule over extensive territory and consolidating authority over the realm. Urban institutions and planning systems adapted to the political order were incorporated as political instruments into a system of national governance that elevated ritual order as its highest objective.

The institutional system for establishing cities gradually formed at the beginning of the Western Zhou dynasty [15]. Capital construction was directed by senior court ministers, sometimes by the chief administrative official. Other cities were generally planned and built under the coordination of the resident administrative head and implemented with central-government approval. In the imperial era, urban planning institutions served the requirements of the unified feudal state. Earlier city-building institutions were critically inherited and incorporated into the imperial order, forming the so-called Qin system. Through its transmission and development during the Western Han, Sui-Tang, Song, and Yuan periods, this system reached the highest level of urban planning in China's feudal society during the Ming and Qing dynasties [16]. Urban planning as a governmental function remained a central concern of rulers and an important means of governing the state.

In modern times, Western incursions introduced the concepts of municipal institutions and urban management, altering China's longstanding tradition of integrated urban-rural governance. The ideas of municipal construction authority and management authority entered the Shanghai concessions in 1845. Early municipal administrative bodies were established in Beijing, Tianjin, Jinan, Shanghai, and other cities from 1894, forming the prototype of China's urban planning administration. The Qing government's 1909 Regulations on Local Self-Government for Cities, Towns, and Townships legally separated cities, towns, and rural areas for the

first time, established local self-government, and assigned local authorities a broad range of public works, including schools and libraries, roads and bridges, drainage, public buildings, trams, streetlights, and water supply. In 1921, the Beiyang government issued the Municipal Self-Government System and its implementation rules. Guangzhou became China's first formally incorporated city and established a municipal administration whose authority covered fiscal revenue, municipal construction, public utilities, transport and communications, public security, environmental sanitation, culture, education, and related planning and construction. The Nationalist government's Building Act and City Planning Act of the 1930s marked the institutionalization of urban planning and construction [16]. The modern separation of urban and rural areas, and the concentration of planning functions in engineering and technology, posed a major challenge to China's indigenous tradition of planning as statecraft.

At the founding of the People's Republic, urban planning and national economic planning jointly served as foundations of the political system [17] and played a major role in building the new political-economic order and advancing socioeconomic development. The urban planning function partly inherited the modern focus on physical space. As a component of the political system, however, it remained on the agenda of the highest decision-making authorities. From the eight key cities and 156 major construction projects to housing standards, the preparation and approval of master plans for major cities, and environmental improvement and planning in key areas, planning technology carried a strong political dimension, and planning authority was expressed primarily through political authority.

In the 1980s, the market economy and departmental interests challenged the comprehensiveness and authority of urban planning. Planning gradually receded from the central government's political agenda and increasingly appeared as a local matter and a technical departmental function. In the 2000s, the central government again turned to planning in response to insufficient governmental regulation, conflicts among departmental planning functions, growing discrepancies between central and local planning objectives, interest conflicts generated by the commercialization of planning and design, imperfect markets, and failed planning control. It called for "substantially strengthening integrated regulation through urban-rural planning" [10]. In 2018, the CPC Central Committee made the major decision to integrate multiple plans into a unified spatial planning system, with unified authority over territorial-space use control and ecological protection and restoration [18-19]. At this stage, urban planning as a governmental function centered on the state's use of planning to regulate the population-land-space relationship and thereby achieve its policy objectives for a given period.

1.3 Urban Planning as a Profession

Ancient China had no occupation called "urban planner," but it did have comparable professional practices. Craftspeople coordinated work concerning territory, roads and waterworks, and urban and rural settlements, providing technical support for harmonious and orderly human environments. They acted according to rulers' intentions and the established political hierarchy. Scholar-officials and craftspeople collaborated in shaping urban and rural space: scholar-officials determined building programs, layouts, and forms, while craftspeople implemented them through technique. Planning aspired to a state in which skill advanced toward the Way, making planning technique an important component of statecraft [16].

In the modern period, returning specialists such as Zhan Tianyou and Sun Ke promoted the development of urban planning engineering and municipal administration, while the practice and professionalism of foreign experts in China stimulated the emergence of a domestic planning profession. Specialized planning institutions and regulations began to appear. The Ministry of the Interior required cities to establish metropolitan planning commissions responsible for plan preparation, planning consultation, and some administrative affairs. The City

Planning Act, Regulations on the Construction Industry, and Regulations on Architects provided an institutional environment for professional development. Practice expanded rapidly: in 1928, the Guangzhou Urban Design Commission began preparing the Draft Outline of Urban Design for Guangzhou and publicly recruited planning professionals, contributing to the professionalization of planning; in 1929, the Nationalist government published the Capital Plan, regarded as the first systematic and comprehensive modern plan prepared under Chinese leadership [16]. As in developed countries, the profession's mission was to improve the quality of the human environment and promote social reform through specialized technical practice. Yet it was neither a traditional Chinese trade nor an independent occupation separate from civil engineering and architecture.

Since 1949, China's planning workforce has expanded through a complex process. Before 1980, it consisted mainly of personnel in planning administrative departments, who undertook plan preparation, approval, implementation, and management. Under the planned economy, professionalization largely meant the formation of a departmental industry, gradually producing relative closure and interest protection [20]. After the 1989 Urban Planning Law, two national urban planning conferences established requirements for institutions, personnel training, and professional cadres, and a technical title series for urban planners gradually emerged distinct from those of engineers and architects. Following China's accession to the World Trade Organization, urban planning became an independent profession within an internationally recognized technical-service field, and planners moved from a general professional-technical category to an entry-regulated practice qualification [21]. Planning institutions were also subjected to qualification management, producing a graded entry system unlike the technical-service or consultancy systems found in many market economies.

