Action Planning

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by Pal Baross

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"Planners must think themselves as initiators
and leaders of development"

Otto Koeningsberger

"if we identify actions rather than decisions
as a principal focus of planning practice,
then being effective in the world becomes
the decisive criterion"

John Friedmann
Planning in the Public Domain

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Introduction

One of the core tasks of urban management is to extract resources from urban based activities and to reallocate them for investments which will guarantee the continued development of the city. In this context planning functions as a professional support activity, feeding political and administrative decision makers with the long term goals and constraints of urban development and proposing a set of feasible investment alternatives for immediate resource allocation. When measured against this expected performance there is little evidence that planning institutions in the Third World have been very successful.

The crisis of urban planning in developing countries is deep rooted. Nurtured on the uncritical imitation of the procedural and substantive analytical planning practices developed (and now largely abandoned) in the industrial countries it is often void of local relevance, both in terms of understanding the peculiar features of contemporary Third World urbanization and the dynamics of its actors of change.

This paper is addressed to ways of breaking this impass. In developing the paradigm of action planning, the seeds of which already exist in both theory and practice, it seeks to provide a new impetus to strengthen the relevance of planning as a meaningful input for managing city development. To achieve a shift of paradigm of planning we must re-examine the context of actions as opposed to be preoccupied with the context of planning. The questions we ask are 'under what conditions (public) actors of urban development seek planning advise and which are the elementary requirements for planning decisions to be translated for implementation.

The paper is addressed to practicing planners in developing countries but it is also relevant to the managerial echelons of decision makers who should be using planners to help them to make more effective choices. We hope that the paper will be of interest to two additional groups, researchers who study the effectiveness of planning and trainers who educate future planners.

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Conceptual Definition

"Planning is linking thinking with action" declared John Friedmann in 1973, setting into motion a more activist orientation of planning practice than the regulatory/technocratic approach which had dominated the profession emulating the British example of Town and Country tradition (Friedmann, 1973). In the industrialised countries the label "action planning" gained wide acceptance in the academic profession as a new focus, procedure and set of techniques of planning, and in practice as new institutional structures for dealing with both localised issues (neighborhood rehabilitation, creation of enterprise zones, urban renewal) and larger social objectives (environmental concerns, transport alternatives, social service delivery, minority issues). Action planning became synonymous with an activist posture in planning, a problem solving rather than a problem defining enterprise (Faludi, 1978).

At the academic level the rupture with the more orthodox, analytical planning theory was radical and complete. It was argued that the logic of analytical planning inescapably leads to the quest for higher and higher levels of "comprehensiveness", the consequent rationalization of centralizing planning power and the mystification of the power of technocracy. The output of analytical planning, embodied in the Master Plan, lacks the scope for dynamic adjustments, flexibility, constituency acceptance and results in either long delays in implementation or in unimplementable projects. It was concluded that the "visible hand" that planning aspired to be in regulating the jungle of urban market forces was suffering from arthritis (Devas, 1989).

At the level of practice action planning was eased into the institutional framework of urban management in industrialized countries with less radical connotations. The "democratization of government" as a social project was well under way in Europe and North America in the late sixties, which above all encouraged and legitimised the emergence of local issues and problems long ignored by the analytical planning process. Cities obtained greater autonomy in defining their destinies and neighborhoods their identity. Although analytical planning did not disappear from the institutional structure of urban management, (master and structure plans are still tools of long range indicative planning) action planning introduced an adaptive framework with greater emphasis on conflict resolution and consultative coordination (Friend, and Jessop, 1969).

In today's world the arthritis of orthodox planning still paralyses urban management practices in developing countries. This paralysis runs through both the institutionalization of procedural aspects of planning (who plans for whom) and substantial aspects of planning, that is to say, the scale and range of studies which must be prepared before action options emerge. Indeed it can be argued that the uncritical imitation of analytical planning practice not only leads to a time consuming and rigid framework (often far removed from the actual objects and subjects of planning) within which action and implementation is structured but frequently pointing to solutions which themselves are inappropriate. The incorporation of analytical planning in Third world situation transplanted both the omnipotence of technocracy and its alien values of what the city is all about.

The concept of action planning evolved from different practical experimentations in situations where either some urban problems inexplicably persisted or where changes were too fast for analytical planning to positively respond. These contextual origins - neighborhood stagnation and decline in the industrial cities of developed countries and rapid urban growth in developing countries - molded action planning into two, seemingly different sets of practices: mvicro action planning and strategic action planning.

2.1   Micro Action Planning

In the first case, action planning is addressed to a relatively very well defined locality problem where the key to solution generation was sought by an intense and coordinated involvement of a large number of agencies through a synchronised scenario of integrated action plans. Best labelled as micro action planning the locality oriented action planning has the following attributes (Goethert and Hamdi, 1988):

It is designed to overcome perceived obstacles (physical, social, economic) which hinders the integration of the area into the mainstream of progressive urban development and change. Even when micro action planning leads to substantial rehabilitation and renewal, such as the harbour front in Boston, the Dock sites in London or the innercity ring in Rotterdam, the remedial character of the development remains paramount; preserving the viability of existing business and retention of inhabitants.

Micro action planning is focussed on well defined spatial units whose boundaries usually do not coincide with the routine operational boundaries of the intervening agencies. It is the repeated social articulation of the 'problem', usually incubated through a long history of political pressure, which defines its spatial location and extent rather than arrived at through a series of analytical planning studies.

The subjects of planning are incorporated in the micro action planning process as active decision makers, contributing to the generation as well as the selection of alternatives. 'Local involvement' is seen as a key to success in micro action planning, the force which fuels the political expediency of implementation.

Investment commitment for the realization of the project is assured from the beginning of the planning cycle, or at least strategies are outlined to generate resources as project output for sustained progress. The viability of resource base transforms the purpose of planning from an advocative posture - proposing projects for resource mobilization, - to an allocative posture - proposing alternatives for resource utilization.

The character of Third World urban development proved to be well suited to adopt micro action planning principles for the improvement of informally developed residential areas. Its intellectual context was provided by the 'self-help' school of housing which emphasized the vigour and resourcefulness of individual and community based housing production (and by extension, urban development). Slum and squatter improvement projects, structured along the key components outlined above (remedial, localised, participatory, implementation focussed), are gradually becoming routine micro action planning exercise in a number of developing countries.

2.2 Strategic Action Planning

The second approach to action planning evolved from a much broader agenda than the rehabilitation of small mosaics of the city. Its direction is oriented to the management of the city as a whole, or at least related to the functioning of its major sub-components; housing, land, infrastructure, financial resource generation or overall administration, often with attempts of integrated combinations. Because of its broader strategic aim of combining growth management with remedial, deficiency correction this paper will label this second approach as strategic action planning.

The origins of strategic action planning can be traced back to the period when international donor organizations begun to consider the financing of substantial capital investment in the urban sector, first as a series of large scale projects and latter as "sector loans" that aimed to establish national level financial intermediaries to provide an assured flow of capital for city development. (Urban Edge, 1986) Probably for the first time in the history of many Third World cities urban investment was scrutinised for its contribution to equity and efficiency of urban growth as well as for its replicability in the future. The "banker's" approach of stimulating a sustained capacity of urban growth management differed sharply from the prevailing

practice which was content to utilise unpredictable funds (mostly as periodic handouts from central governments) as long as they lasted.

The effective utilization of the massive capital injected in the urban system required the following preconditions:

- rapid assessment of prevailing problems and priorities, leading to project identification;
- strengthening or creation of institutional structures which could oversee the detailed planning and implementation of a set of major projects which often incorporated technical, financial and management innovations;
- resource mobilization which ensured that the benefits created by the project will be translated to finance streams that directly or indirectly will cover the cost of investments leading to sustained replicability.

