

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING - ISSUES AND REALITIES

Introduction

“The urban population in the Asian and Pacific region between 1991 and 2020 is expected to rise from 991 million to 2.44 billion. This means an additional 1.4 billion people will be living in the urban centers of Asia. Cities already feel this increase tangibly, as they strain to properly service the physical and social needs of their populations. The urban poor feel the pinch as they struggle to feed, clothe and house themselves and to improvise other basic services and amenities like water supply and sanitation. This lack of adequate shelter and services is one of the most pressing challenges confronting most Asian cities on the threshold of the 21st century (HABITAT, 1994)”. This haphazard population growth is exerting a huge pressure on the available existing facilities present in the urban as well as small towns. On the other hand developing countries are making policies in order to solve the problems caused by this rapid population growth. Case after case illustrates the fallacy of development policies relying on short-run economic efficiency of projects productive primarily (or even uniquely) in terms of their contributions to national growth. There is conclusive evidence in many places that such policies create dangerous chronic imbalances between town and country; and more often than not they cause distortions and internal inconsistencies in the structure and pace of development. But most importantly, such short range development strategies generally fail to create sufficient internal markets for the very industries they promote; and while a relatively small segment of a nation derives direct (or indirect) benefit from such “productive” investments, by far the larger part of the nation goes on subsisting outside the mainstream of development. The more common among these imbalances and inconsistencies are:

- i. A critical lag in the developing countries, between the art of economic growth and employment and the rate of population growth;
- ii. A slow range of investment (in the developing countries) in social programs as compared with investments in their economic programs;
- iii. A growing gap between the fast rate at which the redundant and underemployed grow in numbers, and the agonizingly slow rate at which industry can offer new employment; and
- iv. A rapid deterioration of the “quality of life” in most metropolitan agglomerations, while economic productivity and social investment rise at unprecedented rates.

The current world trend towards urbanization is a direct consequence of the steadily building pressure on a land that could offer but mere subsistence already to generations before the present agricultural revolution. But the great concentration of activities and people in major cities and metropolitan belts, and the resulting acute worldwide urban crises, are mainly due to the still prevailing traditions of locating new economic and other development activities, primarily on a project by project basis, considering short-run economic benefits rather than the long range benefit/cost ratios of broader sectoral, regional or national development plans. Essentially economic considerations often lead to an excessive concentration of the requirements of the world market in preference to a nation’s own needs, so much so that the urbanization pattern in a given developing country may well be a direct result of the demand for certain primary goods in a group of highly industrialized countries. Also, when external investment is sought, the already considerable limitations imposed by the concept of economic efficiency are compounded

with political and ideological issues. This then, restricts even further the prospects of using the world's accrued technical, capital and human resources for the establishment of a viable economy in a tranquil world, which in turn would enable the pre-industrial nations to use their own natural wealth and human capabilities for their own benefit.

Development Planning; A Tool to Solve Problems

Jenessen (1992) says that planning is concerned with where to go. However, where we are and where we have been; are questions of low interests for most planners. The former task is intellectually stimulating and has captured the attention of planners and politicians. John Stephenson (1982) points out that 'Planning falls broadly into two categories. First, development planning is the part of the process in which the future of the area in question is mapped out. The plans will be concerned not only with building but also with job opportunities, manpower, education, and transport. Secondly, development control ensures that the construction of buildings and the use to which land and buildings are put conforms to established policies. It additionally serves various other purposes, such as ensuring that the surroundings are not unnecessarily spoilt and that public services such as water and sewage are not overloaded'. John Ratcliffe (1985) says that town planning is 'concerned with providing the right site, at the right time, in the right place, for the right people'. Lewis Keeble (1969) defines Town Planning as 'the art and science of ordering the use of land and siting of buildings and communication routes so as to secure maximum practicable degree of economy, convenience and beauty'.

What is Development?

Development may be defined as 'the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of buildings or other land' (Cullingworth, 1988). Development may include all types of buildings, completely new construction, demolition and reconstruction or addition & alteration, whether they are residential, commercial, and industrial or others, they come under the definition of development. For better management, development may be thought of comprising:

- Land-use planning / control
- Building control
- Transportation planning
- Infrastructure management / development etc.

