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Organisational Issues in New Forms of Multi-Sectoral Planning

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ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES IN NEW FORMS OF MULTI-SECTORAL PLANNING

Simon Maxwell¹

Summary



Despite current ideological and philosophical objections to planning, it survives in new forms, generating Policy Framework Papers, Poverty Assessments or Food Security Strategies. The route these follow is littered with organisational elephant-traps; but the traps can be avoided by learning the lessons of past experiments with multi-disciplinary or multi-sectoral planning. The literatures on integrated rural development, multi-sectoral nutrition planning, farming systems research, national food security planning, and poverty planning are all of help. They suggest that the key is to establish a task culture, characterised by co-operative goal definition, a high degree of participation, supportive leadership, and strong integration of planning and implementation. A ten point action plan is derived from these principles for new forms of multi-sectoral planning.

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1. Introduction

The death of planning is widely advertised; and it is not surprising that this should be so. The pretensions of planning to objectivity and impartiality have long been questioned (Clay and Schaffer 1984). Current conventional wisdom privileges the market over the state and disparages the jobs that planners do, setting targets, allocating resources, or even designing projects. Further, the philosophical tide has turned, away from concepts familiar to planners, like order, sequence and predictability, towards other, less manageable constructs, like variability, risk and diversity (Chambers 1993, Booth 1993, 1994). Decentralisation, too, accountability, and participation, have all become key words. There seems little scope for planners here: time to abandon government, one might think, and find a job in the private sector.

Well, yes and no. In the corridors of Government, and in donor offices around the world, the planners in fact survive: disguised, transmogrified, but nonetheless alive and well, showing a high degree of adaptation to changing external circumstance. The micro-level planners have become logical framework specialists, striving to list the external assumptions that might derail donor-funded activities. The macro-level planners have turned their skills to Policy Framework Papers, Public Expenditure Reviews, Poverty Assessments, Food Security Strategies, and White Papers, setting out how the country will implement the resolutions of various international conferences. None of these is labelled 'plan', but they all bear a strong family resemblance to the documents we remember from the 1960s and 1970s: multi-sectoral in coverage, larded with targets, usually written at the centre, often donor-driven, and heavily reliant for success on external support.

This should give us pause for thought. For planning of the traditional kind ran into problems for reasons that are well understood, though not always well remembered. The new wave of multi-sectoral planning is heir to a tradition from which many lessons can be learned. To simplify somewhat, a common thread is that previous attempts at multi-sectoriality struggled with the problem of how to escape from a sector and discipline-oriented Weberian role-culture, with all its routines, hierarchies and departmental boundaries. What they sought instead, with varying success, was the establishment of a flexible task culture, which drew planners, programme managers and clients into a relationship that was co-operative and action-oriented.

Before looking in detail at the experience of multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary initiatives, it is worth asking why organisational problems might be expected. One way to approach the problem is to examine Figure 1, which defines various levels of integration, from 'disciplinary' or 'sectoral' at one extreme to 'trans-disciplinary' or 'trans-sectoral' at the other.

At the top of the table, 'disciplinary' or 'sectoral' planning eschews integration altogether, and relies on casual inter-action for the whole to be greater than the sum of the parts. At the other extreme, 'trans-disciplinary' or 'trans-sectoral' planning requires the creation of a new cognitive paradigm. It is very ambitious and probably unattainable. In between the two extremes are two variants of cross-disciplinary, or cross-sectoral planning which are more likely to be found in the real world, 'multi-disciplinary', or 'multi-sectoral', and 'inter-disciplinary' or 'inter-sectoral': the first involves common goals but relies on individual action; and the second takes integration one step further, with co-operative goal definition and collaborative action.

Figure 1
Types of cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral planning

| |
|--|
| <u>Disciplinary or sectoral</u> Independent planning and communication, leading to influence. |
| <u>Multi-disciplinary or multi-sectoral</u> Common goals, independent planning. |
| <u>Inter-disciplinary or inter-sectoral</u> Systematic integration, leading to co-operative goal definition, planning and action. |
| <u>Trans-disciplinary or trans-sectoral</u> Transcend individual skills and disciplines, leading to a new common, cognitive map. |

