

## Article

# What Is the Rational Choice of Community Governance Policy

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**Abstract:** Community governance is the “micro-cell” of social governance and the foundation of the governance system. The rational selection logic of community governance policy reflects the value orientation, goal selection, and tool guarantee of governance policy. It is the result of the interaction between government and public values and it reflects the final value choice in the form of policy text and tries to balance policy rationality through accurate calculation. Through the analysis of 100 government work reports and 63 community governance policy documents of the Chinese government from 2013 to 2022, it was found that “People-oriented” was the core value orientation of governance policy. “Better life” was a key target choice for governance policy. “Diversified tools” were an important implementation guarantee for governance policy. These rational choices were consistent between the central and the local governments, but there was a conflict between localities. Urban and rural community governance policies need to establish a public space between policy rationality and value selection to solve the targeting bias of policy rationality in the future. This paper solves the conflict between policy rationality and value choice using the paths of expert think tank construction, highlighting leading goals, and using technology empowerment, to adjust the tension between the two through reasonable value choice and balanced policy rationality, to achieve the goal of urban and rural community governance modernization.

**Keywords:** policy rationality; consistency or conflict; urban community governance policy; rural community governance; China



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

The Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China proposed a “three-step” strategy to promote the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity. After that, the State Council issued a “two-step” strategy for strengthening the modernization of the grassroots governance system and governance capacity. The modernization of community governance has the premise of the modernization of grassroots governance and is the key to achieving the “three-step” strategic goal of modernizing the national governance system and governance capacity [1]. With the advancement of community governance reform, the responsibility boundary between the government and the community has become clear [2]. The community has more autonomy, and a governance mechanism with multi-subject participation in the community has begun to take shape [3]. However, problems such as weak community autonomy and service functions, and excessive management by government departments still exist [4]. In addition, there are problems such as the single content of community autonomy activities, the imperfect participation mechanism of community governance, and the lack of long-term mechanisms for community multi-subject governance forces [5]. The above problems seriously restrict the further improvement of community governance

efficiency. Therefore, the Chinese government has issued a series of policy documents that clarify the development goals, basic principles, and specific measures of community governance, to realize the modernization of community governance [6].

As the most critical part of the governance system, urban and rural community governance policies concretize relatively abstract ethical norms into a code of conduct that all members must abide by, which not only reflects the governance philosophy of the Party and the state, but also reflects the public will of most people to seek welfare. As a medium and tool carrying public value, urban and rural community governance policies derive public value in specific contexts in the two-way interaction between government value construction and citizens' value preferences [7]. These specific values will change as the social environment changes, and governments need to make rational anticipatory assumptions in advance and adjust the average of prediction errors to zero. The process of adjustment is manifested as the implementation process of public policies at the local government level, that is, the relevant policy documents find calculable methods and paths to achieve a balance between public will and individual interests based on ensuring the logical relationship between different values, that is, the unity of value rationality and instrumental rationality. The process of policy change is a process of public value and private value game, reaching value consensus in conflict and compromise, and forming policy rationality. Because there will inevitably be conflicts between instrumental rationality that embodies public will and value rationality that embodies public and private interests, there is inevitably a contradiction between the value choice of policy and policy rationality, and how to strike a balance between the two has become a difficult problem in public policy formulation.

### 1.2. Literature Review

The earliest research on community governance as an academic concept appeared twenty-two years ago [8]; However, until now, relatively little attention has been paid to community governance policies in academia [9]. In general, it can be divided into two major sections: urban community governance policy research and rural community governance policy research. But there are also scholars who conduct comprehensive research.

In the research of urban community governance policy, based on the perspective of policy analysis, scholars believe that the current governance of urban communities is changing from the traditional form of state handling everything to "multi-party coordination and cooperative governance" [10]. Based on the perspective of policy implementation, a single case analysis of the implementation of epidemic prevention and control policies in Hangzhou, China, points out that grid management can achieve refined emergency prevention and control through policy implementation, and can provide new ideas for urban community governance [11]. Based on the perspective of policy network, it is proposed that under the background of globalization and market economy development, it is an inevitable choice for community governance to change the traditional pattern and seek a new governance path, and the policy network approach is a new way to break the dilemma of urban community governance [12]. Based on the analysis of policy documents from the perspective of policy tools, it is found that the application of community governance policy tools is unbalanced, the internal tool structure is unevenly distributed, and it is pointed out that how to achieve balance between tools has become an important measure of community governance policy [6].

In the research of rural community governance policy, based on 150 policy texts from 15 provinces, the public choice logic in the modernization of rural community governance capacity was analyzed from three dimensions: content, time, and space [13]. In the context of rural revitalization, how to realize the creative transformation of rural community governance policies and drive the overall planning of urban and rural community governance was the core issue at present [14]. Based on the balanced scorecard, how to develop informatization of rural community governance [15]. Based on the analysis of the evolution trajectory of rural governance in the "No. 1 Document" of the Central Committee of

China, it was pointed out that the core concerns of rural governance were the construction of grassroots party organizations, rural community construction and rural governance diversification from the perspectives of rural governance subjects and contents [16].