'Development control is the cutting edge of the land use planning system. It is the mechanism by which planning affects most people and, arguably, could be said to have its most direct effects. The essence of development control is that prior permission is required for most categories of development. Land-use control deals with larger area, whereas building control deals more specifically with the development of individual buildings in more detail (Qureshi, 2003). It focuses on use, area, space and construction details of building. This is a comprehensive requirement, covering all locations and it means that a vast number of development proposals are discussed and decided on "within local planning authorities'.

Above discussion makes it clear that in order to control developments, building byelaws must be framed by the local government institutions and these laws should be enforced with the help of a team of professional Planners. Building control activity requires an understanding of the comprehensive Master Plan of the city. The grant of planning permission involves an

examination of a number of physical, social, economic and environmental aspects of the building site and the neighboring sites.

The recognized purpose of any development is social investment. But human progress is not an automatic consequence of economic growth. To obtain it, a nation must allocate to social development a suitable share of the wealth it produces, and plan for an appropriate distribution of the economic and social benefits it can offer. In this context, a plan is a model for an intended future situation with regard to social and economic activities, their locations and linkages, and the development of requisite land, structures and installations. Viewed from the implementation angle, however, a plan is a program of action and pre-determined coordination of legislative, fiscal and administrative measures designed to achieve the transition from the present situation to that represented by the model. It should be noted that the essential features of both parts of this situation are:

- i. a commitment to improve the human condition through economic development and social change;
- ii. a close integration of socio-economic and environmental development in harmony with an accepted development strategy; and
- iii. complete interdependence between economic, social and environmental planning, and on the other hand, legislative, financial, administrative and political action planning, which, together, indeed amount to comprehensive planning.

REGIONAL PLANNING

As already quite generally practiced, regional planning combines analytical and graphic methods to project economic, social and physical development in a given geographic area, for a given period of time, and presumably also for the benefit of the region's population in addition to and beyond the "national" benefit to which all regions contribute.

The regional plan is also capable of regulating the timing and sequence of execution for specific projects and programs; and projects national linkages and inter-relationships among them. Thus, it may help to bridge the gap between "national development" in terms of "objectives" and the effects on "local communities" in terms of "actual" development. Also, the many services and facilities furnished in a given area by central, local and regional authorities can be so planned on the regional scale as to attract investments from many other sources; and finally, the region offers a framework within which development projects of national significance and those based on local initiative and aspirations can be suitably integrated for mutual benefit of the region and the nation.

Like the input/output method, linear programming, or the critical path method in the economic sphere, regional analysis and regional planning can not substitute themselves for the political process of decision-making. But they can help to conceive a broadly based balance among development projects and programs initiated at the different levels of government by eliminating conflicts in requirements for land and location, or conflicts claims on scarce resources, or conflicts in the pace and sequence of implementation. They can also facilitate the choice of "best" (optimal, most convenient or least opposed) alternative and promote the execution of the adopted course of action. Thus, the region emerges as the physical, economic, social and institutional environment in which development process can react upon each other productively and further both the development of "local economies" and "national development".

Concept of a Region

The reciprocal relationships of economic growth, regional development, urbanization and the human conditions are obvious. As nations continue advancing and as they adopt new technologies and management methods, as new sources of energy (including atomic power), new modes of transportation and new sources of livelihood appear, regional inequalities and urbanization will tend to attain a highly explosive stage. In these conditions, comprehensive regional planning and sufficient investment in social and physical infrastructure at an early stage may help to guide the development of industrial complexes and residential agglomerations, of zones of intensive cultivation and of centers of essential activities into patterns suitably distributing and linking to one another settlements and people, in territorial entities that are cities in the socio-economic sense and regions in the geographic and administrative sense and regions in the geographic and administrative sense. The "city-region" concept suggests itself as a practical approach to the task of moulding an environment in which nature's ecological balance is preserved and its beauty enhanced, in which material growth, human progress and culture can develop and benefit man and community.

