

NEW DIRECTIONS IN PLANNING
AN ESSAY TOWARDS THE RE-APPRAISAL
OF PLANNING

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Among the cataclysmic changes taking place presently, a large number relate to planning. Planning appeared during the inter-war years as a revolutionary mechanism for accomplishing a great variety of social tasks of varying complexity, magnitude and intensity. During the course of the last eight tumultuous decades, the vicissitudes in the affairs of men, communities and nations have been nearly co-terminus with the ups and downs in the efficacy, effectiveness and appeal of planning. In the social sphere, the modern era has hardly contributed anything which is comparable in its comprehensive coverage and relevance to the theory and practice of social planning, which is, after all, nothing but a consciously organised application of social theory to social management and development. Even Scientific and Technological Revolution (STR) may well be assigned a place somewhat lower than that of planning in being so completely a product of the modern era and having comparatively wider arena of validity, relevance and potential, including that of guiding STR.

It is not implied that there exists a clear-cut set of principles, practices and philosophy of planning which command universal acceptance. Far from it. From the very beginning, the idea of planning has carried with it intense controversies (See, Bibliography). These controversies were concerned with almost every aspect of planning: its meaning, methodology, range and conditions and operationalisation, philosophical and ideological bases, relationship with socio-economic system in general and the state structures and processes in particular, relationship with the market and other methods and instruments of socio-economic organisation and management, relationship with STR, varieties of planning, their international ramifications, etc.

Presently, planning is not facing an intellectual and political environment conducive to its extension and enrichment (Lavoie, 1985). From the times when it was said, "we are all planners now" (Wootton, 1946), we are at a stage when many are talking of a certain type and degree of 'plan weariness' (Arkadie, 1979; Chakravarty, 1986). Different sets of reasons for this transition are given and are too well-known to warrant repetition.

What interests us is that these debates can be used for clarifying various issues concerning planning, and help develop theoretical propositions and operational guidelines for enabling planning to meet new challenges. In other words, the intense polemics over planning can be made to yield a rich harvest of theoretical and operational insights. To begin with, it is our attempt to undertake an exercise of providing an overview of the recent thinking on planning. In the light of this discussion, there follows a critical review of Indian planning experience from the point of view of its methodological and procedural aspects and its relationship with the wider social reality. It may be pointed out that we do not intend to take up the substantive aspects of development planning, *i.e.*, its strategy, priorities, policies, problems of implementation, etc., (Wildavsky, 1973; Chakaravarti, 1986) despite the undoubtedly close intermingling of the methodological and substantive aspects.

I

BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE TRAVERSE OF PLANNING

Not only at a popular level, but even in academic circles, an idealised, simplified concept and theory of planning has come to dominate the debate and guide its actual application (Lewis, 1951). It may be recalled that the roots of planning may be traced back to various utopian theories. Scientific socialism assigned a large and critical role to it, naturally without, in its classical expositions, moving beyond a sketchy, schematic level (Marx, 1972; Hegdus, 1976). The socialist countries adopted planning as an essential counterpart of elimination of private property. The purpose was to make it a means for creating a planned socialist economy for rapid development of social productive forces (Bobrowski, 1966; Bor, 1967). These theories and practices considered comprehensive planning, *ipso facto*, the means of socialisation of production relations and thus for

facilitating an uninterrupted growth of humanistic productive forces (Udehn, 1981).

Some of the theories of planning were, at one level, an offshoot of dirigisme for managing extended reproduction of capitalist economies and rescuing them from the crises of over-production, stagnation, depression and neglect of social consumption (Hayward, 1978). They tended to treat planning as a mechanism capable, *ipso facto*, of overcoming the market failures and the anarchy of decentralised private decision-making or suppressing the autonomy of separate individual decisions, as Dobb put it (1953). After their liberation, the Third World countries too went in for planning for overcoming economic backwardness, accelerating accumulation and shortening the period of the transition to a modern, industrialised economy (Waterston, 1975). It was considered possible to adopt development planning in the Third World based on varying mixes of borrowing from the two historically preceding universes of planning. Not much planned and systematic effort was made to evolve an integrated planning mechanism suitable for development planning in the Third World context (Kaplan, 1973; Seers, 1972). In all the three cases, strong faith in the efficacy of planning fore closed many questions of methodology, adaptation and complex interaction between the objects and subjects of planning.

In all these theories, the economics of planning, or planomics, tended to take an upper hand practically to the exclusion of politics, organisational behaviour, sociological considerations, informational bases of planning, etc. Reliance on current statistics became a substitute for historical analysis (Kabra, 1990; Seers, 1972).

The record of achievements of planning in the socialist countries during their early phases of extensive development (Nove, 1968; Bor, 1967), in the advanced market economies during the post-war era of reconstruction and rapid growth (Hayward, 1978) and in the Third World countries in setting up basic infrastructural facilities, large industries, extensive social services and spreading high technology would certainly do proud to the protagonists of planning.

French planning became a by-word for new synthesis, raising hopes of convergence of major world systems (Hayward, 1978). The resounding post-war successes of continental Europe and Japan were contrasted with the lackluster performance of the British and US economies, thanks largely to the welding together of planning and the private enterprise experimented with by the former to a much

greater extent and systematically compared to the latter (Shonefield, 1965; Watton, 1975). Thus, 1950s and 1960s came to represent the 'golden era' of planning, which to some, appears in retrospect as euphoria over planning.

The 1970s saw the world economy in crisis. Stagflation and intense social distortions became the destiny of the First World (Prebisch, 1981; Rostow, 1978). The Second World was unable to maintain its pace of growth as planning faced difficulties in coming to grips with an intensive phase of development which needed fine-tuning in many ways (Dasgupta, 1989). During the same period the Third World's development dream too was seen to have turned sour. Internationally, the chasm between the rich and the poor widened, and the dependency syndrome deepened as reflected in the domineering policy-level role of multilateral agencies like the World Bank and the IMF. Domestically, persistent poverty, unemployment, inflation and the BDP crises were caught in the throes of intense social and political turmoils (Brandt Commission Report, 1980; Nyilas, 1977).

