

MONITORING AND REVIEW IN PLANNING: TWO CASE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the notion of monitoring and review within the general process of planning, and the preparation of structure plans in particular. First, it gives definitions of the terms "monitoring" and "review" in their context. Second, it discusses the concepts of monitoring and review and their applications in two case studies from the British context. The object is to compare between the early and late experiences, and to crystalize those key features that can be learnt from elsewhere.

Keywords: Monitoring and review, Planning process.

What is meant by monitoring and review

Monitoring and review are seen as vital parts of the planning process, which is practiced in order to keep track of the possible changes that might affect an adopted plan.

Monitoring may be defined as the process of detecting changes which could affect the achievement of a plan, and then to suggest what actions might be taken as a reaction to these changes. Whereas, Review means a systematic re-examination of a plan which, usually, results in the production of an amended plan. In preparing structure plans, it is necessary for planning authorities to look out for changes which may have implications for them, and revise their policies in the light of these findings [1].

However, it is not difficult to see that many of the forecasts and assumptions, on which a plan is based, are likely to be inaccurate or invalid over the 10 or 20 years, which it is intended to cover.

The reasons for this uncertainty in planning may be ground into four classes: [1] [3]

1- The forecasts of the future population, employment, recreation habits, income levels and patterns of expenditure, car ownership and level of usage involve making many assumptions which may or may not be moving in the same direction in the future.

2- The systems thinking is bringing about changes in the plan making process. This highlights the limitation of planner's controls on the problems to be treated, which increases the sense of uncertainty in the future.

3- The use of planning controls to deal with problems which they are not specially designed to treat, such as using physical planning controls to achieve additional social and economical objectives, increases uncertainty about their ultimate effectiveness.

4- The values and attitudes of society can be seen to be changing over time, so that some of the objectives formulated 20 years ago might be considered quite irrelevant and even undesirable today.

For these reasons it is not expected that all parts of a given strategy will remain valid indefinitely. Thus, there should be eventually a need to reconsider some of the assumptions, forecasts, policies as time goes by. This, also, involves the process of gathering updated information concerning three types of monitoring as follows:

1- Implementation Monitoring to insure whether or not the adopted policies, included in the plan, are being actually implemented.

2- Impact Monitoring to insure whether or not the policies and proposals of the plan are having the desired effect aimed at in the plan.

- 3- Strategic Monitoring to ascertain whether or not the objectives, assumptions and information content of the plan are still relevant.

Monitoring system vary considerably according to the types of activities to be monitored. A system for structure plan monitoring within a local authority will be different from a monitoring system designed to help sub-regional development. However, knowledge about monitoring in one context may be relevant to monitoring in the other bearing in mind the differences between the two contexts in terms of scale, politics, and economics.

Case Studies

Having given a brief background of the need for monitoring and review in planning process it is appropriate to consider one of the proposals for monitoring (Nottinghamshire/ Derbyshire and East Sussex) which has been put forward in an early stage on the sub-regional level in England. The Sub-regional studies carried out for Leicester/ Leicestershire, and for Nottinghamshire/ Derbyshire in 1969 and 1970, are considered important in this respect.

Leicester/Leics. was the first Sub-regional study in England to be monitored and related to the study and proposals. It also recognized the need for coordination of both development plan preparation and implementation work and suggested machinery whereby this might be achieved. This trend was even more developed in that direction in Notts./Derbys. Sub-regional proposals.

Nottinghamshire/ Derbyshire proposal

After the recommended strategy was published, in the case of Notts./Derbys., reports were produced to give advice on implementation and to give some preliminary ideas on monitoring, which to be developed at a late stage. [4]

The planning term's philosophy indicated that precise forecasts of population, employment, etc., cannot be devised for any strategy as far ahead as two decades. A need, therefore, was identified for other quantifiable form for the monitoring purposes, which to be independent of forecasts of growth or

changes and, hence independent of the uncertainties involved.

Monitoring of the strategy was described, accordingly, as "a continuous review of the situation", for which a separate Monitoring and Advisory Unit (MAU) should be set up with its own staff and budget, and to work independently of the four planning teams:

- 1- Derby Country Bourough Council.
- 2- Derbyshire County Council.
- 3- Nottingham City Council.
- 4- Nottinghamshire County Council.

This definition, which in relevant in sub-regional context as well as in structure planning, led to a five-stage process of monitoring and review:

- 1- Obtained information about factors which concern the Sub-regional development.
- 2- Comparing the monitored information with what had been expected.
- 3- Identifying significant differences between what is observed and what had been expected.
- 4- Evaluating possible actions which can be taken in the light of these differences.
- 5- Producing advice arising from the evaluation.

And to ensure that the monitoring system itself remains effective, two further steps had to be added:

- 1- Assessing the effectiveness of the monitoring system.
- 2- Modifying the monitoring process accordingly.

The purpose of this continuous review was to check whether or not the adopted policies were being carried out, whether they were succeeding in the task of achieving Sub-regional objectives and, if not, recommending what action should be taken as a remedy.

