

## CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND THE SPACE GOVERNANCE RESCALING OF BORDER PROVINCIAL CAPITAL CITIES IN CHINA

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### **Abstract**

*Border provincial capital cities have achieved more attention from superior governments in the background of Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC), and have been given more national functions of political, financial, trading and cultural exchanging functions. All CBC functions are determined and carried out by all levels of government based on different targets, and reshape these cities' space governance scale by multi-objective and multi-level governments' coordination and cooperation. This paper suggests that there should be multi-level analytical framework for border provincial capital cities developing especially in China, for the reason of the top-down politic and administrative system. First of all, it reviews CBC policies and spatial effect at 3 levels of government (central, provincial and city government) on Nanning (provincial capital city of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region). Secondly, it analyses the characteristics of spatial plan and development, taking Wuxiang New District (WND) as an example, and argues that the spatial development policies of WND was guiding by central and provincial governments which even partly dominated its spatial structure. At last, it holds that local cooperating space emergence is under the control of central government, and local cooperating innovation in policy and space (including provincial and city levels) is the fundamental reason of local space diversification. The space governance of provincial capital cities is an indication of top-down guidance and bottom-up innovation, carried out by central, provincial and city government coordination.*

### **1. Introduction**

Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) is a type of regional governance based on different targets of various participants and shows diverse features because of differences in political, economic and social conditions between subnational districts adjacent to national border (Scott, 1999; Blatter, 2004). In East and Southeast Asia, economic development is a primary objective of CBC, trying to integrate and optimize resources allocation to form a "growth triangle" and improve condition of regional and national economic development (Perkmann, 2007). There are two cooperative modes (Sum, 2002): "the globalization embedding" and "the politics of open regionalism". CBC between China and adjacent countries adopts a more loose approaches (on political and social aspects), and takes "non-institutional cooperation model (Zhu, 2012)" even in economic cooperating process. It is still in the preliminary stage of regional economic integration (Lan, 2006). Therefore, case study is the only way to understand the CBC policies and its influence on the border region.

From late 1980's, with continuous improvement of political relations between China and neighbouring countries, central government carried out Border Opening (BO) policy to promote economic development and social stability of border regions, taking foreign trade and border cities as objects. Since 2000, this policy gradually shows conversion to comprehensive cooperating policy (including political, financial, transportation, legal aspects) and takes border provinces as spatial subjects (Li & Lu, 2014). Therefore, capital cities of border provinces have acquired more CBC functions from central and provincial governments. Space layout of these CBC functions from higher authorities is not determined by city governments, but a result of coordination among all levels. From the perspective of policy implementation, CBC has promoted economic and social development in border provinces and cities (Li, 2005, Brzica, 2008, Hu, 2011), but the impact on space of provincial capital cities remains ambiguity. Nanning, capital city of Guangxi Zhuang

Autonomous Region border with Vietnam, southwest in China, has expanded rapidly both in economy and space under the effect of CBC. Its economic factors, urban space functions and images are showing more characteristics of internationalization. However, these features are not only the appearance of “glocalization” but also CBC regionalization and internationalization (Li & Lu, 2012). In general, evolution of space structure is driven by conflict and coordination among “city government, enterprises and citizen (Zhang, 2001; Shi, 2004)”, and city government is the most crucial subject. But in the context of CBC, central and provincial governments play a more important role in Nanning’s space evolution. Taking Nanning and Wuxiang New District (WND) as example, which is a developing hotspot in southeast Nanning city, and focusing on CBC policies evolution and their spatial effect from 3 levels of central, provincial and city government, this paper reviews Nanning and WND spatial plan and development, and tries to explicate the mechanism of space evolution influenced by governments at all levels in CBC process.

## 2. CBC Policies at 3 Levels and Spatial Effect in Nanning

City government is undoubtedly a significant subject of local space policy making, but the exclusive perspective from city level neglects the spatial effect of central and provincial policies. Because of the differences of power and obligations, policies proposed by governments at all levels have different spatial effects (Zheng, 2009). In China, city’s policies are constrained by higher-level governments. Especially in CBC, all crucial policies (such as tax incentives) are still strictly controlled by central government, and these policies largely determine the content and intensity of cross-border flowing factors and affect spatial formation and evolution of provincial capital cities. Meanwhile, higher-level governments also reserve power of control and coordination in China’s urban and rural plan approval system, (some cities’ master plan needs to be submitted and approved by provincial government or the State Council). In that sense, it provides a legal basis of central and provincial government’s direct intervention in cities’ spatial development and plan. In addition, with challenges of globalization, decentralization makes it possible to local space policy innovation from city government.