All these developments were created as failures of planning and interventionism. Under this condition, the ideologies of the market, private enterprise, rational expectations and supplyside economics adopted aggressive postures. But as the 1980s draw to a close, the honeymoon with Reaganomics and Thatcherism seems to be over. But with Eastern Europe and Soviet Union undergoing the pangs of a 'change of course', it is being asked: are we left with any viable and feasible instruments and mechanisms of social organisation and management? While on the one hand, there is a revival of the convergence thesis, on the other hand, the theories of 'end of history' or 'endism' are being propounded (Fukuyama, 1989). In the welter of growing confusion, there is no dearth of purists clinging to their classical positions over the market mechanism and planning respectively. On the contrary, only a limited effort is on to re-examine the issues with a view to learn the lessons at the school of hard knocks.

Such a bird's eye view of the traverse of planning needs to be supplemented by a worm's eye view of what happened at the ground level: it hows and whys. It necessitates a closer examination of how the tryst with planning actually operated which would involve us in a re-examination of its assumptions, contexts, theories and practices, or, in other words, the epistemology, political economy and organisational administrative analyses of planning (Checkoway, 1986).

II

With socialist planning at its glorious beginnings in the mid-thirties and the capitalist economies gasping for breath owing to the great depression, an economic, rational decision-making model of planning (instrumental or formal rationality) for achieving collective goals and replacement of the market mechanism appeared as the panacea. How the practice of economic planning proceeded methodologically in a broadly similar manner in vastly different contexts is a phenomenon whose salience seems to have gone unnoticed for long. Economic planning for building a centralised, collectivist, rational, *ex-ante* coordinated planned economy for achieving rapid growth and structural transformation was adopted by the Soviet Union (Dobb, 1966). In the West, Keynesianism and its post-war descendants sanctioned comprehensive state regulation for growth with stability and near full employment, which had its natural extension in the form of macro-level planning involving critical aggregative variables, large and growing direct economic activities by the state and emergence of a close partnership between the state and the corporate sector (Hayward and Narkiewicz, 1978; Bor, 1967).

Evidently, there are some notable differences as well between centralised and comprehensive planning for the entire economy in a socialist country (use of planning to generate a *planned economy*) and planning of government regulations and interventions in a mixed but predominantly private enterprise economy (either partial planning for regulated reproduction of a capital economy or comprehensive planning by systematic interventions, *i.e.*, planned comprehensive state regulation *versus ad hoc*, partial state regulation (Nizard, 1975). The practice of development planning in the Third World had both elements of heavy borrowing from the experience of transformational planning (*i.e.*, for building a strong, industrialised 'socialist' economy) and reformist planning (*i.e.*, for overcoming the macro-level failures and weaknesses and micro-level anarchy of disjointed, decentralised decision-making) as also introduction of various methodological and procedural innovations (Papanek, 1972). Notwithstanding the differences among these varieties of planning regarding the socio-economic and political contexts and objectives, they acquire striking similarities methodologically, procedurally and in terms of the use of macro models of the economy.

The works of Lewis (1956) and Tinbergen (1963) may be taken

to describe largely similar methodology of economic planning followed in these cases. These plans proceeded in terms of the preparation of perspective, medium-term and annual plans based on an assessment of physical, financial and human resources, and the nature and magnitude of various problems and difficulties facing these economies, leading to the adoption of long-term strategies and perspectives. From these were derived tactical programmes, policies and projects for obtaining the goals laid down by the political authorities in a system of iterative interaction between the central planners and various sectoral, regional and cutting-edge level agencies over the pattern of priorities and resources allocation. Such plans (which substantively are vastly different from each other) take up objectives which are either basically economic or are closely related to the economy, as parameters, and attempt, through various economic techniques, to arrive at formally rational and optimum, *ex-ante* co-ordinated, mutually consistent decisions about the uses of current capacities and creation of new capacities in all their inter-related aspects.

Recognising planning as essentially a political process (Wildavsky, 1973), politics is largely confined to taking the objectives as determined by political authorities. Even in this respect *sui generis* political processes of articulation of interests and conflicts and struggles over these issues and their continuing impact over the entire, continuous planning process are taken as exogenous to the planning process as though different steps in the planning process are watertight compartments. Politics of planning seems to remain confined to a few exclusive steps in the planning process. The rest is taken to be a techno-economic exercise (Hayward, 1975). Basically, the planners are concerned with plan formulation which is supposed to be, at least in theory, a techno-economic exercise by the experts, mainly economists, in close collaboration with the bureaucrats, making use of macro-economic models, growth models, input-output analysis, techniques of project appraisal, programme budgeting, statistical analyses, etc. (Seers, 1972). Even in this phase of planning, systematic use of policy analysis under the framework of planning is a rare occurrence. The relationship between budgeting and planning, particularly in 'mixed' economies adopting partial planning, with accent on the financial aspects (*i.e.*, leaving the power of market forces unchanged in a large measure) and the questions of interaction of the macro-, meso- and micro-factors and processes in a multi-level planning framework are rarely explicitly dealt with by the planners.

This stage is taken to be either immune to politics or the planners and politicians are assumed to enjoy an excellent and inherent rapport. Further, the state and the political processes are assumed to be so powerful and autonomous of civil society that the exercise of plan formulation remains the exclusive domain of the planners, or the planomists, and society may be assumed to be malleable according to the plan. The bureaucrats and various executive organisations of the state are taken to be partners in this process of planning who, whether voluntarily or through a process of value-free collaboration, take a big hand in the preparation of a plan with a view to taking it up for an honest and vigorous implementation. This stage involves critical issues regarding structural, informational, decision-making and operational centralisation-decentralisation, (Kabra, 1972). While many mathematical models regarding these issues were developed, their complex social aspects in their diversity failed to attract attention. This leads to a situation in which implementability of a plan on the general social plane is taken for granted: plans formulated may well be treated as plans implemented or implementable. The role of the organisations and personnel of the state is merely that of loyal and neutral executants. Such was taken to be the voodoo of planning (Hayward, 1975 and 1978; Nizard, 1975; Wildavsky, 1973; Lindblom, 1975). Little wonder that these plans could not go far in assuring an operationally relevant link between plan formulation and plan implementation--a link endowed with the logic of planning (Kabra, 1984; Hayward, 1975). The latter is generally taken to be the forte of the bureaucrats. Bureaucracy is involved in various secondary, subsidiary positions in the process of plan-formulation but is taken to play the leading role in implementing the plans formulated by the planners. A combination of expert planner and effective bureaucrat to integrate these phases of planning is rare indeed. In any case, the two tasks are rarely taken as organically interlinked activities, requiring planned decision-making (Nizard, 1975).

