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## THE CULTURE OF THE PLANNERS : SOME GUIDELINES FOR THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PLANNING-PROCESS

STEVEN SAMPSON

### Introduction : Planning Consequences or Planning Process ?

Anthropologists have devoted considerable efforts to describing the consequences of planning and development schemes on local populations. Such analyses often bring to light the conflicts between what the planners want and what the villagers need, seeking to reconcile the two in a humanistic or developmental framework. In most cases, the focus of study is a local community; the planners and the plan are seen as "outside forces" which tend to disrupt, transform or even destroy viable social units.

In analyzing my own field data on planned urbanization in a Romanian village, I tended to think along the same lines. Socialist planning was implemented by planners from outside the village and local elites within it. Like most development schemes, however, the Romanian plan urbanizing this community also had unanticipated consequences : the plan was altered several times, the village underwent internal changes both because of and in spite of the plan, citizen participation was problematic, and local elites had difficulty in mobilizing the villagers to achieve planners' goals (for more details, see Sampson 1980, 1982). Moreover, Romanian planners were often oblivious to deviations in their plans, or unable to comprehend why these alterations occurred. The framework in which I worked was similar to that described above : "the village versus the plan." The plan was conceived as something outside the local community, something imposed onto it.

On reworking my data, I began to realize that this mode of thinking was somewhat inadequate. In socialist Romania, a society dominated by the planning mechanism, local communities

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do not confront the plan. Rather, they are part of it. Deviations from the plan are not to be considered enigmatic but part of the very nature of planning itself. I come to the conclusion that it is not "the plan" which integrates Romanian society but a much more complex "planning process." This process includes the formal bureaucratic mechanisms which most anthropologists avoid. However, it also includes informal manifestations: hidden ideologies, alternative conceptions of rationality, underlying social structures and personalistic, nonbureaucratic ties.

In arguing for the integrative function of the planning process, I believe that this can be applied not only to socialist societies like Romania, but to most of the Third World, where state planning strategies ("development administration") seek to control or manipulate the market. The planning process includes both bureaucracy and "corruption", administration and deviations from it, successful planning schemes and failed plans, planners and villagers. Integration via the planning process can be achieved *even if the plans themselves are unsuccessful.*

This approach to planning as a process necessarily forces anthropologists to turn over heads around, to "study up" (Nader 1969). Instead of studying the consequence of the plan on the community (why village X didn't accept Y), we study the planning bureaucracy and its actors. Studying the planning process means that we transfer our field expertise from that of bounded localities to amorphous social units.

In this paper, I will present four vantage points from which the planning process can be studied anthropologically, using data from my own fieldwork in Romania. Romania represents just one end of a continuum of Third World societies where the conscious activities of planners, administrators and experts impinge directly on local communities. In this sense, the Romanian experience is relevant to all societies with large planning bureaucracies—East West and "South". By studying planning from these four vantage points, we can transform what were unanticipated consequences into scientifically predictable ones. Predictable in that we can understand not only why plans fail, but why these failures come as such a surprise to the planners. As anthropologists, I will argue that we are in an excellent position to discover the under

lying logic of the planning process. It will become evident that this process can be elucidated only by way of the holistic, intensive and qualitative approach which remains the hallmark of social anthropology.

The four vantage points, which can be considered guidelines for the study of planning, are the following: (1) the plan as symbol; (2) planners as actors within an administrative structure; (3) the planning bureaucracy as a social system; and (4) relations between the planning organization and the people outside it (participation). These four perspectives will be discussed in turn.

### 1. The Plan as Symbolic Model for Society

As a physical, social and symbolic model for society, Romania's socialist planning schemes present an ideal starting point for an anthropology of the planning process. It should be emphasized that socialist Romania is not a "planned society." Rather, it is "a society with a plan." In this sense, the plan takes on symbolic functions for preserving social order and point the way toward social "progress." Thus, Romania's economic organization and settlement units are built and reconstructed to fulfill a grand utopian scheme. In my own study of settlement planning, the planners have scheduled several thousand villages to be abolished because they do not fit into the future planning scheme; an additional 300 villages have been rewarded by being developed into small towns.

