

National Development Planning Trap

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National Development Plans started to be universally applied in the socialist countries. Thereafter, there were various national plans such as the New Deal in the US and the Nazi national development planning in Germany. In pre-war period, national development planning influenced by the German ideas was the major faction among Japanese planners.

In postwar Japan, plans in economic, social and physical national development aspects were introduced one after another. Up to now, economic planning alone has been issued every four or five years. Other plans include the Economic Independence Plan, the Longer or Medium-Term Plan, the Economic and Social Development Plan, and the New Comprehensive National Development Plan, etc., and few people seem to be able to answer correctly which one is related to which. I suspect that a major national development plan is to be issued every two years or so, and why such plans keep appearing.

Objectively speaking, nationwide issues need to be considered, such as national resource allocation, land use, and trunk road networks, apart from regional issues. But, is it necessary that those plans appear every two years, and the new National Development Plan is said to be reexamined in its seventh year? I think that national-level plans should be based on a larger direction, and there is no need to come up with so many different plans in such a short period of time. Regarding the new National Development Plan, there is an opinion of concentrating on large cities, however on the other hand, there is talk of large-scale regional industrial development. Then, suddenly, in the "Japanese Archipelago Remodeling Theory," while talking about large-scale industrial developments, an idea of regionally-centered cities is introduced, as well. Those two ideas may seem similar, but they are slightly different. There are overlapping aspects, but the connection between them has not been explained, and they are being introduced one after another. There is really no need for so many unrelated plans to appear.

A handsome man has neither money nor power: the role of the Economic Planning Agency

The reason why so many plans are being made one after another is not because we are pursuing the proper allocation of resources, but because there is a political dimension to the problem. Development projects in line of national planning features have produced a certain political meaning. The election for the House of Representatives is held every two or three years, and coinciding with the election, some kind of plans will be published. The change of cabinet may have a great deal to do with this. In such a political dimension, the plan must play a slogan-like role. I think it is becoming impossible to keep up with the current situation unless planners create illusion after illusion through the plans. In this sense, there is a possibility that plans will be created without limit, regardless of whether they are relevant to people's lives.

Many of these plans are made by the Economic Planning Agency. But the Agency is not a business agency, nor does it oversee the work of each ministry. It merely handles "other matters that do not belong to each ministry" within the so-called vertically-divided administration.

In the old days of the Planning Agency, it did quite a lot of work on basic drafts such as goods control. However, in the postwar period, now the Economic Planning Agency is one of the many ministries

that dealt with current issues in a very realistic manner, and it seems that it is taking a somewhat integrated role by dealing not only with current issues but also with future issues or major issues that the ministries cannot deal with. Control over the various ministries and agencies does not actually exist. In other words, "A handsome man has no money and no power." However, being a handsome man has a role to play. Putting on a play, a rough and powerful man may be necessary, but a handsome man is also needed as a signboard. I feel that the Economic Planning Agency is forced to play such a role.

The Economic Planning Agency is planning based on this role, so there is no need to make a specific plan or administrative plan. The problem lies in the creation of an image, so the idea is to create an image (as bait), and if someone bites on the image, then it will attract that person like fishing. If they don't bite, while it creates an image, even if they don't bite, that's all that matters. Since politics today is not necessarily driven by strong leadership, we may have no choice but to follow those who bite into the bait.

I am a planner myself, and from my standpoint, I understand that the people at the Economic Planning Agency, while on the one hand they agree upon this kind of movement, want to find somewhere the public is looking for. They do not have the power to lead. Therefore, while they may be hoping to realize their own ideas by launching observation balloons to gauge the trends of the people, they are taken back to a higher political level and put to effective use.

The Aim of the "Japanese Archipelago Remodeling Theory"

The "Japanese Archipelago Remodeling Theory"(1972) is not an administrative plan, nor is it clearly announced by the government. It is a theory that is put forth by one individual MP, Kakuei Tanaka before he has become the prime minister (1972-1974). And it remains somewhat ambiguous, and the "reform theory" is very much in line with the Japanese people's naïve attitude. In the past, the scope of the bait was limited to very localized issues in economic planning, but recently it has become much broader. Since there are different kinds of bait, ministries and agencies are competing to get a bite out of it. The problem is that the bait is not being fed to the citizen or local governments, but is being consumed by corporations, real estate agents, and central government agencies with great vigor. Regional issues regarding the Japanese archipelago must now be seriously considered at the citizen level. This is why various citizen movements are taking place and progressive local governments are moving forward. Although they are not playing a sufficient role, there is an objective background and trend that local problems must be considered by citizens themselves or at least at the level of local governments. However, this theory has ignored those, and has only cultivated fodder for the monsters that have already nested in the hands of big corporations, central government agencies, and the like. This may have been done in the hope that it would be profitable, but on the other hand, it also raises a big balloon and makes the public expect that something good will come out of it. This is extremely dangerous.

There is no way that a truly comprehensive plan can be created if the current administrative structure is left as it is. All ministries and agencies are willing to bite into anything that they deem advantageous for expanding their own authority and interests. The people and local governments are the ones who will suffer the most if they fall into the trough of this feeding frenzy.

