

A Note on Socio-Cultural Dimension in Development Planning

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From 22 to 26 April 1985 an International Experts Panel Meeting on methods to include the social and cultural dimensions of development in integrated planning was held at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris. The Panel meeting was organised by the Division for Socio-Economic Analysis, Sector of Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO. The Panel aimed to a) review methods and techniques currently in use in development planning, b) share knowledge and experience on how social science may provide useful methods and tools for more holistic development policy and planning; c) recommend the methodological research to include social and central dimensions in development planning. The panel meeting was attended by 18 participants and 9 observers from 19 countries. Mr. Erwin Solomon, Director of the Division for Socio-Economic Analysis reviewed the work of Unesco in development planning and he argued the need for new approaches, both conceptual and methodological for there is dissatisfaction with conventional methods as they cannot deal with the multi-dimensional nature of the development process. Furthermore, he remarked that Unesco's strategy has been to develop institutional capacity within member countries to develop and use appropriate methods of their own.

Dr. P. P. Timilsina of Nepal was elected chairman of the meeting, Mrs. P. Gentot of France was elected Vice-Chairman, Dr. R. Thomas from Trinidad and Dr. R. S. Ganpathy from India were elected Rapporteurs.

In the meeting eight leading papers were presented and two scenarios were devoted to the presentation of experiences by participants from 11 countries.—Nigeria, Senegal, Venezuela, France, Hungary, Thailand, Egypt, Trinidad, Nepal, China, USSR and the participants from multilateral and regional organisations—WHO, OECD, EEC, ICSS, also presented their experiences and approach to the socio-cultural aspects in development.

The background paper, prepared by Unesco Secretariate, did a review of Unesco's

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work so far and the emerging issues were identified. The paper highlighted that in the past development used to be appraised in solely economic dimensions, but it is being accepted in recent years that development is a global, multi-dimensional process involving all facets of human activity — social, economic, technical and cultural and accordingly, attempts have been made to translate this multi-dimensional conception of development in operational terms in development planning.

The approaches and methods developed and elaborated to achieve better integration of the different dimensions of development in planning include socio-economic indicators, modelling techniques, social accounting and evaluation techniques. Unesco's recent work, through the Division for Socio-Economic Analysis, has also concentrated on the area of elaboration and application of these selected methods.

The paper presented by Alain Cotta, from the University of Paris-Dauphine on '*Recent Trends in Social Accounting in France*', has focused on the reasons for the development of social indicators in France. The post-1968 social crisis and alienation of youth in France, the feminist movement in the Seventies, the environmental crisis are some significant social phenomena that have influenced the development of social accounts in France. These factors reveal that social crises often precede and determine the development of methods. But the relationship between context and method is dialectical. The example of the influence of Keynesian methods on macroeconomic control in many countries is a relevant one, where methods have influenced the shaping of context. The development of target group oriented programmes have resulted in a number of methods to plan, monitor and evaluate the programmes. The experience of France indicates that social indicators have succeeded in enterprises and at local/regional level much more than at national level.

Third paper was presented by Prof. Stephen Yeh, of University of Hawaii, on '*Use of Social Indicators in Planning Context*'. The paper has highlighted the use of social indicators in U.S.A., and in some countries of South East Asia and Far East. In U.S.A. much of the social indicators in policy use are appropriate only in their national context and most of them are used as formulae for the allocation of federal funds to states and cities. Social accounting models in the U.S.A. is still a research task at the present time and have not yet demonstrated their potential in policy use. In Philippines, the social indicator movement demonstrates that government support and the existence of an active social science research community are important. It is difficult to assess the impact of movement on policy, but it has helped to promote a higher level of public awareness, which may have indirect effect on policy. In China, it is felt that the government is interested in the elaboration of social indicators for policy use. However, due to specific circumstances and limited data base, their need is more for technical assistance to help them develop their own measures rather than specific models to be diffused to them. The paper while highlighting the Malaysian experience, intends to warn against over simplification in think-

ing about the planning process and about the minor role of social indicators therein Prof. Yeh emphatically argues that the applicability of the use of social indicators in planning context, one should take note of the significant normative issues which are functional at several levels. Furthermore, he has pointed out that there are general pre-requisites for social indicator use in policy, such as the ideological and historical context as well as the presence of social science research community.

The fourth paper was presented by G.K. Ikiara from Nairobi University on *Social Indicators and Integrated Development Planning: The Case of Kenya*. The paper has depicted the institutional environment of the planning machinery in Kenya and shown the attempts in this country to incorporate social and cultural factors in the development planning process. Furthermore, the paper has shown to what extent social indicators have succeeded identifying homogeneous sub-population and the extent to which this has been used to integrate these sub-population in the overall development process.