The Process

The review work involved collection and processing of statistical information on certain key issues and comparing the results with the proposals in the strategy. A data base was to be maintained and arrangements were to be made with consultants

to return to computer models if necessary to check whether or not the policies are still relevant. A review of the objectives on which the strategy was based was also necessary from time to time, although this was seen as a matter for political and public discussions rather than technical calculations. Afterwards, the monitoring leader should prepare an annual report to the planning authorities.

Furthermore, it was seen that the monitoring system itself need to be examined at regular intervals to ensure that it is performing its functions properly and without deviation. And this again might be subject to an annual report.

Lessons from the Early Experience

In fact, there were many important lesson extracted from this early stage in Notts./Derbys; which are of great value to structure planning, although structure plans are being prepared and implemented within the local government organizations, whereas in sub-regional planning the Monitoring and Advisory Unit (MAU) was set up as an organization detached from any local authority [5].

These lessons may be summarized in the following:

- 1- The MAU's experience illustrates the need to consider the requirements of monitoring system during the early stage of the plan making.
- 2- The process of the plan and the complex relationship within it must be communicated to those who will maintain its relevance.
- 3- The techniques should be capable of continued use for a wide range of tasks, and information needs to be matched to the resources likely to be available.
- 4- It is important that the maintenance of progress is a part of the monitoring system which should be ignored. In this respect, it is a useful practice to check up regularly on topics of current interest.
- 5- Establishing good links among the public, politicians, and officers has a major effect on the eventual success of monitoring and review.

having given a brief review of one of the early proposals monitoring and review on the sub-regional level, it seems quite necessary to examine how far the late approach to plan formulation and monitoring have benefitted from those lessons derived-from the early experiences.

East Sussex Approach

The need for a Structure Plan, as a main guide for policy-making purposes, was an urgent matter for East Sussex after the British Local Government reorganization in 1974. Bearing in mind that the new Country consisted of an urban coastal belt and a rural hinterland, hence, a structure plan was needed to fuse the old and the new and to solve the problems of the new administration.

Before describing the planning approach of East Sussex, The reasons and the climate evolved are to be reviewed first.

In the new organization, East Sussex lost a rural area of 3 commuter towns and villages and gained 3 major coastal towns. The new County council remained conservative in spite of labour, liberal and independent members inside it. Thus, the East Sussex County Planning Department(ESCPD) was seen as a means of unifying interests and ambitions.

The style of the new Authority also affected the planning process. many elected members wanted to be seen as people introducing new ideas. Thus, the management style was to encourage change and innovation were possible.

In relation to be operation of the new Authority, there was a need to adopt a promotional and forward-looking approach depending upon cooperation between politicians and planning officers on the country level, and planning authorities on the district level.

Plan Formulation

In general, the first step in the structure planning process was monitoring and review of the existing policies which did not seem to be efficient or beneficial. In more details, East Sussex approach to the Structure Plan was based upon these following principles: [6]

- 1- Structure Plan should reflect the political stance of the Authority:
Seminars and discussions were held with councillor and officers from districts and alternative proposals and solutions were posed. The main result of these discussions stressed on immediate and short term aspect of problems.
- 2- Continuous adaptations was required in face of uncertainty:
This was seen to be done by monitoring the

purposes and the achievements of the Plan each year.

- 3- Plan and its review should be prepared quickly:
In practice, the first ESCPD was published in July 1975, prepared from scratch in 16 months through simultaneous effort rather than sequential work.
- 4- A selective issue-based approach to policy-making is needed:
This was done by the acceptance of many inherited policies, after assessing them, and concentrating the technical work on major issues highlighted by discussions with the public and debates in the politicians arena. Most of the key-issues were related to specific areas rather than the whole County, because East Sussex is composed of a number of loosely linked parts. General information (updated regularly) was gathered to formulate a background statement, on national and regional scale, against which individual issues were assessed.

It is important to indicate that the issue-analysis technique avoided gathering masses of statistical information, much of which would not have been necessary for policy formulation.

- 5- The plan should set out a vision of future:
In East Sussex, political and public trend were with conserving what was best in the County and encouraging wealth-creating activities to maintain the existing level of prosperity, rather than to major urban development.
- 6- Commitment to plan arising from public acceptability:
It is usually seen that public participation in strategic planning is unsatisfactory if not impossible. The East Sussex experience showed that the public are more responsive if they can be shown how a strategic policy is locally relevant. In this respect, the local emphasis of the key-issues approach proved helpful.
- 7- Comprehension of policy intention:
The Structure Plan should be seen as a readable guide to County Council's planning policies by being short-expressed in layman's language and well laid out in an attractive format.
- 8- Plan should be an instrument of corporate working:
Structure Plan was seen a strategic plan of the County Council's philosophy, within which

programmes of action can be developed via nonstatutory medium-term investment-orientated programme. This demanded close integration with budgetary cycle of the Authority's activities. This integration could be done by relating the policies of the Structure Plane to the Council budgetary decisions. This again raised the need for annual review of the Plan.