At present, the comprehensive research on urban and rural communities can be divided into three main aspects. The first is theoretical research on urban and rural community governance policies, using public choice theory [13], multi-source flow theory [17], activism [18], and institutional analysis and development frameworks [19], to comprehensively analyze special policies. The second is the content research on urban and rural community governance policies, such as focusing on policy objectives and policy tools [6], policy tools and governance subjects [20], as well as time, space, and policy content [13]. The third is the research on the change of urban and rural community governance policies, such as the problems existing in the changes in urban community elevator installation policies [21], the attention allocation of policy texts [22], and the trend and law of policy evolution [23].

Therefore, the current research was mainly based on the urban-rural binary structure [24]. Urban community governance policies were analyzed from the perspectives of policy analysis, policy implementation, policy network, and policy tools. Rural community governance policies were analyzed from the perspectives of public choice theory, rural revitalization background, and policy evolution logic. In addition, various management theories were comprehensively used to comprehensively explore the specific content and change history of urban and rural community governance. However, after comprehensive analysis, it was not difficult to find that the research on community governance policies was mainly focused on the research of individual policy content in urban communities or rural communities. Even though some studies involved the comparison of multiple policy texts, they lacked rigor in sample selection, expanding the scope of the study indefinitely. The research themes focused on theory, analytical framework construction, policy objectives, policy tools, and characteristics of policy change, etc., and lacked in-depth research on the policy rationality and value choices behind them, especially how to solve the problems that may conflict between multiple policies. Based on this, it was necessary to systematically analyze the value concept, goal orientation, tool use and other factors contained in community governance policies and explore what are the value choices and policy rationalities implied by central and local policies in terms of goals, concepts (principles) and tools? Is there conflict or unity between the central and local governments? Can the flexible space between central and local governments effectively avoid policy failure to better combine the shortcomings and weaknesses to improve the efficiency of urban and rural community governance?

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Sample Selection

The results of data accessed on the websites of the people's governments at all levels and the websites of relevant departments, show that the earliest time the concept of "community governance" appeared in work reports, five-year plans and special policy documents of governments, was after the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee, that is, after 2013. Before this, there were also relevant contents of community management, but they were scattered in relevant documents on community construction and services. As there are few policy texts on urban and rural community governance, and the policy documents issued by government departments at different levels have different characteristics, the sample selection in this paper followed the following principles. First, the sample release period was from 2013 to 2022. Second, the source of the sample was mainly central and provincial policy documents, including government work reports, civil affairs development plans, community governance development plans, etc. Third, because some provinces have not issued special policies for urban and rural community governance, the provincial sample range was three provinces from each of the three major regions of

the eastern, central, and western regions delimited by the state, and the government work report of the sample province was the main source.

Based on the above three principles, this paper selected 163 relevant policy documents from 2013 to 2022, including the 2013–2022 government work report, civil affairs development plan, and community governance development plan. All policy texts used in this work were derived from government work reports, five-year development plans, and relevant policy documents in the statutory public category of the official government website. According to the geographical division standard, they comprehensively consider economic, social, humanistic, and other influencing factors, and eliminate the difference in the number of specific administrative units in each region. Finally, three provinces were selected from the eastern, central, and western regions as representative regions. The selected policy text was encoded according to “Hierarchy-Category-Number”. For example, the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021–2025) for Urban and Rural Community Governance in Sichuan Province was coded as “West-B-153”. Finally, a research text library of community governance policy texts was formed (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Sample library of community governance policy texts.

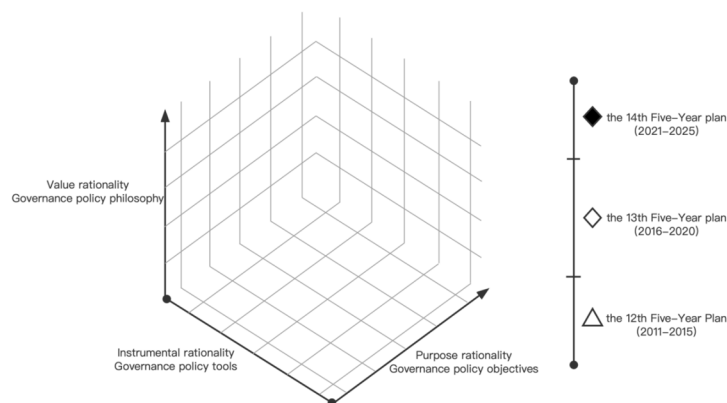
Type	National		Eastern Region		Central Region		Western Region		Total
			Fujian, Guangdong, Hebei		Anhui, Hubei, Heilongjiang		Gansu, Sichuan, Yunnan		
	Number	Quantity	Number	Quantity	Number	Quantity	Number	Quantity	
Government Work Report	N-A	10	East-A	30	Center-A	30	West-A	30	100
National economic development planning, Civil affairs development planning, Community governance development planning	N-B	18	East-B	15	Center-B	15	West-B	15	63
Total		28		45		45		45	163