The symbolism of planning abounds in Romania. Enormous amounts of energy go into formulating and constructing plans—not just for 5 or 10 years, but for 20 or 30 years in the future. Physical models for new towns are built not so much for technical use but for ceremonial exhibition. As "sacred symbols", they are kept under lock and key, strictly supervised by their priestly guardians, the planners. Plans in Romania are elaborated in a special code of quantification and design. Often they are formulated under conditions of secrecy. A plan may be kept a "working secret" until it is approved, with obvious implications for "debate" and "participation" in formulating such a plan.

The plan itself expresses a kind of symbolic power. Villages often paint their plans in large murals on any available wall. It is as if the giant figures, graphs and schemes in themselves will produce the desired results. (And the arrows always point

skyward). Completion and approval of plans is an occasion for celebration. The shift to a new Five Year Plan marks a new era. Each Five Year Plan in Romania receives a new name: the 1976-80 plan was the "plan of technical-scientific revolution"; The current plan is designated "the Five Year Plan of Quality and Efficiency".

The plan is conceived as a symbol of national unity and completeness. There are never any question marks, uncertainties, blank spaces or conflicts. The models are as elaborately detailed for the years 2000 or 2010 as they are for the existing plan. These models, though they have little technical relevance due to changing conditions, nevertheless provide a comforting stability to the system, a point of reference.

The constant rhetoric of planning the use of spatial, numeric and physical symbols, can create both harmony and discomfort. Society and "progress" can always be assessed against the planned reference point and evaluated in concrete terms: industrial production, number of villages developed, amount of books read, number of students in university, etc. However, the reality of society can also be measured against the public ideal of the plan. In this case, it is up to the "ideological state apparatus" (more accurately, the party's ideological apparatus), to explain these discrepancies. Generally, the major goals of the plan...building socialism...and its essential means...scientific rationality...are reaffirmed. "The plan is correct: it is just not being implemented correctly". The overriding symbols remain "sacred"; those who question them are deemed to have "retrograde mentalities" or are considered irrational or even politically dangerous.

One could search further for more systematic linkages between the planning process and its symbolic content. In particular, one could examine how sacred symbols are manipulated in industrial society, following Lans's work on the Soviet Union (1981). It is evident that in socialist countries and in the Third World there is a fetishization of "The plan" and "Development" as all-embracing models for a future society. As ideological models, these create ideological support. However, as guidelines for social and economic development, they generate their own contradictions. These can be seen in other aspects of the planning process.

## 2. Planners as social actors

In studying planners as actors within the planning organization, we must try to understand how they think, how they act, how they articulate fundamental planning ideologies. In anthropological terms, we must try to understand "the culture of the planners". How do planners transmit and mediate the rationality of the plan? What is the relation between their technical training career goals, personal ambitions and political views? In carrying out their function as spokesmen for Society as a whole, Romanian planners articulate ideologies which can also be found in numerous Western planning schemes. These ideologies can be listed as follows.

The ideology of *rational interventionism* is the basis whereby conscious human will can determine the direction of change. Believing in their powers of personal intervention, planners try to stimulate some trends and constrain others. The idea that human endeavor can have decisive influence on impersonal social forces is the hallmark of the planner. This intervention is perceived to be rational and scientific, based on technical expertise. To understand the planners' conceptions of rationality is to understand the culture of the planners.

Planners often justify their actions in terms of the common perceived goals and aspirations of an entire society. This may be designated the ideology of "*the public interest*". The conception of a single public interest assumes a consensus model of society. In practice, however, it is of little use. It is more realistic to see society containing both consensus and conflict models. Groups who protest plans should not be considered opposed to the public interest, but as representing an alternative interest group. In fact, "the public interest" ideology is invariably invoked to achieve very specific ends.