One common feature in both the steps in the planning process in its popular and prevailing practice is that both are treated as outside the sphere of politics, social conflicts and value-judgements or of organisational dynamics, cultural and social processes, international influences, etc. In fact, the seriousness of the issues, problems and challenges at the implementation. The programmes, projects and policies chosen for the realisation of the 'ends' of planning are handed over to the 'executants' or functionaries, assuming that

implementability is not a constraint and social, political, cultural and organisational processes do not interfere with it. It is a neat world of strict division of the labour of planning in which the politicians determine the objectives of planning, the planomists formulate the plans and various administrative agencies carry out the plans so formulated.

Each set is supposed to be leading an independent existence in its demarcated sphere. Not only that: the pursuit of such collective, consciously chosen, *ex-ante* coordinated and consistent plans is basically determined by making use of existing and accepted mainstream economic theory to near exclusion of or secondary, marginal utility of other branches of expertise and knowledge.

Plans are supposed to be teleological--praxiological exercises and, therefore, concerned with choice, purposes, alternatives, conflicting wills and conscious determination of the course of action--both present and future (Ackoff, 1973). In defining the alternatives, possibilities, feasible lines of policy and action, planning has to be based on organised social knowledge (Checkoway, 1986). It is, therefore, very important how theoretical knowledge is brought to bear on the tasks of planning. For a long time, the theoretical bases for it have been derived largely from a reductionist methodology of analysing causal relationship among discrete elements of a mechanical world (Wildavsky, 1973), which came to dominate scientific enquiries during the machine age coinciding with the first industrial revolution.

Such a world view and theory of knowledge failed to recognise the essential organic and collective nature of the social phenomena which cannot be dealt with by a mechanical aggregation of its individual components. Thus, planning has to supplement its intellectual equipment by means of an expansionist, synthetic approach which in its systemic logic recognises society to be much more than a mere aggregation of causally-linked individual components. Such a view "permitted functional, goal-seeking and purposeful behaviour" as "choice of ends and means is the essence of goal-seeking and purposeful behaviour" (Ackoff, 1973). As contrasted to the prevalent practice of planomics, such an understanding of planning implies choice of *both* ends and means in their interrelated aspects all along the line.

It came to be realised that plans which remain glued to inactivism, reactivism or preactivism cannot do justice to the interactivist essence of planning with its five essential phases: (1) determination

of the short-run and long-run objectives and ultimate desiderata; (2) specifying the course of action, programmes and policies; (3) determination of the quantity and types of resources in the aggregate and for each specific means; (4) determination or organisational requirements and design; and (5) designing the implementation and control and planning decisions, or planning of the planning function (Ackoff, 1973). Without going into the details of this kind of planning, it can be said that such planning adopts the principles of participation, coordination, integration and continuity so that an adaptive-learning system of planning can be developed. As Ackoff puts it, "the plan is to seek to control, but planning itself must be controlled" (Ackoff, 1973.)

It can be seen from the above that putting excessive faith on the macro and micro principles of economics cannot be much help in various phases of planning except in the second and third phases listed above (Seers, 1972). Planning is concerned with control and attempt towards a systematic transition to a desired future with the help of various social institutions as they exist and as they can be modified (Gunstern, 1976). Hence, the theoretical support system required for it cannot be found in narrowly focused mainstream economics but, on the contrary, requires an integrated social science approach (Kabra, 1990).

It is true that the advances in integrated social science capable of providing adequate means for systematic and planned use of planning have not gone far enough. However, essential rudiments of such theories have evolved and, it is only in the course of the application of these principles to the processes of planning, that they can acquire the requisite sharpness, relevance, finesse (Neufville, 1986). It means planning has to concern itself with both arithmomorphic and non-arithmomorphic variables and, in addition to the usual scientific methods, make use of intuitive continuum too as a way of dealing with practical issues arising in the process of defining operational choice-space and consensus-building over various aspects of planning (Dasgupta, 1989).

This is an essential requirement more specifically for the effectiveness of multi-level planning. Its concern cannot be, as is the wont, confined to seeking *ex-ante* precise consistency, as "an absolute necessity" (Seers, 1972), except for initiating systematic policies and action for overcoming anticipated bottlenecks and wastages. After all, for seeking social cohesion--(a more pressing task) planning

would have to move away from exclusive or excessive concern with abstract exercises of mathematical optimisation and formal rationality based on supposedly concrete and precise data and forecasts, to practical tasks of consensus building and reduction of the areas of arbitrariness and making explicit the criteria of decision-making. It means "Planning clearly represents a potential solution" (Watson, 1975), and it would be naive to treat it as an automatic political solution capable of realisation in practice once one is able to prepare a plan. In fact, it is essential to emphasise that planning is not the same thing as writing a plan or that every country which prepares and publishes a formal plan in a planned economy (Seers, 1972; Hayward, 1975; Wildavsky, 1973). Such multi-dimensional and practical views, as against esoteric, abstract and economic view of planning, or totally defeatist and misleading views (Wildavsky, 1973) would help impart an effective dose of rationality, both at substantive and formal levels in keeping with the constraints of an imperfect, uncertain and inadequately understood world. Such rationality has to be multi-dimensional, neither just Paretian, nor based on minimax principle alone. But there have to be "several levels of rationality for different aspects of society" (Wildavsky, 1973), including legal norms, social structures, political rationality, etc. Before one takes up issues which are critical to effectiveness of planning and removal of the unnecessary baggage of false theories, "seductive scientism" and determinism arising from and associated with planning (Kaplan, 1973), it may be essential to answer two questions. One, what is the realistic agenda of planning in the sense of limits to human collective endeavours for creating a desired and desirable future in a systematic and controlled manner? Following from this, one may also ask another question, why has planning come in for so severe criticism that the planning enthusiasts seem to be developing cold feet.

