

## REGIONAL PLANNING IN INDIA

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### PREFACE

Geographers' contribution to studies on planning in India has been relatively recent following the decision of Professor P. C. Mahalanobis, F.R.S. to setting up a Regional Survey Unit in the Indian Statistical Institute in 1956. During 1956-58 the Unit conducted a regional survey of the Mysore State under the directorship of Professor A. T. A. Learmonth, then of the Department of Geography, the University of Liverpool. Simultaneously a less intensive study of South-India comprising the four southern States—Mysore, Kerala, Madras (now re-named as Tamil Nadu) and Andhra—was undertaken with a view to examining the distributional patterns of resources and problems of regional development which extend beyond the administrative States. These studies were carried out under the guidance of Dr. V. L. S. Prakasa Rao (now Professor of Geography, Department of Human Geography, Delhi University). Meantime, the importance of regional approach to national economic planning was emphasised by the Planning Commission particularly in the preparation of the Third Five Year Plan as a part of the long-term plan (1961-81). With the available data and maps, a scheme of resource regions adapted to administrative districts was therefore suggested as a basis for understanding the regional resource structure, their broad goals of specialisation and the problems in planning. Regionalisation of the national economy being the first step towards integration of the regions' physical and economic plans an attempt was made to work out a scheme of macroeconomic regions with diversified resource bases. I had valuable discussions with the Soviet geographers particularly Professor A. M. Ryabchikov of Moscow University and Professor K. M. Popov and I. V. Komar of the Institute of Geography, Academy of Sciences, USSR.

This study in its present form has been possible mainly because of my work in the inter-disciplinary team of geographers and statisticians using economists' view-points wherever possible. My contributions to the above-mentioned studies have been consolidated and further supplemented by specific studies such as land use potential in the Western Ghats region and regional aspects of planning within the States and Development Blocks. I had the opportunity of receiving basic training in detailed regional studies and critical comments in the preparation of this report from Professor C. D. Deshpande (Department of Geography, Bombay University) and this has enabled me to experiment on regional generalizations and their utility in planning. I am grateful to Professor A. T. A. Learmonth, Professor of Geography, The Open University, London, U.K. and to Professor V. L. S. Prakasa Rao with whom

I worked in the Unit and had suggestions at different stages of my work and to Shri Pitambar Pant, Member, Planning Commission for his views and comments on regional aspects of planning.

The University of Liverpool offered me the Leverhulme Research Fellowship during 1962-63 which enabled me to consolidate this study. The Indian Statistical Institute granted me special study leave and passage to enable me to receive further training and research experience. I am grateful to Professor R. W. Steel and his colleagues in the Department of Geography for all the facilities and critical comments on my studies and also for introducing me to various planning Departments and individual research workers. Dr. R. N. Prothero has kindly read through the report and offered comments and helpful suggestions at every stage of my writing.

This study grew out of my dissertation on 'Some Aspects of Regional Planning in India' for which I was awarded the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy by the Indian Statistical Institute in 1965. The report has been further revised to include some of the results of the studies on spatial dimension in National Planning. An introductory chapter has also been added to spell out the broad outline of the approach to regional planning in a national content.

I must also thank my colleagues in the Regional Survey Unit, New Delhi, particularly Dr. M. N. Pal for quantitative aspects of regionalisation, S. Sathyanarayana, N. Seshadri and M. S. Kambow for the statistical tables and the finalisation of village land-use maps. Mr. A. G. Hodgkiss, Mr. J. Lynch and Miss P. J. Treasure and Shri A. N. Sharma have finalised the maps.

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CHAPTER I  
SPATIAL DIMENSIONS IN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL  
PLANNING IN INDIA