The Future of the "Japanese Archipelago Remodeling Theory"

It is no longer possible from two points of view to draw up a fixed plan and then reach that plan. The first can be said from the standpoint of a proper planner's methodology. That is, the master-planning approach, which is based on the idea of planning on a fixed, overall scale, may not work as a methodology in times of current drastic change. It is necessary to develop a planning theory that is more adaptable to the changing times. Since the early modern period, there has been a lot of talk about the ideal city, and pictures of ideal cities have been drawn in various ways, which have some sorts of

meaning. Then according to these ideal ways the method has been established, the administrative level says that it is the way to go, and the government will guide us toward it. However, even if the system is good, the world has not improved at all since then. So, we are beginning to reflect on whether it is good to fixedly draw a picture as a serious planning theory. It may be all right to draw an abstract of a philosophical vision, nevertheless, it is impossible to draw physical picture of the future. Therefore, we are forced to have some kind of elasticity in our planning theory. Serious planners are always struggling to figure out what to do about it.

The other problem is that, on a political level, the problems of serious planners today (and there are some such people in the Economic Planning Agency) are strangely coextensive with the "whatever just publish it out there" talk. This is a very troubling story.

No matter which way you look at it, I think that a lot of things are going to come out of the woodwork in the future without being fixed in any sense of the word. There is no political system that can take on much responsibility. Even from a purely planning perspective, it is becoming difficult to say, "This is it," especially in a place like the Japanese archipelago.

Although the "Japanese Archipelago Remodeling Theory" is quite confident in its assertion that this is the right thing to do, it is impossible to believe it as it is. The "Theory of Remodeling" not only affirms the large-scale industrial development proposed by the new National Development Planning, even though it is too large, but also seeks to go beyond it. I believe that those who are considering the Plan know that they will have to proceed while considering harmony with various other things.

I think that large-scale industrial development itself is becoming impossible. The government is trying to force to spend more money by imposing some kind of tax to drive out factories, and then telling to go somewhere else and build a better place. But we no longer live in a world where anything is possible so long as you have money.

After a few years a new plan will emerge, it is very dangerous for ministries, as for the irreplaceable Japanese archipelago, to be told to "make decisions and do things," and to start work without knowing what decisions will be made and what will be done. In terms of planning, and in terms of the political dimension, we must be more careful.

We should start by examining the methodology.

There is a debate whether to create a counter-proposal to the "Japanese Archipelago Remodeling Theory." But under the current circumstances, there is no point in trying to create a plan that will be subject to frequent reviews. The method of plan making should be discussed extensively for a while.

The first and foremost premise in this process is what the people think about their community. In this sense, the "Japanese Archipelago Remodeling Theory" is very abstract. That is an abstraction, and an argument from my student days. Things that already exist have their own meaning, deeply intertwined with the local community, so it is not that simple. It is often said that "32% of the population lives in 1% of the country," but this is true not only in Japan. However, the question is how to organically relate such concentrated areas to other areas and what to do about the environment of the concentrated areas. Population is not easily dispersed. The basic problem lies in the fact that they start their argument from such a point of view as "32% of the population lives in 1% of the land."

In my opinion, it is the method of planning that is the problem, and I think that local communities should be encouraged to think more about what they are going to do with their own areas. It may be said that there is no end to the number of questions we ask, but we should try to ask each region what they are really thinking at least once or twice. In the case of Shibushi Bay and Mutsu Ogawara, I wonder if it is good or bad to just decide suddenly like that. I think we should listen more to the opinions of residents before decisions made. I am against the idea of first raising the balloons and then

seeing how people react later.

Also, the argument that the factory should be relocated and taken somewhere else is too abstract. The things that have already taken root are rooted for a variety of reasons and have a variety of relationships with the local community. The relationship between factories and citizens in today's overcrowded areas is one in which the residents have gradually been mounting pressure on companies that have done good things and bad things to a certain point. If the dispersal of factories is based on the idea for the trapped companies to escape, the balance with the local community where they go will be upset in the future. I think we should consider what has been achieved in the factories that have become a part of the local community.

However, if we say that a factory should not be in urbanized community, it is the same if the factory leaves and a new location of factory becomes urbanized. Such a one-sided viewpoint is not suitable. If it is better to separate them, then they should be separated. In such a case, there will be a discussion on what to put in its place, and the rules for how it should fit in with the new community must also be fully considered.

Another thing that can be said about methodology is that there is still much to increase when considering the future of the Japanese archipelago. Therefore, we should focus more on how to deal with the new additions than on how to deal with the existing ones within the community. It is not as simple as saying that we should increase oil refining and steel production than the new National Development Planning demands. We should give a full consideration to the areas that need to be increased both in terms of quantity and quality. What we have now has its roots somewhere in reality, with some meaning. If we have reached a certain point where we should no longer increase the number of these things, and we have reached a certain level of stability, it would be fine to balance the overall situation by removing factories. However, the Japanese archipelago has an overwhelmingly large portion of growth. If we are kicking out factories to control the growth and obtain appropriate financial resources, that is a bit of a lie. It is not just a question of eviction. Without fully examining the issue of how to settle the situation and how to settle it properly, in the end, we will just repeat what we have done in the past.