No amount of understanding of social processes in their historical contexts, both at the aggregate and micro levels and their interaction can be so complete and accurate as to make human and social behaviour so predictable and malleable as to enable planning to become an instrument for the creation of a future entirely according to society's collective and conscious choices and rational, *ex-ante* co-ordinated decisions. Then, one wonders how far is it possible, politically, technocratically and bureaucratically, to make the 'collective' choices really reflect the common consensus and interests through collective planning. Many have expressed their scepticism on these

scores (Nizard, 1973; Ackoff, 1973; for a definitive rejection of planning on such grounds, see, Wildavsky, 1973).

For one thing, the control over nature acquired through scientific and technical progress is far from adequate in vesting complete control of the future in the hands of men in society. Then, it is naive to assume such a degree of social harmony as would facilitate the acceptance of a shared vision of planned future and power and control in the hands of the state to be able to translate it into reality. Various social conflicts and struggles continue over and through planning. Any plan is largely a reflection of a particular balance of forces as it operates in society over a given period of time and planning is continuance of politics by other means. This balance of power itself is in a flux. Efforts through planning are, among other things, directed towards maintaining and strengthening as well as changing a prevalent pattern of power balance and the resultant social choices. Planning can be used both for change and continuity and for change with continuity.

Thus the instrument of planning, usable for creating a future according conscious social will and desire, has to respect many objective constraints and very many conflicts about the control over the planning process itself. Then, there are the questions of inevitable uncertainties giving sudden and uncontrollable turns to the course of social development. An operational plan would not worry about arithmetic precision and tight control, snuffing out initiative and spontaneity and constant but systematic adjustment to the unexpected and sudden changes altogether. In many areas and situation, it is basically a unified, common framework in which decisions are made by various entities. It would be happy to provide broad, directional guidance which also enables the plans to be consistent with and provide a method to deal with and channelise individual (organic or legal) initiatives and constant creative responses.

Thus planning is neither demiurge nor a fatalistic and passive submission to the unfolding pattern of evolution. It is a collective exercise to reduce uncertainties, channelise spontaneous efforts (by controlling their autonomy), redirect social efforts towards desirable ends and attempt to put order into conflicting pulls and pressures. In sum, it attempts to curb arbitrariness, discipline decision-making and implementation and introduce increasing dose of objectivity but within the framework of objective possibilities, social processes of

politics and behavioural patterns of the entities involved; including, most importantly, of the collective common perspective of society. As Hayward puts it, "Planning is neither a prelude to totalitarianism nor the painless panacea for the ills of industrial capitalism. It requires changes not merely in public policies but in the way they are arrived at and carried into effect" (Hayward, 1975, p. 20).

The enthusiasm generated by the understanding of aggregate economic processes and their reasonably precise quantification in the form of input-output tables, estimation of technological coefficients and quantification of structural and behavioural relationships along with the 'socialisation' of the means of production and the imposition of unified social and/or state control created the belief that the economy can be made to move largely according to the macro economic projections of the plan. With large corporations working in close collaboration and rapport with the state, largely similar results were expected even without state ownership of the means of production (Watson, 1975) or, by following Shonefield's 80:20 relationship between the public and the private sectors (Nizard, 1975). In the socialist countries the adoption generally of closed economy models, or rigidly controlled interaction with the rest of the world, further strengthened the faith in the capacity of the planners to make the economy develop strictly according to the plan.

This way of looking at things also assigned a decisive influence to the economic factors in determining the non-economic aspects of life in terms of certain interpretations of the theory of historical materialism (Lange, 1962). Thus the capacity planning to successfully undertake economic development either in an institutional framework which did away with the private ownership of the material means of production and decentralised private decisions-making or, through the agency of large and powerful public corporations and agglomerate capital working in close symbiotic relationship with various state agencies brought about a corporatist environment (Panitch, 1980) or through state capitalism was taken to constitute both the means and the condition for effective determination of the course of social development (Clarkson, 1978). It should be clear from the foregoing that such excessively economic, deterministic and optimistic views of planning, capable of totally controlling the elemental forces of spontaneity in social development, and the deterministic, independent influence of the economic instance in these processes are over-simplified and misplaced.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, one may also bring in the role of technological change and the processes of technological advancement in reducing the controllability of social development. Despite staid ownership of the means of production in the existing socialist countries and the symbiotic equation between the centres of private economic power and the state power in most of the Second and the Third World countries, planned, endogenous, social determination of the future course of STR has not come about. The STR continues to remain largely under the aegis of large private companies of the West. In fact, the technological leaders of the First World who spearheaded successive industrial revolutions under the auspices of their increasingly concentrated private sector continue to exercise decisive influence on the course of technological evolution not only for their own countries but in the Second and the Third World as well. This makes for imitative, elemental development and reduces the intensity and scope of planning (Bobrowski, 1966) in the sense that plans have to adjust themselves to exogenously given STR.

The socialist countries attempted to catch up with the West for military, cultural, ideological and economic reasons. The Third World too, under the spell of the pursuit of modernisation, laid great emphasis on recreating in its midst the technological experiences and scenarios which the West has already undergone.

Apart from granting an inherent technological edge to the early starting West and, consequently, a certain amount of respectability to its institutions (Senghass, 1985) particularly the large private corporations and the relatively autonomously functioning markets, the univocal pursuit of a similar technological trajectory tended to create conditions reducing the range of availability of options and effectiveness of planning, particularly in terms of the pursuit of an indigenous pattern of development which alone can form the basis for genuine, planned social development. A technological uniformism and universalism tended to limit the options available to planners.

Planning need not be bound within such straight jackets. It has to enlarge the availability of options as well. True, there is an operational limit on the number of options examined in the course of planned decision-making, but planning has to enlarge the vision spatially, temporarily, sectorally and across various aspects of social existence. The parameters of future technological advancement in the Second and the Third Worlds have to emerge in the course of planning endogenously from their own institutional, ecological and

cultural patterns and the pursuit of increasing socialisation of production relations and homogenisation of the conditions of existence. In the First World technology has to rid itself of the dictum that "what is good for General Motors is good for USA". If planning has to succeed even in its limited task of ensuring crises-free, smooth, socially-chosen and environment-friendly extended reproduction of the system. However, the pursuit of technological advancement has been made so overridingly rooted in the dictum that 'the latest is the best' that effective social planning for systematic efforts towards the creation of consciously chosen future cannot really go very far. A pre-determined technological pattern comes to rule the roost, leaving a relatively passive role planning.