Most of the academic analyses of policy texts adopt qualitative research methods. This paper also used Nvivo20 software for content analysis, through the study of the macro evolution characteristics of urban and rural community governance policies in China and the commonalities and differences in the east, central, and western regions, to find the conflicting or consistent relationships between the rational choice of policies. Furthermore, it aimed to provide reference for optimizing urban and rural community governance policies in the new era. It is worth mentioning that while Nvivo software brings the convenience of text encoding, it still has the problem of qualitative encoding. The biggest problem is that people’s coding is subjective and varies due to everyone’s different cognition, so it is difficult for the coding results to objectively present the rational choice of policy, which may have an impact on the result and cause result bias [25]. However, this paper attempts to use the encoding comparison query function to solve this problem by multiple people encoding multiple times to ensure the objectivity of policy coding.

## 2.2. Measures

The complexity of community issues and of participants determine that a one-dimensional analysis framework of community governance policy has been difficult to adapt to the current changeable community governance policy environment [26]. To comprehensively analyze the policy rationality of community governance policies, it was necessary to analyze multiple dimensions of governance policies, and then clarify the value concepts or goal pursuit contained in the evolution of the governance policies [27]. In addition, the choice of community governance policy is time-sensitive [28]. At different stages of development, the focus of community governance policies varies [29]. Therefore, this work constructed an analytical framework of four dimensions: value rationality, purpose rationality, instrumen-

tal rationality, and time. In addition, community governance policies were analyzed from the perspectives of “value”, “purpose”, and “tool” (Figure 1). Furthermore, community governance policies are not static, but new policies are constantly emerging over time. Therefore, this paper also analyzed from the dimensions of “value-time”, “purpose-time”, and “tool-time”.



**Figure 1.** Analysis framework.

#### 2.2.1. Value Rationality

Value rationality assumes that the criterion for judging the quality of governance policies is not the result of policy operation, but the value concept contained in the governance policy itself, that is, whether it promotes social fairness, justice, and harmony [30]. As the guidance of governance policies, value rationality needs to reflect the pursuit of core social values [31]. From the perspective of value rationality, value rationality refers to the concept and value orientation contained in the objectives, tools, and guarantees of governance policies, is the internal scale of governance policy choices, and pursues the purity of motives and the correctness of means [30]. Guided by value rationality, governance policy pays more attention to long-term goals and whether the policy itself meets the standards of fairness and justice. In community governance, the value rationality of governance policy is embodied in the concept of governance policy [13]. Since the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of China first proposed the concept of community governance, the it has undergone successive changes. From “good order and good governance” to “people-centered” to “satisfying the people’s pursuit of a better life”. Different governance concepts inevitably change the goals and tools of governance policies [32]. Therefore, this work selected the community governance policy text, extracted the policy concepts contained in the policy texts, and attempted to explore the evolution of law and value choices in community governance policy concepts, to explore how the changes of value rationality has affected the rational choice of community governance policies.

#### 2.2.2. Instrumental Rationality

Instrumental rationality assumes that the ultimate goal of governance policy is to achieve the set policy goals [33]. Instrumental rationality focuses on the rational allocation of policy tools to achieve policy goals on schedule, rather than paying attention to the value concept of policy tools themselves [34]. In the text of community governance policy, instrumental rationality is mainly reflected through governance policy tools [35]. At present, there are mainly five types of policy tools in the texts of community governance policies, including command-type tools that appear in words such as “regulations”, “implementation” and “strengthening”, incentive-type tools that appear in words such as “reward”, “punishment” and “promotion”, capacity-building-type tools that appear in words such as “platform”, “training” and “guidance”, persuasion-type tools that appear in words such as “assessment”, “typical” and “promotion”, and systematic-change-type tools that appear in words such as “reform”, “reshaping” and “soundness”. Therefore,



based on instrumental rationality, this paper analyzed the characteristics and trends of the combination of governance policy tools from the five dimensions of command-type, incentive-type, capacity-building-type, persuasion-type, and systematic-change-type tools to further explore how changes in instrumental rationality have affected the rational choice of community governance policies.