### 2.1 Central Government Cooperating Policies and Spatial Effect

After the reform and opening up in 1979, “taking economic development as central task” has been national value guidance. Nanning, as the provincial capital city of Guangxi, should be the core of provincial economic development, but undertakes national military deployment and transportation functions because of military conflict between China and Vietnam. In this period, military preparations had been as dominant goal of Nanning development, and large enterprises or high-rise building constructions are banned. In 1980, instructions from Guangxi provincial government suggest that “In the future, universities, scientific research institutions and new large factories are not to be located in Nanning city as far as possible, and new industrial zones are not established except existing ones.” Until 1991, China-Vietnam relations were normalized, and then in 1992, Nanning was approved as a coastal open city, and corresponding beneficial policies was provided. Normalization of China-Vietnam relations not only provides the political foundation for taking Guangxi and Nanning as subjective space of CBC, but also accelerates the growth of economy and space of Nanning (Figure 1). Beginning from 1991, formal dialogue between China and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was started. In 2002, *FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT ON COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH EAST ASIAN NATIONS* was signed, and decided to establish China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (FTA) within 10 years. This is a landmark of formal establishment of supranational coordination mechanism. From 2005 to 2009, *AGREEMENT ON TRADE IN GOODS*, *AGREEMENT ON TRADE IN SERVICES*, and *AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT* had been signed, and *AGREEMENT ON DISPUTE SETTLEMENT MECHANISM* was signed in 2011. A series of agreements provide institutional foundation for cooperation among countries.

Although Nanning is not bordered with other countries, city development is affected by border effect. From the view of economy and space developing history, it can be divided into three stages (Figure 2). Stage 1, fluctuation between China and Vietnam, marked by normalization between two countries in 1991. Economic growth had been slow and volatile, and GDP growth rate was even lower than national and provincial average as capital city of province, down to only 0.2% growth in 1984, and built-up area had been growing 3.8km<sup>2</sup> per year. Stage 2, implementation of BO policy from 1992 to 2000, marked by China-ASEAN FTA was proposed in 2000. Nanning economy is in the stage of recovering, whose GDP growth rate surged sharply to the peak in 1993 (23.5%) and dropped gradually below the average of nation and province in 2000. At the same time, built-up area had expanded rapidly at the pace of 5km<sup>2</sup> per year. Nanning High-tech Industrial Development Zone and Nanning Economic and Technological Development Zone were set up, and education, research and residence land synchronous expanded. Stage 3, implementation of CBC policy from 2001, marked by Nanning was determined as permanent site of CHINA-ASEAN Exposition (CAEXPO). The speed of economic growth gradually rises and is higher than China and Guangxi average, and Nanning has been the largest economy of Guangxi from 2002. Built-up area grows 11km<sup>2</sup> per year.

