PLANNING FOR RURAL AREAS IN AFRICA: EXPERIENCE AND PRESCRIPTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The 1970s have begun with mounting interest in decentralising planning and in preparing and implementing plans for specific rural areas in East Africa. In Uganda an interministerial committee has been set up for a proposed programme for integrated rural development for eighteen separate gombololas (sub-countries). In Tanzania decentralisation has been sought through the Regional Development Fund and through the intended work of Regional Economic Secretaries. In addition, the programme of encouraging movement into *ujamaa* villages in Dodoma amounts to an attempt at a comprehensive area development programme (Rwegayura, 1971) which might become a prototype for similar endeavours elsewhere. There has been much recent discussion of regional planning in Tanzania (for instance Saylor and Livingstone, 1969; Berry and others, 1971; Tomecko and Davies, 1971) and the third volume of the Second Five-Year Plan was devoted to an attempt to decentralise and disaggregate to the regional level (Tanzania Government, 1970). In Kenya, regional physical plans have been completed or are nearly complete for the seven provinces; the Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP) has generated multi-sectoral programmes for six divisions (sub-districts) and preparatory studies for several others; and the Ndegwa Commission has recommended that both plan-making and plan-implementing be extended down to the level of the district and even of the division (Kenya Government, 1971a:112).

While this is by no means a full review of the interest in developing decentralised planning, it may serve to justify the attempt which follows to assess some of the experience gained in the 1960s and more recently, to examine

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explanations for the levels of performance achieved, and to derive prescriptions for the future. In doing this it is necessary to narrow the field of concern. Decentralised planning presents a complex network of problems and opportunities which it is not within the competence of any one discipline to handle. This paper does not consider in any detail either regional physical planning or sectoral planning, for instance for roads, water, or agriculture at decentralised levels. It is concerned rather with area-based planning, defined as planning and plan implementation with participation by local-level staff of multi-sector programmes for specific rural areas. The main focus is on the district and sub-district levels. Most attention is paid to Tanzania and Kenya: to Tanzania because it is relatively well-documented, and to Kenya because of the experience gained with the SRDP (for example Nellis and others, 1970; Chambers, 1970; Kang'ela, 1971; Gerhart, 1971; Hungate, 1971).

A further limitation of scope must be made explicit: this paper does not confront the question of alternatives to area-based planning. It is all too easy to make the facile assumption that any planning is better than no planning. A decision to plan, however, is a decision to use planning resources, and in intention at least, resources for implementation, and these have opportunity costs. Important questions, to be answered only in terms of the particular conditions of particular nations and the national priorities which they set, are first, what forms of planning at what levels are desirable, and second, a question which is rarely or never put in East Africa, whether in some circumstances non-planning may be preferable to planning. The justification for omitting these questions here is that answering them will be easier when the feasibility of one of the alternatives, area-based planning, has been explored in more detail. Such exploration, concerned primarily with administrative aspects, is the purpose of this paper.

PLANNING WITHOUT IMPEMENTATION

Area-based planning and implementation in East Africa has a long record of failure which has, however, been inconspicuous, partly because of its dispersed nature. The impression from the evidence available is that many area-based rural development activities fall into two main categories: planning without implementation, and implementation without planning. While any attempt at a summary inevitably oversimplifies, the former category appears to include three main types of operations: target-setting, preparing shopping lists, and development studies.

Target-setting was much discussed during the mid-1960s. The idea current was that the activities and effectiveness of local-level staff could be enhanced through disaggregating to local levels some of the targets set in national plans. In Kenya, the first development plan stated that the government would define regional and district targets as soon as possible (Kenya Government, 1964, p. 136). President Kenyatta told a development seminar for politicians and civil servants in 1965 that civil servants' merits would be judged by their contri-