### 2.2.3. Purpose Rationality

Purposeful rationality is a goal-oriented governance policy choice [36]. With the transformation of national governance goals, the current community governance goals have begun to develop towards “efficient governance”, “governance modernization”, and “rural revitalization” [37]. From the perspective of purposeful rationality, the goal of community governance policy is to implement the new development concept and continuously meet the growing needs of the people for a better life. In the governance policy text, the purpose rationality is concentrated in the governance policy objectives [38]. Policy objectives refer to the goals, requirements or results that can be achieved by policy implementation and are the unity of value rationality and instrumental rationality. Value rationality guides policy goal setting through policy concepts, and instrumental rationality ensures that policy goals are achieved on schedule through policy guarantees [39]. As a bridge connecting value rationality and instrumental rationality, purposeful rationality should not only conform to the pursuit of value rationality, but also reasonably match policy tools in combination with the actual situation of community governance. Therefore, how the changes of value rationality have affected the choice of purposive rationality, how has the choice of purposive rationality affected the choice of instrumental rationality, and how the rational choice logic of purposive rationality itself was under the dual influence of value rationality and instrumental rationality, were all questions that needed to be answered by the purposive rationality dimension.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Encode Results

In this study, a large number of various policy texts were selected, so Nvivo20 software was selected to encode the policy texts. Referring to the actual text, the policy text was encoded by combining the “reference point—sub-node—tree node” and “tree node—sub-node—reference point” according to the expression of the policy text, and the code category to which the statement belongs was determined, and the code categorized. Combined with the actual situation of the instrumental rationality, referring to the existing literature, the coding method of “tree node—sub-node—reference point” was adopted. Policy instruments were divided into command-type tools, incentive-type tools, capacity-building-type, persuasion-type tools, and systematic-change-type tools. The value rationality and purpose rationality dimensions were coded by the coding method of “reference point—sub-node—tree node”, and the relevant content was programmed into the corresponding sub-node. Among them, when encountering text content that can be programmed into multiple child nodes, the method of meaning judgment was adopted, combined with the context situation, its true meaning was judged, and then programmed into the corresponding node.

### 3.2. Reliability and Validity

In this work, two researchers were assigned to randomly select the same policy documents from other provinces in the eastern, central, and western regions for coding, and then import the coding results into NVivo.20 to use the function of software “coding comparison query” for consistency checking. At the same time, each policy text has two coders, weighted by the number of codes that agree or disagree with each other. If the percentage was greater than 70%, it was considered to have high confidence [40]. The results show that both the coding conformance percentage and the kappa coefficient for coding coverage remained above 0.6, considered highly consistent, with a consensus percentage of 91%. Therefore, the coding for this work was valid and had a high degree of confidence.

### 3.3. Descriptive Statistics

This work adopted the method of vertical normalization, that is, the sum of the frequencies of the three time periods in each dimension was “1”. This work found that the number of encodings of the policy text was proportional to the frequency of the policy text. In other words, the greater the number of encodings in a policy text, the more frequent it was, and the greater the likelihood of rational policy choices (Table 2). From the perspective of value rationality, the value concepts extracted in the policy text mainly included “new development concept”, “integrated governance concept”, and “people-oriented concept”. During the 12th Five-Year Plan period, “people-oriented concept” (100%) was mainly used as the value guidance of policy formulation, and gradually evolved into “people-oriented concept” (45.16%, 50.00%) and “new development concept” (32.25%, 44.44%), and the concept of “integrated governance concept” was introduced. From the perspective of instrumental rationality, the highest proportion of imperative policy tools was 80.00%, 69.73%, and 76.19%, respectively. From the perspective of instrumental rationality, the proportion of command-type tools was the highest, 80.00%, 69.73%, and 76.19%. However, other tools have never been used too, 14.28%, 4.76%, 4.76%, respectively. Governance policy tools show a diversified development trend. From the perspective of purpose rationality, the policy text was extracted and it was found that the policy objectives mainly focused on four aspects: “governance modernization”, “good life”, “rural revitalization”, and “efficient governance”. From the perspective of time evolution, the governance goals during the 12th Five-Year Plan period were not clear. During the 13th Five-Year Plan period, “good life” (52.17%) and “governance modernization” (30.43%) were the main ones. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, there was a trend of “better life” (71.42%), “governance modernization” (14.28%) and “rural revitalization” (14.28%).

**Table 2.** Coded results of community governance policies.

		The 12th Five-Year Plan (2011–2015)	The 13th Five-Year Plan (2016–2020)	The 14th Five-Year Plan (2021–2025)
Value rationality	New development concept	-	32.25%	44.44%
	Integrated governance concept	-	22.58%	5.56%
	People-oriented concept	100.00%	45.16%	50.00%
	Command-type tools	80.00%	69.73%	76.19%
Instrumental rationality	Persuasion-type tools	-	21.05%	14.28%
	Incentive-type tools	25.00%	5.26%	4.76%
	Capacity-building-type tools	-	2.63%	4.76%
	Systematic-change-type tools	-	1.32%	-
Purpose rationality	Governance modernization	-	30.43%	14.28%
	Good life	-	52.17%	71.42%
	Rural revitalization	-	13.04%	14.28%
	Efficient governance	-	4.34%	-