*Community* is another often used planner ideology. Cities are planned for as if they were a collection of self-contained neighborhoods. New towns are modelled after rural villages. The community ideology assumes that small populations in a limited space will tend to have conflict-free relations akin to an idealized peasant village. In this sense, the community ideology confuses small scale with social homogeneity.

Most Western planning remains *urban oriented*, in that the countryside is asked to fulfill the demands placed on it by the



city. In the public interest, planners can restructure the countryside with impunity so as to fulfill the needs of city dwellers. Town and country should be kept separate, such that sprawl is considered anathema to all planners... East West and South.

*Architectural determinism* is the idea that by physically rearranging space, planners can have a dominant influence on human behavior. Since planners often have control only over the physical environment, it is small wonder that they give it causal priority. Nevertheless, the emphasis on physical rearranging tends to bolster professional self-images (Bailey 1975).

Finally, planners' rhetoric is replete with the ideology of *participation*. The debate centres only on the form of participation. On one hand, it can be a genuine avenue toward citizen power. In most cases, however, participation becomes a device whereby planners defuse citizen protest while obtaining citizens' knowledge. Participation thus becomes a means whereby citizens help the planners to achieve the *planners'* goals.

When these planning ideologies appear in the Romanian context, they are structured by the concrete conditions of socialist planning. Romanian planners reify interventionism as the key to "building socialism" and "creating a new society". The only rationality is that articulated by the planners, who monopolize technical expertise and key channels of information. In Romania, planners' rationality dictates that villages which are scattered and dispersed are considered irrational settlements. They will receive little state investment and hundreds of them will be gradually phased out. It is a rationality founded on the presumed efficiency of centralization of peasant households which entails being close to key resources even if houses are dispersed. The conflict between planners' and peasants' rationality is not resolved scientifically, but politically. By monopolizing expertise and by virtue of their administrative position, the planners' rationality prevails over that of the peasants. This conflict is not articulated politically, however. Instead, it is expressed in terms of scientific expertise and "public interest" versus the "tradition" and "particular interest" of the nonviable villages.

In the same fashion, Romanian planners manipulate the idea of "public interest" by merging it with their own particular interests. The "general interest" is so pervasive that in Romania,

and in socialist countries generally, there is really no such thing as a "local plan". There is only a national plan executed in diverse localities. Since there are no local plans, there is no legitimate basis for local power to limit state power. If a community protests or rejects its plan in a fashion deemed unsuitable by the planners, the planners can invoke their monopoly on expertise and their position as spokesmen for the "public interest". Expressions of local protest can be classified as illegitimate; they are "particular interests", chauvinist, provincial, and at times even seditious. In Romania, and probably elsewhere, the public interests is always equated with the planners' interest. And the planners' interests are usually tied to the dominant social groups (classes, bureaucracies, parties).

To contest the plan is somehow to contest the legitimacy of society as a whole. Planners try to appear as administrators. In fact, behind the neutrality of administration, they, too, wield power. What prevents this power from becoming overt is that planners also have interests as professionals, intellectuals and technicians, and personal ambitions. As much as their articulation of ideology, these elements also help form the culture of the planners. Here we will deal with their administrative environment: the planning bureaucracy.

### 3. The Planning Bureaucracy as a Social Arena

Planners do not operate in a vacuum. They are part of a larger organization which has its own interests, its internal mechanisms, its channels of formal authority and its own means of exerting informal influence. Anthropologists have usually left the study of formal organizations to other social scientists (though see Britan and Cohen 1980). We can no longer afford to do this, for without dealing with bureaucratic social forms, we will never be able to reveal the mechanism of domination and subordination to which local communities are integrated into state societies. Bureaucracies need to be examined not as surface manifestations (i.e. what does it look like from the village) but as social organizations in their own right (what does it look like from inside).