bution to the development plan and they would be called upon to explain any failure to achieve their targets (Kenya Institute for Administration, 1965). The second development plan set agricultural production targets by district for some of the main crops but these were given for the end of the five-year period and not broken down into annual totals (Kenya Government, 1966, appendix tables 10-21). In fact only the Ministry of Agriculture was able to provide district targets during the period up to the end of 1968 (Gertzel, 1970, p. 14) and it is doubtful whether these were often taken very seriously. In Tanzania more was attempted. During the first five-year plan period sectoral targets were disaggregated to the regions, but the regions were all set the same sectoral growth rates as those for the nation as a whole (Karmiloff, 1965:86). The unrealistic assumptions of this procedure coupled with the almost complete absence of a professional economic planning competence at regional levels made this a largely meaningless exercise. Crop production targets were produced after some consultation with Regional Development Committees and other bodies, and were meant to be disaggregated from regional to district level. There were, however, differences of opinion as to whether targets were realistic, and as Cliffe and Saul have pointed out, the regional planning of which this was the major component was largely a paper exercise (1969, p. 34-35). In some cases local bodies, full of initial enthusiasm, set high agricultural production targets for themselves (Bienen, 1967, p. 328-329) and these became translated through non-technical channels into calls to increase acreages, regardless of labour constraints at peak periods and of the Ministry of Agriculture's policies of propagating better methods of husbandry to increase yields rather then increase acreages. In the event the targets were not always known at the local level, and where known do not appear to have had much meaning in terms of staff activity and performance. As a result of the intervention of exogenous factors such as weather and world prices, some areas exceeded and others fell short of their targets. In addition, procedures had not been worked out for reporting on progress. The target approach, indeed, had never been throughly worked out as a system, and amounted to little more than a crude and ineffective attempt to provide local-level staff with an incentive for higher performance in the administrative areas in which they were working. Following these discouraging experiences, it is not surprising that in the later 1960s target-setting lost some of its earlier prominence.

The second form of planning without implementation was the preparation of shopping lists of proposals. In Kenya in 1963-64 during the period of regionalism, a number of regional agricultural plans which were in effect project lists were submitted to government. Again, in preparation for the second national plan, districts submitted compilations of programmes and projects, but these like the regional agricultural plans before them were regarded with despair by central government staff and were not incorporated in the planning process. In Tanzania there have been similar experiences: the Mwanza, Dodoma and Mbeya plans produced in preparation for the second five-year plan have been described as 'essentially shopping lists' and contained some unrealistic assumptions in relation to national targets and financial availability (Berry and

others, 1971: 25-26). In practice, 'bottom-up' planning of this sort has been a competition between areas for resources. Far from simplifying central planning, the tendency has been to overbid in relation to likely resource availability, to complicate the tasks in the centre, making the locally prepared plans difficult to use, and to contribute to disillusion and cynism among field staff when their efforts lead to no result.

A third form of planning without implementation consists of development studies which stop short of detailed action proposals and which would require further working up before they could become implementable. In Kenya, development studies carried out in 1970-71 by Norwegian planners in Kitui District fall into this category. They compile information about the district and present general proposals for development, but they do not include detailed proposals with programming and costing. Studies conducted in the eight second-phase SRDP areas in Kenya to varying degrees also have not been carried through into detailed proposals. (For some of the data collected, see Heyer, Ireri and Moris, 1971.) In Tanzania, the Geita District Plan prepared by a French team with Devplan personnel has been described as 'essentially a compilation of data regarding the district rather than a planning document' (Saylor and Livingstone, 1969:8), and the Kilimanjaro plan prepared by the regional planning team of Devplan has been said to provide data and perspectives for the formulation of a plan but not to attempt to design an implementable programme (Berry and others, 1971:24). The most extreme example of studies without proposals is the work carried out in Rungwe District by the Afrika Studiecentrum, Leyden, which absorbed 155 man months of highly qualified research staff, and on the practical side (however valuable the studies may be academically) apparently produced little more than a 'tentative list of feasibility studies' (Berry and others, 1971:24 and 41). It would, of course, be unfair to ignore the fact that some studies, like those in Rungwe, are conducted with largely academic aims, or that the findings from such studies do often feed into policy decisions and so have practical results even if they do not lead to plans for the areas in which they were carried out. Nevertheless these examples, which are by no means a complete catalogue, do suggest that there has been a waste of resources in the past, and that future proposals for studies for area-based planning should be scrutinised to improve the chances of their leading to implementable plans. The need is for carefully devised and enforced procedures to reduce the resources required in data collection and to increase the resources devoted to programming, budgeting and implementation.

While there has been area-based planning activity without implementation, it is salutary to recognise that meanwhile there has been extensive implementation without area-based planning. The implementation of departmental sectoral programmes, of national policies such as *ujamaa vijijini* in Tanzania, and of local authority programmes have continued and usually grown in scale. Decentralised allocations of funds—for self-help in Kenya, for the Regional Development Fund (RDF) in Tanzania, and for the district development fund in Uganda before the coup—have been spent by and through local level officials, though with mixed results. (See Collins, 1970, for the RDF) Meanwhile the

ground swell of self-help, often outside any planning process and often in conflict with national priorities (see Mbithi 1970, p. 19 and Anderson 1971, p. 19 for Kenya) has pre-empted decisions through the collection of funds and through construction work, sometimes with disregard for technical criteria (Holmquist, 1970). In practice the real allocation of development resources that is implemented, at the local level, has been determined not by systematic area-based planning in which there is a careful assessment of potential, problems and opportunities, but through a mixture of national and departmental priorities, the ideas and preferences of individual civil servants, political lobbying, pre-emptive self-help, and the relative capacities of departments to execute their policies. For Kenya at least it is generally true that in the words of Robert Jackson 'Planning at the grassroots level. . . is still largely a formal exercise which has not yet . . . significantly affected local development activities which take place in spite of planning' (Jackson 1970 p. 199)