The emphasis on regional development in the context of national planning came in almost from the beginning of the Five Year Plans of development in India. The Second Five Year Plan stated that one of the objectives of national planning is to even out regional disparities in economic development.<sup>1</sup> The Third Five Year Plan dealt with this objective in some detail by devoting one full chapter on Balanced Regional Development.<sup>2</sup> The Fourth Five Year Plan does recognise regional imbalances in development as one of the issues to be dealt with and has stated in general, the approach to correcting regional imbalances during the Fourth Five Year Plan.<sup>3</sup> In this connection it is also recognised that 'balanced regional development and dispersal of economic activities are closely interrelated and these should be reflected in the formula for investment allocation.' This is no doubt a complex issue but with political overtones the real issue of regional development and location of economic activities is often dictated by narrow linguistic regionalism and further gets entrenched into other forms of *isms* at the lower area levels. This is partly due to the ambiguity in the definition of the region. The regional concept recognises the region as a distinct entity with homogeneity or uniformity in its *formal* and *functional* structures. This is in contrast to the recognition of the different area levels of the administrative set-up as the regional framework for planning. It is recognised however that the regional framework should be evolved on the basis of the administrative units with least disturbance to the boundaries of the political-administrative units such as of the federating States of India. However, the States are of all sizes with heterogeneity in resource structure, and varied patterns of economies within them; and prior to the reorganisation of States these had different patterns of spatial orientation. This might necessitate the step-by-step analysis of the regional aspects of development plans starting from the relatively few macro-regions comprising groups of federating States. The States could be the basis in the next level of analysis. Secondly, the macro-economic variables like per capita income, and consumption of different items of production that are commonly used for comparative assessment of the international and national economic growth are used for measuring regional development as between States and at times for intra-State analysis as well. The identification and evaluation of the physical resource base and population reveal a realistic spatial or regional pattern distinct from the inter-State patterns. Without the analysis of locational advantages of different economic activities in relation to the resource base it is difficult to evolve any objective criteria or policy for investment allocation as related to regional development and dispersal of economic activities. Moreover, because of the large size of the country and the federal structure in which the plan operates, there is a need for

<sup>1</sup>Government of India (1955) : Second Five Year Plan, Planning Commission, New Delhi.

<sup>2</sup>Government of India (1961) : Third Five year Plan, New Delhi, pp. 142-161.

<sup>3</sup>Government of India (1969) : Draft Fourth Five Year Plan, 1969-74, New Delhi, pp. 17-18.

simultaneous analysis of the problems in regional development and location of economic activities at the National and State levels according to the relative importance of resources and activities. All this is however related only to one aspect of regional planning i.e. the disaggregation of national plan downwards through the different ladders of the administrative hierarchy. With the introduction of the process of 'planning from below' there is an equal emphasis on physical planning below the State level particularly for Districts and Development Blocks. Obviously, the framework of a physical plan has to be prepared from the regional angle to facilitate the aggregation of the possible production and investment requirement through a process of integration of these plans in the physical space. Thus, *regional economic planning in a national context and regional physical planning in relation to the development plans of the Blocks, Districts and the States* are the two distinct but related dimensions of regional planning in India. This paper highlights the different spatial dimensions of planning in India and suggests a procedure for organising regional planning keeping in view the integration of physical and economic plans spatially.

#### DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF REGIONAL PLANNING IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

##### 1. *Regional development policy in National Planning*

In order to formulate a regional development policy in national planning with special reference to the federating States, an inventory of the spatial and locational patterns of the key sectors of the national economy is needed. On the basis of the analysis of the inventory, the country may be divided into 5 or 6 macro-regions comprising groups of federating States. Contiguity, inter-State and intra-State relationship and the resource potential for developing distinct regional economies could be the considerations in regional delineation. These would be the regions for formulating a regional development strategy in National Planning. For this purpose an attempt should then be made to analyse the existing spatial and locational components of the national development plans and to indicate alternative locations and areas within each of the macro-region to which the additional targets of production could be allocated. This analysis involves a study of the spatial dimension of the individual sector as well as regional and inter-regional analysis. The acceptance of any one inter-regional sectoral plan and the corresponding locational framework would be subject to political considerations too. It is in this context that the regional development policy has to be formulated in the national plan. The impact of such a development policy on the goals of economic and social development should further be spelt out on the basis of federating States which are the parts of the macro-regions. For a lack of the inventory on locational and spatial aspects and inadequate regional economic analysis of the development plans, the national plan leans heavily on the aggregated sectoral plans of States and inter-State comparison of selected sectors of development.

The spatial and the locational framework arrived at in the manner mentioned above would serve to pin-point areas of growth and corresponding locations that take care of the key sectors of the national plan. Political factors that enter into actual