Like all large organizations, planning bureaucracies in socialist countries generate their own contradictions while they seek to resolve (or administer) problems. Sometimes these

contradictions appear as the corruption of a plan, in that personalistic criteria replace legal, rational criteria. However, what appears to us as corruption may appear to someone within the bureaucracy as flexibility. In Romania, as elsewhere, the planning could not function if it went completely "by the book" (which is why "work to rule" actions invariably mean the cessation of work). From a comparative perspective, the question would be, "at what points is the Romanian bureaucracy 'flexible' and at what point is it truly 'bureaucratic'?"

Romania's planning mechanism is extremely centralized at the top, and in many cases subject to the personal whims of the Party Secretary. At its lower levels, however, (countries and villages) the bureaucracy functions in very anti-bureaucratic ways. Instead of Max Weber's (1958) legal, rational authority based on formal rules, there are extra-legal, personalistic and informal ties based on kinship, friendship locality, or ethnic affiliation. For example, in one country, the village of A—was chosen to be made into a new town. Since all villages are in competition for scarce state investment, it was not surprising that neighboring village J—contested the decision by protesting to regional planners whenever they visited the village. However, it was not until a native son of J—managed to work in the planning office that the decision was altered. This is probably a common example of how the planners' own interests can manipulate the rationality of their organization.

While there is a degree of flexibility at lower levels, the centralization at the top means that regional and local planners operate in an atmosphere of pervasive uncertainty. Approved plans can be abruptly revoked. No decision is ever final. Flexibility of action can thus degenerate into confusion, apathy and cynicism. Here is another area where anthropologists could make cross-cultural comparisons: how do planners "decode" decisions from above? How do they know decisions are likely to remain "final", and what decisions are likely to be altered?

Another aspect of the planning organization which affects planners' activities is the personnel policy. In Romania, a policy called "rotation of cadres" transfers planners and officials between branches, sectors and regions so as to extend their experience and inhibit them from forming bureaucratic fiefdoms of "family circles" of corruption or favoritism. However, this rotation is often

inhibits planners from establishing social linkages to the communities they serve. This leads to poor base-line information, which in turn produces decisions which ignore or conflict with local interests. Ultimately, this produces plans which are altered, corrupted or ignored by the local population.

Gathering this information is further constrained by the social and administrative distance between the planning organization and the local communities. "The rural villages are often far from urban centres and main roads." Planners often visit these communities in an atmosphere of improvisation or crisis. The values of these inhabitants may differ radically from that of the urban trained and urban-oriented planner. Moreover, the planner may mistakenly perceive the local elites in the community to be genuine representatives of local interest. This is not always the case, especially in Romania, where local officials often come from outside the village.

The combination of pervasive uncertainty in the administration and the social and administrative distance to the community thus hinders the formation of an effective plan.

Finally, like all Weberian bureaucracies, the organization attempts to control information and restrict access to key data. In restricting information, it also restricts its own efficiency. Plans come to be formulated which do not always reflect local concerns.

Finally, the planning bureaucracy itself has elements which exist independently of, and may even be in conflict with, the ruling groups it presumably serves. That is, the planning bureaucracy is more than just an instrument of power. Within it, there may be conflicts between technocratic experts, utopian visionaries, bureaucratic opportunists, and political functionaries. These conflicts play themselves out within the organization and in the way the organization performs in the community. An anthropology of the planning bureaucracy could offer some comparative perspectives in this field as well. For example, are the lines of conflict in the Danish (Tanzania, Indian, American...) planning bureaucracy also drawn between "reds" and "experts" as they are in Romania? Or are the divisions based on regional or party affiliations?

#### 4. Relations between the organization and those outside it

The way the planners and the planning bureaucracy operate has direct implications for the way planners and citizens relate

to each other. Ideally, there is to be voluntaristic citizen participation in total accord with the planners' interest. However, if this kind of participation is not forthcoming, the citizens must be "mobilized". Where participation is conceived as "spontaneous" mobilization is a bureaucratic procedure (thus its association with military activity, in that armies are the archetypal bureaucratic organization).