Planning with Implementation

There are however two types of exception to Jackson's generalisation which, in view of the usual gap between planning and implementation at the area level, should be examined. In the first place, settlement and ranching schemes in Kenya, without a fanfare and without being formally described as area-based planning or embodied in any documents which could be described as area plans, have entailed the following activities: resources and human surveys, physical and agricultural planning, infrastructural development, the provision of economic and welfare services and the promotion and development of institutions—which would be expected in a multi-sectoral area development programme. The settlements of the National Irrigation Board at Mwea, Perkerra and Ahero, the Million-Acre Settlement Scheme, and the group ranching schemes in Masailand have all in common the introduction, or the intention to introduce, radical economic and social change in specified rural areas. The experience which these approaches have gathered may well repay closer study by future designers of area-based planning, but two particular circumstances should be borne in mind. In the first place, these operations have been accompained by a change in the organisation of land use and in the farmer's or pastoralist's relationship with the land. This has both required and facilitated the second circumstance, a special organisation—the National Irrigation Board, the Department of Settlement and the Range Management Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, respectively—with an exceptional degree of responsibility for and control over economic and to a lesser extent social activities and rewards. These organisations have related to and depended upon the Provincial Administration and other departments, but have enjoyed a degree of autonomy and power at the local level for which there are no equivalents in the great majority of small-holding and pastoral situations in Kenya.

The second example is more important since it represents an attempt to produce and implement area plans in areas which have been and which remain

subject to normal administration, working as far as possible through the existing machinery of government. The history of the SRDP up to mid-1971 has been recorded elsewhere (Nellis 1970a, 1971a). Suffice it here to state that following a conference on education, employment and rural development held at Kericho in 1966 (the papers of which were published as Sheffield, ed., 1967), a long series of initiatives led in 1968 to the selection and survey of fourteen divisions (sub-districts) in Kenya considered to be representative of small-farming and to a lesser degree pastoral conditions, the preparation in 1969 and 1970 of multi-sectoral and to some extent experimental development plans for six of these (Migori in South Nyanza; Vihiga in Kakamega; Kapenguria in West Pokot; Tetu in Nyeri; Mbere in Embu; and parts of Kwale District), the recruitment of donors to finance and provide technical assistance for these (FAO/SIDA for Migori; US AID for Vihiga; the Dutch government for Kapenguria; none — the Kenya Government in effect — for Tetu; NORAD for Mbere; and the British for Kwale), and the beginnings of implementation in the first half of 1971. The driving force behind the programme was at first the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and is now, since the amalgamation of that Ministry with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Finance and Planning. A small secretariat in that Ministry has developed a system of linkmen in ministries and has worked through the Provincial Planning Officers, the Provincial Administration, and the operational department at the central government, province, district and division levels to prepare and gain acceptance for the plans and more recently to initiate implementation. Officers of the Provincial Administration known as Area Coordinators, one to each area, have been charged with coordinating and expediting the programmes.

Although it is early to assess progress, a good deal of experience has been gained and some light has been thrown on the problems and possibilities of decentralised planning activities involving local-level staff. Historical descriptions of the planning process in five of the six areas (see Oyugi, 1970 for Migori; Moock, 1970 for Vihiga; Nellis 1970b, for Kapenguria; Brokensha, 1970 for Mbere; and Kang'ela, 1971 for Kwale) demonstrate that the sequence of initiatives, the degrees of participation by local-level staff, and the contributions of Nairobi and provincial personnel have varied between areas. The patterns and experience have, however, been sufficiently similar for some generalisations to be possible. (For fuller presentation of lessons learnt, see Chambers, 1970). Four linked aspects appear important for future area planning.

In the first place, the six area plans were produced through repeated injections of inititative and imagination from Provincial Planning Officers and from Nairobi staff. Provincial, district and divisional staff contributed information, ideas and insights by most of the detailed planning was carried out either by people who came from outside the district or by district and divisional staff catalysed and encouraged by the presence of such people. The generation of experimental ideas, their working up into programmes, negotiations for their acceptance in central government, and then their implementation have proved to require considerably greater inputs of high-level staff time and effort than might have been anticipated. The experimental programmes—village polytech-

nics, labour-intensive road construction, extension and farm management experiments, maize credit, cotton blocks, 4K clubs, and so on—could not have been realised without substantial assistance from highlevel manpower from outside the divisions and districts concerned.