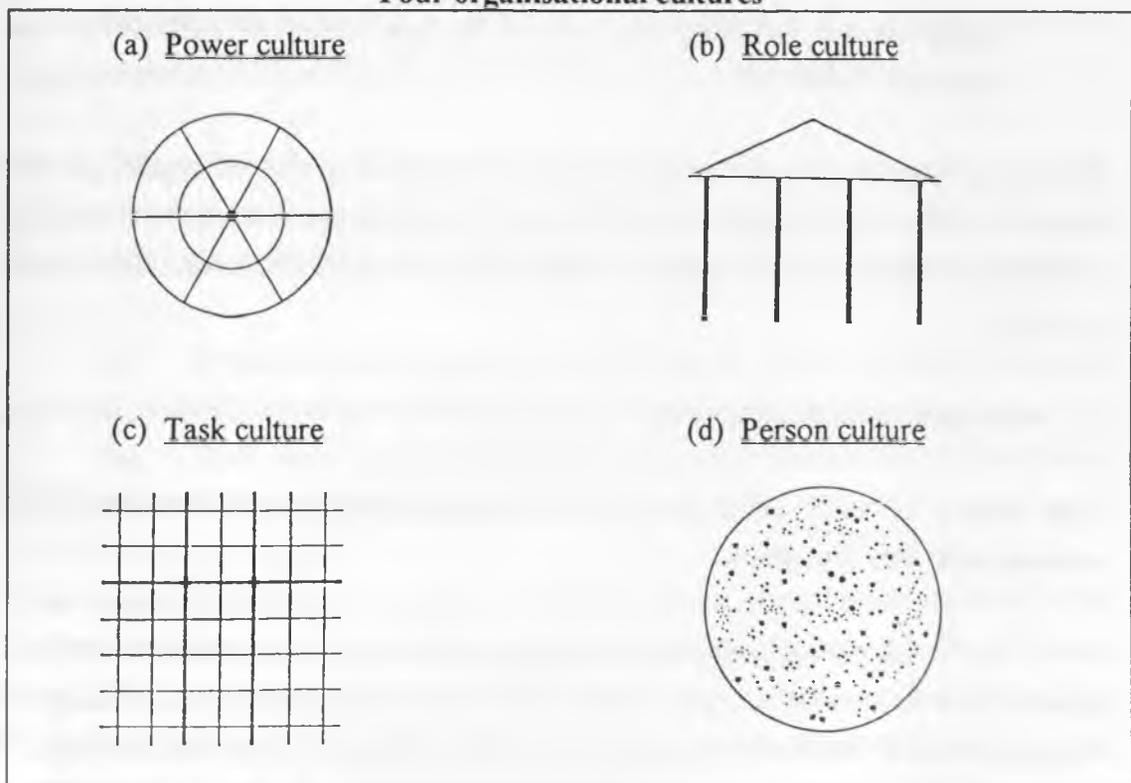
Source: Adapted from Flynn and Denning (1982)

Any form of planning other than single disciplinary or sectoral work requires collaboration in new ways between groups of people who have traditionally worked in separate compartments. Their normal experience will be in a 'role' culture, diagram (b) in Figure 2; they will be required to move towards a 'task' culture, diagram (c) in Figure 2 (Moris 1989). These cultures have very different characteristics. The role culture, of course, is the classic Weberian bureaucracy. Handy suggests that its patron god is Apollo, the god of reason. He adds that:

'the work of the pillars, and the interaction between the pillars, is controlled by procedures for roles (e.g. job descriptions), procedures for communication and rules for settlement of disputes' (Handy 1985:190).

The role culture offers security and predictability and it works well in a stable environment. However, it is not flexible, it does not adapt well to change and is not suited to multi-sectoral projects which link the pillars.

Figure 2
Four organisational cultures



Source: Handy 1985:ch. 7

The task culture, by contrast, is well suited to new forms of collaboration. As Handy describes it, the task culture is a

'team culture, where the outcome, the result, the product of the team's work tends to be the common enemy, obliterating individual objectives and most status and style differences.' (ibid.: 193).

The task culture will have a different form of leadership, more supportive and less directive. It will often be found in the innovative parts of organisations, including research and sometimes planning.

Organisational problems will arise if the organisational culture is wrong. Group dynamics will fail, conflict will grow, leadership will become embattled and personal motivation will disappear. Practical programmes will be lost to bureaucratic infighting. Handy summarises the likely outcome of trying to establish creative multi-disciplinary or multi-sectoral units within a role culture:

'The management of steady state activities should properly be concerned with rules, procedures, regulations and formal controls. Apply these to the innovation arms of the organisation and they will suffocate.' (ibid: 208).