Clearly existing planning practices, the sedated and outdated master plans, devoid of resource implications and assessment of institutional management capacity were not suitable tools to guide the application of this massive capital inflow.

Strategic action planning has the following characteristics:

Developmental
It aims to introduce the element of 'changing course', both in terms of existing practices and opening new opportunities for action. The developmentist posture of strategic action planning is derived from the feasible vision of alternative futures (urban growth orientation, technological and administrative innovations) whose realization will require the adjustment of existing practices.

Macro
It attempts to insert itself into the integration of major components of the urban system, (land, services, resources, administration) rather than focus on isolated projects. The macro scale orientation of strategic action planning derives its rational from the synergic outcome of coordinated and integrated projects, the evident added benefits accruing to the participant agencies in the achievement of their institutional objectives. This integration in macro spatial planning becomes a motivating force, reinforcing the commitment by a number of institutions to contribute to the implementation of project X over the series of other project possibilities which they may have on their agenda.

Political
Strategic action planning recognizes the essential ingredient of political support, the pressure from 'above', as much as micro planning builds upon the participatory process of its own planning subjects. The political support may be obtained through the visibility of party politics or, more commonly, through the

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mobilization of powerful institutions. John Herbert, commenting on the experience of the Karachi Development Programme draws attention to the negative consequences of fragmented political support.

"The capacities and the degrees of commitment to realistic programmes varied greatly among the principal executing agencies and factions within those agencies. Some were almost hopelessly inefficient and corrupt, requiring major renovation. Some were relatively efficient but not at all socially oriented. Some were established specifically to serve social ends but were without significant political power. One or two were socially oriented and potentially powerful but still without much experience at the time at which the Development Programme was being prepared. At least one major entity was struggling to reorient itself under dedicated leadership but was encumbered by a massive staff, most of whom were ill-equipped for the responsibilities they held. There was not a single major agency that combined a sound social orientation with efficient management and the political power and financial independence to launch and sustain programmes to benefit the Metropolitan Area's low-income population." (Herbert, 1982, p. 105)

Resource generating
In strategic action planning explicit attention is paid to the financial implication of macro developmental projects, their contribution to sustainable expansion of programmes on the basis of their resource mobilizing impact. In fact, demonstrated 'affordability' at the user, institution or broader governmental level is the elementary justification for investment commitments for strategic action planning, the resource base which allows to establish the immediate linkage between planning and implementation.

"Included with such proposals is a budget which attempts to examine their financial feasibility. This effort to relate all proposals, including these involving physical development, to financial costs and benefits represents a relatively recent development for most urban planning practice in developing countries". (Taylor and Williams, 1982, p. 28)

2.3   Action Planning: Generic Features

While micro and strategic action planning differ in terms of spatial scale, resource application, institutional complexity and length of project cycle there are a number of generic features of action planning which apply to both (Illustration 1).

Legitimacy:
Action planning is addressed to problems which are self-evident, persistent and where sufficient social committment exist for their solution. The social legitimacy of action planning is derived from the generally shared assessment that solutions must be found rather than the more orthodox planning approach which stresses the need for problem identification.

Illustration 1

Characteristics of Action Planning
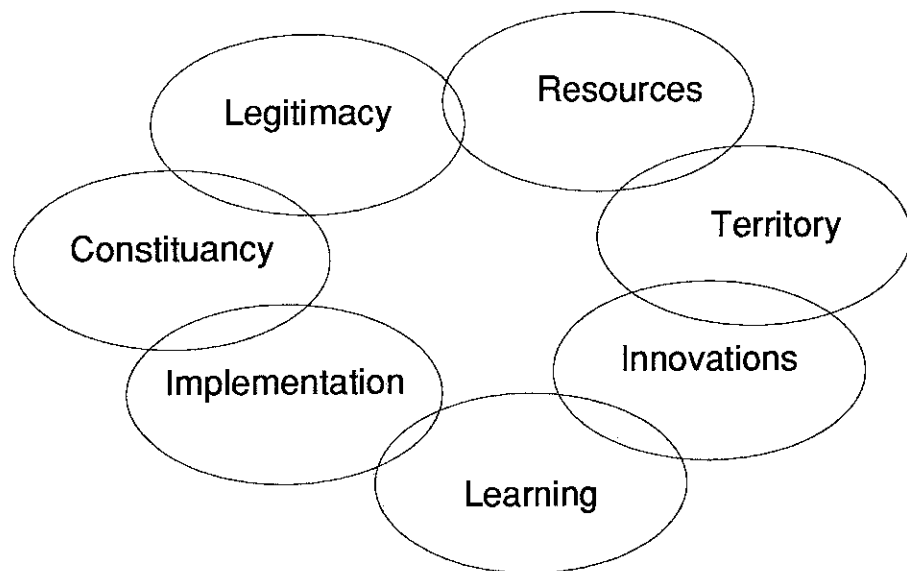
Constituency:

Constituency implies both political and administrative support, often focussed around effective and charismatic 'policy entrepeneurship'. Action planning actively searches for and must insert itself into an active network of actors whose goal orientation coincides. While institution molding and influencing goal adjustment may be a legitimate long term aspiration of action planning it is the initial cohesion of constituency that provides the impetus for successful action.

Territorial:

Action planning operates within a clearly defined (spatial and administrative) territory,where the power to act, or at least to lead, is not substantially challenged by other actors. Action planning reinforces the "chauvinistic" action space, where freedom of exercising choices and attributing credit for success is not eroded by interference.

Resources:

Action planning is investment induced. It starts with an assured resource base which lends credibility to the development of proposals and alternatives. It is also resource generative, providing the bases for the continued relevance of its practice.

Innovations:

Action planning breaks new grounds in technical, managerial and financial areas where apathy and conventions in the past prevented solution generation. It avoids institutionalising techno-bureaucratic routines that prevents the practice of looking at each situation as new.

Implementation:
Action planning is implementation oriented. It seizes upon the positive constellation of perceived urgency, political support and resource allocation to translate planning directly into action. The visibility of implementing capacity also enhances the prospects of attracting additional resources for continued operation.

Learning:
Action planning operates on a short gestation period in preparing alternatives and often draws upon the local adaptation of experiences which have proved to be successful in other contextual circumstances. The "learning by doing" attitude places premium on developing an institutional environmental scanning system, both with respect of discovering applicable innovations and as a monitoring/evaluation feedback of the success of implemented projects.

These generic features of action planning appear in a recent monograph of the World Bank:

"The Action-Planning approach supplements conventional development planning and implementation techniques in improving institutional capacities for effectively plan and manage the implementation of their development programmes. It is a powerful means for achieving seven fundamental objectives:

a) Identifying local perceptions of problems and constraints to be addressed by development programs/projects;

b) Revealing values and attitudes to which the program/project approach must be adapted;

c) Arriving at a procedural, analytical, and operational framework that meets the development goals of the country;

d) Mobilizing a critical mass of local supporters and implementors for the development strategy as a whole or particular program/project elements of the strategy;

e) Generating sufficient commitment and ownership by appropriate supporters and implementors;

f) Starting a process for team functioning to be used throughout planning, implementation and evaluation; and

g) Improving the capacity of project or program management teams to plan and manage on an on-going basis during implementation." (Silverman, J.M. et al., 1988)

In summary this paper will use the label action planning in a generic sense to describe a planning support operation which is geared to provide a range of implementable project alternatives for an explicitly identified coalition of actors in pursuit of the implementation of their goal.

3 Action Planning:

Procedural Steps

The fundamental difference between analytical planning and action planning is outlined in Illustrations 2 and 3. Analytical planning (Illustration 2) proceeds through a series of studies of 'existing situation', 'trends' and 'constraints', assessing the physical, social and economic aspects of urban development. There are many entry points of the investigation and through a series of synthesis exercises alternatives are developed, evaluated and a single 'best' alternative is proposed. The decision then is geared to a single, long range outcome (Master or Structure Plan).