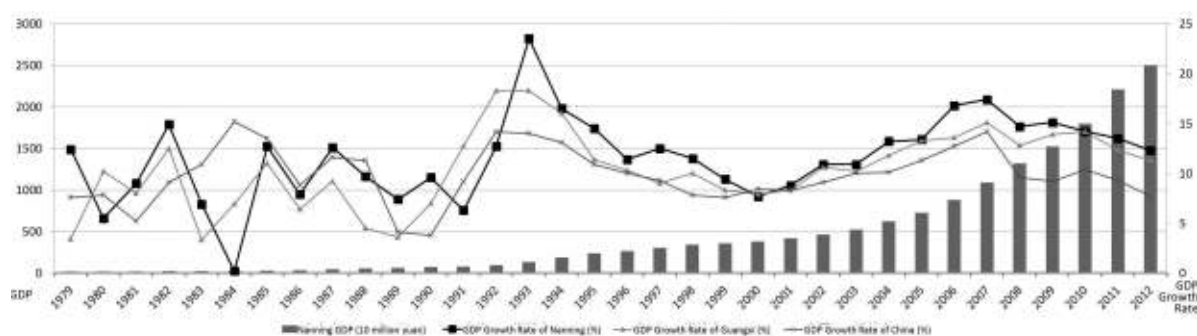


Figure 1. 1979-2011 GDP and GDP Growth Rate of Nanning, Guangxi and China

Data Source: Statistical Yearbook of Nanning, Guangxi and China

Different from border cities adjacent to other countries, provincial capital cities' CBC is not for a single country but a range of countries as capital cities of economic, political and cultural centre of border provinces in China, such as Harbin (Heilongjiang province in northeast) for Northeast Asian, Urumqi (Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest) for West Asian, and Nanning for ASEAN. Nanning has been endowed the platform of China-ASEAN cooperation, and this is also supported by national and regional development policy carried out by central government. These regional development policies, promulgated by central government, advance city function positioning. Nanning was positioned as "the bases of logistics, business, trade and manufacture, and the centre of information exchange (i.e. 3 bases and 1 centre)" of China-ASEAN cooperation – in *Guangxi Beibu Gulf Economic Zone Development Plan (2008)*. Also in "*Pearl River and West River Economic Zone Development Plan (2014)*" proposed to support relevant industries development —"taking advantage of central role in pilot border-financial reform zone, and giving support to foreign financial institutions for opening new branches, international or regional management headquarters, business operation headquarters, backup service centres and training bases". On the other hand, Bonded Logistics Park, political agencies and other cooperation projects etc. (e.g. China-ASEAN Business District, China-ASEAN Science and Technology Park of Modern Agriculture Cooperation) are directly set up in Nanning in national documents. Considering CBC opportunity, the State Council approved to adjust administrative districts (i.e. incorporation Yongning into Nanning) in 2004, and resulted in built-up area sharp expansion in 2005. In general, changes in central government policy – from military conflict to border opening and cross-border cooperation – significantly impact city economy and space of Nanning, especially in CBC period. Meanwhile, central government policy is a fundamental condition for CBC at local level.

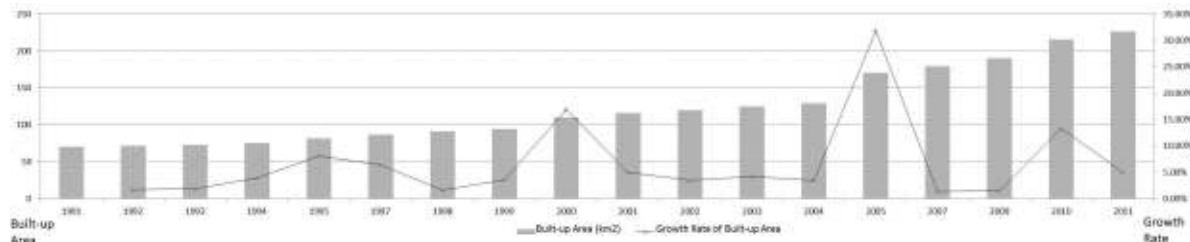


Figure 2. 1991-2011 Built-up Area and Growth rate of Nanning

Data Source: Statistical Yearbook of Nanning, Guangxi and China

## 2.2 Provincial Government Cooperating Policies and Spatial Effect

Because of the sensitiveness of coordination and decentralization in CBC, border provincial government takes more significantly role in coordination and participation which is not merely market-oriented in other cities with the Reform and Opening-up Policy. Decentralization from central government empowers province limited autonomy in CBC and provides some incentive mechanism which formed “multi-level branched institutional arrangements (Su, 2010)”. But border provinces mainly concentrate in “lower politics (Wang, 2012)” such as economy and trade, environmental protection, cultural exchanges and other fields. Taking education as an example, the number of international students from ASEAN reached 7400 in Guangxi and 5000 studying in ASEAN countries from Guangxi (data source: Li, 2013). This makes Guangxi as the most important province of exchange students between China and ASEAN.