The theory here provides a framework. Can it be applied to the real world? There is material in the literatures on: integrated rural development; multi-sectoral nutrition planning; farming systems research; national food security planning; and poverty planning.

2. Integrated rural development

The history of rural development over the past twenty years can be divided schematically into four phases:

- i. A period during which issues of poverty and unemployment gradually came to the fore, culminating in Robert McNamara's Nairobi speech of 1973 which committed the World Bank to a new poverty focus. This period was marked by a shift in rural development away from production-oriented programmes, often targeted to high potential areas, towards programmes aimed specifically at poor people.

ii. A period marked by the realisation that the symptoms and causes of rural poverty were multi-dimensional, resulting in theories of basic needs and in systematic attempts to integrate the various components of rural development programmes. This period, broadly the second half of the 1970s, marked the high point of Integrated Rural Development (IRD) and of the large-scale, top-down projects through which IRD philosophies were implemented.

iii. A gradual disenchantment and retrenchment, caused by the difficulty of financing the high recurrent costs of IRD programmes after the second oil shock of 1979, as well as by the many organisational problems of IRD.

iv. A search for new models of rural development, which resulted in the rejection of old-style 'blue-print methods in favour of new, flexible, decentralised and high participative 'process' modes, often implemented by NGOs.

We are not concerned here with objections to the underlying model of rural development, pretty well common to all four phases, notably the common assumptions about the desirability and feasibility of targeting, the tendency to ignore macro-economic imperatives and, at least in the first three phases, a limited view of participation (see, however, Heyer et al 1981). Our concern here is rather with the organisational problems of IRD and with the attempts to overcome them.

The organisational problems of rural development have been a common theme of the literature². A good example is the review of IRD by Crener et al in 1984. This lists seven reasons for the failure of IRD, of which two are clearly to do with organisation:

(a) Projects were conceived in a rigid manner, due to an overly idealised economic, political and institutional environment; and

(b) Both newly created and existing organisational structures did not foster effective and efficient project management (Crener et al: 40ff).

What these criticisms mean in practice is that the technical departments involved in the implementation of IRD were often in conflict, so that decisions were constantly being postponed and a global approach was lost; that responsibilities and decision-making powers were dispersed throughout the relevant government structures; that technical assistance was frequently called on to assume management responsibilities; and that

2. See, for example, Korten (1980), Korten and Klauss (1984), Gwyer and Morris (1984), Rondinelli (1983), Chambers (1993).

autonomous project management units created to overcome these problems disintegrated when external funding was removed. The underlying problems reflect the failure of IRD to build on local institutional structures or to recognise conflicts of interest between institutions and individuals (ibid: 43).

A similar diagnosis stems from Birgegard's 1987 analysis of IRD. He points out that the characteristics of the task and the environment typical of IRD require management which is:

'flexible, adaptable, willing to experiment, to learn and to accept mistakes. Managers need to have bargaining and negotiating skills to reconcile conflicting interests (and) placate influential demands at different levels... and have the ability to explore and to understand the dynamic informal processes between conflicting interests in the project environment (ibid:6)... Sadly, the 'control-oriented', compartmentalised government bureaucracies with centralised decision-making hardly match the prerequisites of effective management of IRD projects'. (ibid: 7).

A number of different problems surface in these analyses, and in many others on the same theme³. Crener et al offer one set of solutions. They offer five general principles for a new-style IRD, all of which in some way or other influence organisational design. The five principles are:

- i. Simple or medium term interventions on an initially limited scale at the outset;
- ii. Constant interaction between planning, execution and evaluation;
- iii. Dynamic analysis and more in-depth comprehension of the milieu;
- iv. Increased participation on the part of target groups in decision-making, implementation and evaluation;
- v. Diversification and strengthening of the support given to local capacity for institutional organisation.

3. See bibliography in Birgegard (ibid.) and footnote 2.

The organisational implications are far-reaching: much greater simplicity in planning and implementation, with less ambitious goals and less overt integration; open-ended planning and greater flexibility; genuine participation in decision-making; and the strengthening of decentralised institutions in rural areas.