The profession has thus moved from administrative affiliation and professional subordination to independent organization and professionalization. Because urban planning has a strong public-policy character, its development differs substantially from ordinary engineering professions and from policy research or consultancy. Meanwhile, planning institutes that had functioned as quasi-public administrative organizations underwent corporatization and institutional reform as the market economy developed. Their clients shifted from government alone to market-oriented and diverse stakeholders. Yet the institutions themselves remained constrained by qualification systems rooted in planned-economy thinking and industrial interest protection. These changes have profoundly affected planning as a profession. Professional ethics and the protection of public interest are more important than ever. Diverse clients, limited technical liability, and market-based operation increasingly define professional development, while reforming the qualification system and moderately simplifying the dual administrative constraints of institutional and individual credentials have become central concerns in efforts to revitalize the planning, design, and consultancy market.

1.4 Urban Planning as a Discipline

Ancient China had no modern discipline of urban and rural planning, but it possessed cultural and knowledge traditions related to planning. This knowledge was dispersed across government departments responsible for rule and administration and was characterized by "learning in government" and specialized official scholarship. It included knowledge of ritual order in space, geomancy, urban-rural governance, urban construction, and institutions for city building [16].

The knowledge tradition of ancient Chinese planning was initially established in the pre-Qin period, took shape from the Qin and Han through the Sui and Tang dynasties, and underwent transformation from the Song and Yuan through the Ming and Qing dynasties. It combined holistic thinking and overall balance with an integration of material function and spiritual support, displaying the structure of a comprehensive science. Its knowledge system grew from the induction, analysis, and synthesis of practical experience and was transmitted

together with other forms of knowledge through official education. By combining ritual and music, it pursued not only truth but also goodness and beauty [16].

During the modern transmission of Western learning to China, official education gradually shifted toward vocational education. Engineering schools founded during the Self-Strengthening Movement contained the earliest modern planning knowledge, while debates associated with local self-government introduced Western theories of urban planning and municipal administration. As city-government-led planning practice expanded, planning content that had developed in several fields was consolidated within architecture, directly shaping academic and public understandings of urban planning [22]. Planning knowledge thus moved from "urban planning as engineering" and "urban planning as municipal studies" toward "urban planning as architecture." Functionalism, rationalism, and positivist interpretations of the city, society, and space, expressed through both scientific and humanist currents, constrained the development of indigenous planning knowledge.

In the 1950s, the establishment of the planned economy and the planning system institutionalized urban and rural planning as a discipline for the first time. It absorbed theories and methods from the Soviet Union and established an independent disciplinary status through a knowledge system based on architecture, centered on physical-spatial design, and oriented toward professional needs. On the one hand, top-down working methods, direct governmental allocation of resources, and the pursuit of rational relations among elements formed the scientific core of planning under the planned economy. On the other, technical and instrumental rationality made the discipline dependent and even subordinate.

After reform and opening-up, urban and rural planning was restored and incorporated geography, ecology, and other related disciplines, advancing through a process of scientization. Its knowledge structure and technical methods were continuously adjusted and improved. It subsequently absorbed knowledge from ten related first-level disciplines, made important advances in twelve fields of knowledge, and was recognized as a national first-level discipline in 2011. As an interdisciplinary field, urban and rural planning organizes, refines, and systematizes existing and emerging knowledge points and units, a process that largely constitutes what science studies calls "knowledge integration" [22]. Yet it remains confined to the engineering category and has not achieved a fundamental change in disciplinary paradigm.

1.5 Internal Relationships and Dilemmas of the Three Dimensions

Function, profession, and discipline are the three dimensions proposed here for examining urban planning. They have not developed at equal rates: the professional dimension has generally led, the discipline has gradually expanded, and the governmental function has shifted with institutional change. Urban planning as a governmental function has existed since antiquity and gained importance as modern governments actively intervened in urbanization and modernization. Planning as a profession emerged only in modern times and expanded continuously, producing a pattern of "planning functions supported by the industry" and "professional education oriented toward practice." Plan preparation, plan formulation, and "doing planning" often became synonymous with urban planning. Planning as a discipline was formally established in the first half of the twentieth century as industrialization accelerated. It accumulated experience by addressing urban problems and absorbed extensive knowledge from related fields, gradually becoming a relatively independent discipline with a coherent knowledge system.

These dimensions examine urban planning from the perspective of its principal actors and form a necessary cognitive framework for the healthy development of the field. They are closely related (Figure 1) but follow different internal logics. The governmental function generally follows political alignment and administrative compliance; the profession follows market rules, industry protection, and technological innovation; and the

discipline follows the production and diffusion of knowledge. Administrative logic therefore cannot be used to prescribe disciplinary or professional development, disciplinary logic cannot fully explain administrative or professional behavior, and professional logic cannot be allowed to override administrative or disciplinary development.

The practice-oriented nature of urban planning meant that it possessed, from its inception, the dual characteristics of a shared intellectual lineage and a shared profession. Knowledge was transmitted through the development of skills, skills were cultivated through the application of knowledge, and both served governmental needs. This produced internal flows of knowledge and skills among functional departments, professional institutions, and universities. At the same time, the demands of large-scale rapid urbanization, together with entry-regulated qualifications and technical thresholds, generated an internal circulation of practitioners among the same three organizational spheres. This paper calls the resulting circulation of knowledge, skills, and personnel the "three-dimensional isomorphism" of urban planning, a pattern that has also prompted criticism of the field's closed character [23].