Even if such a technological fixation were somehow overcome (a very difficult task indeed), the basic limitation on human capacity to become the architects of their future could persist in the sense that the complex interaction of a variety of factors in the global village cannot be brought under complete, pre-determined human control as ordained by economistic, overcentralised, deterministic theories of planning. The votaries of total decentralisation, upholding the autonomy of such decisions, do not even attempt planning. That is to say, unless the tasks of planning are realistically defined, *i.e.*, planning is not sought to be made an instrument for accomplishing the un-accomplishable, the dreams of social engineering may curb democracy, develop vested interests and stifle creativity without, of course, succeeding in its unrealistic and over-ambitious tasks.

Only the broad contours of social development can be attempted to be planned according to a broad social perspective with reasonable, if subsidiary, place left both for spontaneous individual human initiative and the interplay of various unknown and little known factors in a planned, common, unified and harmonising framework. Thus, the enthusiasm for planning was weakened through long years of experience because of unrealistically high and unrealisably precise tasks imposed on planning, as though it were a mechanical exercise. A consequence of such a mechanical approach is to translate plan-objectives into precise, quantitative targets and judge the 'success' of planning in terms of the correspondence between the 'targets' and 'achievements' (Wildavsky, 1973) .

This brings us to the second question. The operation of planning involves three distinct elements:

1. the methodology and process of planning (method and process);
2. the substantive social, economic strategies, programmes and projects decided and implemented as a part of planning (content); and
3. the choice of planners, institutions and instruments, through which the first two choices are made and carried out (Agencies and Institutions).

It is true that there is a continuous interaction among these three factors, and they cannot be taken to be totally independent of each other. However, often times the failures of planning are ascribed primarily to the failures of the very instrument and methodology of planning rather than that of the specific socio-economic model, strategy and policies or of the choice of planners, institutions and instruments.

Thus, in the developed and developing market economies as well as in the industrialised and industrialising socialist countries many of the supposed failures of planning may well be the result of the strategy of development or regulation. For example, the absolutisation of the practice of relatively greater allocation for department of industries in the socialist countries; or a highly centralised model of functioning under the party bureaucracy in the name of social control (Kornai, 1959; Lange, 1965) may well be the reasons for the disillusionment with planning rather than with the methodology and process of planning as such.

This kind of separation of disparate elements is essential simply because there need not be, either on theoretical or operational grounds, any necessary association between any specific choices regarding these three sets of factors. One must clearly distinguish between the *contingent and the necessary* aspect of planning.

These are areas in which a number of options are available. One can cite examples of failures of substantive socio-economic strategies and models or of instruments and institutions from the developed and developing market economies as well which may have little to do with the fact whether one went in for planning or for the elemental, spontaneous, *ad hoc* and uncoordinated path of development.

The point which is sought to be made is that planning methodology does not uniquely and necessarily prescribe any specific choices regarding substantive socio-economic model or strategy of development and regulation. Nor does it prescribe any specific set of institutions and agencies like what has come to be known as the 'command economy', centralisation, continuing with the growing power of large private or public corporations and MNCs, the formal democracy of the Western variety or the bureaucratically controlled state structure, or a supposedly Weberian bureaucracy as essential tools of plan formulation and implementation. Thus any retrospective evaluation of the experience of planning must make a clear distinction between these three aspects and attempt to apportion responsibility where it belongs rather than dump it all together at the doors of planning.

On this basis, it is clear that planning is not necessarily associated with any particular role of the state, markets, centralisation, private enterprise, bureaucracy or even the overall social formulation. After all, the experience of planning during the twentieth century has shown a great deal of diversity in each of these respects: analysts have written about 'family of plans' (Bobrowski, 1966). This is not to say that planning is compatible with or feasible in any and every situation and institutional complex and imposes no conditions for its operationalisation. For instance, it has been argued that a certain size and nature of public ownership of the means of production or role of the state, are essential for effective planning (Shonefield, 1965; Bettleheim, 1959). Contrary to the formulation of Robbins, a *laissez faire* economy remains incompatible with planning (Robbins, 1963).

The point essentially is to deny, within broad ranges, unique and exclusive co-relations and to stress the availability of many meaningful choices and options. There is an essential element of instrumental and institutional neutrality or relative autonomy which planning possesses along with many other categories (Wiles, 1977), and hence its catholicity. False identification of planning with centralisation and statisation or the so called mixed economies and crises or persistence of poverty and social imbalances or rapid economic growth are the outcomes of imprecise and confused thinking and false associations. This may, to an extent, be inherent under the impact of 'ideological' cleavages and resulting controversies or the result of the manner in which professional social sciences have emerged and grown

during the last couple of decades. Be as it may, it is imperative to rescue planning from a lot of false theories and motivated onslaughts. Our attempt in surveying somewhat sketchily the debates over various issues of planning has only hinted at the dark and awkward corners and thus hopefully, help identify the directions along which one may reach the end of the tunnel.

III

In the light of the foregoing, it may be possible to briefly advance some propositions regarding the disfunctionalities and limited effectiveness of planning in India or the inability to go beyond formal planning (Kabra, 1988). The issues concerning the development strategy and its tactical manifestation in the plans in the form of medium-term programmes, policies and projects and the arrangements and choices concerning institutions of the economy, society and polity, despite their close interaction with the planning process do not directly concern us in this discussion. Our formulations are, as far as possible, confined only to the issues concerning the methodology, principles, agencies and procedures of planning.

Comprehensive economic planning for development in a democratic federal polity is how Indian planning is generally characterised. It has been an economistic exercise, though, naturally there are certain features of the planning process which are specific to the statutory, social, political, administrative and cultural conditions prevalent in India. Many standard and authoritative accounts of the planning process in India are available (See Planning Commission, 1975; Reddway, 1962; Administrative Reforms Commission, 1967). Hence, here we need not attempt to recapitulate it.