An anthropological approach to the planning process must focus on participation as both an ideological and social phenomenon. Ideologically, we must examine the cultural understandings of participation as they are articulated by planners and various interest groups. Sherry Arnstein (1969) has constructed a "ladder of citizen participation" whose lowest ranks include "manipulation", "therapy" and "informing"; these are followed by "consulting", "placation" and "partnership", with the highest levels being "delegated power" where citizens dominate a particular program, and "full citizen control". Conflicts about participation may be simple cultural misunderstandings: the planners envision participation to be, say, informing or consulting the population, while citizens will be satisfied with nothing less than full control over the planners' decisions. Participation in Romania, for example, is generally confined to the execution phase of planning. Ultimate goals are usually relegated to the sacred or the secret, and citizens who question these can be dismissed as being provincial or lacking expertise. However, within the sphere of participating in the execution of planning, Romanian citizens are to contribute both out of moral duty and economic necessity. Plans in Romania could not succeed without citizen participation (e.g. voluntary labor). The state simply does not have the resources to accomplish their plans without the citizens participating or being mobilized.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that participation is simply a cultural misunderstanding. Behind the problem of participation lies the question of power. Planners' power is exercised formally, through sanctions, laws and regulations. Villagers' power is often exercised informally...by corrupting, altering, or ignoring the plans. In Romania, for example, the degree of citizen participation in one community was a function of households' control over key resources and their commitment to long term residence in the community. A plan to urbanize a village had the potential of turning agrarian producers in to

dependent consumers, thus threatening their control over resources. Plans for industrial growth in the village entailed the recruiting of migrant workers who tended to antagonize the local residents and competed with them for scarce food resources.

By transforming the social composition of the community, planners also affected the degree of citizens commitment to it. Proletarianization of the work force (turning peasants into workers) tends to produce a higher degree of spatial mobility, which means that citizens are less tied to their communities. This in turn reduces the moral incentive to participate in the local plans.

Faced with limited levels of participation among the population, Romanian planners and local elites have to "mobilize" the population. Here again, an anthropological approach can help us to understand how such mobilization takes place. In Romanian villages, mobilization styles can be reduced to two ideal types: one is the "bureaucratic" style: in which the elite uses his position and the threat of negative sanctions to get villagers to participate (of example, threatening a fine if the villager does not show up for a Sunday voluntary work brigade). The other style is the "egalitarian" in which the elite appeals to citizens as fellow villagers, kinsmen or friends, using moral reciprocity rather than legal sanction as the basis of mobilization. Both these styles have advantages and disadvantages for the elites. The bureaucratic style produces quick results and leaves the elite without potential ties of corruption or favoritism. However, it also tends to solidify the gap between "us" and "them", so that subsequent participation must also take place on a bureaucratic level. The egalitarian style is more effective in the long run, but carries with it the risk that local elites will become enmeshed in social ties may turn flexibility in to corruption, nepotism and favoritism (see Sampson 1982 b for more details).

The participation/mobilization problem is particularly acute for rural communities. Here planners and bureaucrats come to perceive local social organization as an obstacle to be overcome, and local interests as provincial, uninformed or chauvinistic. When things do not go according to the plan, planners tend to blame villagers for having "retrograde mentalities", "poor organization" or the elites for their "indiscipline" and "poor leadership". Such accusations echo the complaints of development experts in the Third World.



Yet an anthropological understanding of the social dynamics of local communities can demonstrate that poor leaders are made not born, that is, they emerge because of the structural features of the communities themselves and the administrative demands of the planning organization to which they are subordinate. Corruption becomes not a "dysfunction" of the plan but its logical outcome, "Retrograde mentalities" and "indiscipline" are not causes of plan failure, but symptoms of structural contradictions in the planning process.