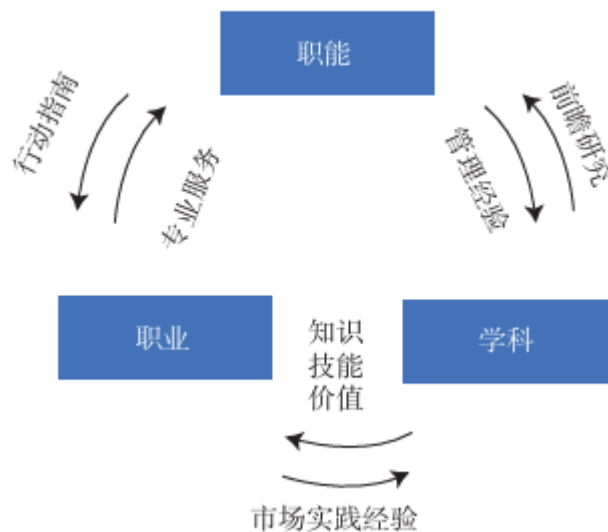


Figure 1. Logical relationships among the three dimensions of urban planning

At a more fundamental level, however, the relationship among the function, profession, and discipline is not determined within the closed system of urban planning itself; it is shaped by social demand and by the actors involved. The establishment and operating effectiveness of the planning function depend on the political-economic system, governing philosophy, administrative capacity, and level of understanding. The scale, product types, and service models of the profession are determined by socioeconomic demand, the level and mode of urbanization, institutional and policy trends, and market support. The growth and improvement of the disciplinary knowledge system depend on scientific and technological development, the institutional environment, practical experience, and interdisciplinary integration [24-25].

2 Endogenous Contradictions between "Three-Dimensional Isomorphism" and Governance Modernization

Historically, three-dimensional isomorphism had two sides. In a period of scarce policy, human, technological, and knowledge resources, it effectively supported rapid industrialization and urbanization and helped China avoid much of the disorder experienced by other developing countries. China's planning experience gained international recognition and was reflected in the New Urban Agenda, the principal policy document of the

United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) [26]. Yet although the model may have been an inevitable choice in a particular historical period, it should not be regarded as a universally optimal and regular pattern.

2.1 The Orientation of Planning: From Resource Allocation to Supply-Demand Relations

The planned economy emphasized resource allocation but lacked the theoretical research and practical experience needed to understand demand, especially diverse and individualized demand. In an underdeveloped economy, an industrial structure oriented toward basic subsistence produced an anti-urban approach to land-use control. The excessive emphasis on food supply naturally suppressed demand for other goods and services. Egalitarian thinking also erased individual demand: statistical indicators such as per-capita land use and per-capita consumption of municipal and service facilities were converted into control standards for the supply of land, space, and public services in urban planning.

After China achieved a moderately prosperous society in all respects, planning could no longer focus solely on governmental resource allocation; it also had to examine relations between supply and demand. Demand for land and space became more diverse, integrated, individualized, customized, and high-end, and increasingly shifted from material or subsistence needs toward spiritual needs and self-realization. Average demand consequently lost much of its relevance [26]. These changes generated new forms of land use and new consumption settings, formats, and spatial practices, visible in the recent growth of influencer economies, nighttime economies, and cultural-tourism activities.

Changing demand also shifted resource valuation from single-value assessment toward plural recognition. In agrarian civilization, resources such as land were allocated primarily to meet subsistence needs. Industrial civilization broke with this single-dimensional valuation, and GDP replaced agricultural output as the principal measure of resource value in pursuit of large-scale production and affluent living. Yet wealth accumulation based on resource consumption cannot meet the requirements of ecological civilization. Resource valuation has accordingly expanded to ecological, emotional, and other values, with greater attention to both efficiency and equity.

Social demand is the fundamental factor shaping the status and role of urban planning [25]. In 2015, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the Integrated Reform Plan for Promoting Ecological Progress, elevating planning from a task of urban construction to a foundation of the national institutional system. As a component of spatial planning, urban planning underwent a major transformation in status and function [27], and its object expanded from physical space to entire territories, all elements, and multiple dimensions.③ The competent authority and implementation functions also changed: government shifted from directly allocating resources to acting as a gatekeeper and platform provider. Professional orientation moved from allocating land and spatial resources toward managing demand and guiding values in the ways people use those resources. Professional actors expanded from planners alone to a broader community of technical specialists, investors and entrepreneurs, and ordinary citizens. While the disciplinary knowledge system continued to address physical-spatial change, it also shifted toward public administration, sociology, psychology, and other humanities and social sciences. Unfortunately, planning authorities, the planning industry, and the discipline did not adequately recognize or adjust to this transformation at the time (Table 2). The 2018 institutional reform and the advent of the urban-renewal era definitively returned urban planning to a rational condition of non-isomorphism among function, profession, and discipline.

Table 2. Changing social demands from urban-rural planning to spatial planning: comparison of the functional, professional, and disciplinary dimensions

Dimension / item	Urban-rural planning before 2015	After the central government introduced spatial planning in 2015
Social demand - basic positioning	Strategic deployment and detailed arrangement of urban spatial development	One of the institutional supports of ecological civilization
Social demand - planning object	Urban and rural settlements and their internal physical spaces	The entire territorial space and all resource elements
Social demand - core system	Instrumental rationality	Value rationality
Social demand - core logic	Planning logic: objectives, processes, integration, coordination, and related principles	Planning logic: objectives, processes, integration, coordination, and related principles
Planning function - competent authority	Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development - provincial housing and urban-rural development departments - municipal or county planning bureaus	Ministry of Natural Resources - provincial natural-resources departments - natural resources and planning bureaus / planning and natural resources bureaus
Planning function - plan-preparation system	Based on administrative hierarchy and spatial scale	Based on administrative hierarchy and spatial scale
Planning function - implementation path	Development and construction	Transmission mechanisms, use control, development, and construction
Planning profession - industry regulation	Entry regulation through institutional qualifications and individual credentials	Entry regulation through institutional qualifications and individual credentials
Planning profession - preparing entities	Urban planning institutes	Urban planning institutes, land-planning institutes, and information-technology companies
Planning profession - professional composition	Registered urban and rural planners	Planning participants, including registered urban and rural planners and other actors
Planning discipline - principal disciplines	Urban and rural planning	Urban and rural planning, natural-resource studies, land economics, oceanography, public administration, forestry, grassland science, and related fields

2.2 The Convictions of Planning: From Instrumental to Value Rationality

A direct consequence of three-dimensional isomorphism was the priority given to practice and instrumental rationality, while value rationality was seriously neglected. This deficiency can no longer meet the value orientation of governance modernization. The greatest shift from urban-rural planning to territorial spatial planning lies in the transformation of the value rationality underlying planning.