Illustration 2

Decision Tree of Analytical Planning

Studies   Studies   Studies   Studies

Problem

Problem

Problem
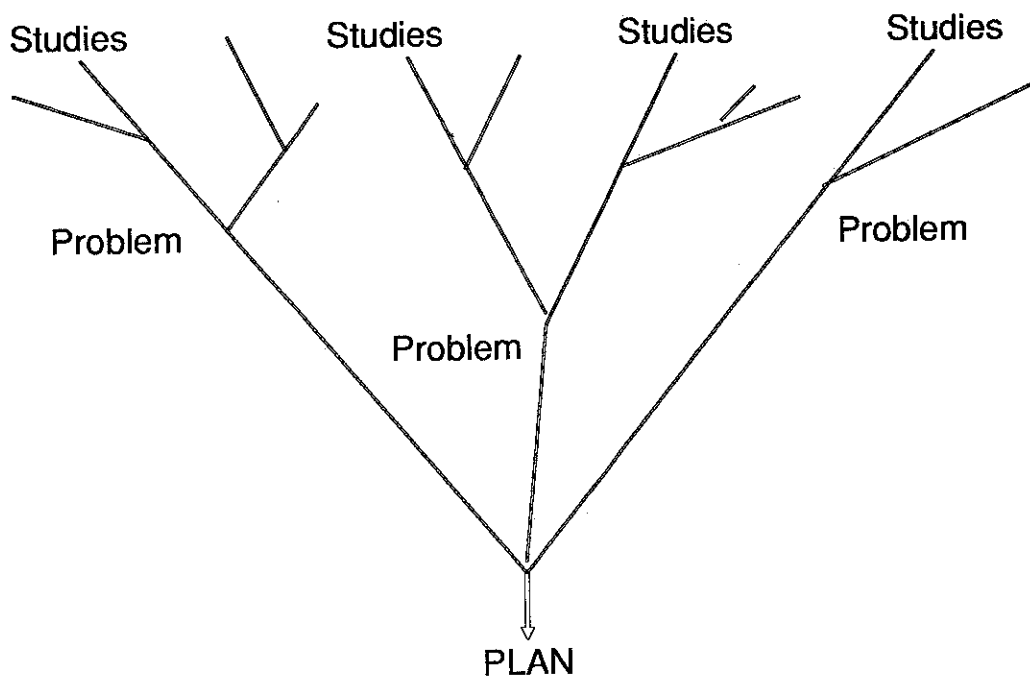
PLAN

Action planning (Illustration 3) essentially reverses the conceptual order. It enters from a single action field (where the configuration of 'legitimacy, constituency, territoriality and investment inducement' are appropriate to yield results) and with innovations and learnings works itself through the expanding network of interrelationships. Action planning 'discovers' complexities which need to be addressed in the course of implementation rather than become paralyzed by the demand for 'comprehensiveness' from the beginning.

The dilemma of breaking away from the conventional, analytical planning practice is well illustrated by the Kampung Improvement Programme (KIP) in Indonesia. KIP offered a modest investment package of road, drainage, sanitation and water supply improvement in the informally developing residential areas of Jakarta and other Indonesian cities. In a decade of implementation the programme reached a massive scale of millions of families and left, in most cases, a visible improvement on the physical environment.
However, quoting Taylor and Davis:

> "In the rush to programme and execute feasible projects, the danger is that both the longer- range and metro/urban scale perspectives may be lost sight of. In carrying out an upgrading programme in Jakarta individual Kampungs, for instance, the need to simultaneously formulate city wide strategies for drainage, sanitation, water supply, etc. has until recently been glossed over." (Taylor and Davis, 1982, p.29, emphasis added).

These comments make rational sense within the paradigm of analytical planning, which pursues the notion of comprehensiveness. Action planners draw their satisfaction from the last words of Taylor and Davis "until recently", which in fact, point towards the inherent learning experience of action planning. Their rationality lies in the proposition that once sufficient work was done on the neighborhood level pressure begun to build up to act at a city level.

"Recently" in Indonesia major action planning studies were commissioned for the large cities to investigate the need and feasible solutions for metropolitan wide infrastructure rehabilitation and development. It is a matter of conjuncture now to speculate whether investing energies and resources in metro-wide development in Indonesia ten years ago would have ever 'filtered' down to neighborhood level action projects by now, or would have simply remained the modern spine of infrastructure network on which much of private sector, upper income residential real-estate would have developed. This is not to argue that city-wide programmes should not be developed - but rather that they should not be a pre-condition to action - or divert essential resources from action.

The philosophy of 'acting to induce others to act' (the single point entry into the web of integrated follow-ups) is also the basic strategy of the NGO initiated Orangi Pilot Project.

Illustration 3
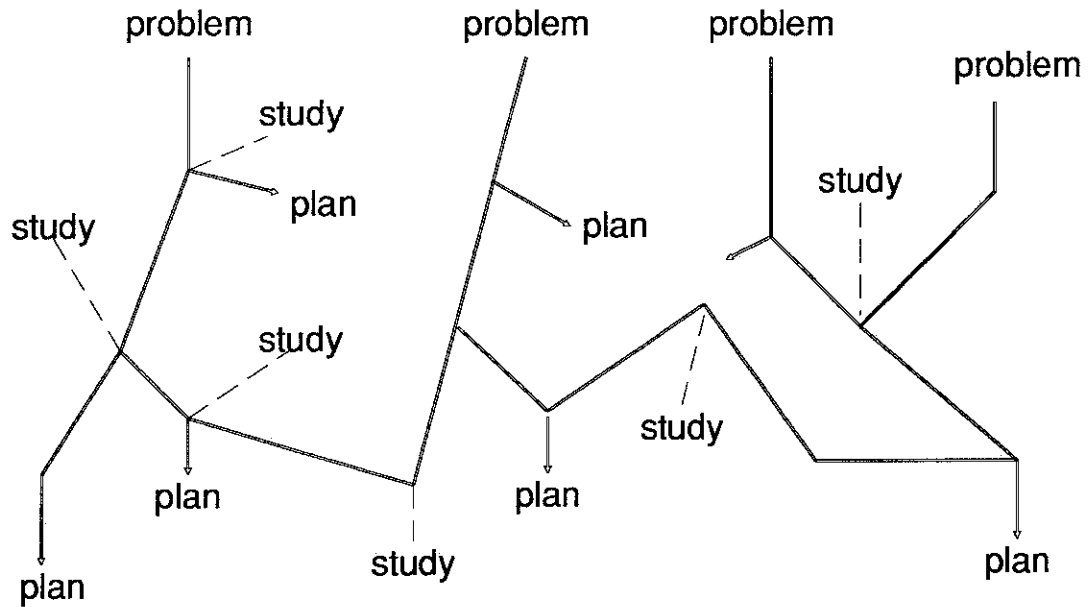
In Karachi, Pakistan initially only those lanes could lay their drainage lines which were adjoining a *nullah* or natural drain. In technical terms, therefore, the decision to make the lane a unit of organization was not the best solution. However, the technical solution was made subservient to sociological considerations. As the programme developed, lanes away from the *nullahs* realised that if they had to solve their sanitation problem they would have to come together to build secondary drains. The lane organizations therefore grouped together to form a *mohallah* or neighborhood organization. In such cases, the elected Councillor has also been brought in by the people and through him pressure is put on the KMC for more involvement in Orangi. The sanitation programme has built up not only the organizational and technical skills of the people but also their political power. (Hasan and Caidya, 1986)

Drawing together the conceptual aspects of action planning outlined in section 3 and the single entry, innovation/learning strategy of project network development we are now in the position to outline the process of action planning. This is shown in Illustration 4. For comparison, the steps of the traditional analytical planning process are shown in Illustration 5.