Under institutional incentives in finance, tax revenue and promotion of local officials (Zhang & Li, 2012), based on implements of central CBC policies, provincial government creatively formulates local CBC policies and tries to stay in CBC pivotal position between countries. In 2007, “China - Indonesia Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone” was established, which is the first state-level economic and trade cooperation zone in Indonesia. This is also the first national foreign trade and economic cooperation park undertaken by Guangxi, and *Guangxi Nongken Refco Group Ltd*, which is a state-owned enterprises located in Guangxi, was selected as the developer. In addition, “China - Malaysia Qinzhou Industrial Park” was founded in 2011, located in south of Guangxi, which is the third cooperation park between China and foreign central governments. With the approval as core space of CBC between China and ASEAN from central government, provincial government has been trying to expand its influence in ASEAN countries (such as “Guangxi Commodities Expo”, held annually in ASEAN countries by Guangxi provincial government). Meanwhile, national CBC organizations are set up in Nanning by provincial government, e.g. China - ASEAN Institute, China - ASEAN Culture Research Association, Guangxi China - ASEAN Culture Promotion Association. It is clear that provincial government plays a role of initiator and promoter in a sense (Su, 2010).

As the capital of Guangxi, Nanning is the economic, political and cultural centre of province. And for that, Nanning has been further empowered from provincial government for promoting CBC effect. In “*the National 12th Five-Year Plan (2011)*”, it proposed to turning Guangxi into “a highland of China - ASEAN cooperation”. Later in 2012, “*Several Suggestions on Accelerating Highland Strategy Implementation of Nanning Inland-Opening Economy of Guangxi*” was published by provincial government, and 24 administration authority, including investment finance and taxation, land management, license and qualification management, price management etc., was empowered to city government to promote Nanning’s economy. The decentralization increases autonomy of Nanning city spatial development.

## 2.3 City Government Cooperating Policies and Spatial Effect

City government is truly not a sovereign actor, so its supranational power comes from higher-level government authorization and permission. At present, cities have been one of subjects of regional

and national competition with market-oriented reformation in China. Connection between provincial capital cities of border provinces and neighboured foreign cities and regions has been strengthening by CBC, and city government has strong motivation to participate in CBC in decentralizing context of authority-responsibility adjustment. After Nanning was positioned as “3 bases and 1 centre” by central government, Nanning city government proposed “regional modern logistics base, advanced manufacturing industry base, characteristic agricultural industry base and international centres transportation, information exchange and finance (i.e. 3 bases and 3 centres)”. It can be seen that Nanning city government tries to innovate and undertake more important economic functions in CBC countries, based on implementation of national policies.

However, with economy diversity in CBC regions and different central and local policies, border provincial capital cities’ internationalization shows both globalization and CBC-regionalization characteristics. From the view of foreign trade and foreign investment development, Nanning shows CBC-regionalization characteristics – ASEAN countries are the most important partners of foreign trading and investment abroad. At the same time, because of insufficiency of economic growth supporting for Nanning from CBC countries, city government actively participates in globalization. For that, globalization characteristics are also shown in foreign trade and foreign investment aspects, especially in foreign direct investment (FDI) – the most important source of Nanning’s FDI is from Hong Kong and US. In addition to economic cooperation, local policies are published to strengthen social interaction with ASEAN countries. In 2011, “*Scholarship Management of ASEAN Foreign Students*” was published to encourage and reward foreign students from ASEAN sister-cities in Nanning. In recent years, city governors and industry professionals have been organized to Singapore for learning and training, and Singapore has been an important window for Nanning learning from abroad.

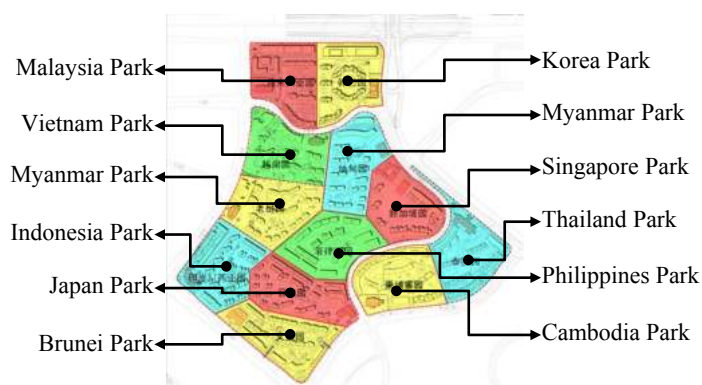


Figure 3. Zoning of China – ASEAN Business District

Source: Development Control Plan for China – ASEAN International Business District

