LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND NATIONAL DECENTRALISED, MULTISTAGE PLANNING PROCESSES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Summary

Planning has arisen from four schools, town planning, economic planning, military planning and business planning. This paper interrogates the first two of these, looking particularly at multilevel decentralised planning processes and how these can contribute to sustainable approaches to poverty eradication. It uses the sustainable livelihoods approach to describe this. Four main types of planning are considered: national development planning, sectoral planning, spatial planning and decentralised planning. Three case studies are reviewed, Ghana, South Africa and Zimbabwe, and these provide

the main focus for the paper, with some references to Uganda, Bangladesh and Latin America.

Lessons are drawn from experience with decentralisation, and a structured approach to looking at the planning roles required at micro-meso-macro levels. There are real tensions in promoting a decentralised planning process, and while there is evidence that it does promote a pro-poor development agenda, it requires political backing and there is a risk of capture by local elites. A significant weakness at present is the lack of systemic planning linkages between the district/local government level and community level. Much work is needed to develop these if real bottom-up planning and empowerment is to be realised.

1. Introduction

The paper looks at multilevel decentralised planning, and the contribution it can make to sustainable development, particularly that focused on the poor. The origins of planning are described in section 1, followed in section 2 by a set of approaches to public sector planning, ranging from national development planning to decentralised planning. Section 3 looks at a range of case studies in Africa, and sections 4 and 5 discuss the implications of these for multilevel planning and poverty.

1.1. The emergence of planning

A plan is defined in the Collins Concise dictionary as " a detailed scheme or method for attaining an objective", a "proposed usually tentative idea for doing something", or " a drawing to scale of a horizontal section through a building taken at a given level" (Collins, 1987). Mintzberg (1994) defines planning in practice as "a formalised procedure to produce an articulated result, in the form of an integrated system of decisions". There is even a reference to a Director of Strategic Planning in Sun Tzu's "The Art of War", originally written some 2400 years ago (Mintzberg, 1994).

These definitions illustrate the four main ways that planning has arisen, from:

- Urban planning
- Economic planning
- Military planning
- Business planning

This paper concentrates on the origin and use of the first two, as part of the development planning process.

Archaeological excavations of ancient cities reveal evidence of some deliberate planning: the arrangement of housing in regular, rectangular patterns and the prominent location of civic and religious buildings along main thoroughfares. This tradition was broadened in the Greek and Roman periods, and then in China, arising from the planning of buildings and towns and military facilities. During the industrial revolution there was massive expansion of urban areas, the development of slum areas, followed by an expansion of the role of the State in providing infrastructure, education and health

services (Goldman, 2000) and in regulating the sanitary conditions and density of tenement housing. A movement then arose for a more comprehensive, long-term approach, and a process of town planning that would examine and control the many forces affecting modern cities. Important steps were taken in the early 20th century to formalize and legalize *town planning*. In 1909 Britain passed a Town Planning Act, which authorized local authorities to prepare "schemes" controlling new development. In 1909, in the United States, the First National Conference on Town Planning was conducted. Most countries in the developed world soon followed (Encarta, 1999).

The Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1918 led to the emergence of centralised *economic planning*, and the creation of an industrialised state through state control of the means of production. During the Great Depression of the 1930s regional and national governments in Western Europe also intervened more forcefully in town planning and to foster economic development in depressed regions. There was a belief that it was possible and desirable to plan comprehensively (DPC, 1999). The United Kingdom appointed special commissioners with wide-ranging powers. Britain, France, the Netherlands, and other European countries carried out extensive public-housing projects. In the United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, under his New Deal programme, established a Public Works Administration to deal with capital improvements, a National Planning Board to coordinate long-range development, and a programme for greenbelt towns.

Following the Second World War there was a renewed interest in town planning, and the Marshall Plan in Europe was an example of economic planning for the reconstruction of Europe. Newly independent countries following World War Two also saw the key agent of change as the new State, and stressed its role in planning for the desired modernisation process. Another area where planning developed was in business. Mintzberg (1994) quotes Fayol writing of his experiences as a mining chief executive in the last century, when they had 10 year forecasts revised every five years. A range of planning schools has developed in relation to business, trying to relate the business to its external environment. Mintzberg suggests that underlying the approach of business to strategic planning is an analytical approach, formalising, decomposing, articulating and rationalising, with the belief that this will result in synthesis.