Illustration 4

Planning Process of Action Planning

| Problems |
| Institutions |
| Goals |
| Resources |
| Projects |
| Analysis |
| Priorities |
| Operationalization |
| Implementation |
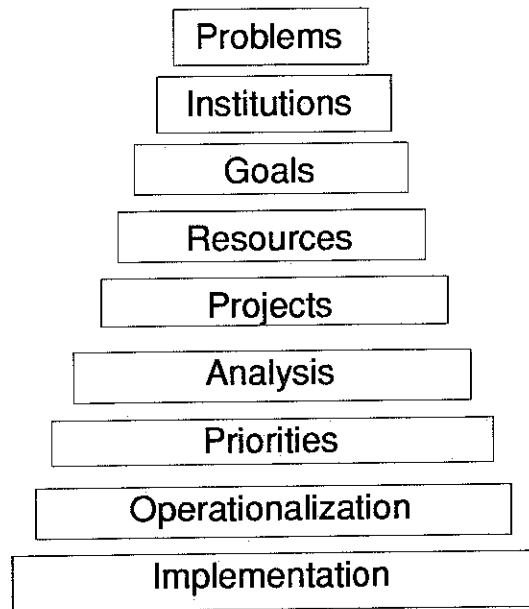
Illustration 5

Planning Proces of Analytical Planning

| Data Collection |
| Analysis |
| Alternatives |
| Evaluation |
| Plan |
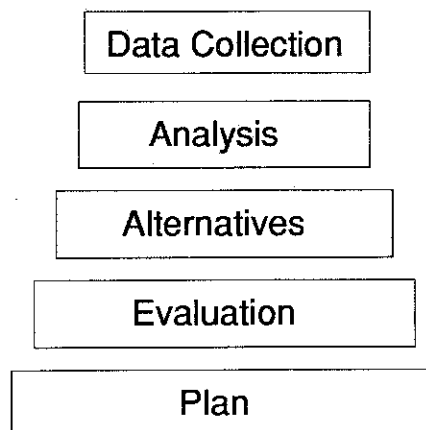
3.1   Problem Identification

Action planning begins with the identification of perceived problems. This 'scanning' is not an elaborate study of past, present and future trends (which tend to be the bulky 'mark of excellence' of analytical planning studies), but is simply a list of firmly held and articulated views about the city's problems, its growth, infrastructure, deficiencies, resources and institutions. Problem scanning contributes to the establishment of the first condition of action planning, the legitimacy of the proposed course of action.

It is likely that an action planner will encounter a long (shopping) list of problems, some of which are vaguely formulated (lack of resources), some of which are used to justify inaction (rapid population growth, uncoordinated intervention), and some of which are strongly held preoccupations (land acquisition for a particular project). Many of the problems will be favorite laments of individuals ("we must stop squatters") or slogans of politicians ("provide water for all"). It is also likely that problems which may be high on the planners' agenda have no resonance at the institutional or political level, (increased coordination, lower standards, preservation of aquifers). Yet sieving out individual or clusters of problems which are widely held and strongly believed to be solvable within a foreseeable future with resources at hand is the crucial starting point for action planning, establishing the initial condition of pursuing legitimate objectives for planning.

A typical "problem identification" example is the work of UNDP assessment-team in Lagos, Nigeria:

"The Lagos team consisted of a physical planner as team leader, an urban land policy and legal adviser, a social policy adviser, a transport economist and a specialist in public health and sanitation. The members knew that they could not afford to spend years in Lagos, but had only from three to twelve weeks each to analyze the city's troubles on the basis of their experience of other cities and similar situations elsewhere.

They started looking at the dominant problems in the field or fields of their own expertise and experience, and fairly soon agreed on diagnosing 10 problems. These were:

(1)   competition for land;
(2)   long journeys to work;
(3)   traffic and parking difficulties;
(4)   shortage of housing;
(5)   lack of housing finance;
(6)   growth of slums;
(7)   health hazards;
(8)   under-developed human resources;
(9)   community neglect;
(10)   absence of metropolitan government"
(Abrams, C., et all, 1980)

3.2   Institutional Involvement

Acting on the problem requires institutions. Some of these may be formal, highly organized techno-bureaucracies, some may be more loosely structured entities like community groups, NGO's and private sector associations, others have clearly established political or administrative character. Action planning asks three fundamental sets of questions about institutions:

a) are they related to the solution of the problems?
b) what have they done in the past to deal with the problems?
c) are they committed and have the institutional capacity to do more in the future about solving the problems?

In their review of contemporary planning practice in England, Friend, Power and Yewlett stress the importance of viewing organizations as entities which are relatively selective about the 'admissability' of problems into their descision fields.

"Most structures of authority evolve in such a way as to deal not with individual decision problems - which are by definition transient - but with *classes* of problem situation which are expected to reoccur over time. The term *policy system* refers to any set of organizational and interpersonal arrangements which have evolved to deal with some identifiable class of decision problems To reflect the possibility that there will be many dimensions to the total field of decision situations with which any policy system is directly concerned, we shall refer to this field as its *action space.*" (Friend, Power and Yewlett, 1974, p2).

3.3   Goals Setting

Institutions and other forms of social organizations move towards goals. These may be explicitly stated as a periodic reassessment of the tasks to be fulfilled or remain implicit and dormant, to be discovered through discussion and analysis of past achievements. As Angel shrewdly observed "there are 'dead goals' behind which no energy of pursuit can be observed and 'alive goals' which are vigorously pursued, often at the expense of conflict and opposition. (Angel, 1986).

"The success of infrastructure programmes in low-income settlements depends, to a major extent, on generating sufficient common interest among the various participants. This makes it all the more important to search for a clear understanding of the objectives they are pursuing. Anyone involved in the planning and implementation of infrastructure programmes in slums and squatter settlements will come to realise, sooner or later, that his or her understanding of the objectives of the various participants in the process has both predictive and strategic value. Such an understanding is crucial for mobilising the support of potential partners, as well as for circumventing opposition." (Angel, 1983)

It is evident that the goal of "ensuring orderly development" was very much an 'alive' goal behind the activities of the Delhi Development Authority, pursued through bulldozing away spontaneous settlements and building high quality neighborhoods in the capital of India. By the same token, the goal of "providing housing for economically weaker sector groups" is very much a 'dead goal' (despite being high on the goal list of the agency) because practically no poor family can afford a plot or a house in the DDA projects and those affordable solutions which have evolved within the context of unauthorized development are regularly eliminated.

In Ismailia the expatriate planning team correctly perceived that one of the most important 'alive' goals of the national and local policy structure was to plan for the rapid expansion of the city in anticipation of the returning of refugees and new migrants. This facilitated the preparation of a series of action plans for innovative land development and growth management. But for the same reason it was a more difficult and time consuming task of the planning team to focus the decision makers attention on upgrading existing informally developed neighborhoods.

The failure to assess 'alive' goals in Karachi led to major implementation problems for a series of strategic and action plans for the city's future development.

> "The planning project's genesis was not much more promising than its context. Although there was a recognition of the massive problems facing Karachi in the higher levels of government and a general sense that something should be done about it, the real thrust for launching an integrated planning and development effort came from United Nations technicians who had been viewing the situation with alarm for some time and a small group of Pakistani professionals -- some of whom were in the central government and some of whom were on the staff of the KDA. In other words, much of the initiative came from outside the real power structure."
> (Herbert, 1982, p.105).

The assessment of institutions and goals relate to the second aspect of action planning: coalition building among institutions whose active participation is sought in plan implementation.