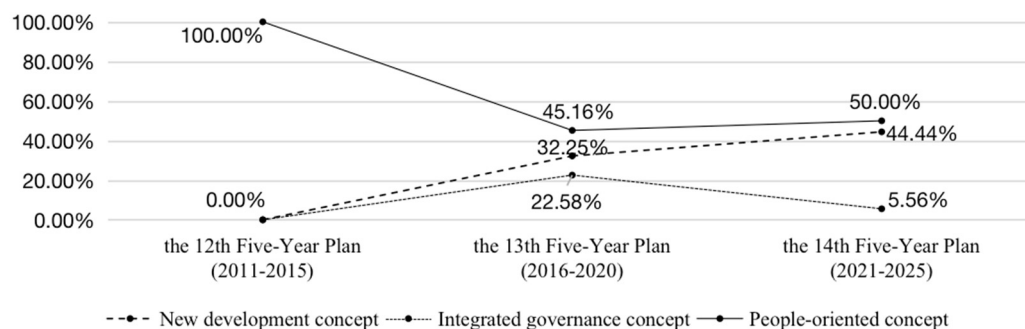
The data comes from software calculations.

### 3.4. Analysis Framework

#### 3.4.1. Analysis of Value Rationality

According to the results of policy text coding (Figure 2), the policy concept during the 12th Five-Year Plan period was only “people-oriented” (100%). During the 13th Five-Year Plan period, the policy concept gradually expanded, and multiple concepts such as “people-oriented concept” (45.16%), “new development concept” (32.25%), and “integrated governance concept” (22.58%) appeared in parallel. This is related to the reform of the government. Community governance policies paid more attention to the systematic, integrated, and innovative nature of policies. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, the proportion of “new development concepts” increased, from 32.25% to 44.44%. However, the proportion of the concept of “integrated governance concepts” decreased significantly,

from 22.58% to 5.56%. The concept of “people-oriented concept” was relatively stable, accounting for about 50%. This is related to the long-term focus of national policies on the “new development concept” and “people-centered concept”. In addition, after the promotion of the 13th Five-Year Plan period, the reform of integrated governance has achieved remarkable results. As a result, there was a clear downward trend in the focus on integrated governance.



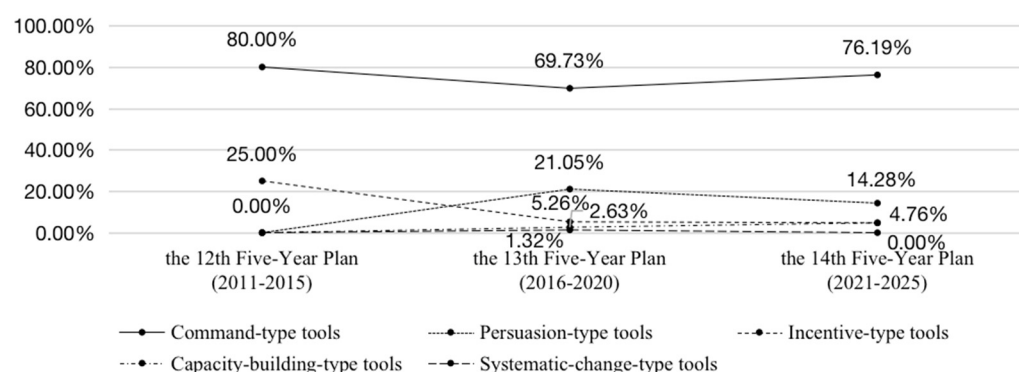
**Figure 2.** Value rationality coding statistics.

From the perspective of the concept itself, the “new development concept” was first proposed in 2015 in the “13th Five-Year Plan” of the national economy. It emphasized that through the development concept of “innovation, coordination, green, openness and sharing”, the current development momentum, unbalanced development, harmonious relationship between man and nature, internal and external linkage, social fairness and justice and other problems should be solved. During the 13th Five-Year Plan period, community governance also introduced the “new development concept”. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, the proportion of “new development concepts” increased again, emphasizing the promotion of community development through “innovation”, the resolution of internal conflicts in communities through “coordination”, the creation of livable homes through “green”, and the introduction of diversified community governance subjects through “openness” and “sharing”. At the heart of the “integrated governance concept” was integration. In community governance, it was emphasized to promote the logical integration of community governance through diversified governance methods [41]. The “integrated governance concept” achieved significant results in the 13th Five-Year Plan period. In community governance, it was concentrated in “one form application”, “only one run” and “centralized office”. Based on this, the “integrated governance concept” in the policy text presented a development trend of “from scratch to reduction”. “People-oriented concept” was the fundamental concept of social development, emphasizing that “development is for the people, development depends on the people, and the fruits of development are shared by the people”. “People-oriented concept” in policy texts has always been at the core of policy concepts at all stages.

