

Strategies for Improving the Quality of Regional Strategic Planning in China: Postprint

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] A high-quality plan holds significant importance for regional economic and social development. Particularly against the backdrop of modernizing the national governance system and capacity, China's regional strategic planning has been endowed with richer connotations, playing a strategic and overarching programmatic function in the historical process of comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society. [Method/Process] This paper divides planning formulation into three stages: strategic positioning, strategic gaming, and strategic balancing, and analyzes the core elements that determine planning quality at each stage. If the strategic positioning mechanism, strategic gaming mechanism, and strategic balancing mechanism operate effectively to form a pattern of balanced development, such regional strategic planning should promote sustainable regional economic development. [Results/Conclusion] This paper proposes several policy recommendations on how to improve planning quality: first, strengthen legislation on regional strategic planning; second, follow the operational laws of regional strategic planning; third, establish a whole-life-cycle responsibility system for planning; fourth, establish a collaborative operation mechanism for planning formulation and implementation; fifth, use planning evaluation to promote the construction of regional governance systems; sixth, strengthen the construction of third-party evaluation mechanisms.

Full Text

Abstract

[Objective/Significance] A high-quality plan holds great significance for regional economic and social development. Particularly against the backdrop of modernizing the national governance system and capacity, China's regional strategic planning has been endowed with richer connotations, playing a strategic, overarching, and programmatic role in the historical process of building a moderately

prosperous society in all respects. [Method/Process] This paper divides the planning formulation process into three stages: strategic positioning, strategic gaming, and strategic balancing, analyzing the core elements that determine planning quality at each stage. If the strategic positioning mechanism, strategic gaming mechanism, and strategic balancing mechanism all function well to create a pattern of balanced development, such regional strategic planning should promote sustainable regional economic development. [Result/Conclusion] This paper proposes several policy recommendations for improving planning quality: first, strengthen legislation on regional strategic planning; second, follow the operational laws of regional strategic planning; third, establish a whole-life-cycle responsibility system for planning; fourth, create a collaborative operation mechanism for planning formulation and implementation; fifth, promote the construction of regional governance systems through planning evaluation; and sixth, enhance the construction of third-party evaluation mechanisms.

Keywords: regional strategic planning; quality assurance; improvement strategies

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1 The Necessity of Improving Regional Strategic Planning Quality

Regional strategic planning constitutes an important component of local government public policy, with its role and value becoming increasingly prominent under the rule of law. The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee stated: “The government should strengthen the formulation and implementation of development strategies, plans, policies, and standards, enhance supervision of market activities, and strengthen the supply of various public services.” As a vital part of top-level design, regional strategic planning has been endowed with richer contemporary connotations in an increasingly complex social environment, evolving into a basis for government performance, a blueprint for social development, and a program for people’s actions. It has become an important instrument for modernizing the national governance system and capacity. Planning evaluation is crucial for ensuring the effectiveness of regional strategic planning and has thus gained increasing attention from countries worldwide, with its status and role continuously consolidated and strengthened through institutionalized or legalized procedures. Both the UK and the US have made planning evaluation a necessary component of plan formulation. The German government has established a nationwide regular reporting mechanism for spatial planning information. China’s Urban and Rural Planning Law explicitly requires establishing evaluation mechanisms for urban systems planning and overall urban planning. China’s 11th Five-Year Plan for economic and social development initiated institutional construction for mid-term evaluation, while the 12th Five-Year Plan dedicated a chapter to improving plan implementation and evaluation mechanisms.

As Xi Jinping pointed out, planning mistakes represent the greatest waste, and

planning disruptions constitute the greatest taboo. In recent years, due to various subjective and objective reasons, many local governments have used strategic planning as a means to maximize their own interests, neglecting its nature as public policy. This has turned planning formulation into a procedural task, deviating from its original positioning and substantially diminishing its quality and effectiveness. Under the current institutional arrangements, local government planning often falls into the predicament of “planning is just for hanging on the wall.” Even the best plan is merely a castle in the air if it cannot be effectively implemented. In 2016, at the start of China’s 13th Five-Year Plan period, facing a complex and changing global and national situation and the historic task of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, regional strategic planning should advance with the times, adapt to contemporary and practical needs, and better perform its functions of cohesion, guidance, and guarantee. Against this backdrop, exploring mechanisms to ensure planning formulation quality holds important practical value for local governments’ future work in compiling high-quality plans.