Crener et al's five principles encapsulate the new approach to rural development planning, styled 'process approaches', in contrast to earlier 'blue-print' models. Chambers has summarised the alternative approaches in the chart reproduced in Figure 3, and it is clear from this that process planning embodies a very different organisational culture to blueprint planning. Thus, blueprint planning uses technical specialists to devise a scientific plan in the capital city, which is then implemented according to a rigid timetable; process planning, by contrast, is bottom-up in nature, organic, flexible and action-oriented.

Whether these principles work in practice is another matter. In NGOs, they probably do (Fowler 1988). In government agencies, success is much less likely. Birgegard reviews the evidence on the government side, tracing a shift from independent project management units to lead agency arrangements, with one ministry, designated as the 'project owner', sub-contracting to others. This is a very partial move towards a simplified mode of operation, but Birgegard concludes that the outcome is not ideal even in these cases, with management and co-ordination problems continuing to plague rural development projects (ibid: 8). This is true even in Sri-Lanka, which is often cited as having one of the most successful government-sponsored IRD programmes. Birgegard concludes, as do others, that the solution may be to abandon IRD in favour of a much more modest approach: integrated planning but not integrated implementation (ibid: 14ff).

3. Multi-sectoral nutrition planning

The history of multi-sectoral nutrition planning (MSNP) is rather harder to interpret than that of integrated rural development. On one view, it

'experienced a meteoric rise and an equally meteoric fall in the 1970s'
(Field 1987:19).

Figure 3

The Blueprint and Learning Process Approaches in Rural Development Contrasted

| | Blueprint | Learning Process |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| idea originates in | capital city | village |
| first steps | data collection and plan | awareness and action |
| design | static, by experts | evolving, people involved |
| supporting organisation | existing, or built top down | built bottom-up, with lateral spread |
| main resources | central funds and technicians | local people and their assets |
| staff development | classroom, didactic | field-based action learning |
| implementation | rapid, widespread | gradual, local, at people's pace |
| management focus | spending budgets, completing projects on time | sustained improvement and performance |
| content of action | standardised | diverse |
| communication | vertical: orders down, reports up | lateral: mutual learning and sharing experience |
| leadership | positional, changing | personal, sustained |
| evaluation | external, intermittent | internal, continuous |
| error | buried | embraced |
| effects | dependency-creating | empowering |
| associated with | normal professionalism | new professionalism |

Source: Chambers 1993:12, adapted from David Korten.

On another view, its key elements remain intact and its influence can be seen in food security studies, adjustment with a human face and many other dimensions of poverty planning (Berg 1987). What all would agree, however, is that large-scale and systems-oriented multi-sectoral nutrition planning did benefit from a boom in the 1970s, at a time roughly corresponding to phase 2 of the IRD history outlined in Section 2. It fell out of favour, for some of the same reasons as large-scale IRD, and at about the same time. However, there were also special factors which applied to MSNP.

MSNP suffered from familiar problems of large data requirements. In addition, Field has identified seven 'intellectual flaws' which 'derailed' MSNP (ibid: 23ff):

- i. MSNP was largely oblivious to problems of implementation as 'an inherently pluralistic, often conflictual process that is uncertain, even precarious...';
- ii. The programmatic features of MSNP were 'devastating to effective implementation', with ambitious goals, long chains of causality and multiple-decision points;
- iii. Organisational overload, with a 'premium placed on inter-ministerial co-ordination (that) was neither (sic) realistic, desirable nor necessary';
- iv. Naiveté about political economy and illusions about technocratic omnipotence;
- v. Political conservatism and disregard of broader social, economic and political relationships;
- vi. Neglect of wider development linkages;
- vii. MSNP fell between sectoral stools and suffered from an identity crisis.

Despite disagreement on details, this diagnosis is confirmed by others, especially with regard to the large-scale multi-sectoral systems analysis projects of the 1970s (Berg ibid, Levinson 1995).

There are also a number of common themes with the analysis of IRD, especially with regard to the disproportionate importance given to planning and the difficulties of implementation.

The response of the nutritional community to these criticisms has been to follow two complementary paths, which again parallel the routes taken by IRD. One path has been explicitly to seek better ways of managing MSNP, in ways which broadly correspond to the process approach of IRD. The other has been to stage a strategic retreat and focus on inserting nutritional insights into more general debates on food security and structural adjustment: this broadly corresponds to the IRD solution of 'integrated planning but not integrated implementation'.