Secondly, this reflects much less on the capabilities of local-level staff than on the environment in which they find themselves and their rational responses to it. They are cynical about planning: they quote past examples of planning without implementation, of initiatives which have stuck in the machine in Nairobi, and of delays in fund releases even when these are routine. They also have a low expectation of being in the same post when any plans they prepare come forward for implementation. This is partly because of the expected duration of processing the plans, and partly because of the rates of transfer. In seven SRDP districts and divisions surveyed in July 1970, District Commissioners had been in their districts for an average of $6\frac{1}{2}$ months and District Officers for an average of only $3\frac{1}{2}$ months. During a little over a year during which there have been Area Coordinators there have been changes in incumbents in four out of the six areas. In these circumstances there is a low incentive to learn about an area or to initiate development action which will require more than a few months to mature. The focus on immediately realisable self-help activities can thus be understood partly as reflecting a desire by local-level staff for useful activity which they can most easily achieve in the short-term outside the normal operation of government development procedures. Local-level staff are thus the captives of a syndrome of rapid transfers, low expectations of continuity in post, low incentives to initiate longer-term developmental activities, and the expectation that the operation of routine government procedures will be lengthy.

A third point highlighted by the SRDP experience is that the main administrative bottleneck in the Kenya Government is in Nairobi rather than in the field. This had long been recognised by field officers and part of the purpose of the SRDP,—to sharpen and make more effective the machinery of government—implies attempting to overcome this. It has however recurred with the SRDP because of the smallness of the secretariat responsible for it and the magnitude of the difficulties of generating proposals and then processing them, whether prepared in central government or in the field. For example, when development studies are carried out in the field without their being worked through into action proposals with realistic requests for resources, they present a problem to the secretarial requiring effort and innovation to solve. In the press of events it is the better prepared proposals or those which fit best into existing programmes which receive priority. The non-implementation of plans derives partly from the inappropriate forms in which they are presented to the centre, which in turn stems from the difficulties experienced in the centre in innovating standardised forms in which proposals should be presented so that they can slip quickly and easily through the machine.

The fourth, most important and perhaps most obvious lesson which can be derived from the SRDP experience, as from examples of planning in many countries, is that implementability is the crux of good planning. Indeed

improving programme implementation is regarded as one of the main objectives of the SDRP. It is doubtful whether a statement like Pratt's about Tanzania's first Five-Year Plan, that it was 'an able and highly professional document' (Pratt, 1967, p. 38), can be justified unless the professionalism includes sufficient insight into the conditions of implementation for the plan to be put into practice. (See Leys, 1969, pp. 273-4 for a discussion of the first Tanzania Five Year Plan's non-implementable character.) It should be axiomatic that a 'good' plan which cannot be implemented is in fact a bad plan. In the case of SRDP first-phase area plans, working them from proposals through to scheduled action programmes has proved difficult, time-consuming and a sharp discipline in feasibility testing (for details of the system, see Belshaw and Chambers, 1971). Working out who does what, when and how and with what resources, has revealed incompatibilities in proposed resource use, particularly with agricultural staff time, forcing confrontation with choices which would otherwise have remained unrecognised and would have been pre-empted by the structure and inertia of the situation. Testing implementability should thus become a part of area-based planning. The implication is that planning resources and activities have tended to be concentrated on the earlier activities of the sequence of planning implemention to the neglect of the later ones. One reason may be that plan documents are sometimes felt to represent the culmination of planning operations, whether on a national or local level, and plan documents do not normally include detailed action programmes. But good planning should include planning implementation.

Common Diagnoses and Prescriptions

In the light of the experience with area-based planning without implementation, area-based planning with implementation, and other evidence, some of the more conventional diagnoses and prescriptions for rural development administration can now be examined. Low levels of performance in developmental roles are commonly attributed among other factors, to inappropriate structures, lack of coordination, lack of entrepreneurial and problem-solving attitudes in the civil service, and lack of trained manpower. These diagnoses and their associated prescriptions will be considered in turn.