2 Core Elements of the Planning Quality Assurance Mechanism

Based on the general procedure of planning formulation, this paper divides it into three stages: strategic positioning, strategic gaming, and strategic balancing. If the strategic positioning mechanism, strategic gaming mechanism, and strategic balancing mechanism all operate well to create a balanced development pattern, such regional strategic planning should promote sustainable regional economic development. So, what are the core requirements that can ensure high-quality planning at each stage?

2.1 Strategic Positioning Mechanism—Diversification of Subjects

During the strategic positioning stage, China’s mass line has played an important role. China has developed a mechanism for plan formulation that pools collective wisdom, with democratic practices that transcend traditional views of “fragmented” policy processes. However, overall, one important reason for the lack of scientific rigor in strategic positioning is that the general public is effectively isolated from policy discussions, remaining in a state of collective voicelessness. In the planning formulation process, the public lacks effective participation channels, and their interest appeals cannot form independent discourse power. Admittedly, some members of the public may be invited to attend symposiums as symbolic participation. This situation relates both to the lack of effective interest mechanisms and to the public’s underlying psychological expectation of “free-riding,” resulting in a lack of sustained enthusiasm and professional knowledge about planning affairs, manifesting to some extent as political apathy. Consequently, deficiencies in the public’s capacity, motivation, channels, and means for participation have led to problems in the depth, breadth, and effectiveness of their involvement in planning. If the public’s voice

is ignored, the value of the planning itself will be greatly diminished, becoming a unilateral government plan and losing its *raison d'être*. Only when the public upholds public rationality can planning dialogue generate value and inject new vitality into the strategic positioning mechanism.

2.2 Strategic Gaming Mechanism—Adequate Gaming

China is currently in a special period of economic and social transformation. During this phase of dramatic economic, social, and technological changes, long-accumulated deep-seated problems are constantly emerging. Against this backdrop, planning, as a public policy tool for regulating social relations and major interests, is playing an increasingly important role. Planning is a complex and profound process of interest integration that carries the mediation of social contradictions and conflicts, providing social consensus and strategic guidance to constitute the driving force for social progress. Any attempt to evade or ignore the turbulent undercurrent of interest integration behind the text will inevitably strip planning of its original meaning, reducing it to worthless armchair strategy that cannot truly be implemented. However, in the practice of the 12th Five-Year Plan, some problems emerged, such as government overreach, public absence, and expert misplacement. The ideal “government-public-expert” gaming structure was often replaced by gaming between central and local governments. From China’s 12th Five-Year Plan formulation case, we can clearly see the competitive-cooperative process of these two forces in the planning process, reflecting different understandings between the two levels of government regarding development models and strategic paths. This also demonstrates the difficulty of changing path dependence. Excessive pursuit of economic interests inevitably entails costs in environmental resources and other areas. The mid-term evaluation report of the 12th Five-Year Plan showed that most tasks and targets were progressing smoothly, but key indicators such as energy conservation and emission reduction that the central government sought to control were progressing slowly. The main driver of development still came from large-scale investment, and the balanced growth strategy had not truly been implemented. This precisely reflects the failure of gaming between the two parties to form truly effective consensus. Additionally, many local governments lack extensive and in-depth discussions and interactions vertically and horizontally during the planning process, intentionally or unintentionally avoiding social contradictions. Their information collection is more symbolic, and strategic gaming is primarily internal government interest reconciliation. Even with rigorous procedures in the strategic balancing stage, the result is inevitably a content-deficient plan—a government plan rather than a regional plan.

2.3 Strategic Balancing Mechanism—Multidimensional Balancing

Government power is entrusted by the people, so it must consider not just the consensus of powerful groups but the welfare of the entire society, seeking long-term stability from a longer-term perspective and multiple dimensions. In China’s

s planned economy era, balance in investment, finance, and credit was the basic principle of plan formulation. Under market economy conditions, planning formulation should focus more on multi-dimensional balancing. Especially in the current period of dramatic economic and social transformation, with accelerated urbanization, livelihood issues such as household registration, employment, education, and medical care are becoming increasingly acute. Urban-rural gaps, regional disparities, and intergenerational differences are increasingly becoming the focus of society, and planning should face and address these dimensional balances. Through spatial, industrial, and intergenerational means of resource allocation, planning should guide and balance the actions of stakeholders and thus possess strong authority, stability, and continuity. The 12th Five-Year Plan shifted from simple growth protection to comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable development. This change balanced the benefits and costs of various growth behaviors, representing a scientific development concept. China has a vast territory with complex conditions and unbalanced regional development, including both economically developed eastern coastal areas and less-developed central and western regions. To leverage comparative advantages, planning must integrate central concepts with local resource endowments, scientifically analyze internal and external environments, seize opportunities, and meet challenges to produce a high-quality plan that is both visionary and grounded in local realities. However, in practice, China's regional strategic planning falls far short of established requirements in both formulation procedures and degree of balance. Local government planning often inadequately analyzes the environment and its own resource endowments, tending to prioritize urban over rural areas, developed regions over underdeveloped ones, and the present over future generations, making it difficult to achieve true balance and equitable justice. Particularly in resource-based provinces, there is excessive emphasis on material construction and insufficient attention to social development, with substantive balance in resources and environment being somewhat inadequate. If the internal logic is not clarified and problems arise in the socio-economic system, society may pay a heavy price.