- 9- Plan should be realistic in resource terms:
East Sussex's team faced a difficulty in forecasting the future economic circumstances on availability of finance. However, the solution was to prescribe priorities, either for area policies or for proposals.
- 10- Implementation as an-integrated part of the Plan:
The main methods for implementation were seen to be:
 - a) Development controls.
 - b) Local plans with more detailed land-use policy.
 - c) County Council expenditure for infra structure.
 - d) Other public sector expenditure.
 - e) Selected actions to achieve confidence in plan.
 - f) A fair share of the nation's resources.

Monitoring and Review

In East Sussex approach to structure planning, monitoring is seen as "a *continuous activity concerning both hard and soft information*". External factors and the performance of the policies are monitored in order to identify whether any new policies are required or whether changes should be made to existing policies. This process begins in April each year immediately after approval by the Council's Planning Committee of the previous year review. The monitoring process includes:

- (1) Monitoring the performance of the existing policies by trying to answer the following questions:
 - a) To what extent is the policy still relevant?
 - b) With what success is it being implemented?
 - c) What are the effects of implementation ?
 - d) how could its performance be improved?
- (2) Monitoring the external changes, by examining:
 - a) Socio-economic variables,

- b) Land-use changes,
- c) Governmental policy changes,
- d) Availability of resources in public sector,
- e) Changes in public and political attitude,
- f) Feed back from local plan preparation,
- g) Emergence of new issues or trends,

This approach includes, also, three positive aspects. First, the style of reviewing plans doesn't involve a heavy staff commitment. Second, the planners and councillor are presented with a yearly report which maintains their interest in the Structure Plan, And third, it keeps them up-to date with any changes that are taking place. However, it may be seen as a negative aspect that there is always a need for a submission to the Secretary of State for Environment when a fundamental change is necessary, which may cause delay.

CONCLUSIONS

As it is indicated in table [1], East sussex approach to structure planning and monitoring, in an age of uncertainty, has benefitted, to a great extent, from the early studies and proposals practiced in the early sub-regional studies, such as those of Leicester/Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire/ Derbyshire.

However, there are some differences between them, especially, in the administrative aspect. While it was suggested in Notts./Derbys. proposal to establish an independent monitoring body (i.e. MAU), which is quite relevant on the sub-regional level, it was not the same in East Sussex; because in the latter it was intended to achieve a low cost process and a fairly light staff commitment.

In sum, there are many shared features in both approaches to planning and monitoring which may be seen in table (1) and are summarized as:

- 1- The principle of key-issues approach, which is based upon areas of interests or problems, which are recognized through discussions and seminars held with politicians and officers, and by the public direct participation as well.
- 2- The attempt to avoid gathering masses of statistical information which might be irrelevant in the long term, and concentrating more on

those concerning the key issues and the external factors which might affect them, mainly, in both short and medium terms.

- 3- Considering the monitoring and review of a plan as, not only a process which is needed at an early stage of plan preparation, but also as an attitude of mind and a philosophy of approach to planning. Review process for both of the performance of policies and their relevance to external factors and desired objective. This also indicates the need to understand monitoring and review as a flexible, cyclical and adaptable process to a great extent.

Generally, the style of monitoring and review which has been discussed in Notts./Derbys. studies and developed in East Sussex case requires an innovative and continuous way of decision-making. This way means *a certain amount of unpopularity, because most organizations prefer to remain secure in their own routine.* However, personalities and political climate within which local government has to operate seem to play an important role in this respect.

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Table 1. Shared Features in Early and Late Approaches to Monitoring and Review in England.

Early experience: Notts./Derbys. (1969-70)	Late experience: East Sussex (1975-82)
* a separate monitoring and advisory unit with its own staff and budget detached from any local authority	* The style of reviewing plan does not involve a heavy staff commitment cost down to minimum).
* Changes in area should be studied and related to plan (in face of uncertainty).	* Simultaneous process to prepare plan rather than sequential (in face of uncertainty).
* Maintaining a data base to check upon policies relevance	* Data background on the national and regional scale against which individual issues are tested
* The need for a monitoring system in an early stage of planning	* First step in structure planning was monitoring and reviewing existing policies that did not seem efficient
* The need for coordination between plan preparation and implementation	* Implementation is an integrated part of plan * Co-ordination between politician & planner on county level and planning authorities on district level.
* Collecting and processing information (soft & hard) on key-issues.	* A selective issue-based approach to policy-making related to specific areas (key-issue highlighted by discussions & seminars)
* Checking up regularly on topics of current interest to maintain progress. * Reviewing objectives with reference to political and public participation.	* Organizing seminars & discussions with councillor, officers & public to get their opinion on proposals and alternatives.
* Producing an annual report with results and recommendations to planning authorities. * Examination of monitoring system at regular intervals	* Annual process of monitoring and review linked with budgetary cycle for both performance of policies and external changes