Defects in administration are often attributed to missing, faulty or inappropriate structures, or their incorrect location in government. Until the later 1960s there was much debate in East Africa about 'where planning should be put'—whether in the President's Office, or as a separate Ministry, or as a department of a Ministry of Finance. Discussion continues about the location of certain departments—community development and water development in particular—and these tend, in both Kenya and Tanzania, to suffer a peripatetic life; the Water Development Department in Tanzania was in three different ministries during the preparation of the Northeast Nzega Plan (Berry and others, 1971, p. 26). Such questions are undoubtedly important; as Rweyemamu (1966)

has shown, for example, there can be a significant structural aspect to the absorption of civil servants' energies in inter-agency rivalry and conflict. But the relative importance of such questions has perhaps tended to be exaggerated. To borrow from a phrase of Kang'ela's, concentrating attention on structural changes in government may be like the man who lost his watch in a dark street and looked for it in his bedroom because that was where he could turn the light on. It is easy to recommend changes in structure. Academic commentators and short-term consultants alike, often not understanding in any depth the operations of government departments, are easily tempted to suggest macro-organisational changes rather than micro-adjustments to make the system work. Indeed, the fluency with which the Tanzanian government changes its ministries and departments may be a symptom of evasion of the need not for structural change but for means to improve the working of what already exists. Applied to area-based planning this argument implies that it may be less important to create special organisations than to develop procedures for making use of those which are already operating. The process of interstitial penetration and catalysis devised for the SRDP, relying on incremental modification of procedures and behaviour, may be more effective than more visible and more easily prescribed changes in organisational structure.

The most common diagnosis of weaknesses in rural development administration is, however, lack of coordination, typically followed by a call for more coordination. (This is explicit or implicit in Junod, 1969; Cliffe and Saul, 1969; the Ndegwa Commission Report; Pratt, 1967; and Berry and Conyers, 1971, p. 12). Certainly many cases can be cited (for example, see Junod, 1969) of lack of cooperation between staff of different departments. But 'coordination' is a vague term and is in practice used to cover a number of different purposes. It is probably no coincidence that calls for coordination come most loudly from departments which are insecure and need cooperation, such as community development, or planning in its early days. Nor is it surprising that Gertzel found that District Officers in Kenya said when asked about their developmental work that their task was to 'coordinate' but were vague about what was involved (1970: fn 36). Again, an analysis of the use of the term in the paper by Cliffe and Saul on the district development front in Tanzania suggests that they use coordination to describe pursuing the socialist strategy which they advocate (1969, *passim* but especially 1-2, 10-12, and 34-36).

The very vagueness of the term 'coordination' which makes it useful to community developers, planners, District Officers in Kenya and socialists in Tanzania alike also allows a use of syntax which can be interpreted to imply that more coordination is necessarily beneficial and that maximum coordination is best of all. Some quotations may serve to illustrate this usage.

Cliffe and Saul: The general strategy of the Tanzania leadership has as its most salient features:

> The intention to coordinate as closely and as frutifully as possible the activities of *all* institutions with a presence in the Tanzania countryside.

> A continuing effort to streamline the functions of District Development Committees and to maximize effective coordination is obviously a major priority. (1969, pp. 1 and 34.)

Berry and Conyers: Of water development planning:

> We envisage that in most cases there will be close coordination between the planning teams and the various ministries at *all* planning stages, so that *as wide a group as possible* are involved in the planning process. (1971, p. 12. My italics)

Ndegwa Commission Report:

> . . . . there is a widespread feeling that coordination of the many aspects of government activity must be improved to get maximum results. . . . Here we consider the overall problem of structure to ensure maximum coordination of these various organisations towards meeting the nation's development goals. (Kenya Government, 1971a, p. 110)

Implicit in all these statements is the assumption that in some respects at least coordination should be maximised. There may here be a bias, especially in the Tanzanian case, towards coordination because of a national preference for cooperative activity; indeed there is a harmony of models of human behaviour between the ideals of communal production in *ujamaa* villages and the cooperation of the teams of specialists who plan and service them. Planners also have a tendency to prefer those rural projects (settlement schemes, ranching schemes) which, from the nature of the combination of inputs required, generate a need for coordinated programming and implementation (see for instance Millikan, 1967). Such preferences should not, however, be allowed to obscure the fact that coordination is not costless, and that there is no general *a priori* reason why alternatives to coordination should always be less beneficial, by whatever criteria.