The international behaviour innovation of city government can be carried out only in independent and autonomous space. As the direct subject of city government's public policy, city space is designed and reshaped with some international characteristics of spatial form of CBC countries for city marketing. Because of aspiration of integration into China – ASEAN cooperation, Nanning tries to maintain its status with Southeast Asian’s architectural features called “tendency of splendid Southeast Asian (Yuan & Feng, 2010)”. For example, in China – ASEAN Business District, it shows collage by buildings of ASEAN countries (Figure 3). In addition, not only central government’s CBC projects are located in Nanning (e.g. Modern Agricultural Science and Technology Park), but also local CBC projects are blooming. It can be seen that urban space named by “China – ASEAN” or “ASEAN” increases, such as *China – ASEAN Cultural Products (Publications) Logistics Park*, *China – ASEAN Youth Training Base* and *China – ASEAN Headquarter Base*. Some of these CBC districts involve government, enterprises and non-governmental organizations of CBC countries, but most of all are local projects developed by local government and enterprises.

Although the lower-political projects are still at local level, they are useful supplements to CBC between countries because of the controllability of political and economic risk, and could be approved by central government in some scenarios. Such as “China South City” in Nanning, annually holds *China – ASEAN Expo of Light Industrial Products* from 2009, and approved by China prime minister as “*China – ASEAN Commodity Exchanging Centre (CACEC)* as trading platform and the logistics base” in 2011. After that, CACEC was founded as the first trading and logistics project with national governments of all levels and enterprises, which provided rent free for five years to distinctive products exhibition and trade from ASEAN countries. By now, all local leading policies made by Nanning government, including “*the 12th Five-Year Plan*”, “*Master Plan of Nanning City (2011)*” and “*Land use Master Plan of Nanning*” etc., have consider CBC with ASEAN as one of the most important factors about city development, and are eventually implemented with characteristic space.

### 3. Spatial Plan and Development – Wuxiang New District (WND)

WND locates in southeast of Nanning central urban area (Figure 4). From China – ASEAN Expo has been held annually in 2004, “Regional-International City” has been proposed as main goal of city development, and administrative districts adjustment was carried out for spatial expansion and optimization. After that, master plan was started and WND was emphasized as focal point of spatial growth. In 2006, “Concept Master Plan of Wuxiang New District” was published as guideline of spatial development by Nanning city government. The following in the passage is about the spatial plan and development of WND.