3.4   Resource Mobilization

Resource scarcity remains one of the main constraints for large scale implementation of municipal infrastructure systems in practically all developing countries. As long as the "per capita development budget in many cities is less than the price of a hamburger in a five star hotel" (Mulkh Raj, 1988), plans which are not adequately supported by resource mobilization have no chance of being translated to action. In action planning practice resource assessment is composed of three complementary inquiries:

a) will funds be available to implement the projects; the 'investment induced' dimension of action planning?
b) will resources be forthcoming to pay for the services generated by the projects; the 'resource mobilization' dimension of action planning?
c) is there an adequate human resource base to implement projects?

The resource assessment phase in the action planning process should not be confused with detailed costing and appraisal of various proposals, which usually is only an appendage in the analytical planning process, and proposed to be the concern of 'analysis' in the action planning sequence. Resource base assessment is only a broad-brush indication of source and magnitudes of existing funds, general paying capacity of target groups and the implications of 'quantum jump' in funding through (international) loans, grants and budgetary supports. Two examples of planning assessment reports (of Bangladesh and Tanzania respectively) illustrate the critical aspect of resource mobilization.

"It is the clear conclusion of all economic studies of Bangladesh that resources for investment will remain severely limited throughout the planning period. Dacca cannot expect a disproportionate share of national resources and maximum use must therefore be made of existing capital investment. Future projects should only be undertaken if they satisfy rigorous criteria. The public sector will need to allocate resources strictly in accordance with well-defined priorities. To foster achievement of the national and local objectives, future allocations of resources will need to differ from the past pattern: re-allocation will be required between sectors, between localities in Dacca, between Dacca and the rest of the country, and the target groups of beneficiaries will need to be redefined."
(Sharkland Cox Partnership 1981)

"Funding is one of the most critical problems facing the new capital city project. The Capital Development Authority alone was expected to spend £200 million during the period 1976-81, which covers the First Five-Year Development Plan of the Capital and which also corresponds with the time span of the Third National Five-Year Plan. By the end of the third year of the 5-year plan, CDA received only £14 million, which is 27% of the amount earmarked by the Government for the development of the capital between July 1976 and December 1979.

Out of the £85 million programmed in the CDA 5-year plan for implementation by other ministries and organizations, only £15 million (18%) had been spent by the end of 1979. Therefore, if the Government objective of transferring the capital city to Dodoma by 1985-86 is to be implemented, then determined efforts must be made to intensify the flow of adequate funds for the capital city and impact area projects. The estimated cost of the first 5-year programme 1976/81 is £130 million." (Hayuma, A., 1981)

The resource base assessment will primarily be concerned with financial implications, as an a priori condition for the 'investment induced' character of action planning. However the

feasibility of implementation also significantly depends on the availability of human resources, people who are able to design, manage, build and maintain the projects. Again, the assessment is a broad review, using productivity indicators of past performance rather than detailed survey of manpower capacity.

3.5 Project Identification

Action planning regards the four contextual factors of perceived problems, institutions, goals and resource base as the incubators of projects. While these projects may be ill-conceived, uncoordinated, technically naive, fragmented, socially unproductive (just to list a few of the common criticism advanced from the armchair of analytical planning), they represent developmental avenues behind which the desire (and a degree of competence) to implement is manifested. In an action planning environment projects may be formulated by neighborhood groups, local or central government agencies, the private sector, each project manifesting the strength and weaknesses of its initiators.

The subtle, but crucial point separating action planning from analytical planning is that the former uses the proposed projects as a basis - to be modified and influenced through the follow up steps of analysis, and prioritization - for selecting feasible alternative investments. In contrast, analytical planning proposes projects from the scientific vantage points of the 'needs of the city' through the analysis and synthesis of past and future trends and looks for institutional and resource capacity for implementation. Projects for analytical planning are targets for production increases for which frequently new institutional structures and resource commitments needed to be raised for implementation. For action planners projects represent insights into the task of performance improvements, how far the subsequent steps of analysis, and prioritization can be used to provide new insights for the implementing actors that their goals will be better served and their resource base more quickly enlarged by altering or redesigning the projects.

3.6 Project Analysis

In assessing the technical implications of projects action planning draws heavily on the traditional skills of architecture, engineering, economics and operational research which have been common tools of analytical planning. However, in participating in the design or improvement of the project proposals action planners often look for innovations (technical, financial, managerial). Innovations, frequently but not exclusively the adaptation of similar solutions from other contexts, are seen as new opportunities for problem solving since projects which merely reproduce past practices have proved to

be inadequate in scale and replicability to cope with the rapid growth of demand for services. An example of such adaptation argument was used in Bangkok to legalize the continued supply of low quality plots for housing in the city.

"Clearly, then there is scope for allowing land subdivision for low-income groups to continue, possibly with the creation of special minimum standards. This is indeed the approach taken in Bogota, the capital of Colombia, which passed special subdivision regulations (normas minimas) in 1972, to create an alternative to informal 'pirate' subdivisions in the city. The aim of the legislation in Bogota was to open a new market in legal land subdivisions, that would appeal to those preferring smaller plots with better services to larger ones with minimal services. The normas minimas approach has been quite successful, but some of the similar difficulties encountered with its acceptance in Bogota are likely to be found in Bangkok. There was considerable resistance to the proposed standards by officials who claimed that by having two separate standards they officially endorsed discrimination between rich and poor, and gave official support to the creation of new slums. Infrastructure authorities, who also resisted the move to allow 'normas minimas', claimed that lower road, water and electricity standards posed later maintenance problems and additional expenses." (Angel and Pornchokchai, 1989)

In the analysis phase action planning places focusses explicitly on two cardinal aspects of projects: their resource mobilization impact and complementarity. Resource mobilization, the assessment of users' capacity for paying for the services either directly (user charges) or indirectly (taxes and levies) ensures the continued sustainability of the operation, and by implication, the resource base of the action planning institution.

Complementarity is essentially a risk assessment, to what degree the implementation and functioning of the project is contingent upon the actions of other institutions. In action planning it is taken for granted that projects can rarely be assumed to be fully implementable within a single corporate environment and their success depends on projects or resources controlled by other institutional structures, what Friend calls "contiguous policy systems".

"The third facet, which we shall distinguish in the environment of any policy system, embraces any further policy systems concerned with other action spaces within which related decision problems may arise. While the boundaries of the action space for any one policy system are necessarily limited, both in functional and in territorial terms, it is a matter of common observation that decision problems are frequently interrelated in ways that transcend these system boundaries, and that induce those concerned to engage in communications or transactions across them, often on a reciprocal basis. Such interdependencies between policy systems arise wherever the choices faced in either are seen to be sensitive to the assumptions made about future intentions within the other. Examples would include the now widely recognised reciprocal relationships between land use and transportation decisions, or the relationships between decisions about the future development of

some particular public service in adjacent geographical areas."
(Friend, et all, 1979)

3.7   Setting Priorities

Although a careful consultative process in the 'incubation' stage of action planning is expected to inject a realistic vision of the list of feasible projects which are prepared in the action planning process, it is realistic to assume that proposals will exceed the resource and management capacities for implementation. This is partly due to (and understandable because of) the 'general nature of planning' in an urban environment where backlog of services are immense and where political expectations of the 'government doing something about it' are high. However, the dynamic nature of action planning, its simultaneous preoccupation with 'immediate' and 'strategic' problem solving, its activist posture of enlarging the role of institution within the network of other institutions and the emphasis on the continuity of projects, also contributes to the empirical outcome of larger than implementable number of proposals.

Prioritization then becomes a screening tool for selection and phasing, the identification of immediate actions and postponed intervention.

3.8   Operationalization

Operational action plans are the detailed documents of project implementation. They specify the technical and costing details of the selected individual projects, the authority structure of the actors of implementation, time schedules, resource inputs and monitoring/review points.