Coordination has, indeed, in most of its forms, high costs in staff time. Coordination is liable to many meetings, staff sitting through discussions which do not concern them, and in its more pathological forms listening to speeches, failing to make decisions, hiding from responsibility for inactivity behind a group consensus, and agreeing on technically poor programmes. Two related examples may illustrate the potential costs of coordination. Collins states (1970, p. 17) that compartmentalism of ministerial operations in the regions in Tanzania and lack of cooperation with other agencies limit the effectiveness of the Regional Development Committee as a unit for the planned allocation and coordinated implementation of the Regional Development Fund. He finds a certain 'technocratic arrogance' in the case of cooperation over implementation of RDF projects, as when one head of a water development organisation bemoaned 'squandering' his staff over lots of small village schemes. Given scarce resources for implementation, however, the choice here is likely to have been between being uncoordinated (choosing the technically easiest areas and sup-

plying more people with water) and coordinated (choosing the areas selected on political and other grounds and supplying fewer people). A second, related example can be taken from current dilemmas in water development in Kenya. Executive capacity and not finance is the main constraint, as is suggested by the fact that in 1969/70 of an original estimate for development expenditure on rural water supplies of K£525,000 only K£253,000 was spent (Kenya Government, 1971b, p. 243). In designing water schemes, consultation and coordination at the local level are often called for, but they absorb the time of the engineers who are the bottleneck in the whole process, and therefore have high opportunity costs in terms of total numbers of people provided with water. The choice may well be between more coordination and less water, and less coordination and more water.

The implication of this argument is that coordination may sometimes be dysfunctional and should be optimised rather than maximised. What form it should take—whether the passing of information, joint planning, development committee meetings, joint field visits, unified reporting systems, or whatever—needs to be decided upon the merits of particular case and according to explicit criteria. Enough should have been said to make it evident that blanket calls for more coordination should be regarded critically and broken down into separate activities, the costs and benefits of each of which can then be appraised. In the case of area-based planning the optimal degree of joint activity between departments varies with circumstances. There may be no operational connection and therefore no need for coordination between, let us say, a rural domestic water programme and a maize extension programme; but self-help dips programmes in Kenya require joint planning and replanning between the local representatives of the Division of Animal Husbandry, the Department of Community Development, the Provincial Administration and self-help groups. A listing of the operations required for a programme such as this, including who is responsible for what quickly identifies the joint activities required, and joint phasing of these activities by the officers concerned should help to cement commitment to the programme (Belshaw and Chambers, 1971, pp. 8-9). Optimal coordination may best be obtained by *ad hoc* cooperative activity based on the stage of planning and implementation and the particular programme concerned, combined with a standardisation of procedures to reduce the cost of coordination in staff time spent in discussion and in the innovation required for working out operations in the absence of clear guidelines. For example, Kates has observed about the approaches to producing water development plans:

> Comparability between plans has been enhanced when the terms of reference suggest a standard set of sub-regional units, when major economic and demographic projects are centrally provided, and when a common set of design standards and assumptions are adopted. Building-in consistency this way seems more effective than the use of coordinating or liaison committees which in practice seldom seem to function well (1971, p. 7).

Put another way, as a means of securing desirable coordination, standardisation of procedures may be preferable to meetings which have to innovate relationships.

A further diagnosis and prescription is that civil servants lack initiative and

should develop entrepreneurial qualities. Bienen, for example, suggests that entrepreneurship is needed on the part of Regional Commissioners in Tanzania (1967, p. 332); but the other side of the coin is that the achievement drives of Regional Commissioners have led them sometimes to hasty and authoritarian initiation of projects and continued support for them even when they are economically unviable (Cliffe and Saul, 1969, pp. 6-7). The issues here are not simple. A common model in commentators' minds is that the civil service is hidebound with rules and regulations, and innovation is only possible through initiatives outside the sytem. The RDF in Tanzania can be seen in this light: the provision of a resource not constrained by a dead weight of controls inhibiting its use. Although the RDF evidently has benefits, some of its short-comings have been associated with the very autonomy of resource allocation which is its virtue. (Collins, 1970, *passim*). In Kenya, extra-system developmental initiatives by civil servants have included self-help activities, in this case sometimes taking the form of compulsory exactions of contributions carried out by the Provincial Administration (Nyangira, 1970, p. 10). Thus, in both Tanzania and Kenya extra-system initiative has shown a tendency toward authoritarian forms. A preferable approach may be to modify the existing system of procedures so that it provides more scope and rewards for developmental initiative.

A relative issue here is the tendency for thinking about the role of the civil service, even indeed of the development administration which is desired, in terms of problem-solving. Thus the Ndegwa Commission report: 'A good civil service in a developing country must .... have the capacity to identify and solve specific kinds of problems—problems of inducing and sustaining social and economic change in addition to the already formidable task of efficient management of the services for which it is now responsible.' (Kenya Government, 1971a, pp. 2-3). Similarly, Heyer in part of her acute paper on choice in the SRDP planning process writes: 'The detailed goals for any particular area are related to its problems, and probably the easiest way of formulating goals is through consideration of fundamental problems first.' (Heyer, 1971, p. 4). In like vein, Berry and others say of the Mwanza, Mbeya and Dodoma plans that they 'were drawn together from sets of projects suggested by the District Development Committees and Village Development Committees and thus clearly contained the important problem areas as seen through local eyes.' (1971, p. 23). But as Drucker has pointed out in the field of management: 'Results are obtained by exploiting opportunities, not by solving problems.' (1964, p. 18).