### 3.4.2. Analysis of Instrumental Rationality

Collating policy text coding data showed that policy tools in the 12th Five-Year Plan period only included “command-type” and “incentive-type”, and “Command-type tools” accounted for more than 80% (Figure 3). During this period, the policy tools were relatively few, and the government paid less attention. Although the policy tools during the 13th Five-Year Plan period were still mainly “command-type” (69.73%), the types of tools used were relatively diverse, including “incentive-type”, “persuasion-type”, “capacity-building-type”, and “systematic-change-type”. In addition to “command-type tools”, “persuasion-type tools” were used the most frequently (21.05%). During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, the “persuasion-type tools” were no longer used, the frequency of use of “persuasion-type tools” and “incentive-type tools” was reduced to 14.28% and 4.76%, and the frequency of use of “capacity-building-type tools” increased from 2.63% to 4.76%. However, among the various policy tools, “command-type tools” were used the most frequently (76.19%).





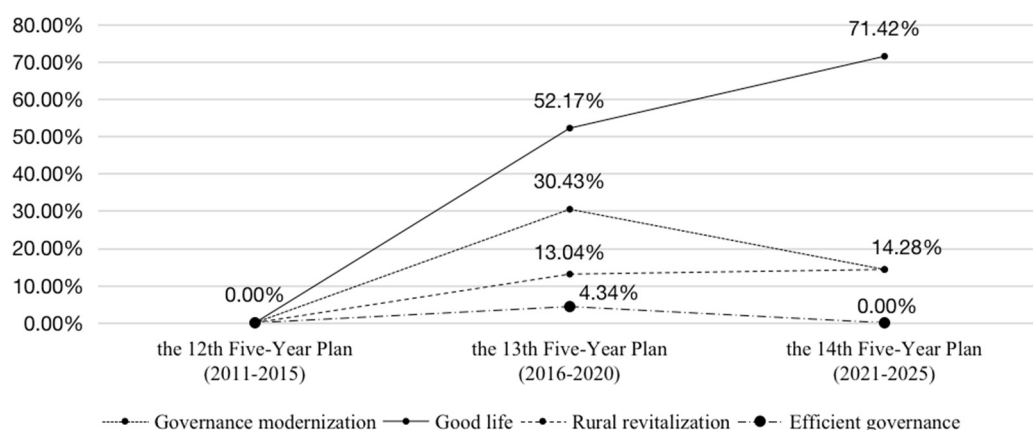
**Figure 3.** Instrumental rationality coding statistics.

Overall, after the 12th Five-Year Plan, “command-type tools” were dominant, the proportion of “persuasion-type” and “incentive-type” increased year by year, and the use of “capacity-building-type tools” and “systematic-change-type tools” in community governance was at a low level. From the perspective of the policy tool itself, the “command-type tool” was based on coercive legal authority and required unconditional obedience by the governance object. “Persuasion-type tools” encouraged specific actions by giving meaning to specific things. “Incentive-type tools” induced policy recipients to engage in relevant behaviors through material or spiritual rewards. “Capacity-building-type tools” ensured the realization of policy goals by cultivating capacity and improving quality. The “systematic-change-type tools” emphasized changing existing organizational structures and institutional arrangements to accommodate new policy objectives [42]. The complexity of community governance suggests that a combination of policy tools was needed to achieve the goal of modernizing grassroots governance. Since the 12th Five-Year Plan, community governance policy tools have gradually developed from command-based to a combination of tools.

### 3.4.3. Analysis of Purpose Rationality

The results of this work code showed that the goals of community governance policies mainly included “governance modernization”, “good life”, “rural revitalization”, and “efficient governance” (Figure 4). “Governance modernization” was proposed at the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. In the context of the national governance modernization strategy, the modernization of grassroots governance proposes a two-step development strategy, that is, to basically realize the modernization of grassroots governance by 2025 and fully realize the modernization of grassroots governance by 2035. Correspondingly, the modernization of community governance began to be introduced in the 13th Five-Year Plan period and became the main goal of community governance. “Efficient governance” is the guarantee and embodiment of “governance modernization”, and “efficient governance” is to transform grassroots governance from passive governance to autonomous governance. In the policy text, “efficient governance” accounted for 4.34% during the 13th Five-Year Plan period, but it was not mentioned during the 14th Five-Year Plan period. This is because “efficient governance” was embedded in “governance modernization”. The relevant discussion on “efficient governance” in the 13th Five-Year Plan period was mentioned in the 14th Five-Year Plan “Governance Modernization”. “Good life” is the pursuit of the people, and the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China proposed to meet the people’s growing needs for a better life. “Good Life” is a comprehensive concept that includes quality of life, improvement of three senses (a sense of gain, happiness, security), stability and harmony, ecological livability, and equalization of basic public services. The proportion of “good life” policy target in the 13th Five-Year Plan period was 52.17%, and the proportion increased again to 71.42% during the 14th Five-Year Plan period. “Rural revitalization” is another major strategic deployment after the end

of comprehensive poverty alleviation, and it is an inevitable choice for the contradiction between China's dual urban and rural development pattern and the goal of integrated and balanced development. The "rural revitalization" goal was introduced into community governance with the 13th Five-Year Plan period, and its occupancy frequency has basically stabilized at about 15%. Overall, the attention of community governance was mainly focused on the goal of satisfying the people's good life. At the same time, however, more attention was paid to the modern governance level of communities (30.43%, 14.28%) and rural revitalization (13.04%, 14.28%).