3 Strategies for Improving Regional Strategic Planning Quality

From the first Five-Year Plan in the early days of the People's Republic to 2015, China has completed the formulation and implementation of twelve Five-Year Plans (Guidelines), which have exerted important and profound influence on economic and social development. In this new historical stage, facing a complex and changing global, national, and regional situation and an increasingly complex social governance environment, regional strategic planning should advance with the times, actively adapt to practical needs such as diversified participation subjects, legalization of gaming rules, and scientific comprehensive balancing, and better perform its functions of cohesion, guidance, and guarantee to promote healthy and sustainable regional economic and social development. Based on the above analysis and research findings, we propose strengthening and improving

regional strategic planning formulation work from the following six aspects.

3.1 Strengthen Legislation on Regional Strategic Planning

The essence of regional strategic planning is a solution that can achieve balanced and maximized long-term interests of various stakeholders in a specific region, determined by the advantages of that particular space and opportunities of that particular period. In the process of finding optimal solutions, a complete and scientific methodology corresponds. Currently, many local governments' planning formulation and implementation often fall into campaign-style or meeting-style modes, which seriously deviates from the context of modernizing China's national governance system and does not conform to the core spirit of rule of law. Given the considerable arbitrariness in China's regional strategic planning, strengthening planning legislation to enhance planning seriousness and transform planning texts from administrative documents to legal documents is increasingly necessary. In Western countries like the United States, planning approval power is exercised by local councils, which demonstrates from another perspective that planning formulation has been incorporated into local legislative acts. Compared with administrative acts, legal acts have greater authority and binding force, which aligns well with the inherent requirements of seriousness and stability of regional strategic planning, helping to improve planning formulation quality and facilitate better implementation. Therefore, from a long-term perspective, planning legislation should be regarded as an important matter concerning the long term and overall situation and be given due attention and promotion.

Planning legislation is a complex and significant social project that requires further clarification of planning functions, nature, role, procedures, implementation, and other aspects, as well as clarifying the relationship between planning and the market. First, improve top-level planning system design. Currently, China has numerous planning levels and diverse types, with conflicts and unclear relationships among various plans at different levels. To address these issues, planning legislation should start from top-level design to establish a unified, orderly, functionally complementary, and hierarchically clear national planning system led by national economic and social development plans, truly solving the practical problem of "multiple plans integration" from a legal perspective. Second, optimize planning formulation procedures. The process of formulating government regional strategic planning is relatively opaque and non-public, with arbitrary procedures and missing necessary consultation links. After completion, plans cannot be promptly disclosed to society, affecting their value as action programs. Therefore, through legislative action, a more scientific, democratic, and standardized planning formulation process should be established, clarifying necessary statutory procedures such as preliminary research, drafting, soliciting opinions, demonstration, public notice, approval, and release. Third, strengthen planning implementation mechanisms. Given the large arbitrariness and unclear effects in planning implementation, legislative work should focus on

building an implementation mechanism with clear responsibilities, well-defined interfaces, and effective supervision, enabling planning implementation to have a closed-loop evaluation system that is assessable, traceable, and accountable, thereby promoting planning to play its proper value and contribution in regional economic and social development.

3.2 Follow the Operational Laws of Regional Strategic Planning

Based on a deep understanding of planning essence, this paper further deconstructs the planning formation process into strategic positioning, strategic gaming, and strategic balancing stages. Each stage contains inherent laws of economic and social development. To formulate a good strategic plan, objective laws at each stage should be followed to ensure planning quality.