The 2019 Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Establishing a Territorial Spatial Planning System and Supervising Its Implementation (hereafter, the Opinions) called for a human-centered ecological civilization. Territorial spatial planning was to follow the new development philosophy, put people at the center, proceed from actual conditions, and conduct top-level design in accordance with the requirements of high-quality development, thereby realizing harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature on the basis of sustainable human development [28]. Under this value orientation, the professional ethics of urban planning must be reconstructed. Planning scholarship and professional conduct should center on public interest; the basic theory of spatial planning should be grounded in respect for nature and biodiversity protection; and the rules and procedures of planning work should take respect for history and cultural continuity as their baseline. Planning objects and balanced development should be reconsidered according to the principles of plural inclusion and social equity [29].

Three-dimensional isomorphism and the absence of value rationality cannot support the tasks of territorial spatial planning or the demands of urban planning in the new era. Territorial spatial planning encompasses entire territories, all elements, and the full process, and is oriented toward protection, equity, and ecology. Cities also face the difficult renewal of existing built-up space, which requires meticulous planning and refined governance. The functional scope of planning, as well as the research and impact ranges of administrative decision-making, has therefore expanded and must incorporate knowledge from more disciplines. More importantly, under a governance model of joint contribution, joint governance, and shared benefits, enterprises and the public must participate in planning. The success of urban planning depends on enabling more governance actors to understand the city, strengthen urban and planning awareness, enhance their motivation to plan, and develop planning capacity. Value rationality has become a new foundation for both the discipline and the profession, consistent with the expectations of the Party and government.

2.3 Implementation of Planning: From Technical Authority to Rule-of-Law Authority

Three-dimensional isomorphism obscured the source of planning authority and encouraged mistaken reliance on technical, departmental, or administrative authority. Modern urban planning emerged from modernist thought, one core element of which was the rationalism embedded in modernity [30]. During modernization, instrumental rationality directed toward maximizing efficiency became a dominant aspiration. Planners possessing technical rationality were treated as custodians of truth and granted technical authority [31]. Yet technical authority depends on technical tools and often pursues optimization according to a single standard, as though it were a universal remedy. This tendency can itself cause planning failure.

Some planners work within government departments and control substantial administrative resources, objectively placing them within power structures and making them appear to possess administrative authority over planning. At the same time, many cannot avoid dependence as a "knowledge group," lack professional dignity and scientific commitment, and become trapped in unquestioning obedience to leaders.

Moreover, planning departments, as competent government authorities, not only manage public affairs but also develop departmental self-interest: they seek conditions favorable to the survival and expansion of the sector or organization under their jurisdiction [32]. Departmental authority can therefore turn departmental powers into legislation and departmental interests into planning objectives, a phenomenon common during periods of rapid development and institutional adjustment.

Urban governance is now a major component of modernizing the national governance system and capacity, and planning is an important route to governance modernization. Urban planning is no longer a technical specialty centered on professional skill and liability; nor is it a self-protective trade based on restrictive entry; nor

is it an organization centered on power and potentially on exchanges of interest. It is a policy process strongly oriented toward public interest, a mechanism for forming shared values through bottom-line thinking, and a deliberative platform involving multiple actors. In short, it is a social project directed toward governance modernization. It has the basic function of providing public goods and the bottom-line function of correcting market failure. Planning decisions therefore operate at increasingly explicit and important levels. Technical decisions should emphasize rationality, coordination, and aesthetics; economic decisions should secure growth, efficiency, and feasibility; political decisions should achieve legality, equity, and inclusion. Planning grounded in technical, departmental, or administrative authority consequently faces profound challenges.

Urban planning is moving from its leading position under the planned economy toward a governance platform in the context of Chinese modernization [22]. Urban governance has become central to social governance, and urban planning a key mechanism for addressing diverse problems. Under the governing philosophy of the People's City, planning knowledge and skills must extend beyond architecture and design. They should include at least four areas: social-work methods, such as communication for consensus and social mobilization in pursuit of public interest; policy-making methods, including policy communication for planning coordination; resource and environmental skills, including value and performance assessment; and planning and design skills oriented toward quality and customized solutions [29]. To implement the People's City concept fully, planning must abandon habitual reliance on technical, departmental, and administrative authority and recognize that its legitimacy derives from orderly authority based on objective regularities, political authority based on consensus, and rule-of-law authority based on institutions.

2.4 The Utility of Planning: From a Single Utility to Multiple Levels

The core utility of planning lies in coordinating elements. From the perspective of governmental functions, planning follows different basic logics in different departmental contexts. The development and reform, natural-resources, and housing and urban-rural development departments - the three most closely associated with spatial planning - differ substantially in internal workflows, value orientation, objects and cores of control, rights involved, technical foundations, and spatial expression (Table 3).

In a governance context, planning does more than regulate resource allocation. It focuses on human needs and interests - individual, group, and public - and seeks to maximize social utility. Yet different actors hold different conceptions of utility. In traditional urban-rural planning, local governments, enterprises, residents, and planning professionals may evaluate utility differently. Under subjective and objective constraints, stakeholders can easily neglect or forget ultimate utility and remain at the level of immediate and intermediate benefits, revealing their self-interest and limitations (Table 4).