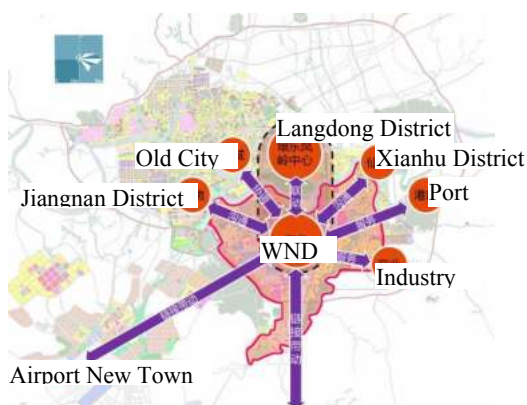


Figure 4. WND location in Nanning central urban area

Source: Concept Master Plan for Nanning WND

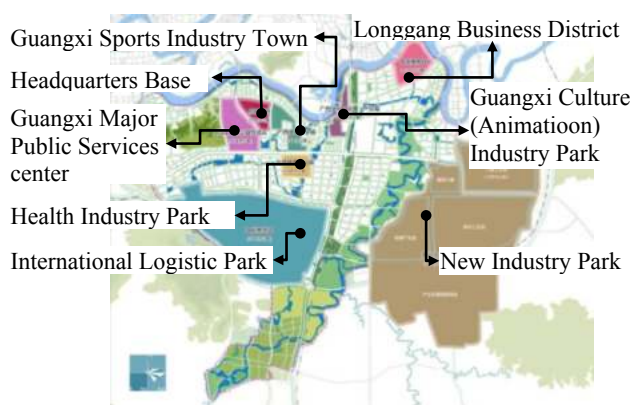


Figure 5. 8 Plates of WND

#### 3.1 Spatial Plan and Development of WND

With the main goal of “Regional-International City”, CBC effects on WND economy and space have been highlighted at the very beginning of plan. It holds that CBC projects – cooperation between Beibu Gulf urban agglomeration (including Nanning, Beihai, Fangchenggang and Qinzhou 4 cities) and ASEAN countries, CAFTA and Great Mekong Sub-region Cooperation (GMSC) – will significantly impact economy, technology and culture of Nanning. Therefore, “modern city of influencing ASEAN” is emphasized in development goals, and WNC’s functions are defined as “the logistics, trade, manufacturing base and information centre of CAFTA, and new headquarters base of Pan Beibu Gulf (PBG) Economic Zone”. Besides, national cross-regional cooperative policies, such as “Go West Strategy” and “the Pan Pearl River Delta Regional Cooperation”, and provincial preferential policies are considered. And functions are determined as not only a southwest access to the sea and trading and logistics centre at national level, but also an administrative centre at provincial level. Multi-scale policies and flowing factors have got local government’s attention.

In consideration of the multi-scale preferential policies and flowing economic factors, 8 functional plates are emphasized in master plan (Figure 5). These plates not only carry provincial administrative, commercial and public service functions, but also reflect the goal and requirement of CBC participation. For example, provincial sports functions are located in the plate of *Guangxi Sports Industry City*, including *Guangxi Sports Centre*, *Guangxi Sports Education Base* and *Guangxi Olympic Training Base*, and CBC project of *China – ASEAN Sports Communication and Cooperation Experimental Area* are integrated in the same area. It is same in *Guangxi Culture (Animation) Industry City*, *China – ASEAN Cultural Industry Talent Base*, *China – ASEAN Digital Publishing Base* and *China – ASEAN Cultural Products Logistics Park* are integrated into other local cultural and residential functional space. It is clear that provincial government has been actively involved in WND plan and tries to enhance mutual connection with CBC countries.

The plan of International Logistics Park (Nanning China-ASEAN International Logistics Base) started from “Logistics Industry Adjusting and Revitalization Plan” published by central government – Nanning was defined as one of the 21 national logistics node city in 2009. At the same time, “Nanning Bonded Logistics Centre (NBLC)” was checked and started operating in 2010. As a “dry port”, it enjoys export tax rebate, import bonded and free transfer policy. In Feb. 2010, Nanning was identified as “the National Demonstration City of Modern Logistics Industry”. Under the support of a series of top-down preferential policies, “*Nanning China-ASEAN International Logistics Base Regulatory Plan*” was approved by city government, and positioned as “the comprehensive bonded zone and international modern logistics park for serving CAFTA and southwest China, and the new district including modern logistics, trade, advanced manufacturing industry and residential functions”.

As can be seen, the plan of WND is not just an area of city spatial expansion as a result of population growth and only depended on city government, but a target area under the guidance of multi-level policies made by governments at all levels. In WND, NBLC could only be approved by central government, and provincial administrative and public service functional space needs provincial government’s permission. The most important functional space of CBC is a result of coordination between governments at different levels and an innovation of local government based on its own overall targets.

### 3.2 Development of WND under CBC

Unlike other districts, led by city government, provincial government has participated in WND plan and development at the very beginning. In 2006, provincial government of Guangxi proposed that Nanning should focus on the goal of regional-international city and prioritize the development of WND. With provincial government support, “Decision on Accelerating Development of WND” was carried out by city government in 2007, which provided a series of preferential policies. In 2013, the administrative level of WND had been promoted by provincial government to accelerate development.