While this statement is oversimple, and while the quotations from the three sources above do not do the authors full justice, the point is not mere semantics. Civil servants can very easily be problem-oriented in their attitudes and activities; indeed the continuing emphasis on law and order, however necessary, has a problem-preventing and problem-solving character. Moreover, the programmes of technical departments can be biased by uncritical attempts to solve problems. To take one example, cotton had done consistently badly in Kenya despite repeated efforts to expand acreage; the response of the Ministry of Agriculture has been to redouble efforts to persuade farmers to grow it rather than to look

for alternatives. In cases such as these, resource allocations are determined by difficulties that arise. Far from this always being the desirable creativity welcomed by Hirschman as part of his theory of the Hiding Hand in development (Hirschman, 1967) it may have high and unjustifiable costs through draining effort and resources into activities which are less beneficial than their alternatives. An opportunity-orientation could be much more productive. In area-based planning for instance one of the first steps to be taken by an agriculturalist (as rarely if ever happened with the first round of SRDP planning) would be to visit agricultural research stations to find out what new crop varieties might be available and what opportunities were presented by research results already obtained. Similarly, in land utilisation the emphasis would be on making fuller use of under-utilised resources. Activities such as these, innovative though they are in their implications, could be promoted by making them part of standard procedures for area-based planning.

The final diagnosis of the difficulties of decentralised and area-based planning to be considered here is lack of high-level manpower. For Tanzania, Saylor and Livingstone consider the lack of skilled manpower capable of properly planning and evaluating projects to be 'perhaps the most crucial limiting factor in the sub-national planning process' (1969, p. 17), and Cliffe and Saul describe it as among the most unyielding parameters of the current situation' 1969, p. 37). For Kenya, Belshaw has recently written: 'Since applied-economics competence plus rural orientation is a very scarce reasource in Kenya, considerable ingenuity in resource use will be required if district planning is to be a productive activity.' (1971, pp. 9-10). Certainly in Tanzania and Kenya there has been difficulty over a number of years in recruiting suitably qualified Regional Economic Secretaries and Provincial Planning Officers respectively. Moreover, in Kenya there seems no prospect of early recruitment and training of the District Development Officers and District Planning Officers recommended by the Ndegwa Commission (Kenya Government 1971a, pp. 113, 116). These difficulties are, however, relative to definition of the tasks to be carried out. If a high degree 'of innovation, both procedural and substantive, is called for from the lower levels of administration it will not be forthcoming. If, however, the innovative effort is concentrated on devising and introducing procedures which seek to optimise the performance of existing staff, perhaps with limited training, then worthwhile results might be obtained. But this could only be done through hard realism and through devising procedures feasible for the staff who would be required to carry them out. There is no place here for comprehensive intellectual perfectionism. The need is for sophistication in simplicity.

The Primacy of Procedures

The weight of the evidence points towards a primacy of procedures in increasing the effectiveness of rural development administration in general and in introducing area-based planning in particular. The value of standardised procedures and comparability in planning is commonly emphasised for engineering

activities (Kulp, 1970, p. 385; Kates 1971, p. 7), but the principle can equally apply to area-based planning. The problems experienced with the target-setting approach to area development, with the generation of shopping list plans from districts and regions, and with development studies which have not led to plans or implementation, might have been reduced had better systems been devised for them. But at least as important, had there been careful *ex ante* appraisal of the procedures proposed then it might have been decided that they were not worth initiating. In any future replication of SRDP area planning in Kenya, standardising procedures for field staff should enable them to play a greater part in plan preparation, and building comparability into plan presentations should reduce the amount of effort required at the centre. Such measures should lower the demands on high-level man-power, improve the fit between area-based plans and national priorities and programmes, and make it easier for plans to slip through the hurdles in central government.