At the Central Urbanization Work Conference in December 2013, Xi Jinping observed that macro-management of urbanization lagged behind, the micro-management of cities remained weak, reform of the urban planning system was delayed, and mechanisms for orderly participation in urban governance had not been established, all of which affected the quality of urbanization [33]. This diagnosis directly identified the challenges facing planning utility as both governmental function and profession in the context of governance modernization. Ultimate utility cannot be idealized as the immediate and only utility. Planning should instead be understood as a policy process that recognizes and respects the legitimate claims of different stakeholders and uses institutional and mechanism design to guide them toward ultimate utility. In this way, planning as a governance mechanism can help identify the greatest common denominator. Attributing poor implementation simply to erroneous leadership decisions or corporate self-interest, or treating technical liability as an escape from "planning failure," are lessons from past practice that must be corrected in the new era.

Table 3. Planning-utility logics in different departmental contexts

Item	Development and reform context	Natural-resources context	Housing and urban-rural development context
Planning instruments	Former national economic plans and economic and social development plans	Former land-use plans and territorial spatial plans	Former urban-rural plans
Workflow	(Development) field - project - investment	(Resources) discovery - utilization - supervision	(Human settlements) planning - construction - management
Value orientation	Macroeconomic and social development	Resource conservation and sustainable use	Needs of resource users
Object of control	Investment: whether, how much, and when to invest	Development: whether to develop, development mode, and intensity	Engineering: construction behavior, scale, and technology
Core of control	Utility of investment	Land use and control of use conversion	Land-use function and conversion from two-dimensional land to three-dimensional space
Control instruments	Project approval and negative lists	Land quotas and land supervision	Site-selection opinions, construction permits, and enforcement against violations
Rights involved	Regeneration of ownership	From ownership to use rights	From use rights to property rights
Technical core	Capital operation and wealth creation	Value recognition, preservation, and appreciation	Demand assessment and wealth distribution
Spatial expression	Region	Pattern	Layout

Table 4. Stakeholder demands for urban planning and levels of planning utility

Actor	Immediate utility	Intermediate utility	Ultimate utility
Local government	Political achievements and city image	Economic growth	Fairness and justice
Development enterprises	Sales and profit	Market brand	Social responsibility
Residents	Novelty and property appreciation	A beautiful home	The future of the city
Planning and design professionals	Contracts and business performance	Technical soundness	Public interest

3 Returning to the Tradition of Statecraft to Serve Chinese Modernization

The history of urban planning in developed countries shows that planning has assumed specific responsibilities in different periods: public health at the birth of modern planning; postwar reconstruction and economic revival; environmental challenges; and social equity. In ancient China, planning was largely a means by which rulers governed the realm. The introduction of Western ideas, together with industrialization and urbanization, subsequently confined planning more narrowly to technical or departmental functions. When planning in developed countries shifted at the policy level toward people, the coordination of interests, and social justice, marketization and departmentalization in China drew planning more strongly toward serving development and construction. Although an extensive literature emphasized its public-policy character, the overall pattern of three-dimensional isomorphism lacked the endogenous impetus required for transformation.

3.1 The Historical Responsibility of Chinese Modernization

The 20th CPC National Congress set out the grand blueprint of building a modern socialist country in all respects and advancing national rejuvenation through Chinese modernization. Planning addresses an uncertain future and is characterized by choice: according to particular values, it uses different skills to select among visions and possibilities. Planning bears the historical responsibility of supporting scientific decision-making and will play an indispensable role in Chinese modernization. Guiding economic and social development through planning is an important mode of Party governance and a defining feature of the development model of socialism with Chinese characteristics [34].

The Integrated Reform Plan for Promoting Ecological Progress reincorporated spatial planning into the institutional system. Reform of the national planning system and construction of the territorial spatial planning system further strengthened planning's institutional role in ecological civilization. Land and space are no longer natural resources available for unlimited extraction, but foundational carriers for managing the relationship between humanity and nature and realizing Chinese modernization.

Urban planning has proven irreplaceable in advancing new-type urbanization, adhering to the principle that cities are built by the people and for the people, and developing livable, resilient, innovative, smart, green, and culturally rich cities. In particular, it enables different forms of urban resources to realize their functions, supports virtuous cycles, and guides sustainable urban development. It has also accompanied the CPC's major achievements and historical experience over the past century, helping to shape the approach to urban work in the new era [35].

At the same time, planning coordination has become more important than ever in balancing resources, environment, and development. Three major documents - the 2016 Opinions on Further Strengthening the Planning, Construction, and Management of Cities [11], the 2018 Opinions on Unifying the Planning System and Better Leveraging the Strategic Guiding Role of National Development Planning [34], and the 2019 Opinions - jointly established China's national planning system for the new era. This system includes national development planning, territorial spatial planning, and specialized plans, together with their coordination, adjustment, and supplementation. It is a fundamental institutional arrangement for planning coordination within the governance system and a cornerstone for accurately understanding the contemporary meaning of urban planning.

The new development philosophy and development pattern also require more balanced and accessible basic public services, higher service quality, and satisfaction of diverse, multi-level, and multifaceted spiritual and cultural needs. In an era of renewal of existing urban fabric centered on people and using asset operation as an important instrument, urban planning should begin from the goal of better meeting human needs and "reserve the best resources for the people" [36]. It should identify new growth drivers, advance joint contribution, joint

governance, and shared benefits in the People's City, protect public interest, address shortcomings, improve quality, and strengthen people's sense of gain and well-being [41].

3.2 Understanding Urban Planning from the Perspective of the Party's Cause

3.2.1 The Party's Growing Emphasis on Urban Planning

Modernized governance and the modernization of governance are inseparable. The inherent features of Chinese modernization mean that its governance is expressed primarily as governance of a major country, civilizational governance, equitable governance, environmental governance, and development governance [42]. Party leadership determines the fundamental direction and nature of Chinese modernization. As an important instrument through which the Party turns the blueprint of Chinese modernization into reality, urban planning has received increasing attention and has been assigned new value and requirements in the new era.