Create conditions for everyone to fully express their opinions. A region belongs to all its people, including not only various groups within the region but also higher-level governments, outside investors, and even people in surrounding areas, all of whom have countless connections with regional economic and social development. They constitute the stakeholders of regional strategic planning. If they are absent from the planning formulation process, the procedure is obviously deficient, and implementation will also be difficult to truly land due to the lack of public support. First, further improve the planning formulation environment by truly opening up the planning process, substantively introducing multiple subjects such as experts and the public, and having them participate in the gaming process at various stages of planning formulation by category to form a participation pattern composed of multiple subjects. Second, make full use of various technical platforms such as WeChat, the internet, and new media to collect information resources at multiple levels and through multiple channels, comprehensively reflecting the interest appeals of various social groups. Third, establish a public participation rate constraint mechanism, specifying concrete procedures and assessment requirements for public participation rates and representativeness, and putting forward specific requirements for opinion adoption rates. Establish material carriers such as paper and electronic records (including audio and video) to truthfully record public opinions and provide important reference basis for assessment.

Form a fully interactive gaming pattern. Currently, the gaming subjects with discourse power in planning are mainly reflected between central and local governments, with gaming basically in a single-line state that cannot produce positive interaction with society or a good mass base. Therefore, first, construct a mutually check-and-balance subject structure. We should leverage the functional positioning of the public as interest stakeholders, experts as capacity providers, and government as platform providers, ensure power is normatively and effectively allocated among core stakeholders, and establish a balance between value preferences and rationality. The more important work of local governments should be providing dialogue platforms, scientifically formulating game rules, and making comprehensive balances on final plans or results to

build a diversified and mutually check-and-balance planning subject structure. Second, optimize the expert think tank supply market. In the operation of the strategic gaming mechanism, experts play core functions of coordination, communication, and guidance, forming a main thread in planning solutions. China's think tank construction should accelerate professional capacity building, strengthen requirements for independent operation, and improve specialization levels. Third, promote the "hidden rules" of gaming to become explicit. For a long time in China's regional economic and social development, special interest groups, relying on their economic discourse power, often formed alliances with local governments, creating "hidden rules" of gaming. We should actively promote the transformation of gaming "hidden rules" into "explicit rules" that are fair, just, and open, becoming norms jointly followed by the public rather than "hidden rules" manipulated by a few groups. If they remain at the "hidden rules" level, only a few powerful groups can maximize their interests.

Make balanced decisions with a holistic and strategic perspective. Planning should focus on a region's long-term development, highlighting strategic vision and forward-looking thinking, and achieve overall planning balance across multiple dimensions of time and space. First, clarify government's own positioning and boundaries. In a sense, the root cause of planning falling into procedural quagmire lies not in planning's own positioning but in government's positioning in the economy and society. Against the backdrop of streamlining administration and delegating power, planning should better serve government positioning transformation, strengthen constraints on government public service supply, boost the market's decisive role in resource allocation, and maximize market vitality and social productivity on the basis of clarifying government-market boundaries. Second, enhance planning's own systematicity and compatibility. From the perspective of planning itself, China's planning system is not yet perfect. Due to departmental barriers, many plans lack coherence, weakening the systematicity of the entire planning system. It is recommended to take regional economic and social planning as the entry point, integrate different types and levels of planning, clarify boundary conditions for various plans, and form a planning system with both top-level design and category connection, thereby promoting "multiple plans integration" practice and building a unified, scientific, and systematic planning system. Third, build a policy incentive environment that encourages long-term behavior. Currently, due to the term system of local governments and GDP-oriented assessment, there is more focus on short-term rather than long-term interests. Therefore, achieving true comprehensive balance in regional strategic planning requires advanced development concepts as top-level guidance, reforming government and official assessment mechanisms, committing to pursuing more systematic and balanced new growth models, and promoting coordination between long-term and short-term interests, local and overall interests, and group and collective interests to achieve healthy and sustainable regional economic and social development.

3.3 Establish a Whole-Life-Cycle Responsibility System for Planning

During planning formulation, strategic positioning, gaming, and balancing mechanisms function sequentially to ultimately generate a series of quantitative indicators centered on economy, society, and environment, along with supporting economic and technical policies. After this, planning formulation concludes and enters the implementation stage. In this process, there is actually a dilemma of unclear responsibilities. First, the responsibility interface between central and local governments is unclear. Due to information asymmetry and limited human resources, the central government's guidance and supervision of local planning are insufficient, overly relying on data from local governments. Second, due to term limits, plans formulated by the previous government are often implemented by the current government, creating a mismatch between planning and implementation subjects and weakening local governments' sense of responsibility for previous plans. Finally, expert teams are important factors determining planning quality. Due to the unique authority of local governments, experts often succumb to political power, losing professional independence to some extent and lacking a sense of responsibility for providing professional services.

