

Introduction

Planning experts will be the first to admit that theirs is an unrewarding and intricate task, aimed at keeping control over situations usually involving an enormous variety of factors, as mentioned in the Appendix. As a swimmer avoids drowning by varying his style to suit conditions, so a planner achieves results by adopting whatever method best suits the situation for which he has to plan. Planning situations range from one extreme to another; for instance, from that of a football match played at tremendous pace with new plans being evolved, and if possible thwarted, first by one side and then by the other, so that a no-score draw denotes failure of all these plans, to that of a successful attempt to beat the world record for speed skating over 10 000 metres, which simply means that the skater has managed to pace himself perfectly throughout each of the 25 circuits. Where a factory's order book is full, any enquiry from a customer as to whether a new order can be delivered by such and such a date can only be met by a skilful search for whatever tiny bit of capacity can be spared to accommodate the order conveniently, without jeopardising other delivery deadlines.

In his book *Humanity in Flux**, Pierre Bertaux defines this kind of situation succinctly in such phrases as 'Rigid planning leaves no room for manoeuvre' and 'Whoever plans, reckons without the unknown' (or 'Man proposes, but God disposes').

In industry there is really a need for a separate term to distinguish between what passes for planning, but allows new orders to be accepted regardless of risk to those already in the pipeline, and true planning in the sense of ensuring that new orders rarely (if ever) jeopardise the due completion of work taken on earlier. That is the kind of planning we shall be studying.

* *Mutatie van de mensheid*, in Dutch, published by Scientific Publishing Company, Amsterdam, Holland.