It may also be recognised that the task of introducing planning in India was a difficult one, in view of the backwardness of the economy, the colonial legacies, existence of a very large unorganised sector and underdevelopment of social theories, for guiding the process of instituting the planning process. That is to say, a number of criticisms now being advanced are possible simply because we have the advantage of hindsight. The Planning Commission, set up by the Union Government, is the main nodal agency for planning, of course, without any direct responsibilities for implementation and participation in the current management of the economy. The function of the Commission were set out in a government resolution, "whose signifi-

cance was not sufficiently perceived at the time" (Tarlok Singh, 1979). The resolution spell-out the two major functions of the planners, viz., assessment of the resources and the determination of the priorities and conditions conducive to development. It confirms its economic and growth-oriented tasks" (Planning Commission, 1975). An economist closely associated with planning has revealed: "At this stage there was no clear view of what was meant by a plan. It was only at a much later stage, after an exercise had been done on the preparation of a six-year *programme* for the Colombo Plan and instructions had to be sent to the states to draw up their own programmes that the idea of a Five Year Plan became concrete. Still, later on, on the very day in July 1951 that the Draft outline had to be signed and a title had to be set, that the view was taken that the plan should be described as the First Five Year Plan, meaning thereby that other plans of like nature would follow, that the various five year plans would constitute an unbroken continuum" (Tarlok Singh, 1979, first emphasis ours). It is evident how 'planned' was the introduction of medium-term development planning!

It has been further noted that "Sardar Patel prevailed once again in deleting a passage from the original draft that would have defined the purpose of planning as "the progressive elimination of social, political and economic exploitation and inequality, the motive of private gain in economic activity or organization of society and the anti-social concentration of wealth and means of production" (Frankel, 1978). That such important factors were consciously excluded from the domain of planning exercised influence both on the planning process and methodology (insofar as it has to work within the constraints of the prevailing, given institutional pattern and its elemental evolution) and the design of development strategy. True, there have been attempts at institutional change in India during the planning era. But there is little evidence that a coherent and planned view of the institutional pattern has been taken. A perusal of a paper (Ganguli, 1955), dealing with the institutional implications of planning, prepared by way of a background paper for the Second Plan in mid-fifties, would bear out our contention. (For details, see, Tarlok Singh, 1979, pp. 6-9).

This factor seems to have, *inter alia*, played a part in preventing Indian planners from undertaking planning of plan-implementation (Kabra, 1984). As also what may be called the planning of the planning function. It is true that "Planning everywhere has been

developing gradually" and "more complex forms of planning accompanied by more elaborate and sophisticated methods used to appear only after a period of time" (Bobrowski, 1966). However, the evolution of this kind is predicated upon conscious and systematic initial choice of the planning agencies, their relative roles, methodology of its various inter-related steps, methods of obtaining feedback and its redesigning, etc.

In Indian conditions, it is imperative that planning has to be a multi-level, multi-stage, multi-agency exercise. The planning machinery at the centre, states and district levels and for large organised private sector, decentralised, informal and pre-capitalist sectors and agencies concerning various social services and other social institutions has to be instituted and its internal relations and relations with the existing non-planning decision-making and functional apparatus have to be clearly spelled out and made known to each agency. They have to have a distribution of control over resources commensurate with their roles and responsibilities. Without satisfying these pre-conditions, an iterating process of *ex-ante* coordination cannot be operationalised. Such an exercise has to strike a balance between various contending social forces for cohesive functioning. Obviously these issues cannot be left unspecified or subject to conventions for *ad hoc* functioning.

There is little evidence that the planning function under a multi-level planning framework has been defined so far or has taken a well-defined, well-known and generally accepted form, let alone the question of its appropriateness. Various agencies interpret their roles and relationships in many different ways. The actual functioning model seems to be quite *ad hoc* and volatile, according to the changing power and influence of the agencies and personalities involved. As a result, many agencies like state governments, local administrations and organised private sector seem to have no common understanding of their roles in the planning process leading to disfunctional centralisation disjointed policies and actions, planning process. Even with respect to and lack of plan-consciousness, let alone having an effective hand in the planning of public investment and outlays, *i.e.*, subjecting the budgeting and financial management of the public sector to the logic of planning, there has been little advance (Minhas). The planners do not seem to have accepted the need for involving the 'informal sector' entities in the planning process, as various schemes of democratic decentralisation and 'grass-root' planning seem to have ignored this aspect.

It was not simply the role of some political forces which and prevented planning from undertaking certain key tasks and adopting flexible, integrated and well-defined methodologies. The politics of Indian planning has received some attention, (Chatterji & Sen, 1988) but it either gets excessively involved or lost in the larger question of the nature of state power and processes, or is reduced to analyses of the controversies on centre-state relations, and some aspects of development strategy like public vs. private sector, industrial policy, rural vs. urban-bias, etc. These debates do not seem to have been concerned with the politics of planning process, methodology and agencies. A number of factors regarding the role of the states, the organised large-scale industry, administrative organs below the level of the state, etc., were neither specified nor the existing arrangements regarding financial and administrative relationship between these agencies were considered adequate, may be with marginal adjustments, even from the planning angle.

It is true that we have adopted planning in a democratic system of elected governments. However, the implications of democratic planning cannot remain confined to or come to an end with the process of planning being in the hands of a democratically elected government. The real thrust of democratic planning is to ensure that an endogenous, self-determined pattern and process of planning and development has to emerge through the active involvement of the people. This is something which requires a good deal of democratisation of decision-making and debureaucratisation of functioning which increases the voice of the people as determining forces in the planning process right from the block level up to the national level. Our planning process remained content with formal and empty process of people's participation. The effective role in planning has been confined largely to either experts or bureaucrats or a combination of the two or, as Peter Self puts it, 'econocrats' (1975); and indirectly to the large resource holders. The role of all these 'planners' is supplemented by a liberal sprinkling of highly motivated external experts (Rosen, 1985; Papanek, 1972). The politicians have remained content basically with rhetoric, having little real autonomy in the case of the power of strong socio-economic groups. One need not go here into the complex social and historical processes which have been responsible for the inability to systematically plan even the planning function, let alone development planning as a whole. Our point is that this kind of planning which was, at a rigorous analytical level,

treated as "programmes of economic development" rather than planning (Bettleheim, 1959) has seriously constrained the effectiveness of planning and introduced a number of dysfunctionalities and negated the expectations entertained from planning.