They could be more properly labelled as 'management documents' because they emphasize the process of implementation rather than being simple blue prints and bar charts

3.9   Implementation

Whereas analytical planning leaves the plans at the whims of future, assuming that resources and institutional capacities will somehow be available for implementation, action planning incorporates the realization of projects into its developmental cycle.

For action planners, plan preparation is only a preliminary step of guidance towards a better managerial readiness to face the real challenge: realization.

For action planning no choice is final. Like architects or engineers supervising the on-site construction of their designs, action planners see implementation as process oriented projects, where institutional, resource and technical adjustments are regularly called for. Siffin's analogy accurately sums up action planners' relationship with implementation:

> "A development project is not like a train trip to a ticketed destination. It is more like sailing on a ship, hopefully beyond the point where the internal rate of return becomes favorable, in the direction of a better and more generously endowed climate". (Siffin, 1979)

Implementation, rather than planning, is the praxis of action planning, the actual confrontation with the real material and institutional world. Learning, the last component of the action planning concept, is derived from the participation in implementation rather than from a separate phase of 'after the fact' evaluation.

3.10 Conclusion

The nine steps which were elaborated above (Illustration 4) represent the practical sequence of action planning. While no rigidity is implied they point to a process of decision making; understanding the context (problem, institutions, goals and resources), existing initiatives (projects), the application of traditional professional skills for shaping existing initiative into socially useful, economically realistic, technically innovative and managerially implementable plans (analysis, priorities) and adding a managerial orientation for finalization and realization (operationalization and implementation).

4

Arguments in Favor of Action Planning

"There is, it seems, an unwillingness among implementors to accept that notions of the 'best' for programmes, policies and projects are often incompatible with those that have the greatest likelihood of success". (Hamdi and Goethert, 1985, p.33).

While it is likely that the pragmatism inherent in the concept and practice of action planning will attract an increasing number of planners and urban managers in developing countries to move away from the more orthodox analytical planning practice its acceptance will not be fully realised until consensus is reached on three fundamental issues:

a) the character of urban growth in the Third World.
b) the leverages of 'planning' in managing urban growth.
c) the rationality and possible coordination structures which bound action plans into coherent strategies.

4.1 The Character of Urban Growth in the Third World

By now there is well documented evidence that cities in developing countries, especially those in Africa and Asia will continue to grow and grow fast, adding some 100.000-300.000 people yearly to the population of key metropolitan areas. Many of the 'new comers' are poor rural peasants for whom it will take decades to acquire urban skills and incomes that are consumerate with the cost of consuming 'standard' urban services and a finished house in a well serviced neighborhood. The sequence of urban development, planning, services, building and occupation, which provided the rational of analytical planning is simply an inappropriate development strategy for managing urban development in most Third World cities. Koenisberger's observation from a decade ago will be relevant for more decades to come.

"The three forms of self-help, migration, squatting and illegal subdivisions account for most of the growth of settlements in poor countries. All three are forms of unplanned growth. Neither master plans nor their authors have any influence on them. National or local government departments deal with this kind of development only *after* settlements are established, when they are asked to legalise

what has happened and provide infrastructure and services. In theory, planning officers are supposed to control self-help developments as much as any others. In practice, they have neither the staff nor the power to do so.

This is a situation in which the much debated question of 'public participation in the planning process' does not arise. It is the public that does the planning *and* the development; it is the planner who is not allowed to participate. Ten years ago in Britain, when the anti-planning lobby complained vociferously about the 'dictatorship of the planners', the government appointed a commission under Lord Skeffington to study the question of public participation in planning. In the poorer countries which we are considering, the terms of reference of such a commission would have to be reversed. It would have to study how one could assure the participation of planners in the process of city building by squatters and illegal sub-dividers." (Koenigsberger, 1983)

In fact, Third World cities grow through four complementary development processes:

Autonomous development
This type of development is often dismissed with the prejudiced label of squatters but increasingly manifested as unauthorized commercial land subdivisions - represents the dominant urban expansion process. Proceeding through the development sequence of occupation, building, servicing and planning these areas are the pioneering settlements of the city, both in the outskirts in the rural urban fringe and as 'infills' in areas where commercial exploitation of land is hindered by geographic or legal factors (Baross, 1986). Autonomous development has and will precede planning in a conventional sense, restructuring the key task of (action) planning from that of forward to that of remedial intervention.

Consolidating development
This development represents the incorporation of autonomous areas to the basic (legal and infrastructure) fabric of the city as well as the consolidation of urban market forces in terms of land uses and densities within the pioneer settlements. In these areas people and business become increasingly dependent on the availability of regular urban services, often have the resources to pay and/or political power to bargain for it. In concrete and empirical terms the bulk of what is done in the name of planning and infrastructure provision in contemporary Third World cities is in the integration and servicing of consolidating settlements.

Instant development
Projects, (residential, industrial, commercial) which largely follow the procedural steps of conventional planning, produced as finished products, ready for occupation. Public housing, middle and upper income residential development are typical, if in the context of many Third World cities marginal, examples of 'modern' development, images which still exemplify the aspiration of many planners as an achievable future. In reality, even these conventionally developed areas are increasingly autonomous from the power of analytical planning and in many

cases from the city's service network. Private developers are notorious in their effort to subvert the planning process and locate their development on the basis of opportunistic land assembly practices. Often these up-scale residential subdivisions operate with their private electricity, water and sewer supply rather than rely on the errative provision of these services by urban governments.

Structural development
This is used as a label for the periodic effort in Third World cities to initiate major investment programmes. The flood protection work in Dacca and Bangkok, the intra urban highway system in Jakarta or Bogota, the planned subway programme in Delhi, the land reclamation projects in Singapore and Manila, the construction of new water trunk lines and treatment plans in Madras, major port developments, export processing zones, sewer rehabilitation projects, are typical examples of structural investments, often with far reaching impact on urban forms, land prices and the modernization of the city. Both the development and implementation of structural development is long and tedious, triggered by large scale structure plan studies. Their significance is that structured development perpetuates the myth that 'comprehensive' planning leads to 'action', and the believe that it is somehow possible to come to grips with major urban problems in a finite way. In the 1970's and early 1980's the key components of international technical assistance and financial support was directed towards structural development projects. (Urban Edge, 1986)

Cities largely constrained by the progress of national development, exhibit a different balance between autonomous, consolidating, instant and structural settlement formations. Seoul and Singapore, for example, have rapidly moved to a stage (propelled by strong national economic growth) of predominantly instant urban development with incremented structural growth support. Dar es Salaam, Lima or Peshavan represent the other end of the scale, dominated by autonomous development where only few areas have been sufficiently consolidated which could become a coherent core for structural developmental support. Manila or Mexico city, Bombay or Delhi are typical examples where while autonomous development is still significant, consolidating processes are the most dominant, with bits of instant development and where structural development is most needed. (Sivaramakrishnan and Green, 1986)

The acceptance of action planning will significantly be influenced by this balance, for its methodology and tools are most suited to address problems associated with consolidation (micro action planning) and structural development (strategic action planning).

4.2 The Leverages of Planning in Managing Urban Growth

Drawing on the almost century of experience of using planning as a technical, legislative and administrative instrument in managing urban growth the central task of planning was to influence the (locational) behaviour of the private sector. Koenigsberger compared the Master Plan to a giant jigsaw puzzle into which developers and public agencies must dutifully insert their blue (industrial) red (commerce) yellow (residential), or green (parks) chips. While not entirely successful, Master Plans could guide - and restrict - the behaviour of private development in advanced countires because they were structured as institutions. Behind major projects, whether residential, commercial, industrial or public sector stood well developed organizations with a core of professional, managerial and administrative staff. Planning in this context is institutional bargaining, where the rules of the game are well defined and fought through public hearings, development briefs, planning appeal counts in addition to the more subtle bargaining manoeuvres of public pressure, tax incentives and spot zoning negotiations.