WND built-up area had expanded 3-4km<sup>2</sup> annually until 2013, and had been an important area of Nanning city spatial growth – accounting for 25% of total amount. By now, land of public administrative and service facilities accounted for 32.13% of WND’s total, just less than residential land 34.24% (including housing development and resettlement of farmers). It is obvious that the spatial expansion mechanism of driving by public facilities. In master plan, WND is defined as the centre of information and headquarter for CBC countries, but spatial agglomeration of regional headquarters has not appeared in WND – business facilities land (including business services, commercial and financial land) accounted for only 8.7% of total. It has demonstrated the features of public-dominated cooperation. Although regional headquarters have not agglomerate in WND, but CBC effect on Nanning has been recognized by market – some enterprises have set up regional logistics centre in Nanning. And some enterprises have transferred customs clearance business from Guangdong to Nanning since operation of NBLC, showing the “arbitrage economies (Altvater, 1998)” features in border areas. At the same time, WND also attracted national large

projects and enterprises such as Yurun Global Procurement Centre of Agricultural and Sideline Products and Beibu Gulf Paper Trading Market, and large manufacturing enterprises such as Good Fortune Heavy Industry CO.,LTD (GFHI) and SANY Group.

Generally speaking, spatial plan and development is driven by all-level policies and market behaviours under the background of CBC. Central government promulgates macro policy of CBC and gives WND possibility of participating in CBC, and directly approves and sets up “Bonded Logistics Centre”. So, the central government is the basic impetus of local spatial expansion. No doubt, provincial administrative and public service functions influence capital city’s space, and provincial government has powerful influence on site selection of significant CBC projects. Nanning city government proposes master plan and developing goal based on preferential policies of higher levels, and limited cooperating space and activities are innovated to strengthen local cross-border linkages.

#### **4. Rescaling Mechanism of Space Governance**

Unlike other regional developing and coordinating policies, CBC refers to political, cultural and social cooperation which is strictly controlled by central government. Therefore, the decentralization of diplomatic power to local government is minimal, and city spatial development is firstly influenced by macro policies and must be subordinated to national interest – a frontline of defending and attacking or a gateway and channel of communication between two countries. The former excludes economic, social and cultural space agglomeration in city, and results in smaller spatial scales and slower spatial expansion; the latter brings about preferential policies and CBC projects at different administrative levels, and results in rapid spatial expansion.

Border provincial government has been one of crucial participant of CBC between China and other countries. It organizes and implements national CBC projects, and coordinates cross-border flowing factors among cities in province, and innovates local CBC policies cautiously, e.g. integrates local exposition into CBC Expo, and founds relevant CBC research academies. In china, provincial government could be seen as an ally of central government in the process of CBC (Su, 2012). In general, provincial rarely involves in city spatial plan and development directly. But as political centre of province, capital city’s space governance will inevitably be affected by higher-level government activities. In addition, provincial government is a more significant partner than city in CBC process, and some important projects still need its approval and coordination.

The city government is given limited power in CBC, so its main role is to implement the policies and projects of higher-level government. But, participation in CBC is conducive to attracting factors agglomeration and enhancing the level of city economic development. For that, city government can only reshape the image of city by limited authorization, such as naming specific area and introducing distinctive buildings of CBC countries, in order to attract more CBC functions and economic factors. In this process, city government has also innovated cooperating modes in economic, social and cultural aspects to improve city’s status. Implementation of higher-level policies provides new impetus for city. As the direct manager of city space, city government integrates multi-level policies and projects into its own developing goal, and specific spatial pattern has ultimately formed.

#### **5. Conclusions**

For a city, all-level policies impact the evolution of city space to a certain extent, but border province is the most direct region which “territorial logics conflicting with functional logics (Blatter, 2004; Popescu, 2008)” and more sensitive to higher-level policies. Under the background of CBC dominated by central government, provincial capital cities’ economy and space is expected to expand, and innovation in local policy and space will be possible to promote to national level if it is approved by central government. Therefore, local government is possible to be the leader and innovator of CBC between countries based on its own interests and judgments. In general, all-level

CBC policies impact space of provincial capital city. The fundamental driving force of city spatial growth comes from implementation of central CBC policies and relevant space supply. With provincial supporting policies, local space is integrated in macro CBC policies by local government's innovation in policies and space. The multi-level CBC policies complicated the content and intensity of flowing factors in provincial capital cities, and rescaled spatial governance. Multi-level space governance of provincial capital cities should be paid more attention for understanding mechanism of spatial evolution.

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