The fifth paper on *Social Indicators and Regional Planning in Czechoslovakia*, presented by F. Charvat focused on the practical application of social indicators in the planning sphere in Czechoslovakia is mainly in the area of Socio-economic Planning of Development of Regions, Physical Planning of Regional Development and Social Planning of Territorial Units Development. Thus three types of planning practice in Czechoslovakia represent the structure of planning activity in which social indicators have been used.

The sixth paper on *Integrative Approaches to Development Planning and Decision Making*, presented by Faisal Al-Tamimi, of King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. The paper has tried to develop a theoretical framework for integrating economic, social and physical aspects of development. Through modelling, this framework for multiple system definition and interactions includes economic manpower, education manpower, population activities, physical environment and physical-economic systems interactions. It was emphasised that the identification of interactions is necessary to investigate impacts of one system's development on the other.

The seventh paper on *The Integration of Socio-Cultural Aspects of Development into Integrated Plan and Policies: The Case of Ecuador*, presented by F. Pareja focused that the Integral Transformation and Development Plan (1973-77), formulated by the military government viewed development as a global, social process and had reduction of marginality through unemployment reduction, has one major objective. In contrast, the 1980-84 National Development Plan is not structural in nature but focuses on growth and a number of social programmes, the aggregation of which will result in integration of social and cultural factors in development. The two approaches have significantly different methodological implications.

The eighth paper, on *The Critical Review of Methodologies for Integrated Development Planning*, was presented by R. S. Ganapathy from India. The paper highlighted on the fact that strategies and methodologies match differently in different contexts, based on history,

socio-political institutions, development priorities and resource endowments. Though substantial works have been carried in the area of integrating social and cultural dimension in planning by such organisation like Unesco, yet there are several limitations to his methods viz. social indicators are fragmented; the relationships among indicators is often not clear; indicators basing on quantitative approach may be misleading; and social participation in construction and use of indicators are often difficult. This concludes that the methodological choice in development planning is not a neutral one. The paper proposed three typologies of development planning: (a) main stream (b) reformist and (c) critical.

In addition to these papers, short oral presentations were also made on the country experiences in integrating social and cultural factors in the planning process. In this presentation, the position of social and cultural factors in the development planning of Nepal was presented by this author. In his presentation the author has said that in Nepal the work on designing and using social and cultural indicators have not been so far carried. Still the basis of evaluating the development has been the economic indicators such as GDP. However, it does not mean that in the development planning social and cultural factors have not been considered totally in Nepal. The social and cultural factors are being undertaken as the social overheads in the development planning, where huge amount of resources are being invested. With these investments what have been the impact on the social and cultural aspects of Nepalese society is not being analysed. In fact in a country like Nepal, where rich cultural and societal values have been dominating the activities of the Nepalese, due importance should be given to such factors. There are two things to be carried for its development in Nepal (i) The importance of the social and cultural dimension in development planning should be made clear to the plans and decision makers (ii) There is the need for the identifications of social and cultural indicators of the Nepalese society. Coming to the development of methodology the author held a strong opinion that in this area universal methodology can not be applicable to different nations having different social values. However, basing on the indicators of different societies certain framework can be designed by such organisation like Unesco. However, it will be the duty of the scientific community of a nation to develop their methodology with regard to the inclusion of socio-cultural dimension in development planning. In this respect also organisation like Unesco can carry extensive case studies in consonance with the concerned member nation.

At the end the meeting came with various recommendations, for bringing improvement in the methodologies to include the socio-cultural dimension in development planning. The author strongly believes that with due coordination from the side of Unesco and support from the side of the scientific community participating in the meeting, this baby will have chance to be adult and will get chance to develop offsprings, otherwise, in the wake of technico-economic approach to development it will get strangulated.

Book Review

Harka Gurung, "Nepal: Dimensions of Development", Sahayogi Press, Kathmandu, pp. 275, Price Rs. 130.00.

The purpose of the publication is to record an individual's perception of development processes in Nepal. Author's experience, though unique, is stated to have world of difference between tribal upbringing without formal schooling and that later exposed to national level planning and implementation.

Since he is the champion of regional planning, it is natural on his part to recommend best of measures in favour of banishing hill poverty. The writer proposes for integration of regional economies within national space. At the same time he feels anguished to find that regional strategy is distorted. Thirdly, he has same bias towards spatial dimension—more on pattern than on process. He feels disturbed to see Kingdom of Nepal divided into five Development Zones.

The writer commits himself that the captioned book is not original in itself—it is a collection of numerous papers or orations, written or spoken during different periods for different purposes. As a minister he had to treat the audience with his own psycho-analysis; he finds in these articles varying tones and styles, coverage and depth ranging from population, tourism, spatial planning to ecological problems. The whole approach, made in the compilation constitutes flavour of geography, regional planning, politics, population. He states geography as to intimate relationship between man and nature. Planning, for the author, aims at maximisation of resource exploitation for the welfare of the society. Since limited resources necessitate ordering of priorities no factual approximation of resources both present and potential is necessary. He tries to adjoin planning and geography in this way: planners need to understand the present landscape before trying to change it. Resource inventory is thus recommended by the author.