In the rapidly growing cities of developing countries the illusion of enforcing the regulatory power of planning to guide the character and location of private sector investment must be abandoned, except for the rare cases of influencing 'instant' development. The Third World city is not built by institutional actors whose behaviour could be influenced, checked or guided by the regulatory mechanisms at the disposal of planners. The city builders are ordinary families who consolidate their urban life by creating their own jobs and own neighborhoods. Even the large majority of commercial developers elude or circumvent planning, themselves being no more stable actors than an illusive middle man between small farmers and families searching for a more secure building plot. (Baross and Van der Linden, 1989). For most Third World planners the city is given, it is already built, where some 30-50% of the population is waiting for the government to add those missing elements of urban life that cannot be achieved only through individual self help.

Under these conditions the leverages of planning lie in public investment. Not that they are as fine-tuned as regulatory powers can be, nor that much of it can be anticipated in the coming decades until the resource base of public agencies and the purchasing power of their clients can be strengthened. Still, within these limitations, what 'planning' in the Third World countries implies is to extend influence over development through public acquisition of land, location of major industrial sites, the servicing of areas of the city with roads, water, electricity, bus transport and alike.

"What Calcutta needed was not a negative, restrictive, regulatory land use plan with the heavy commitment of scarce administrative resources that such a system of control required, but rather a positive Development Plan, in the full sense, with an emphasis on development action directed at priorities of social and economic change, of selected capital investment in the physical infrastructure of administrative and fiscal organization, of co-ordinated executive action by implementing agencies, and of systematic generation and mobilization of resources - fiscal, administrative, technical - and the largely unutilized efforts and commitments of population at large".
(Safier 1983)

When planning concentrates on public investment it achieves two conditions which are critical components of action planning:

a) operate within known (or discoverable) parameters of institutions, goals and resources;
b) focus on the predictable (resource mobilizing) impact of public expenditures on the growth and consolidation of the city.

While both these conditions offer a degree of certainty, neither of them are as predictable as planners usually assume them to be. The cyclical economic fluctuations which randomly affect developing countries make long term (5-10 years) investment decisions liable to sudden changes. Mexico, Peru, Pakistan, Indonesia are typical examples where it would be difficult to predict in a few years ahead the resource mobilizing capacity of (urban) governments and the purchasing power of the citizens. Similarly, while we generally understand the impact of infrastructure provision on subsequent urban morphologies, land prices and land use distribution, this understanding provides a rationale for -post-facto explanation, why people settled and consolidated their neighbourhood where they did, but cannot accurately tell where they will do it in the future. Autonomous development remains a growth process loose from the formal powers of planning.

4.3 Binding Action Planning into Coherent Strategies

Many will challenge the concept and practice of action planning as a recipe for fragmentation and incrementalism, a process which does not lead to a "coherent" strategy of long term development. Illustration 2 on page 11 would seem to add credit to this critisism, the exploratory arrows point to different directions, even if they form part of a network of problem solving practice. Further, it will be pointed out, that fragmented action planning (strong commitments to the realization of individual and isolated projects) is already part of contemporary Third World urban planning practice, and what is needed is to integrate, these projects into comprehensive packages.

"A danger is that the project approach may give scant attention to policy measures which could complement or even replace projects as an alternative means of achieving the same end. Concern with the investment budget as the instrument of planning, and the influence of aid agencies seeking projects, can lead to a situation in which capital expenditure is regarded as the obvious -- and perhaps even the only -- way of achieving a desired objective. A few examples will illustrate the point.

If a city is suffering from a shortage of water the immediate 'project' response is to increase the capacity of the system. It is likely, however, that two alternative policy measures could serve the same end. Since wastage from leaking pipes, overflowing storage tanks and illegal connections can amount to as much as 50% of total production, measures to reduce losses can result in increases of up to 100% capacity, without any capital investment whatever. Alternatively, the introduction of a new tariff system, with higher or possibly progressive charges, may result in a reduction in luxury use (e.g. for watering gardens) and a redistribution of the limited volume available to those most in need.

In the transport sector, the intended benefits of investment in road widening may be achieved instead by appropriate traffic management schemes, such as one-way systems or bus lanes, or discouraging the use of cars in the central area by pricing systems or physical limitation of parking space.

In the field of housing, instead of building new houses, much more may be achieved, for example, by amendments to the land tenure system which would enable and encourage individuals to undertake construction themselves.

These are only a few examples of how policy measures, rather than capital projects, can be used to achieve the same objectives. But planners who regard the resources available to them in terms only of the capital development budget, and who see action only in terms of projects, are in danger of ignoring these alternatives." (McNeill 1983)

It is conceded that action planning tends to be fragmented or at best 'corporatist' (to further the objectives of a single agency). As it has been pointed out repeatedly in the report that there are many real and potential action planning agents (from neighborhoods to central government line agencies, from infrastructure corporations to politically active administrators, from international donors to local NGOs), each with a degree of leadership, energy and resources to solve their immediate problems. Yet the existence of such an action planning practice at all levels of governments and at the society at large in our view, provides the basis for the optimism of this paper, action planning does not need to be invented, it needs to be strengthened and integrated.

However, it must also be pointed out that some of the critisism directed at the 'fragmentary' tendencies of action planning are exaggerated, advanced from the equally untenable 'comprehensive' perspective of analytical planning. On the one hand, most micro action planning activities deal with well

defined localities where except for rethoric, little practical justification exists for an integrated strategy. For example the municipal settlement improvement programme in Surabaya, Indonesia has been operating now for a decade on the basis of communities developing their own 'action programme' with technical assistance and financial support by the public works department of the city. These micro-action plans provide realistic improvements at the local scale and incrementally point to larger scale solutions which could supplement their effectiveness.

The programme of 'action communal' in Colombia and the 'one million houses' programme in Sri Lanka could also be sustained on the same institutional support principle. In contrast, the slum improvement programme in Dacca, Bangladesh is pre-occupied with developing objective indicators for 'prioritization' of targeted settlements but fails to incorporate the two crucial variables of community leadership and political support for implementation. Ironically, the first two 'pilot projects' actually selected to start improvement would not qualify for assistance if only the technical priorities were considered.

On the other hand, it must also be recognised that the resource base (financial, institutional, political) of action programmes are not completely interchangeable, project A may not be replaced by project B or C simply because it is judged to be more efficient, relevant or urgent. Given the resource scarcity (in its broadest sense) in developing countries it is generally better, and politically more defendable, to do something 'than do nothing!' Excessive demands for 'integration' are often unrealistic and paralyzing.

With these two qualifications in mind it is still imperative that the problems of co-ordinative or connective action planning across the boundaries of virtually independent policy systems are resolved. Action planning efforts need to be linked to achieve synergetic and complementary effects.

There are two opportunities to guide the fragmented action planning activities towards common focus and complementary impact:

a) indicative planning studies
b) multiple-sector investment clearance.
   (illustration 6)

Indicative planning studies (not to be confused with indicative plans) provide a technical reconnaissance towards the future. Their function is to raise institutional and political awareness towards problems, whose recognition is the first step in initiating the action planning process, as we defined it. Indicative planning studies must be informative rather than prescriptive, aimed at the managerial and political decision working structures of city administration, emphasizing what they should be concerned

with rather than listing prescribed courses of actions. Indicative planning studies provide action planning with a context, molding a consensus towards the legitimacy and urgency of the problem solving agenda.

The action planning process must also be restrained at the actual project selection stage, the step which we identified as prioritization. It can be achieved by institutionalizing a multi-sector investment review activity that approves the allocation and budgeting of resources for implementation. Such a review panel would have considerable influence on 'packaging' action plans for sectoral, spatial and financial integration, because, in reality, few implementing agencies have sufficient investment pools on their own to act without requesting resource augmentation.