To address this issue, we must start from the entire life cycle of planning formulation and implementation, establish assessment and incentive mechanisms, and implement accountability systems. First, give play to the guiding responsibility of central (higher-level) governments. In the entire planning system, the central government holds the highest and most central position. Currently, the national development and reform system lacks human resources to effectively monitor and guide local planning formulation and implementation. It is recommended to absorb personnel from universities and research institutes to form relatively stable teams focused on training for planning formulation and dynamic guidance for implementation, truly enabling local five-year plans to both implement central strategic intentions and reflect local characteristics and stage features. Second, strengthen the principal responsibility of local governments. Against the backdrop of market-oriented reforms, local governments should further streamline administration and delegate power, weaken approval functions, and strengthen planning functions. Planning should be regarded as an important means of government governance, with evaluation indicator system standards for regional strategic planning quality established, assessment mechanisms for regional strategic planning quality created, and accountability systems implemented to strengthen comprehensive assessment of planning quality, time nodes, and implementation effects, thereby boosting local governments' governance capacity and level. Third, clarify the service responsibility of expert teams. A knowledge-respecting atmosphere should be cultivated, avoiding overstepping intervention in expert teams and creating a favorable working environment for them. The contractual performance responsibility of expert teams should be strengthened, their professional service levels enhanced, and their own professional authority established.

3.4 Establish a Collaborative Operation Mechanism for Planning Formulation and Implementation

Under current institutional arrangements, local government planning often falls into the predicament of “planning is just for hanging on the wall.” An important reason is that planning formulation and implementation involve multiple types of subjects. Local government terms and planning cycles have some overlap but do not completely coincide. Motivated by political achievements, local governments have strong desires to modify previous governments’ plans, causing planning discontinuity. Planning formulation teams are often composed of consulting companies, universities, and research institutions, decision-making departments consist of local government executives and departments such as development and reform commissions, housing and urban-rural development commissions, and land bureaus, while implementation units are subordinate agencies or the next government. The diversification of subjects in formulation, decision-making, and implementation inevitably creates deviations in planning implementation motivation and effectiveness. Even a high-quality planning text loses its value and significance if it is difficult to implement or produces unsatisfactory results. Therefore, the connection between planning formulation and implementation must be addressed.

The key to establishing a collaborative operation mechanism for planning formulation and implementation is institutional design. First, during the planning formulation stage, implementers should be involved early to form a joint working mechanism, ensuring as much as possible that planning formulation and implementation are conducted by the same group or personnel to better understand the connotation of planning texts and facilitate implementation. Second, strengthen planning policy continuity. When formulating plans, local governments should strengthen assessment of previous plans, propose reasons for plan modifications in light of environmental changes, and properly handle the continuity and connection of planning ideas across government transitions to maintain policy continuity between two plans and give full play to the substantive role of five-year plans. Third, leverage the supervisory role of the general public. Through various channels including traditional and new media, further promote transparency in government affairs, establish information notification mechanisms for planning formulation and implementation, and ensure the public’ s right to know, thereby enabling better supervision of local governments’ planning implementation work and ensuring that regional economic and social development always stays on the main course charted by planning.

3.5 Promote Regional Governance System Construction Through Planning

A good environment for regional strategic planning formulation should be constructed within a multi-centered, multi-level, networked social governance system and improved in the process of modernizing national governance. Meanwhile, improving regional strategic planning quality will also promote the im-

provement of regional governance systems to a certain extent. First, strengthen the strategic positioning mechanism and cultivate public participation capacity. A good strategic positioning mechanism cannot do without active public participation. Currently, the public's literacy and willingness to participate in political affairs in China are not high. While smoothing channels for public interest expression, the government should strengthen the cultivation of public literacy and capacity for political participation, support the construction of social organizations, and create basic conditions for building a regional governance system. Second, strengthen the strategic gaming mechanism and explore multi-governance models. A good strategic gaming mechanism lies in the positive interaction of multiple subjects, resolving contradictions and forming consensus through debate. Many local governments lack extensive and in-depth discussions and vertical and horizontal interactions during the planning process, intentionally or unintentionally avoiding social contradictions. Their information collection is more symbolic, and strategic gaming is primarily internal government interest reconciliation. We should adapt to the concept of regional governance, construct a gaming structure with multiple subjects including government, public, and experts, and truly transform regional strategic planning into a plan for the entire region rather than just a government plan. Third, strengthen the strategic balancing mechanism and improve government governance capacity. The modernization of regional governance capacity poses significant challenges to government governance capacity. However, in planning practice, local governments often prioritize urban over rural areas, developed over underdeveloped regions, and the present over future generations, making it difficult to achieve true balance and equitable justice. We should strengthen government governance capacity building, improve the comprehensive level of overall control, deepen the construction of strategic balancing mechanisms, thereby continuously improving the regional governance system and promoting healthy regional economic and social development.