**Figure 4.** Purpose rationality coding statistics.

#### 4. Discussion

This study analyzed the logic of rational choice of community governance policies in China through text coding. The study found that China's community governance policy has gone through three stages of development. Value rationality, instrumental rationality, and purpose geography, all showed phased characteristics. Value rationality has experienced the "good order and good governance" of the 12th Five-Year Plan period, to the "people-oriented concept" of the 13th Five-Year Plan period, and then to the "new development concept" and "satisfying the people's pursuit of a better life" in the 14th Five-Year Plan period. Correspondingly, the purpose rationality of community governance has also gone through three evolutionary stages: "maintaining good order", "equalization of services", and "better life". Instrumental rationality has also changed from command-type to incentive-type, persuasion-type, capacity-building-type, and systematic-change-type.

"People-oriented" was the core value orientation of governance policy. In the text of community governance policies, "people-oriented" was mainly reflected in three aspects. First, "people-oriented" was to promote the participation of multiple subjects in community governance. The main body of community governance includes the grassroots party and government organs, voluntary organizations, professional social work organizations and social workers, residents' self-organization, expert teams, community units and enterprises, etc [43]. It is to stimulate the enthusiasm of all kinds of subjects to participate in community governance, guide participation in community governance, and provide suggestions for the development of community governance [44]. Second, "people-oriented" means improving community services. There are many categories of community services, mainly including social assistance, social welfare and social security services for the elderly, the disabled, women and children, the convenience and benefit services for community residents, the socialized services for community units and enterprises, and the employment and security services for laid-off residents [45]. Community governance was to improve various service systems and mechanisms, enrich service categories, simplify service processes, and enhance the accessibility of services. Third, "people-oriented" was to create an ecological, livable, civilized, and harmonious community. Quality life could be divided into spiritual quality of life and material quality of life [46]. Spiritual quality of life mainly refers to the construction of community spiritual civilization, which is continuously improved through community

education and community cultural facilities. Material quality of life is to improve safeguard measures to achieve the “survival” function of the community, improve the living environment to realize the “life” function of the community, strengthen public security protection, create a harmonious community, and realize the “life” function of the community [47].

“Better life” was a key target choice for governance policy. At this stage, the people’s needs for a better life were mainly reflected in the expectation of better education, more stable work, more satisfactory income, more reliable social security, higher medical standards, more comfortable living conditions, a more beautiful environment, and a richer spiritual life [48]. Combined with the content of community governance policies, a better life was embodied in improving unemployment or reemployment protection, improving community medical and health standards, providing social security, and creating a quality and livable living environment [49]. Each policy text reflected the pursuit of community governance to meet the needs of people’s “better life”. Take the Opinions on Strengthening and Improving the Governance of Urban and Rural Communities issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council as an example. The document pointed out that it is necessary to “actively develop community education, establish and improve the community education network integrating urban and rural areas, and promote the construction of learning communities” to improve the level of community education, “support and help residents to cultivate a sense of consultation, master consultation methods, and improve consultation ability” to promote community harmony, and “do a good job in public service matters such as labor and employment, social security, health and family planning that are closely related to the interests of urban and rural community residents” to improve the level of community security and “improve the capacity and level of medical and health services in urban and rural communities” to better meet the needs of the residents for basic medical and health services.

“Diversified tools” are an important implementation guarantee for governance policy. The Marxist philosophical system theory holds that the whole is an organic combination of various parts, and the whole has new functions that the parts do not have [50]. The combined use of policy tools aims to break through the limitations of a single policy tool. Then, the combined use of policy tools aims to achieve the pursuit of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts, which can effectively promote the improvement of community governance and ensure the realization of modernization goals. At present, the community governance tools present one situation dominated by the command-type, which is in line with the urgency of the current community governance. The three-step strategy of national governance modernization and the two-step strategy of grassroots governance modernization require that the modernization of grassroots governance be completed fifteen years before the modernization of national governance. As an important part of grassroots governance modernization, community governance modernization must be completed ahead of grassroots governance modernization. Moreover, the problem of modernization of rural community governance in community governance is more serious. In rural community governance, there are prominent problems such as low quality of organizational leaders, weak leadership in party building, a serious loss of youth, a lack of governance subjects, and a weak economic foundation. The urgency of time and the complexity of community governance require an increase in the frequency of use of imperative policy tools with a large coercive role. However, with the development of community governance, the concept of people-oriented governance continues to penetrate community governance. The increasing awareness of residents’ participation has made community governance not to rely on a single command policy tool and has begun to pay attention to the combination of promoting policy tools such as persuasion, incentive, and capacity building. Command-type tools ensure that the goal of community governance modernization is achieved on schedule. Persuasion-type tools guide behavioral change in communities. Incentive-type tools encourage diverse actors to participate in community governance. Capacity-building-type tools enhance community capacity literacy. Systematic-change-type tools reform anachronistic organizational structures.