Following the first path, Field has identified eleven lessons for the future of MSNP (ibid: 26ff). These introduce a process dimension to nutrition planning, with increased emphasis on beneficiary participation and 'backward mapping'. They also downgrade the importance of planning, emphasise the need for simplicity, subordinate analysis to action, and focus on the implementing role of the existing sectoral ministries. This is a list which is familiar from the IRD process model, except that it applies the lessons to questions of national planning rather than to project implementation: indeed, there is a marked overlap in the academic material on which these two sets of prescriptions are based.

Field does not provide evidence on the extent to which his prescriptions have been followed. In his reply to Field, however, Berg (ibid.) cites Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Tamil Nadu and a dozen other countries or regions as places where part of the new agenda is already to be found, by implication with success.

Berg goes on to make the case for the alternative, almost covert route to multi-sectoriality. MSNP may not have the prominence once hoped for in the 1970s, but

'slowly, with the advent of nutrition planning, respect for nutrition has grown in some development circles and it has become a legitimate subject for inclusion in the policy discussions of planning councils of many governments ...' (ibid: 375).

Evidence for the truth of this statement can be found in the growth of nutrition advocacy and of nutrition programmes in developing countries (Gillespie and McNeill 1992, FAO/WHO 1992, Levinson 1995)

There are clear differences between MSNP and IRD. In particular, the first focuses far more on planning than the latter. Nevertheless, the lessons are complementary: a process approach with a focus on action, on local institutions and on participation.

4. Farming systems research

As a way of organising agricultural research and generating new technology, farming systems research (fsr) provides a contrasting case to the others considered: here the problems are largely confined to individual research stations and the organisational issues arise between specialists in different disciplines, rather than between the

agricultural and other sectors. Nevertheless, the issues and the solutions follow a similar pattern; furthermore, the smaller scale of the problem make it easier to see solutions.

Farming systems research had no less a turbulent history than either IRD or MSNP. It emerged in the late 1970s, in response to growing dissatisfaction with the failure of traditional agricultural research to tailor technologies to the needs of small farmers. It introduced the idea of a holistic, multi-disciplinary diagnosis of farming systems, followed by a co-ordinated research programme and mutually-supporting recommendations. There are again many variants (Merrill-Sands 1986), but in terms of cross-disciplinary work, fsr falls somewhere between models 2 and 3 in Figure 1.

FSR became the dominant agricultural research paradigm of the 1980s, overcoming a good deal of resistance on the way, both in the international research system of the CGIAR and in national research organisations. It was then challenged by 'complementary' farmer-first paradigms, which laid more stress on the diversity of traditional agriculture and the need for flexibility in technology design (Richards 1985, Chambers and Jiggins 1986). At the extreme, the alternative approaches could be presented as radical departures, bearing the same relationship to fsr as process planning did to blueprint planning (Chambers et al 1989). Alternatively, and perhaps more constructively, they could be seen as evolutionary developments in a broadly farmer-oriented approach (Tripp 1989).

Irrespective of whether we are dealing here with one paradigm or two, agricultural research has come to place unprecedented demands on inter-disciplinary collaboration and institutional flexibility. These demands have not always been successfully met and institutional friction has been a theme of the literature (Flynn and Denning 1982, Biggs and Clay 1983). Maxwell (1986) described the institutional difficulties of research stations and attempted to explain them. He concluded that there were five underlying factors:

i. Personal inadequacy, meaning that the individuals concerned were unable to work together;

ii. Communication problems between disciplines, particularly between natural scientists and social scientists (Chambers (1983:33): natural scientists are trained to act, social scientists are trained to criticise);

- iii. Poor and poorly-managed group dynamics, exacerbated by poor conflict resolution and the wrong leadership styles;
- iv. Inappropriate organisational cultures, particularly clinging to a role culture when a task culture would be more appropriate;
- v. Power struggles between different disciplines and different individuals.

Maxwell noted that institutional disruption was usually attributed to the behavioural characteristics of particular individuals, but suggested that cultural and structural issues usually provided more powerful explanations.

This conclusion was certainly consistent with later work, for example by ISNAR (the Institute for Strengthening Agricultural Research), which was concerned with the effective management of on-farm, client-oriented research. Merrill-Sands and McAllister concluded, for example, that conflict was frequent between on-farm and on-station research:

'divergent goals and attitudes lead, in turn, to disputes over more concrete issues, such as resource allocation, priorities in planning and programming of research, or the validity and interpretation of results' (ibid:4).