3.6 Strengthen Third-Party Evaluation Mechanism Construction

The evaluation stage is an important control means for China's regional strategic planning and an indispensable link to ensure implementation quality. Currently, local government planning evaluation in China can be generally divided into self-evaluation and external evaluation (third-party evaluation). In practice, local governments prefer self-evaluation. Third-party evaluation is often undertaken by research institutions under government departments or local universities, lacking real independence, thus greatly compromising its fairness and objectivity. In terms of content, evaluations tend to affirm achievements while ignoring problems in planning implementation, which are often more meaningful for local governments. Methodologically, current evaluations generally follow the "blueprint consistency method," which lacks scientific rigor. Over-reliance on data provided by evaluated departments in practice easily creates passive situations, making evaluation work a mere formality. Under the mechanism where the "client" pays the "service provider," it is difficult for experts to express

substantive opinions unfavorable to the “client.” This institutional arrangement will turn technical elites into political vassals or transform them from “technical elites” to “political elites.” For instance, institutions participating in preliminary planning topics are often universities or research institutions under government departments, which are academic elites within the system in nature. Private research institutions are in a relatively marginalized position. For such a huge and complex economic and social system, limiting the decision-making process to within the system is obviously not a win-win or multi-win situation. There is a particular need for independent third-party voices that can represent and reflect the will and voice of the public, providing a better rational and public opinion foundation for planning formulation.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to innovate local government evaluation methods and introduce truly independent third-party evaluation forces to ensure the achievement of planning objectives. First, establish planning evaluation research institutions and strengthen third-party evaluation capacity building. From international experience, third-party evaluation institutions are often uneven at the beginning, but through continuous market competition, the fittest survive, gradually producing specialized evaluation institutions with high levels and strong credibility. Currently, China’s third-party evaluation institutions are generally weak. We should strengthen evaluation discipline and capacity building, establish a relatively professional evaluation talent team, and gradually form an orderly developed third-party evaluation discipline. Second, establish a third-party evaluation supply market. We should cultivate third-party evaluation suppliers in a planned way, formulate policies encouraging research associations, universities, professional consulting companies, and other institutions independent of the system to undertake third-party evaluation work, and create conditions for cultivating the third-party evaluation market. Establish a third-party evaluation bidding mechanism to promote market-oriented operation of third-party evaluation. Strengthen comprehensive application of evaluation results to play incentive and constraint roles. Identify gaps, diagnose problems, and find systematic solutions through third-party evaluation. Third, establish a big data evaluation platform. Currently, there are various reasons constraining planning implementation, among which departmental barriers causing data fragmentation and information asymmetry constrain the operability of planning evaluation. Evaluation institutions can only rely on data provided by evaluated units and thus cannot truly supervise and evaluate planning implementation. We should gradually establish a nationwide interconnected, unified, and shared planning information system. Establish execution information collection mechanisms where each execution unit should dynamically input execution information to facilitate local government monitoring and guidance of planning implementation. Establish information notification mechanisms where higher-level authorities, based on first-hand dynamic information, should coordinate resources and provide effective guidance for the future development of execution units. Meanwhile, enhance planning information openness by systematically and step-by-step opening data information to the public except for necessary

confidential information.

4 Conclusion

Truly promoting the scientific development of planning formulation involves the major issue of transforming planning from a blueprint to public policy, which is a systematic, long-term, and arduous public governance project. This paper proposes several policy recommendations for improving planning quality: strengthening legislation on regional strategic planning; following the operational laws of regional strategic planning; establishing a whole-life-cycle responsibility system for planning; creating a collaborative operation mechanism for planning formulation and implementation; promoting regional governance system construction through planning evaluation; and enhancing third-party evaluation mechanism construction. At the current stage, improving planning quality is a grand topic for both government and academia. Its concrete resolution and implementation require further pooling of wisdom and strength from all parties, as well as emancipating minds and courageously breaking interest patterns. Only through long-term unremitting efforts and persistence can we continuously improve planning quality and promote healthy and sustainable regional economic and social development.

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