So there are several underlying themes that emerge as drivers for development planning:

- The need to control development, notably in overcrowded urban areas
- The desire to spur economic development, through focused application of resources
- A belief in the rational approach, and historically in the wisdom of those rational planners

1.2. Role of planning and link to sustainable development

Most states now have some formalised planning system, both for town planning, and for managing government expenditure. The challenge for the EOLSS is to understand the different types of multilevel planning that exist, and how these can be applied effectively for sustainable development. This paper will explore in particular its potential role in poverty eradication.

> *A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base. (Carney, 1998)*

Box 1 What is a livelihood?

One way of looking at poverty eradication is the promotion of sustainable livelihoods. This is discussed further in paper (*Institutional Support for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods*). Box one defines what is a livelihood. The key principles behind the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) are:

Poverty-focused development activity should be:

- **People-centred**: sustainable poverty elimination will be achieved only if external support understands the differences between different groups of people and works with them in a way that is congruent with their current livelihood strategies, social environments and ability to adapt.
- **Responsive and participatory** – poor people themselves must be key actors in identifying and addressing livelihood priorities. Outsiders need processes that enable them to listen and respond to the poor.
- **Based on an understanding of people's strengths (assets) and vulnerabilities** – it is important to understand peoples resources and not just needs, and building from those;
- **Holistic** – the need for holistic responses which reflect the integrated nature of people's lives
- **Multi-level**: the scale of the challenge of poverty elimination is enormous, and can only be achieved by working at multiple levels, ensuring that micro level activity informs the development of policy and an effective enabling environment and that macro level structures and processes support people to build upon their own strengths.
- **Conducted in partnership**: with both the public and the private sector.
- **Sustainable**: there are four key dimensions to sustainability – economic, institutional, social and environmental sustainability. All are important – a balance must be found between them.
- **Dynamic**: external support must recognise the dynamic nature of livelihood strategies, respond flexibly to changes in people's situation, and develop longer-term commitments of support;
- Have a commitment to **poverty eradication**.

Box 2. Core SL principles (adapted from Carney, 1998)

1.3. The Emergence of Decentralisation

During the 1980s many developing country governments became interested in decentralisation as a means of regaining political legitimacy, to give people more of a voice in local affairs, or sometimes to gain narrow or partisan (often party) advantage. The interest of governments predated that of donors, who later came to consider decentralisation as a way of overcoming some of the difficulties of integrated rural development (IRD). These included IRD's neglect of local institutions and its centralised and complex approaches, which led to bypassing of government systems and the weakening of local institutions (e.g. through the creation of project management units).

Decentralisation appeared to offer a locus for integrated rural development, an institution to deal with it (local government), and the potential for downsizing central

government and promoting 'good governance' (Goldman, 1998).

Decentralisation is essentially transferring the locus of power and decision-making, either downwards (sometimes referred to as vertical decentralisation) or to other units or organisations (sometimes referred to as horizontal decentralisation). These powers can be political, administrative or fiscal. Four permutations are commonly described (Goldman, 1998):

(i)   **Deconcentration (**vertical decentralisation within an organisation e.g. To local administrative offices of government);

(ii)   **Delegation** (vertically or horizontally to sub-national governments or parastatals);

(iii)   **Devolution** (where power is transferred to sub-national political entities such as states or local government; and

(iv)   **Privatisation** (where power is delegated outside to the private sector, profit or non-profit). Privatisation will be treated as a separate debate and is not considered further. In reality most situations have a mixture of these four possibilities.

Manor (1998) provides an excellent summary of the issues around decentralisation.

The levels can be considered on a continuum from micro (community) to macro (central government). This is discussed further in *Improving Institutional Support to Promote Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa*.

However in terms of terminology Table 1 provides a structure for looking at these micro-meso-macro levels.

Country	**Micro**	**Lower meso**	**Upper meso**	**Macro**
Approximate populations	<20,000	200,000	500,000-2 million	2 million plus
Zimbabwe/ Zambia	Community, village, ward	District	Province	National government
Ghana	Union	District	Region	
Equivalent in South Africa	Community, village, ward	Municipality	Region of government(Being renamed district) District municipality	Provincial/ national government
Bangladesh	Village or union (grouping of 8-20 villages)	Thana or upazila (6-10 unions)	Zila or district	National government

Table 1.Examples of micro/meso/macro levels

What this table illustrates is a terminology problem, even though all these countries have a British colonial heritage, with district in South Africa being akin to that in Bangladesh, but a level above that in other African countries.

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