During an inspection of Beijing's planning and construction in 2017, Xi Jinping stated that urban planning plays an important guiding role in urban development. Its strategic leadership and binding control were thereby highlighted, and sound planning was identified as the foremost task of every city. Xi also articulated clear value requirements: during an inspection in Guangdong in 2018, he emphasized that urban planning and construction must attach great importance to historical and cultural conservation; during an inspection in Shanghai in 2019, he stated that whether in urban planning or construction, and whether in new-area development or old-city renewal, work must be people-centered and focused on public needs. He also formulated in full the principle that "cities are built by the people and for the people" [52]. This perspective goes beyond ordinary administrative principles and rises to the level of the CPC's governing philosophy.

Urban planning has consequently moved beyond government administration and departmental functions to become an important component of the CPC's governing program. The 2021 Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century identified strengthening urban planning, construction, and management as a major achievement and experience; "urban planning" was the only type of planning mentioned [35]. In 2022, the 20th CPC National Congress called for improving urban planning, construction, and governance [12]. The Decision of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization [39] subsequently emphasized improving the urban planning system. These statements affirm the importance of urban planning in the new era and assign it new historical responsibilities.

As China enters an urban era guided by Chinese modernization, the CPC has fully recognized the value and responsibility of urban planning. It has become a major instrument of the Party's urban work and a form of planning for the people, rather than merely a departmental plan, professional plan, or technical document.

3.2.2 Urban Planning Requires a New Interpretation for the New Era

In 2015, the United Nations issued the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, the first international technical standard devoted to the subject. The Guidelines define urban and territorial planning as a decision-making process for realizing economic, social, cultural, and environmental goals through spatial visions, strategies, and plans, supported by policy principles, policy instruments, institutional and participatory mechanisms, and regulatory procedures [40]. Many developed countries likewise divide urban planning into policy stages and cycles according to public-policy theory. This widely accepted definition shows that the transformation of urban planning toward a policy process is consistent with international trends [20, 41].

In China, early urban planning was largely equivalent to municipal design and long existed as specialized work. After the founding of the People's Republic and during the early years of reform and opening-up, it was

primarily the work of government departments. The 2007 Urban and Rural Planning Law marked a new stage. It returned "urban planning" from national, regional, city, and rural levels to the specific level of planning the city, and strengthened its public-policy character by standardizing administrative procedures. The 2015 Central Urban Work Conference set out requirements for scientific planning, rational layout, and sustainable development, many of which went far beyond departmental functions, administrative work, or traditional professional plans. The conference further established urban planning as a policy framework for "the planning of the city." In practice, it evolved into "the city's various plans." Its meaning broadened to include, at the city level, development planning as the strategic direction of governance, spatial planning as the foundation of development, and departmental and specialized plans related to urban construction and governance.

Urban planning can therefore be interpreted in three ways. First, in a broad and generalized sense, any work concerning urban construction, building projects, or urban character may be treated as urban planning [42]. This understanding is closely related to the ancient governmental tradition of a Ministry of Works and to the visible contributions of modern engineering and architecture. Second, the term may refer specifically to plans prepared by municipal governments, emphasizing official and functional attributes. It may include not only municipal master plans but also transport, housing, public-service, infrastructure, and environmental plans. This interpretation originated partly in the planned-economy period and was reinforced after the 1990s, when many departmental plans were required to be incorporated into city master plans. Third, in the new era, the Party has strengthened its overall and unified leadership over all fields. Urban work concerns the country's long-term development and the Party's governing position, and urban planning is a major instrument and strategic guide for urban work and a key carrier of the People's City concept. Its political meaning is therefore explicit.

The new contemporary meaning of urban planning includes at least three elements. First, planning should serve governance modernization. As a local platform for applying national governance, it is not limited to technical coordination at the parcel or project level or to control instruments for implementing central policy. Its core task is to reconstruct production relations in response to the development of productive forces. Second, it is a process of adjusting relations among stakeholders. It must examine institutional conditions and governance foundations before planning elements are supplied and evaluate the sustainability and performance of implementation and operation afterward, avoiding both windfalls created by planning and wipeouts that impoverish affected groups [43]. Third, it should construct a people-centered urban governance mechanism based on people's rights, including equal rights to use space and rights to participate in decision-making. By coordinating development-policy guidance, value rationality in resource use, and spatial-technical solutions, urban planning can guide rational market allocation of spatial resources and create pleasant urban environments that enhance well-being, security, and satisfaction.

From the perspective of demand, planning follows two paths in maintaining consistency between the CPC and the needs of the people.

The first path responds to existing public needs. Planning plays an active role in identifying, coordinating, and responding to demand. The Party and the state continue to deepen research on demand and demand-driven behavior, identify needs at different levels and in different fields on the basis of residents' behavioral patterns,^④ and treat satisfaction of the people's growing needs for a better life as a fundamental objective of governance [44-45]. Because the public is heterogeneous and complex, needs differ among groups. In the renewal of existing urban space, limited land and spatial resources may even generate conflict among group demands. Urban planning should therefore coordinate demand through communication, negotiation, and mediation, clarify relationships between governance subjects and objects, seek the greatest common denominator, and respond effectively to diverse and integrated needs.

The second path guides the orientation of public demand. Planning plays important roles in creating, guiding, and satisfying demand. The Party and the state bear broad responsibilities for political stability, economic growth, cultural prosperity, and ecological development. Overall and local needs, and long-term and short-term needs, cannot always be reconciled automatically. Through publicity and mobilization, knowledge dissemination, and value guidance - including community-planner systems, institutionalized public participation, mobilization meetings, seminars, and workshops [44-45] - planning can encourage greener and lower-carbon lifestyles, strengthen public awareness of sustainable development and participation in social governance, and translate macro-level top-down design into everyday spatial settings through spatial design and regulation.