In view of the foregoing, it is clear that the use of planning in our country was on a rather limited scale in terms of the intensity, scope and range of planning. Even though the purpose was to introduce development planning, it could be seen that most of the variables critical to development were left out of the scope of planning. This is correct even for many strictly economic variables like processes of price formation: covering both the question of relative prices and the general price level (Tarlok Singh, 1979). Employment too was not made a direct plan variable. Distribution of income and wealth was also exogenous to planning. With prices, employment and existing distribution of income and wealth being exogenous to the plans, the future pattern of distribution of income and wealth also became exogenous. How critical these factors are to the determination of the private sector-led rate and pattern of industrial growth can be seen from frequent slow-down of industrial growth and non-realisation of the socio-economic objectives (like employment equity, self-reliance, etc.) of industrialisation. Fiscal policy and administered price policy were too feeble and torn between various unplanned forces to impart a modicum of planning element to prices and income distribution. The point is not that the plans did not intend to influence these variables or that, in fact, these variables were left uninfluenced by the decisions of the planners. The point is simply that planned method of influencing both the pattern and rate of change of these variables were not evolved in a planned manner. As Tarlok Singh has demonstrated, medium-term planning had its "preoccupations with Five Year Plans and inadequate in the area of perspective long-term policy". This was compounded by largely undefined relationship between planning and current economic policy, as "in our focus on Five Year Plans and on investment and growth we had failed to correlate the short-term management of the economy with medium-term planning" (Tirlok Singh 1979). It is also clear that we are not speaking of a system in which these variables have to be fully and totally determined by the plan either in a centralised or a decentralised manner. We are only speaking of conscious and purposive determination of the broad direction, *i.e.*, the pattern and rate of change, of these variables under the influence of and accord-

ing to the logic of the plan.

As a result of leaving prices, employment, income determination, exchange rate, etc., largely to the interplay of elemental market forces, emanating both from within the country and outside, even the planned variables like rate of savings and investment, rate of growth and allocation of investment among sectors, states and between the private and public sector moved in directions uncontrolled by the plans. These factors put stress on the quality of plan performance.

In view of the above, it is unrealistic to expect the course of reality to move strictly according to planned quantitative targets in a precise manner. But even qualitatively and directionally, one would find in India large-scale divergence between the *plan objectives* and the actual course of development. For example, the ten-point critique of planning, contained in the "Approach to the Eighth Five Year Plan, 1990-95" (Planning Commission, 1990), is a clear and eloquent evidence of wide and random divergence between the plan objectives (not just targets) and actual results. However, it is possible for one to argue and on both good theoretical and empirical grounds that what went on under the name of planning had very little to do with real element of national planning (Arkadie, 1979). We essentially remained a market economy largely going about its spontaneous path of growth in an elemental manner with some weak attempts at the use of comprehensive national investment and public expenditure planning as an overall coordination mechanism for multi-faceted state intervention, mostly directed towards stepping up the rate of accumulation.

It has been pointed out time and again that the most critical variable for development planning in a country like India is not so much the planning of public outlays/investment but the preparation of a consistent and comprehensive policy and forecasting framework in which individual, regional, sectoral and macro national decisions can be taken. It means centralised investment planning and allocations were insufficient for ensuring planned development of India. There was a greater necessity for systematic and planned policy formulation which would make the plans a consistent framework for different policies and programmes for bringing about coordination between different decentralized decisions both in the public and private sectors and for increasing integration of the unorganised sectors, with the organised sectors (Gadgil, 1967; Parikh, 1986). It means the planning process has also to become an exercise for bringing into

existence an increasingly integrated and homogenous economy and society. We have seen above how our planning was wanting in long-term perspective and the issues correlating it with current economic management were never fully considered in our planning exercise.

One wonders if even now there is an adequate realisation of these issues. Most of the debates over planning, whether about method and process, or about substantive strategy and policy issues, are largely within the framework which accepts the basics of the present planning process. It means a basic critique going to the roots has not been able to become the focus of mainstream debate. In this context, it is significant to note that the approach to the Eighth Five Year Plan, entitled *Towards Social Transformation* states that the new approach which envisages decentralisation of the planning process, "involves not only re-orientation of the focus and priorities of planning, but also in its *process and mechanisms* (Planning Commission, 1990, emphasis added).

Since we have already discussed a few aspects of the new directions in planning in the foregoing sections which imply a realistic operational, and analytically balanced concept of planning, responsive in its potential and possibilities to the real life situations of modern societies (which bases planning in an integrated social science framework), we need not go over the ground again in the specific context of India. Our contention is that these formulations and their implications are broadly applicable to the Indian conditions as well. We wish to conclude by underlining the criticality of these issues in the context of the challenge of the accumulated backlog of contradictions and unfinished tasks as we move towards the end of the twentieth century.

IV

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

Given the complexity and vastness of the subject and its theoretical and empirical intricacies, particularly in view of the different varieties of planning which have been experimented with under different socio-economic systems, for a variety of different tasks and under many different conditions and compulsions, it is quite likely that the discussion on various aspects of planning gets mixed up, leading to futile debates and controversies which generate more heat than light.

The basic problem is that the debate should specify its universe of discourse, the sense in which the concepts are used and the manner in which theoretical and empirical issues are raised. In other words, some questions concerning planning belong to more than one paradigm and some issues belong to a specific paradigm while still others are inter-paradigm, comparative issues.

Given our concern with development planning in countries like India, it may be useful to leave out of our discussion issues concerning comprehensive transformational planning giving rise to a planned economy. That is, questions of planning under existing socialisms, and the related issues may not form a part of our discussion, though careful, guarded and precise references to lessons from the experience of socialist planning, relevant for the Third World countries, may be made in the course of arguments. However, the appropriateness and applicability of such comparisons would require explicit demonstrations.