Participation and mobilization ... apathy and resistance... should be seen partly as a function of local social organization, and partly by its integration in to the planning organization. In this sense, and especially for "societies with a plan" like Romania, it is impossible to separate the community from its administrative milieu.

### Conclusions and Implications

In explicating these four perspectives on the planning process, we can conclude by posing some broader anthropological questions about planning. First, why do plans fail? Is it a conflict between planners' ideologies and local goals, or does it follow from the logic of the planning process. These questions can be answered only by analyzing the planning process in both its domains: in the bureaucracy where plans are formulated and in the communities where they are executed.

Second, in what way do failed plans help to integrate society? In socialist societies, planning clearly performs this function because of the dominance of the planning mechanism. Plans routinely fail or are corrupted, but people must still deal with plans even if they ignore them. Plans thus "work themselves out", remifying through society much like the market does in capitalism or kinship in tribal society.

Third, who plans the planners? Planners are as important a part of local societies as the peasants and local elites. Planners have their own cultural concepts, their own rhetoric and means of action. They have different kinds of resources at their disposal to implement their goals: bureaucracy and monopoly over expertise and information. How are planners socialized within the bureaucracy? How do they turn administrative neutrality into power?

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Fourth, what is the relation between formal and informal structures within bureaucratic organizations? What is the relationship between bureaucracy and corruption? When does corruption become flexibility and when is it truly parasitic. How is bureaucratic domination maintained through the informal structure?

Finally, by discovering the answers to these questions, we can pose a fifth: How can the anthropological study of the planning process be used not just to influence the powerful, but to replace them with more democratic mechanisms, more responsive to the needs of local communities? That is, can we envision alternative planning bureaucracies which do not become new forms of domination?

Answering these questions requires the application of classic anthropological concepts to new niches: for example, applying notions of symbolism and ideology to planning models, participation concepts in demystifying the notion of "administrative neutrality."

More important, the anthropology of the planning process requires new kinds of research techniques. For example, how do we study "the cultures of power" (Wolf 1969)? How do we penetrate formal organization (Serber 1981)? How do we use and analyze written sources which we may not wholly understand? How do we penetrate the technical veneer of the planning bureaucracy? How do we interpret organizational theory and public administration rhetoric as bureaucratic self-image or as theory of bureaucracy?

This paper has suggested that we turn our heads around from the local arena to the planning bureaucracy. To understand the planning process, we must get inside the planners' heads. Note—This paper first presented to The Tenth Conference of Nordic Ethnographers 10, Nordisk Etnografmode, Copenhagen, October 1982.

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## STRUCTURAL DIFFERENTIATION AND INTEGRATION AS PROCESSES OF DEVELOPMENT IN MAURITIUS

S. R. MEHTA

Development as a process of social change has to be conceived in terms of economic growth and technological advancement concomitantly affecting the attitudes, motives, values and norms of the members of the society for a modern oriented system. Of late, it has been recognised that development *per se* does not mean growth only but it is explicitly expressed as change plus growth. The concept of change has brought non-economic variables into the forefront while delineating the development of the Third World countries and in their context, it implies social and cultural change as well as economic growth.<sup>1</sup> However it has been observed that there are changes in the social structure of the developing nations that are concomitant with and in some cases determined by economic development. Social structure may be considered as an ordered arrangement of status and roles held by the members of the group or the community and their patterned relationships which persist over a period of time. The persistence of social relationship over a period of time does not imply that the social structure remains static. Instead, the social structure is dynamic and is constantly reacting to intrinsic and extrinsic influences so as to give way to the processes of structural differentiation, integration and social disturbances. Differentiation as a process of structural change will lead to the emergence of qualitatively new complexes of roles and organization, and necessitate a suitable adjustment within the social structure of the society. This shall have to be provided by the integrative mechanism or the establishment of either new coordinative structures in legal, political, associational fields or through suitable modification of the existing institutions. And the discontinuities caused due to the process of differentiation and integration within the society may develop certain stresses or strains or may result in social distur-

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