

## **Strategic planning practice in a global perspective: the Case of Guangzhou, China**

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Keywords: Guangzhou, strategic planning, urban growth patterns, interactions, evaluation system, international comparisons

As the vital city in south China since the ancient time, Guangzhou has been losing its leading role among the rising neighboring cities, especially, Hong Kong and Shenzhen, since the late 1980s, with the overloaded infrastructure and deteriorating urban environment in its old inner city. Fortunately, with the new expansion of the administrative area in 2000, the municipality of Guangzhou considered it as an unprecedented great opportunity for future development to solve a series of alarming urban problems. Thus, for the first time, strategic planning was introduced to China by the municipality for providing more convincing and scientific basis towards better urban future, as the first attempt in China. Differed from traditional Chinese planning practices, which rigidly and dogmatically focused on future blueprints, the strategic planning of Guangzhou proceeded from analyzing practical challenges and opportunities towards establishing reasonable developing objectives and proposing corresponding strategies.

Moreover, it was pioneering that the municipality invited five planning institutions for proposals, among which, the paper focuses on the one proposed by China Academy of Urban Planning & Design from its theoretical basis to problems' defining and analyzing process, as well as planning results. Since it was closer to the following municipal decisions and had a more far-reaching influence for other Chinese cities' relevant practices, especially the unprecedentedly innovative exploration, focusing on specific problems of Chinese cities, about the decisive role played by urban developing rate on selecting urban growth patterns ("Spillover-reverberation" or "Leapfrog"), which

ultimately established an unprecedented paradigm on deciding an appropriate urban spatial structure in future including its specific location, function and scale.

Meanwhile, inspired by Healey's diagram on strategic planning making, this paper not only focuses on the proposal itself, but also highlights the role of interactions, among actors, as well as proposals, discussions and final municipal decisions (one proposal made in 2003 and following summary and proposals between 2007 and 2009), especially the precedential establishment of the rolling dynamic evaluation system for periodical reviews on the implementation situations.

Indeed, strategic planning of Guangzhou brought out considerable benefits, especially opening the strategic mind for plentiful Chinese cities in the following years through establishing a flexible and dynamic planning mechanism highlighted the interactions among multiple actors with innovative and effective tools, methodologies and perspectives on regional, objective-approach and comparative analysis. However, compared with some developed countries, the strategic planning in China just started, with more summaries of previous experiences instead of scientific analysis, and the time for making the proposal was far less. Thus, the last part of this paper attempts to put the preliminary exploration of Chinese strategic planning as the case of Guangzhou in a global perspective, comparing with some international cases, i.e. London, New York, Sydney. In spite of considerable differences on current national conditions and urban developing situations, some shortcomings of present Chinese strategic planning could be outlined based on the comparison, i.e. the certain gap among institutional proposals, final municipal decisions and implemented results, with weaker supervision and management systems, mainly due to the lacking legal constraint. Also, how to improve the public involvement in China with an absolute up-down administrative system is another urgent task. In future, despite of irresistible and irretrievable weakness, some experiences and lessons from previous international practices, with the combination of specific Chinese situations and domestic practices, could inspire us for promoting the further advance on strategic planning in China.