Conflict could be avoided if scientists shared a common approach to research, agreed on the benefits of collaboration and had adequate opportunities for collaboration.

There are suggestions as to how this desirable outcome can be brought about, in the earlier literature, in the writings on complementary paradigms and in the work by ISNAR. Pulling the various themes together, there are a dozen practical steps to take, grouped into three main areas: organisation; training; and work practice (Maxwell 1986).

In the sphere of organisation, the main recommendations are for the introduction of a task culture, for participative leadership and for rewards and sanctions which encourage collaborative work. These should provide the conditions within which collaborative work can flourish.

With regard to training, the literature suggests special attention to communication skills, to the techniques of conflict management and to the basic concepts and skills of the other disciplines in a multi-disciplinary team. Taken together, these recommendations should overcome problems of behaviour and build greater team spirit.

Finally, with regard to work practice, the prescriptions are to start on a small-scale with practical actions rather than philosophies, to undertake collaborative fieldwork, and to build a larger programme slowly over time as attitudes begin to change: in fact, a process approach.

As in the previous cases, there is no strong evidence that these solutions have solved all the problems, nor that they have become embedded in agricultural research institutions. Nevertheless, they provide a useful check-list of practical steps and can find application outside fsr.

5. National Food Security Planning

National food security planning is a prime candidate for the kind of organisational difficulty described in the introduction.

'Food security' is a concept that cuts across sectors and disciplines. It is defined as 'enough food for an active, healthy life' (World Bank 1986:1) and is dependent on entitlement to food, through production, purchase, exchange or gift (Sen 1982). As recent analysis has shown (Dréze and Sen 1989, Maxwell (ed) 1990, Von Braun et al 1992), analysis of food insecurity requires an understanding which ranges from household vulnerability and coping strategies, through community support mechanisms, to national agricultural, trade and social welfare policy.

To make matters more complex, the solutions to food insecurity are also multi-sectoral and require multi-disciplinary initiatives. There are many different approaches to food security planning, with the World Bank, the FAO and the EC all sponsoring their own approaches and with country experience throwing up new variants, especially in SSA (Maxwell (ed) *ibid.*).

Familiar problems have arisen, however. For example, Belshaw (1990) describes communication problems between government departments in Ethiopia, and Maxwell (1991) discusses the difficulties of donor co-ordination on food security in Sudan.

Similarly, Kennes (1990) analyses the question of dialogue between governments and donors and the difficulty for donors of integrating instruments in pursuit of food security. Davies (1994) reviews the institutional problems of trying to link relief and development in the field of food security, including questions of capacity, flexibility and sustainability.

How, then, can the ideal of promoting food security as an 'organising principle' (Hindle 1990) be carried into practice? FAO has pioneered planning methods which involve workshop sessions to develop and analyse multiple criteria tables for ranking and choosing food security interventions (Huddleston 1990). More generally, an approach to food security planning has been proposed which draws on the lessons of previous experience:

'integrated planning but independent implementation ('no super ministries'); the importance of a bias to action over planning ('start small and grow'); the value of risk-taking and innovation ('pilot projects'); and the importance of addressing explicitly the need for new modes of organisation in multi-disciplinary team work ('task cultures not role cultures').' (Maxwell 1990:6)

These, again, are familiar themes. Davies (*ibid*) suggests caution, however, citing Moore (1993) to the effect that many African countries may need to (re)create a public service which meets minimal Weberian requirements to establish overall competence and accountability, before more complex and appropriate systems can be achieved. 'Paradoxically', she concludes,

'overcoming institutional constraints to LRD may therefore necessitate the establishment of a minimal level of apparently old style bureaucracies before these can then be reformed to respond to the complex needs of linking relief and development.' (*ibid*:52)

6. Poverty planning

A final example comes from the wave of work on poverty which followed the publication of the 1990 World Bank World Development Report (World Bank 1990), and which has resulted in a large number of Poverty Assessments and Poverty Reduction Strategies. A review of World Bank work in this area in sub-Saharan

Africa, carried out in 1994 (IDS/IUED 1994), identified two main areas of weakness which are relevant to a discussion of organisational issues.