For tackling population problems, the author recommends for use of human geography. For construction of roads, he suggests for identifying modal points and their hinterlands. Towards agricultural planning, he likes to have differentiation between subsistence farming of hill, with exchange economy of the south, Terai. Whereas for industrial planning, resources are to be identified and quantified.

Urban planning in Kathmandu is precariously difficult because of congestion of sanitary facilities - for this, geographic surveys and participation by geographers are recommended. Same is the case for industrial plan, i. e., thorough survey of resources is obviously needed for regional planning. Author suggests for analysing space economy and identifying depressed and rich areas with no less emphasis on interdependence and integration of economies of unequal opportunity.

With reference to distribution pattern of industries of Nepal, he categorises as: agro-based industries 27.5%, forest-based 17.5%, light manufacturing 10.0%, engineering 10.0%, metal works 7.5%, textiles and hosiery 10.0%, animal products processing 7.5%, construction 5%, power generation 5%. (Agriculture and forest based industries alone constitute 45% of total industries).

And about locational aspects of industries, author reveals concentration as: Kathmandu valley has 37.5%, Biratnagar (Eastern Terai) 35.0%, Birgunj (Central Terai) 10.0%, Nepalgunj (Western Terai) 7.0%, Hetauda (Inner Terai) 5.0%, Janakpur (Eastern Terai) 2.5%, Bhairahawa 2.5%. (Kathmandu Valley and Biratnagar alone possess more than 70% of the total industries.)

The author is in favour of framing of regional development strategy as to envisage north-south growth axes or development corridors linking the diverse regions, over and above pooling of resources within a common development corridor as to help circulation of goods and services. He proposes four growth axes which run as: Kosi Growth Axis (Biratnagar to Hetauda), Kathmandu Growth Axis (Birgunj to Dhunche/Baarbise), Gandaki Growth Axis (Bhairahawa to Jomsom), Karnali Growth Axis (Nepalgunj to Jumla). The growth axes are expected to help growth of integration and co-ordination of different development programmes. These will help represent north-south, east-west, over and above promoting redistribution of resources while maximising economic growth and national welfare.

It is remarkably true to say that increase in population over the last decade points to progress of descent to lower elevation with an unaccommodative encroachment against silviculture of the Chure Range to fill up gap of employment aspect in development demand, author seems to be critical of the present state of provisions, since for him they are open for few privileged. So he puts emphasis, over and above other things, in service training.

On population and development, muscle strain is a muscle drain for employment; forest depleted for settlement; immigration towards south has climaxed. Since there has been almost no positive impact of development effects on absorption of population, population control is to be resorted to.

Implication of foreign aid has been that recipient has not been shy of it; process of use of it is in the stage of making, either.

For promotion of tourism, author recommends effortful collaboration of public and private sectors even if he does not seem to lag behind stating about administrative and political hurdles inherent in past days for permits to travel Nepal for an outsider. Now the case is quite otherwise for incoming tourists.

The author, as others, seems to be critical while saying about food systems and society: in spite of the increasing priority given to agriculture (under plan IV, allocation worth of 34.8%, Plan V, worth of 34.5% and plan IV, worth of 31.1%) in the last decade, performance has been of a declining trend. Priority without supportive activities meant little

progress in agricultural sector. Agricultural pricing policy too is responsible for ills in food front, as no less evil roles are played because of no water management for land on the one hand, and levies made by Nepal Food Corporation, on the other.

In the context of ecology, which has started increasing attention in recent years, the author quotes: tremendous quantities of materials are removed each year from the soil and carried by the monsoon floods on to the plain; hill side crops are swept away and farm land in plains are buried; tillable area further crippled. Nature, i. e., Nepal's ecological balance, is robbed. We export soil with no compensation to Nepal except desertification. Balancing of man and mountains will help preserve the beautiful Himalayas. Growth is thus to be maintained even with awful demographic trends.

Just as the book contains numerous misgivings because of quotation of inceptional matters forgetting the development of modern trends in the nation, equally it's a good book dealing with numerous topical subjects beginning with a foreword and winding up with an afterword.

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The first part of the report deals with the general situation in the country. It is noted that the economy is in a state of depression, and that the government is unable to meet its obligations. The report also mentions the political situation, which is described as unstable. The author expresses concern about the future of the country and the well-being of its people.

The second part of the report provides a detailed analysis of the economic situation. It discusses the causes of the depression, such as the loss of markets and the depletion of resources. The author also examines the government's policies and their impact on the economy. It is concluded that the current policies are ineffective and that a new approach is needed to address the country's economic challenges.

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