The Party's emphasis on urban planning thus derives from a governing philosophy of serving the people and meeting the needs of the times, from the requirements of sustainable urban socioeconomic development and ecological civilization, and from the historical mission of guiding behavioral change among resource users. As a major instrument of urban work, planning neither directly allocates resources in a simple manner nor limits itself to departmental control of construction land and construction behavior. While allowing the market to play its fundamental role in resource allocation, it achieves higher-level coordination through goal orientation, value guidance, and behavioral regulation, thereby embodying the governing philosophy as a whole. The time is therefore ripe to reconstruct the urban planning system comprehensively, transform its values, institutions, mechanisms, and technical support to meet new governing requirements, and establish disciplinary, academic, and discourse systems with Chinese characteristics, style, and ethos [46].

3.3 Improving the Urban Planning System

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee called for improving the urban planning system. This requirement continues the Party's consistent policy toward urban work and planning, reflects a profound assessment of current practice, and constitutes a strategic deployment for the coming period.

Improving the system does not mean simply denying the immense contribution of urban planning during more than seven decades of the People's Republic. It requires reassessing planning's role and status through the inheritance of the Party's fine traditions and deepening reform so that planning can meet the needs of the new era. At least four areas require attention.

3.3.1 Following Objective Regularities and Serving People's Needs

The relationship among governmental functions, professional development, and disciplinary construction under Party leadership must be managed appropriately. Following objective regularities and implementing the People's City concept deserve particular emphasis. The People's City provides the overarching idea for urban planning and systematically answers the fundamental questions of to whom the city belongs, whom it serves, and on whom it relies. The people are the principal actors and the core of urban power, and they are the ultimate objective of urban planning and construction. "Maintaining the principal position of the broad masses in urban construction and development and ensuring the people-centered nature of the city are essential features of urban construction with Chinese characteristics and defining features of the People's City" [47]. They are also the political foundation of CPC governance.

Party leadership is China's fundamental leadership system, the defining feature of Chinese governance modernization, and the prerequisite for improving the urban planning system. Moving beyond departmental, industrial, and professional habits of thought and behavior, and understanding urban planning in the new era from the perspective of the Party's cause, is a challenge for government departments, society, and planning professionals. Administrative requirements, professional-development demands, or disciplinary interests cannot substitute for the Party's institutional arrangements for urban planning.

The relationship among governmental function, professional development, and disciplinary construction may also draw on the wisdom of China's statecraft tradition: an administrative model of governance through the Way, a professional objective in which instruments carry the Way, and a value philosophy in which the Way follows nature. Returning to this tradition can integrate the interests of the governing Party and the people [48].

3.3.2 Streamlining Functions and Planning the City Well

The respective initiative of central and local authorities must be mobilized. Returning urban planning to the city level clarifies relations between central and local governments and between government and the market, in line with further reform. Urban planning concerns the industrial development, human environment, infrastructure, public services, and ecological protection of individual cities and is therefore strongly local. Local residents are the principal stakeholders. Subject to national policy and higher-level plans, decisions should be made by local Party committees, people's congresses, and governments so that planning can adapt to changing circumstances [49].

After rapid urbanization and large-scale construction, many developed countries engaged in extensive debate and reached a broad consensus that urban planning is primarily a local responsibility. Local decision-makers - councils or governments - determine the direction, scale, and pace of development, formulate spatial strategies and implementation steps, and mobilize social resources to realize planning objectives. Differences in political and legal systems do not alter this basic positioning. United Nations documents accordingly distinguish five levels of spatial planning: cross-border, national, city-region and metropolitan, urban, and community planning [26, 40].

This does not deny the central government's responsibility to consider the country as a whole. Even market economies strongly emphasize the overriding importance of national and regional interests, which must be respected and protected in urban planning. The New Urban Agenda treats national urban policy as equally important as strategic urban development planning [26]. In China, national plans and policy guidance exert substantial influence on local urban development, notably through the Five-Year Plans for National Economic and Social Development and the National New-Type Urbanization Plan.

3.3.3 Orienting Planning toward Governance and Advancing Joint Contribution, Joint Governance, and Shared Benefits

The transition from management to governance must be achieved. The difference between "urban planning, construction, and management" and "urban planning, construction, and governance" is more than wording; it reflects profound historical and political change. Urban planning is fundamentally an instrument of governing authorities. It translates governing intentions into decisions concerning the construction and management of built and natural environments. Governance is the sum of the ways in which public and private institutions and individuals manage common affairs, a continuing process through which conflicting or divergent interests are reconciled and joint action is taken. It includes formal institutions and rules that must be obeyed as well as informal arrangements that people accept or regard as consistent with their interests [50-51].

China's strong-government model historically required a path of governmental management. Government was the principal actor, and management was an organized internal administrative process led primarily by government and mayors, governed by explicit instructions and procedures, and directed toward maximizing efficiency. Its objects included land use and development control, construction behavior, and related matters. Governance, by contrast, is a joint effort of government, enterprises, and society under Party leadership. Its objects are public affairs across political, economic, social, cultural, and ecological fields. It encompasses not only permit-centered administration within government organizations, but also comprehensive guidance of the urban

social system, coordination among government departments, and interactive processes of cooperation, consultation, and exchange within informal organizations and networks. Government is not the only governance subject and may itself become an object of governance. The Party's centralized and unified leadership and the socialist democratic system are therefore crucial to modernized governance.

3.3.4 Raising the Level of Coordination and Normalizing Coordination among Multiple Plans

The integration of multiple plans is not an end in itself and does not mean that only one plan should exist. Coordination among plans is more important. Integration addresses governmental functions and seeks to resolve contradictions and mutual constraints among government plans. The roots of these problems lie not in planning itself but in the evolution of socioeconomic development and urbanization, which has produced overlapping, misplaced, absent, or mismatched departmental functions, incongruence between authority and responsibility, and irrational resource allocation. Fundamentally, production relations have failed to adapt to the development of productive forces. The basic solution is stronger communication among government departments - that is, coordination among plans. Integration is a special measure for periods of acute conflict; the coexistence of multiple plans is normal, and their connection is the basic principle and working method.