The first was a lack of inter-disciplinary analysis of poverty, and particularly the lack of political and social analysis: the Poverty Assessments reviewed had concentrated on collecting economic data on levels of consumption, and had neglected analysis of underlying social processes. Summarising the results of the study, Toye and Jackson (1996:58-9) commented that

'the analysis of the process of poverty, . . . has been the major weak point of the Bank's poverty assessment efforts to date. . . it is a critical area of weakness, given the boldness and ambition of the new poverty agenda.'

The second weakness was the lack of linkage between poverty assessments and other instruments of planning and policy. Poverty reduction strategies were designed to influence policy across the board, but it often seemed that they had little influence. Toye and Jackson (*ibid*: 60) again commented that:

'At present there seems to be little connection between the processes of preparing the new Poverty Assessments and other tasks of country documentation, including the preparation of Public Expenditure Reviews . . . without any particular sensitivity to the logical links between the attempt to achieve a new anti-poverty emphasis in country policies and the implications of this for changes in their public expenditure management.'

Implicit in these criticisms is a model of preparing poverty assessments which entrusts the task to a small group which may or may not consult as widely as it should, and whose report is thrown into a competitive arena with other sectoral or thematic special interests.

The World Bank has been aware of the problems, and its response throws further light on how to approach multi-sectoral planning. A recent task force report is remarkably frank about the difficulties of integrating poverty assessments into country assistance strategies and lending programmes, and concludes that although

'PAs have done a reasonably good job of identifying the policy and strategy options that will assist the poor to become more active participants in the growth process, these options, typically, are not being reflected in the Bank's assistance strategies or operations' (World Bank 1996:102)

Various reasons are cited for the shortcomings, including inadequate information, complacent attitudes by Governments, a willingness by Bank management to compromise on poverty in the interest of good country relations, and importantly for our purposes, the fact that

'operational interests tend to be made based more on sectoral interests and less on the understanding that poverty reduction requires a multi-sectoral, integrated approach' (ibid:110).

The solutions offered by the task force are to strengthen linkage between the poverty assessment, the country assistance strategy and the lending programme, and to achieve this by taking, *inter alia*, the following actions (ibid: 1111-2) (*italics added*):

- i. Establishing poverty reduction as the pervasive organising principle, 'through the *leadership* of managers and the actions of staff';
- ii. Establishing a strengthened *process* for preparing country assistance strategies, working with country teams, governments, donors and other stakeholders;
- iii. Introducing *procedures* such that country business plans set out in detail how the poverty reduction strategy will feed into the Bank's work programme;
- iv. New *training* and *incentives* for staff; and, finally,
- v. Rigorous *monitoring* of how well a new poverty strategy is being implemented.

7. Common themes and lessons

The initiatives received differ in important respects: some are concerned with planning, others with both planning and implementation; FSR is essentially a question of multi-disciplinarity, where the others combine multi-disciplinarity with multi-sectoriality;

FSR is also mostly concerned with relations within one institution, where IRD is focused on the district or region and the others start at least with a national perspective. Nevertheless, our brief review of the organisational issues in these very different fields suggests that there are important commonalities. If this is true, there is certainly potential for learning across programmes.

The first point to make is that institutional analysis has played a major part in the assessment of each of these multi-dimensional initiatives. The very least this suggests is that institutional issues deserve much greater attention whenever disciplines and sectors come together.

A second point is that organisational culture and structure seem to be at the heart of the problem, whether the theme is planning or implementation and whether the level of analysis is national, regional or institutional. Culture and structure are, in a sense, catch-all notions, which encompass such issues as motivation, leadership, conflict and the nature of interaction between individuals and groups. This, however, is precisely what makes them powerful: they are metaphors for the stance an organisation takes, internally and externally.

The message from all our examples is that a traditional role culture is not well-suited to these new, holistic programmes. In all five cases, different departments are thrown into conflict over priorities and resources, decision-making is disrupted, and short-term organisational solutions prove to be ephemeral. Particular strain is placed on managers, who are ill-equipped to handle new pressures and new levels of complexity.

If all the experiments examined have run into problems of organisational culture and structure, none has really managed to define and implement an alternative model, at least for public sector agencies. Nevertheless, there is a striking similarity of approach in searching for new models along a continuum labelled blueprint-process. This is most clearly found in IRD but is also evident in MSNP and contributions to agricultural research.