It may be objected that there are powerful social factors militating against the effective implementation of new procedures for decentralised area-based planning. Hyden, for example, has described some of the social factors which limit effective rational administration in Kenya (1971) and Nellis has questioned the extent to which the Kenyan bureaucracy can be described as developmental (1971b). A vital assumption behind the argument of this paper is that local-level civil servants would work harder and be more productive if they were given tasks which were more demonstrably developmental and from which they could derive the satisfactions of achievement. Certainly there are some indications that a lack of clear developmental tasks and procedures limits staff motivation. Saylor and Livingstone suggest that it is possible that local-level officers 'grope in the dark in the absence of policies they can execute' (1969, p. 20). Gertzel found that one of the reasons for the early failure of development committees in Kenya was that members had 'little clear idea about the real nature of their functions' (1970,p. 14). It is arguable, too, that her finding that administrative officers in Kenya in the period 1965-68 preferred the public baraza (meeting) and publicising plans and mobilising people to disciplined coordination and implementation through development committees (1970, pp. 20, 27) stems partly from the lack of definition of the work the committees were meant to undertake. Where staff have developmental activities which are routinised, enforced, and visibly effective (for instance, the staff in Kenya engaged on land consolidation or tea extension) they tend to work well. As Hyden has written: 'A stonger task orientation is unlikely to develop spontaneously unless individuals are given tasks over which they have a full grasp, which they can develop into something better and be proud of.' (1971, p. 11). The field staff of the East African governments represent a major under-utilised resource; but devising procedural systems to realise that resource is liable to be a complex, long drawn out and indeed intimidating undertaking.

If decentralised area-based planning is pursued, certain principles can be recommended for its design on the basis of experience so far. First, the introduction of procedures should be gradual and experimental, tested in a few areas and modified before being generally applied. Second, the procedures themselves

should be simple, with optional loops into complexity to be followed dependent on planning and implementing capacity, the time scale, the types, quantity and quality of data, and degrees of uncertainty and risk in the programmes being developed. An algorithm might provide the best guide through the system. Third, over-attention to the early operations in the planning-implementing sequence should be avoided, especially tendencies towards pathological data-collection without regard for its potential use. The concept of optimal ignorance might be developed, with techniques for identifying what are the relative costs and benefits of acquiring different types of information in different types of situation. Fourth, implementability should be a prime criterion of good planning. Indeed, in preparing area plans a backwards approach—taking existing programmes and beginning by phasing and replanning them—could be combined with the introduction of new programmes. These recommendations amount to a proposal for a gradual and experimental building-up of simple operations which can be evaluated for effectiveness, but they need not exclude more complex approaches providing they too are tried on a limited scale and treated as experiments. What is important is gaining a range of experience with different techniques in different conditions, so that there are alternative approaches available for future choices.

To develop, test and modify procedures for area-based planning would seem to require a combination of research, consultancy and training: research to identify the present situation, its constraints and opportunities; consultancy to devise experimental procedures; and training to introduce them. Such work has to be multi-disciplinary: the skills and insights of the environmental sciences —geography, agriculture, economics, and sociology—are certainly required. The position of public administration and political science as academic disciplines with a potential contribution is more debateable. Commentators from these disciplines tend to agree that procedures should be worked out (Cliffe and Saul, 1969, p. 36; Collins, 1970, p. 42; Pratt, 1967, pp. 46-7) but they stop short of presenting detailed proposals themselves. There may be many reasons for this: a sense that this is the work of the civil service, the relative invisibility of procedural details, lack of access in some cases, and perhaps a preference for more general issues rather than what may be regarded as the rather dull detail of Authorities to Incur Expenditure, Local Purchase Orders, and similar parts of government routine. Some relevant techniques are those developed for organisation and methods and operational research. But these have tended to be associated with management consultancy and management training more than with university departments of government and political science. Students of public administration and political science may indeed be able to help as critical observers, in evaluating, and in assisting exchanges of techniques, experiences and insights within East Africa. But in the initial design of procedures, civil servants and professional management consultants may have more to contribute.

The question remains where the innovative ideas and drive should come from. This is important in that the staff concerned should have suitable experience, receive official support and be free from distractions. There are arguments for and against institutes or bureaus of development studies, university departments, training institutes, management consultants, and government departments. In Kenya, if the Ndegwa Commission's recommendation for a Management Services Division of a Central Management Office is adopted, this might eventually provide a suitable home since it would be charged with rendering management services and consultancy to ministries. (For a full description of its proposed functions, see Kenya Government, 1971a, pp. 143-4). The SRDP experience, however, as well as experience with area-based planning elsewhere, does indicate that to innovate procedures requires much effort and skill. If the nations of East Africa are seriously to experiment further in developing and extending area-based planning, the best immediate policy is probably to exploit whatever resources are currently available. But this should be accompanied by recruiting and training personnel both to design and test procedures and to carry out area-based planning and implementation in the future.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the Kenya Government servants who have assisted with the work on which parts of this paper are based, and D.G.R. Belshaw for collaboration in research on area-based planning and implementation in Kenya. This paper draws on our joint work. The views expressed are, however, mine; they should not be taken as reflecting the views of the Institute for Development Studies or of the University of Nairobi.

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