For a profession and discipline accustomed to three-dimensional isomorphism, cross-departmental practice and development will increasingly follow their own internal logic. The profession should not be preoccupied with monopolizing all planning services corresponding to the functions of a single competent department; it may extend beyond one department's remit and provide technical services to many departments. The discipline should not restrict itself to studying the needs of a single planning function, but should address the full scope of planning, conduct scientific and technical research, synthesize experience from diverse practices, and develop an integrated body of knowledge encompassing all planning types. Competent planning departments have an important responsibility to guide the healthy development of the profession and discipline, but this does not make the planning industry or the planning knowledge system departmental property.⑤

In sum, overcoming three-dimensional isomorphism requires ensuring that administrative functions operate effectively within legal and policy frameworks, improving administrative efficiency, supporting the sustainable growth of the planning profession, and strengthening the autonomy and capacity of the discipline. This demands a perspective beyond the three-dimensional framework and the institutionalization of interdepartmental planning coordination as a normal working mechanism.

4 Conclusion

The meaning of urban planning in the People's Republic of China has undergone two major transformations. First, the urban-rural planning system established by the 2007 Urban and Rural Planning Law explicitly classified urban planning as planning at the city level. The term therefore changed from a collective category that included national and provincial urban-system plans and town and village plans to a narrower reference to "planning the city." Second, the Central Urban Work Conference identified sound urban work - including urban planning, construction, and management - as a major responsibility of Party committees at all levels, moving it beyond its earlier position as a governmental or departmental function. The Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee further established urban planning as a system rather than a specialized plan. Xi Jinping's People's City concept strengthened the political content of urban planning and provided the overarching guidance for reconstructing its system.

The meaning of "urban planning" has evolved with the times and assumed different historical responsibilities. Today, urban planning is the planning of the city. The urban planning system is the city-level expression of the national planning system; a concrete practice of people-centered governance in the construction and governance

of the People's City; a system composed of the city's various plans under the guidance of the national planning system; and a system for coordinating multiple plans at the city level. Its meaning is broader than the engineering-oriented planning of the traditional construction sector because it covers the city's diverse planning forms. At the same time, it is more integrative because it incorporates and carries forward the overall deployment of the national planning system, maintains vertical continuity with that system, and serves as an umbrella term for plans in all city-level sectors and fields.

Urban planning has moved from the vertical system spanning multiple administrative levels in the early reform period back to local affairs. Under the guidance of national planning and national urban policy, and subject to national interests and ecological and fiscal bottom lines, it provides strategic direction and an action framework for urban development and integrates all types of plans at the city level. It is a major instrument through which municipal Party committees and governments implement the People's City concept and conduct urban work, as well as an important means of resolving central-local and interdepartmental tensions. Strengthening the system and serving the needs of urban governance is therefore one of the most urgent transformations of urban planning in the new era.

Under the objective of modernizing urban governance, all city-level plans jointly encompass the full process from demand management to resource use and behavioral regulation, thereby realizing genuine coordination among multiple plans. Urban planning has consequently assumed a greater historical responsibility for both vertical and horizontal coordination. Planning itself has evolved from police power intervening in private property rights into a public platform for governance modernization. Under the leadership of municipal Party committees, it envisions the urban future, guides contemporary values, and regulates social behavior. It seeks balance and optimal solutions among power, rights, and capital; among development, security, and environment; and among history, the present, and the future. It enables decisions to precede action and coordinates the base map with the development blueprint. This process requires spatial planning and coordination of construction projects, demand management across socioeconomic groups to balance the supply and demand of basic public services, public space, and public housing, and communication and negotiation among governance actors to build consensus on both long-term urban strategy and immediate livelihood issues.

Achieving this transformation depends on planning departments updating their concepts, administering according to law, and helping diverse stakeholders identify the greatest common denominator. It also requires professional innovation, broader participation of other sectors in planning, and stronger technical support for scientific decision-making. Finally, the discipline must continue to accumulate knowledge and serve planning practice while also taking responsibility for strengthening the urban and planning awareness of decision-makers and society as a whole.

Notes

- ① Urban system planning takes a region and its network of cities and towns as the object of study and provides a scientific basis for city master planning. It gradually expanded from municipal to provincial and national scales and incorporated land use, infrastructure layout, ecological and environmental protection, and other factors, moving toward entire territories and all elements. This expansion planted the seeds of overlap and even conflict with the planning functions of other departments, especially the later territorial, land-use, and major-function-zone plans.
- ② When China adjusted its disciplinary catalogue in 2011, "Urban Planning," formerly a second-level discipline under Architecture, was upgraded to the independent first-level discipline "Urban and Rural Planning." This

name reflects the discipline's dependence on administrative functions and differs from internationally common expressions such as "city/urban planning" and "urban/city and regional planning."

- ③ For the relationship among the functional, impact, and research scopes of planning, see Reference [27].
- ④ At the media meeting of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in November 2012, Xi Jinping stated that the people love life and expect better education, more stable employment, more satisfactory income, more reliable social security, higher-quality medical and health services, more comfortable housing, and a more beautiful environment, and that they hope their children can grow, work, and live better.
- ⑤ According to the Academic Degree Disciplines Catalogue issued by the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council (updated April 2018), among 111 first-level disciplines in 13 categories, 26 first-level disciplines across seven categories are related to territorial spatial planning. According to the Ministry of Education's Catalogue of Undergraduate Majors in Regular Higher Education Institutions (2020 edition), among 703 undergraduate majors in 12 categories, 54 majors across eight categories are related to territorial spatial planning, including 38 closely related majors. Planning functions in other government departments display similar breadth.

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Revised: September 2024, AI-assisted translation