The striking feature of process approaches is that they correspond closely to a task culture approach. The key features of a task culture, innovation, flexibility, participatory leadership, result-orientation, are all found in process models. Many of the precepts of process planning, participation, a bias to action, decentralisation, will be familiar to students of task-oriented 'post-Fordism' in industrial organisation and to what Murray (1989) calls the 'new managerialism' (Murray *ibid*, Peters and Waterman

1982, Peters 1987). It is interesting, for example, to compare Chambers' description of process planning in Figure 3 with a description of contrasting corporate business cultures, summarised in Figure 4: the two are entirely complementary.

The outstanding question is how to bring about the shift from a role culture to a task culture, or from a blue-print approach to a process approach. Our case studies contain a wealth of suggestions for practical action to be taken by individuals, programme managers and policy-makers. Specifically, and supplementary to Davies' concern for minimal bureaucratic soundness, there are ten main lessons to be drawn:

(a) On planning:

- i. Set clear, short-term goals and work towards them. Focus on the task;
- ii. Train the team to work together, with training in communication, conflict-resolution and multi-disciplinary skills;
- iii. Build team cohesion, through collaborative fieldwork, participative leadership;
- iv. Stay close to the customer, build in participation.

(b) On implementation:

- v. Build in a bias to action. Start small and grow;
- vi. Take risks and innovate. Embrace error;
- vii. Downgrade overt integration. Integrated planning but independent implementation.

(c) On evaluation and public relations:

- viii. Constant iteration between planning, execution and evaluation. Be flexible;
- ix. Monitor progress. Be publicly accountable for targets;
- x. Raise the profile of the topic. Raise consciousness.

8. Conclusion

If planning survives, it is not just because of vested interests in Ministries of Planning and donor offices. It is because the problems with which planning is concerned are at the heart of governance. In particular, the state cannot efficiently set the incentive and regulatory framework, nor raise and distribute resources, without attention to the main steps in planning: setting objectives, identifying and selecting alternatives, monitoring

impact, and so on. This remains true however market-based economies become, and however political the policy process appears to be (Clay and Schaffer 1984).

Figure 4
Contrasting Models of Corporate Organisation

| | | | |
|--------------------|--|----------------|--|
| Mechanistic | | Organic | |
| Closed system: | adapting internally oriented passive consumers arms length suppliers competitive | Open system: | adaptive interplay of internal/external user centred close, long-term supplier relations collaborative networks |
| Planning | pre-planning concentrated at centre detailed targets imposed by centre | Strategy | feedback from action participative process adjustable range of target within constraints consensus |
| Organisation: | multi-layered pyramid vertical flow of information and command unitary segmented organisation departmental specialisation role culture organograms/job descriptions centralisation of operating responsibility/rules and manuals management role: planning, organisation command, co-ordination, control, organisation as instrument | Network: | flat hierarchies horizontal connectedness, through project teams, task forces, matrix methods decomposed system functional redundancy/ duplication task culture clusters/project goals workplace autonomy management role: boundary management system adjustment, enabling, supporting, educating, monitoring organisation as learning |
| Labour: | labour as cost incentives through pay strict hierarchies rate for the job high turnover Taylorised: fragmented, de-skilled, division of mental and manual work | Staff: | labour as asset incentives through quality of work less inequality incremental pay lower turnover multi-skilling - 'requisite variety'/group working |

Source: Murray, 1992:81

It then behoves planners to learn from their own histories. This they have rather conspicuously failed to do. Many of the errors of multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral planning seemed to be programmed into planning or strategy units, especially in central government. However, the programming is less genetic than environmental, and rehabilitation is entirely feasible. The trick, as with much deviant behaviour, is to start

early. The programme set out above should go a good way to help improve performance; and will be most effective if it is taken up when new initiatives are first launched. The central task is to establish a task culture, whether within a department, across departments, or in a joint endeavour between separate organisations, for example Government and donors.

In conclusion, it is worth pointing out that a recurrent theme of the literature has been the difficulty of managing change. In a sense, the reliance on NGOs which is characteristic of process approaches is an admission of the failure to change governments. The traditional solution to an administrative impasse has always been to create a new institution: in this case, the new institutions just happen to be outside government. The real success of process planning will occur when governments themselves take up the task cultures of the new managerialism.

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