Preface

Writing this proved far from easy. I have tried to make it digestible, so I hope that reading it will be easier.

My problem has been this. I wanted to do two things: first, to tell some tales about a few selected 'Great Planning Disasters'; secondly, to help explain them in terms of an eclectic body of theory culled from the borderland of political science, welfare economics, social psychology and ethics. The first was simple enough, but without the second it was just higher journalism; and the second was very difficult.

This could be simply because I was unable to handle the necessary level of theoretical abstraction. I am reminded of a story about Alfred Hitchcock, who back in the 1930s made a musical: 'I hate this sort of thing,' he is reputed to have said; 'melodrama is the only thing I can do.' But I think that the problem is more elusive: it is that I wanted to make the theory accessible to a group of readers, including planners, bureaucrats and officials, who otherwise would almost certainly never hear of it. And the theory proved not merely eclectic, but in many places highly esoteric.

I've done my best with it. If even just a few practical people come to realize that the theory helps to illuminate what they are doing, and even call this into question, then perhaps it will all have been worth while.

I have been powerfully aided over a five-year stint by a number of people. First, as always, by the anonymous librarians in many places: the British Library Reference Division (or, as it will always be for most of its devotees, the BM Reading Room), the British Library of Political and Economic Science, the University

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of California library at Berkeley, the New South Wales Public Library in Sydney, the University of Reading Library and others.

Secondly, to those colleagues and friends who read all or part of the manuscript: Douglas Hart, Andrew Sharman, Andrew Wilson and Melvin Webber. I owe a particular debt to Gila Falkus at Weidenfeld and Nicolson for reading the whole text in draft and for making helpful suggestions on improving the book's readability.

Thirdly, I owe deep thanks to the secretaries at the University of Reading who produced the manuscript, in particular to Patricia Hobson and Elizabeth Hodgson who typed the first draft, and to Chris Holland for a heroic feat in finishing the revised draft in almost impossible circumstances. Sheila Dance and Brian Rodgers did a characteristically professional job on the maps and diagrams.

Fourthly, I would like to recognize the encouragement of Harvey Perloff as we worked side by side, in loose but warm contact, on parallel projects in the same area. As ever, his inspiration and advice have been invaluable.

Lastly, as ever, my thanks go to Magda for putting up with me.

PETER HALL

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