Any developing area or "growth pole" can be the starting point. In some cases, the aim may be the concentration required for development. At other times it may be a loosening of urban agglomerates for higher efficiency or simply for obtaining a "human quality of life". The city-region can take any shape and structure that geography, technology and human ingenuity can produce. Its main characteristics, however, should always be total flexibility and a capacity to respond to the human need for dignity, freedom, and continued growth. From a static art of "projecting", regional planning must shift to dynamic "action planning" sensitive to rapid advances in science and technology, fast rising productivity and to the growing amount of resources and time the average citizen will have for leisure, learning and culture. Most of all, what is suggested here is not a prescription or a static image of a glorified "city of the future" but "ground rules" for a dynamic process of balanced socio-economic and environmental development.

Regional Planning; Issues and Prospects

As the concept of development broadens and planning becomes more comprehensive, a question arises: At what level of government (or scale or operation) can the planning of economic, social and environmental development be most suitably integrated? Or, at what levels of government (or scale of operations) can the implementation of development objectives be conveniently programmed in a rational sequence? Recent development experience may provide an answer. Countries with centrally planned economies have gradually supplemented central national with regional territorial planning (in addition to sectoral planning). They did so to overcome difficulties inherent in detailed planning exclusively from the center. In the countries relying on the market mechanism to regulate the economy, planning was traditionally local and urban. These countries too are now expanding the scope of their "master planning" to cover at least the area directly influenced by, and in turn influencing, a given city's development from city proper, to greater city area, to metropolitan region, to megapolis. Thus, starting from opposite planning concepts, the "region" is now accepted by both as a convenient scale for the desegregations and implementation of national plans.

As knowledge about and experience in comprehensive development planning increase, the inadequacy of traditional indices in terms of national averages becomes more and more apparent. Different geographical areas of a country vary with respect to economic, technological

and human resources, the rates of productivity, standard of living, levels of health and education, and their endowment with the essential physical and social infrastructure. Once these regional differences are recognized, national development strategy must try and strike a balance between two extreme positions:

- i. To equalize as soon as feasible the conditions in all areas, conceivably at the expense of total national growth; or
- ii. To favor areas most likely to grow rapidly in the short run, and use the resources so reproduced to bring about progress everywhere in the long run.

Decisions of this kind must, of course be guided by thorough knowledge of alternative courses of action present and their consequences in economic and in human terms.

Conclusions

A few conclusions emerge from the above discussion:

1. The concept of planning is shifting from a predominantly sectoral (economic, industrial, educational, etc.) to comprehensive planning. This does not mean however, planning for all sectors in all detail for all times. Instead, comprehensive planning aims at integrating the different sectoral plans into a coherent whole capable of accommodating and indeed facilitating a productive interaction among related development factors.
2. The regional approach to planning can be an instrument for meaningfully disaggregating the national development plan and its sectoral components into comprehensive regional plans; or a means of aggregating local plans, or a means of aggregating local plans, programs and projects into comprehensive regional development plans; or again a means of implanting new growth poles in strategic locations of underdeveloped regions. In either case, the objectives of national development are being promoted through regional development as an instrument of implementation. However, strategies must blend and effectively combine the inputs from central sources with the development based on local resources, aspirations and action, and they must ultimately benefit the region's people.
3. Regional development is the cumulative effect of a complex system of interacting development process influenced or controlled by governmental and non-governmental interventions and by collective and individual decisions made at the local, the central, and the intermediate (regional) level. These interventions and decisions concern resources located in a given territory and they consequently primarily affect a given group of people.
4. Current regional development concepts, theories and approaches generally assign to the region a subordinate role in the hierarchy of levels at which development is planned and implemented. Instead of being a mere instrument of territorial dis-aggregation of the national plan, or an instrument of aggregation of local developments into more manageable regions for implementation of national plans, comprehensive regional planning will assume in the future a more dynamic role of identifying development possibilities, and stimulating and controlling development in harmony with national goals. Consequently, regional planning bodies will assume greater development responsibilities while central planning and control will correspondingly diminish in importance. At the same time, social; criteria will take their appropriate place in the planning and development of regions (or city regions).

References

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