Though the experience of planning in Western market economies is also not directly relevant, but certainly has some relevance to us as ours is also a market economy with the co-existence of both public and private sectors and market and plan-based allocation of resources. However, in such discussions, one should take into account the significant differences in planning for ensuring regulated reproduction of private enterprise market economy and planning for development in countries with limited organised sector, legacy of colonialism, vast agricultural sector, late entry into the sphere of internationally inter-dependent industrialization and pervasive underdevelopment and the consequent unequal bargaining power.

Thus one important issue for discussion is whether the methodological aspects of planning in developed market economies hold any lesson for the methodology of planning in the Third World countries like India, particularly with respect to planning covering the MNCs operating in the Third World and the large organised industrial sector, with a high degree of concentration.

A very significant issue which needs discussion is that regarding the role of political factors and politics in planning. Have we to or can we keep planning insulated from politics? Or, politics in planning should come to an end with the determination of the objectives of planning? Or, in various forms politics has to get reflected at every step and turn of planning? If so, what are the implications of the alternatives in this respect from the point of view of ensuring the

scientific character of decision-making and implementation, which is essential from the point of ensuring the essence of planning as a preferred social mechanism? Is planning an alternative to market mechanism and hence inconsistent with market processes and/or relations, particularly in countries like India with inadequately developed, segmented markets, leaving millions either out of the framework of markets or keeping them just peripheral to it, by way of parts of proto-markets.

Is planning essentially an economic phenomenon, concerned with resource allocation, investment, production, etc.? Or does it cover the main elements of the social processes in their organic unity? Does planning replace market by bureaucracy or makes use of both, along with other instruments, agencies, institutions in order to make people take a crucial hand in determining their affairs? Has an excessively economistic or protectionist view of planning distorted the practice of planning and unwittingly made for its bureaucratisation?

Does planning involve a critical minimum of centralisation? How for is planning consistent with decentralisation? What is the nature of such decentralisation and what are the devices for ensuring such a decentralisation? Indian experience both at the centre and at the level of the states may be highlighted.

Can countries with large market economies and informal sector which have state and administrative structures instituted during the colonial period succeed in their attempts to define the planning functions in an operationally meaningful manner at the very outset of the institution of the planning process? What are the difficulties, limitations and problems faced in this exercise and what are the practical via-medias available in this respect? How for do existing economic, political and social theories facilitate planning, particularly in view of their origins in non-planning contexts?

Is it possible to plan not only projects and investments but also policies, particularly policies covering not only the economic sphere but also social, political and cultural spheres? Even in the economic sphere, given the highly differentiated nature of the economy, is it possible to plan incomes, prices and wages policies, informal sector policies, external policies, policies regarding social services and infrastructure and policies regarding various markets along with their imperfections? What is the availability of information, expertise and possibilities of compatibility of such open, glass-bowl policy making

processes with the compulsions of democratic polity in a highly inequitable society? In general, if development is not just growth of output but refers to social transformation in a wider sense, does not the use of planning for this purpose imply that the socio-political processes of such transformation can operate consistently and systematically as is implied in the use of planning process for such purposes, rather than through the struggles and manoeuvres typical of real politics?

The question of the relationship between concentrated economic power, the on-going processes of concentration and centralisation and planning for social transformation need examination, because it also implies centralisation of decision-making outside the public control: Does such concentration in private hands place a limitation on the objectives of planning in order to make planning both an instrument to change as well as continuity? Is it fair to criticise planning's limited success in achieving social and cultural objectives *vis-a-vis* the narrowly defined economic activities when it has remained concerned largely with the economic factors?

Assuming that systematic planning includes 'planning of plan implementation', questions regarding the nature and role of public functionaries and experts required for such purposes, their availability, inherent character, the power which flows from such roles and expertise, need thorough examination? How far are such factors consistent with people's participation in development planning? Does it imply that instead of dealing with the real nature and role of bureaucracy and technocracy, planning assumes a certain idealised variety of bureaucracy? If such a bureaucracy is not available, or cannot be brought into existence, as a pre-condition for the adoption of planning, how far can one use planning itself as a mechanism for throwing up the kind of bureaucracy and technocracy which would further the goals of planning and democratise its content?

Given the fact that in large countries like India, there are state governments, local governments and a Central Government and there are many large interest groups, how does one ensure an effective, coordinated and consistent multi-level planning system which ensures effective reconciliation of conflicting interests leading to consensus-building and yet allows the various agencies involved to serve the interests of their constituents? What are the structural, political, local, economic and sociological requirements of this kind of effec-

tive multi-level planning?

Planning has to be a fairly long-term, continuous exercise. Thus a very important aspect of planning is institutionalisation of the mechanism for monitoring and evaluation so that systematic "learning by doing" can take place. One question in this connection needing some discussion is: How to differentiate between the *contingent* and the *necessary* aspects of planning? This question needs to be examined with respect to the process and methodology of planning as also the agencies and institutions essential for undertaking the task for planning.

How far can one take planning to be a fairly neutral, technical mechanism which can be useful for a variety of purposes under different socio-economic conditions? What are the essential socio-economic pre-conditions for the use of planning as a social mechanism for the attempts to democratically control and direct social development? Or, is it an instrument of 'democratic swindle', used by the powers that be to stabilise their socio-economic rule?

Can we elaborate the nature of counter-vailing processes in the context of the nature and possibility of centralisation/decentralisation in highly differentiated societies? How can we use planning as an instrument for reforming and developing social institutions, values, attitudes, etc? Should we not raise a basic question regarding the extent to which human beings in society can be able to control their future, particularly in the Third World underdeveloped countries which are buffeted by the forces originating in the more powerful, if not more developed, countries?

In the light of such discussion, would one like to speculate about the inherent degree of effectiveness which planning can have or cannot have in meeting the challenging task of removing poverty, creating full employment (that is ensuring the right to work) and creating an egalitarian society?

Discussions on all the issues raised above and, on issues which are not raised but are considered pertinent, may well draw upon the critical review of Indian planning experience during the last four decades, particularly in view of the availability of a large number of studies dealing with such questions.

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