Through the analysis of instrumental rationality, value rationality, and purposeful rationality, it is not difficult to find that public policy is endowed with rationality because of the actions of decision makers, but only through the value and function of policy. Urban and rural community governance policies present different value choices due to the value preferences of decision makers, and are reconciled because of policy rationality, promoting the value choices of lower-level governments to be closer and closer to the value preferences of higher-level governments. Similarly, the governance policies of urban and rural communities at different levels and regions also adjust their value preferences due to instrumental rationality, so that the final value choices are closer to the reality of local community governance. It can be seen that (1) there is room for flexibility between policy rationality and value choice. The policy rationally reflects the expectation assumption of decision makers, value selection is the process of establishing and realizing public value, once the policy is generated and implemented, but due to the error between expectations and actual existence, it may make public value deviate from the original intention. If the public value choice remains unchanged, the value rationality of the policy can be retained, but the instrumental rationality is only formal, and the original value choice will basically lose its meaning. (2) There is a bias in the policy rationality of urban and rural community governance. For example, the central government emphasizes the balanced allocation of multiple values, but local planning highlights the values of equality and justice, democracy, and order in community governance, and ignores the values of development and efficiency. (3) The conflict between the value rationality of urban and rural community governance policies is an important reason for the conflict between policy rationality and value choice.

## 5. Conclusions

The study found that community governance policies have a preference for rational choices. At present, “people-oriented” is the value choice of community governance, “better life” is the continuous goal of community governance, and “diversified policy tools” is an inevitable requirement for the implementation of community governance policies. Value rationality, purpose rationality, and instrumental rationality all show diversified development trends. In addition, it was found that the policy rationality of urban and rural community governance has the problem of targeting bias, and the main reason for this problem is the conflict between the value rationality of governance policies, but there is a flexible space between policy rationality and value choice, which can solve this problem to some extent. Therefore, the problem of rational choice of governance policies in urban and rural communities should be solved from three aspects.

First, allow the role of expert think tanks to promote more rational choices of governance policies in urban and rural communities. With the deepening of governance modernization, increasing numbers of expert think tanks have participated in the preliminary investigation and research, decision-making process, hearing, and evaluation of major issues, and promoted the scientific, democratic and rule of law of public policies. Most of the urban and rural community governance policies studied in this paper were major issues (except for the government work report), and if the wisdom of expert think tanks was also widely used, then why was there a conflict between policy rationality and value choice? Therefore, governments at all levels should continue to enhance the intellectual support role of think tanks, so that they can fully understand and objectively evaluate the intentions of political parties and public will, help decision-makers balance value conflicts and reach value consensus in policy formulation, select value structures commonly recognized by value subjects, and realize rational policy expectations. Second, highlight the leading goals and achieve a rational balance of urban and rural community governance policies. In the selection of goals, it is necessary to balance individual demands and public will, and ensure that the value of urban and rural community governance policies has matching policy rationality when choosing the combination of development and efficiency. It is necessary to balance the governance demands of urban and rural community residents with the political demands of the state, and reduce the latter’s intervention or replacement of the former. It

is necessary to establish a dynamically adjusted computing model so that policy rationality can accurately target the complex and diverse governance environment, so as to achieve the dominant governance goals, and also promote the partial realization of other government governance visions. Third, the use of technological empowerment to classify and stratify the tension between policy rationality and value choice. It is necessary to empower the multi-subjects of urban and rural community governance through emerging digital technologies, especially to adjust the distribution, operation, and construction structures of governance power in an hierarchical manner in public policies, so as to ensure that local governments not only abide by the value choices of central policies but also maintain their own unique policy rationality. Then, to release or alleviate the conflict between the two and its possible negative externalities and avoid the “policy failure” of urban and rural community governance.

The question of the choice of value in public policy is a topic of ongoing debate in the discipline of public administration. Overall, this study highlights the important impact of rational choices of community governance policies on community development. More importantly, the current community management was a matter of concern, especially in terms of how to deal with the relationship between the government and the community, such as strengthening government control or enhancing residents’ self-government. Although text coding analysis has its limitations in fully grasping this concept, this study presents a complete view of rational choices for community governance policies and provides a path for further clarification of the relationship between government and community. In addition, this paper used policy texts to interpret the rational game problem of urban and rural community governance, with a relatively simple perspective, and the use of NVIVO software for coding will also be subject to subjective influence. Although the article adopted the method of coding comparison to try to reduce the impact of subjectivity, a difference in coding was still inevitable and needs to be further improved.

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