Illustration 6
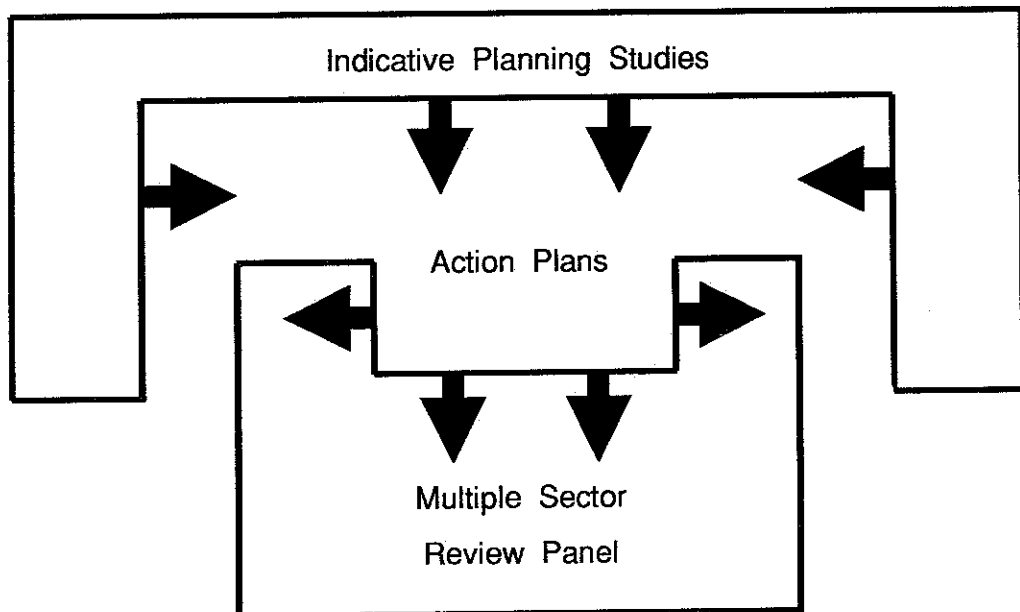
In summing up, the broader acceptance and institutional facilitation of action planning in developing countries will be contingent on the degree of agreement on three fundamental issues:

a) that only parts of the contemporary city development process (consolidation and structural development) are realistically amendable to planning intervention;

b) the leverages and hence the focus of action planning is public investment;

c) there is a possibility to rationally 'bind' action planning into coherent development strategies through indicative planning studies and multiple sector investment review.

5

Conclusions

Action planning is yet to emerge as a generally accepted, well defined and codified planning theory or as coherent, operational practice. In this paper an attempt is made to bring together scattered references to experimental innovations of action driven planning practices in a number of developing countries and to combine it with the reflective analysis by writers on planning theories who sought to rescue planning from its current disrepute as ineffective paper production. While there is a detectable consensus on the need for making planning a more effective technical instrument for influencing urban management decisions and the direction of how this could be achieved, the implementation of action planning principles within broader institutional frameworks remains at the experimental stage. There are, however, five consensus areas where the legitimacy of elements of action planning is accepted.

Shortening of the planning cycle
Given the fast rate of urban growth and fluctuating economic conditions most planning information is rapidly outdated. Planning studies should evolve tools which are geared to rapid assessment of the existing situation and identify both policy measures and feasible projects which are implementable within 1-5 years.

Planning with economic realities
Planning should move away from the exclusive preoccupation with physical aspects of development (urban layout and land use maps) and incorporate explicitly the economic and financial implications of proposed courses of action. The economic assessment of plans generally should include three concerns; whether it is *fundable* (are there enough resources to undertake the project) *affordable* (whether the beneficiaries of the project can pay for the services) and *sustainable* (the recurrent expenditures of Operations and Maintenance can be met in the future.

Planning to concur with budget cycles
Synchronizing the planning process with budgeting and programming decisions of institutional structures (local, central government, funding agencies) which control potential funding for the projects. The current practice of hoping that projects will induce funding should be reversed to a practice of developing projects which utilize identified and feasible funding sources.

Institutional capacities strengthening.
Projects should be vehicles for institutional development, strengthening of technical, managerial, financial and administrative capacities for continued operation. Action planning recognizes the critical dimension of institutional readiness for absorbing implementation responsibilities as well as the possibility of 'learning' from the implementation process itself. Hence, plans are not prepared in an 'institutional vacuum' but in close collaboration with those who will be responsible for implementation.

Planning with political and participatory support.
Planning should recognize that beyond the strict institutional boundaries of the technical agencies lie the crucial network of formal political support and informal mass of beneficiary constituency. Inherent in this perception are the values of adaptivity and acceptability, recognizing the role and influence of 'non-technical' insight for implementation support. (Rodinelli, 1983)

These five areas of (complementary) consensus lead us inescapably to the reversal of the last three decades of planning tendency in developing countries from centralization to decentralization. When Harris recommended that given future rates of anticipated urban growth "we need more rather than less planning" his advice can only be implemented through the stimulation, strengthening or invention of local planning (Harris, 1989). It is within the local setting (neighborhood and municipal level) that the principles of action planning (legitimacy, constituency, resources, implementation and learning) can become relevant activities of practice rather than the object of study by externally located planners.

The evolution of action planning practice in developing countries is directly linked to the ongoing decentralization processes and the consequent strengthening of local planning power. As we stressed throughout the paper local knowledge (pressing issues, available resources, competence of institutional actions, leadership of key personnel, connecting planning through consensus generation, networking and coordination) is the key justification to remove planning from the realm of analytical technocracy and place it within a managerial decision making framework for local problem solving.

The complementary requirement of decentralization is equally valid for the national framework, yielding more planning responsibilities for urban governments, and for the urban framework, stimulating neighbourhood level collectives to plan, fund, implement and maintain local improvements.

The coupling of decentralization with integrated action planning practice will suggest that the most likely strategy to succeed initially will be the combined strategy of 'action planning from

above' and 'action planning from below'. This combination imply well defined performance targets for infrastructure provision in urban areas of different sizes, as well as strict resource sharing principles for the finance of their development and maintenance. Performance targets ensure balanced service provision across sectoral elements, and the resource participation acts as a leverage of control and incentive of local initiatives. The role of 'action planning from above' is to legitimize local development objectives (or in some cases stimulate concerns) and to offer part of the resource requirements for their fulfillment.

'Action planning from below' will provide the concrete project packages for implementation. These will be formulated as sector specific and/or owner specific projects, emerging from the yearly or multi-year work programme of action oriented agencies. As we pointed out earlier, it is important to maintain or even stimulate the autonomy of existing institutions and agencies to develop purposes (projects) rather than evolve some 'super planning' body which relegate only implementation power to executive bodies.

The autonomy of initiative, however, should not be equated with the autonomy of implementation. Action planning agencies must gradually develop shared principles of analysis of the proposals which stress their economic viability, user acceptance, technical innovation, spatial and technical compatibility and integration with other projects. These can be particularly ensured by guidelines and checklists but more successfully facilitated through regular channels of inter-agency consultation.

The critical element of action planning from below within the broader strategy of decentralization is prioritization within the multi-sector investment review process. It is here that plans receive their investment backing and committed for implementation. Yet the multi-sector investment review process should not be thought as a leverage of absolute power or as a simple rubber stamp. Tempting as it is to look for coordinative coercion, institutional decisions are more complex, and have greater historical continuity than most of the planners prepared to acknowledge. It is molding rather than forcing the performance of action oriented agencies towards integration and connection, a process that may take many years of practicing of multi-sector investment coordination.

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Annex II: Recommended Reading

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