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Some Aspects of Planning

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". . . in a world increasingly rushed to death, the long-range waits on the immediate. What is *urgent* takes priority over what is merely *important*, so what is *important* will be attended to only when it becomes urgent, which may be too late" (H.J. Halle).

Introduction

Plans can be made to do something absolutely new, plans can also be made to improve the productivity of existing assets or investments which may mean doing something absolutely new. Whether it has been worked out or not, it does not take much imagination to accept that whatever absolutely new plans are made the inventory of existing assets by and far exceeds the planned. Of course the public relationing aspect of doing something absolutely new is heady wine.However, grim reality also beckons us to take care of the existing accretion of assets demanding continuous attention and this is humdrum most uninteresting business. All plans, by and large, are conceptualized physically in the first instance. Giving the physical concept a financial reflection converts it into a budget, such budgets are therefore, secondary to or reflections of the primary thought. Yet, having converted so many cubic yards of earth to be moved, so many miles pipeline to be installed, so many tons of oil equivalent utilized, so many employees on the payroll, so many hours of mean time between failures of equipment or so many telephone instruments to be installed into a rupee or dollar figure it is so easy to forget the relationship between the physical original and consequential reflections. This connection becomes yet weaker when compounded by delays, inflation and changes in technology during the life of a plan. And there are many other upsetting factors which may be totally outside the control of both the planners and executors. This means when planning, it is necessary not only to look into the economic, technical, financial and social aspects. . . it is equally important to ensure that implementation can be managed efficiently. Looking at both the transient conditions (putting something new up) and the steady state (routine looking after) requires a "life cycle costs" approach for it this approach that provides a realistic picture.

Reorganization

In Pakistan while economic, technical and financial feasibilities are reasonably understood, we have lately got into an evaluation of the social effects of certain investments. However, in very many ways we are blissfully ignorant of what it takes organizationally both from the structural (mechanistic, after all force can only be transmitted through a structure!) and the procedural aspects (organic, because this aspect determines the horizontal interrelationships and growth between various parts of the implementation system). This means we need management or administrative feasibilities to determine organizational capability to implement a plan. Our reaction to failures is to first blame the individual and then to change the person and when this does not work it is usually followed by "reorganization" i.e. structural adjustments. The centralized is

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decentralized, the decentralized is centralized, then one sits back with a sigh of relief, the surgery is complete. But, somehow the patient's health continues to deteriorate. Organic growth continues un-planned and unabated. Little thought is given to understanding that organizations are built up bottom upwards but the enabling mechanisms to permit healthy growth are intoduced top downwards. These enabling mechanisms provide the means for coordination in an active affirmative sense, currently missing. It is a combination of both building up and installing top downwards the essential enabling mechanisms that require careful and deliberate planning, formal installation and continuous maintenance to help prevent the silting up of information channels which assist in getting work done. This is also the sure recipe for becoming self reliant!

We are an economy that has plenty of sick mills, sick universities, sick hospitals, sick sports systems, sick power distribution systems, sick telecommunications, sick bureaucratic systems and a sick political system. Why is this so, after all at one time all this appeared to be in much better health!

Mapping-Charting

What can be done to make changes in our inherited helplessness? In order to do so it is necessary to remind ourselves of the obvious i.e. establish current status. Anyone who has tried to obtain data on a particular aspect finds out very soon that there is more than one set of the same and even if there is one set it is difficult to validate it in good time. If we wish to navigate in shallow waters, bathymetrics can help us by using sound waves (SONAR). By recording the reflections a build up of the not visible to the eye contours of what is under water appear. It is these maps that provide a reliable base to work on. Likewise, subsoil controlled explosions, creating seismic shock waves their effects can be recorded and these maps help in determining where a hole should be drilled to say, prospect for oil. Similarly, in establishing current status in man made organizations the disturbance is 'questioning' and its reflection 'answers'. Flow charts are the maps, they indicate how information flows in day-to-day work. Just as professional expertize is required to generate sound waves or controlled explosions and equally professional expertize for the interpretation of the maps likewise a professional approach is required in framing questions, filtering out distortions in the reflections (answers) so as to produce distortion free maps (flow charts). These maps mirror the existing state of affairs. From this verifiable base of knowledge it is possible to proceed with confidence to define what improvements can be introduced. The diagram below indicates graphically the result of a disturbance.

Since there is a necessity for fixed rules in constructing the maps (flow charts) the ability to interpret one flow chart makes it possible to interpret any other. Just being able to extract information from one physical map of a geographical region makes it possible to repeat the performance for any map of any other area, but should there be any inconsistency in the method of construction of maps the resulting interpretations will be chaotic. Of signal importance is the

necessity of introducing means for maintenance of the maps. They must be kept current i.e. updating is required continuously, and this is routine work. Satellite and other photographs help in modifying earth maps reflecting the changes in the level of land or water and snow cover. However, maintenance does not come of itself. It has to be deliberately designed and installed.

Life Cycle Costs

To recognize the necessity for looking at acquisition costs (capital expenditure or development costs) as only one part of the total picture will help to improve the productivity of governmental activity. The total picture includes the operating and repair/maintenance costs over the life cycle of whatever may be under consideration. Such costs are non-developmental or non-plan expenditure. The attack to 'reduce' costs is usually targeted on this aspect, which is very easily done merely through executive orders. However, the total number of employees are not reduced they indeed remain the same and progressively get used to a lower performance level i.e. their productivity is diminished and over time a lower standard becomes the new standard. When work really needs to be done to keep the show moving additional assistance is acquired which leads to manpower proliferation. This leads to a new round of inefficiency i.e. more inherited helplessness and so on to sympathetic inflation, confusing accountability, encouraging laziness and increasing taxation to raise more funds for increasingly inefficient government spending, this helps the onward march of inflation.

Staff Functions

Earlier the need for organizational enabling mechanisms was brought out. These mechanisms are better known as staff functions. They carry no line authority but do have their reflections at various levels in organizational formations. Since staff functions cut across organizational departments they have to report very high up in the hierarchy. If they cut across all departments then the staff function must report to the highest level. On the civil side there is currently hardly any appreciation of this. However, we do have acceptance of this concept in our military establishments. This is one of the major reasons why maintenance of defence equipment is so much more efficient than maintenance of equipment on the civil side. Since administrators or managers are only doing two things i.e. handling information and making decisions and but nothing else and that the quality of a decision depends on the accuracy and timeliness of information available when a decision is being made, it will be to our advantage to look at and deal with this commodity "information" with respect. Just as specific gravity is an intrinsic quality information is an intrinsic quality of man-made organizations or systems. All activities generate information, it is a more common denominator than money, for there are several activities that cannot be given a money tag, but all activities must and do generate information. The flow charting or its mapping provides decision makers at all levels with better information to make decisions. Just as quality cannot be argued or discussed into a product or be promised into it, or be inspected into it, it has to put there. It has to be deliberately designed into the product or system. The best public relationing cannot hide the facts (at least for any length of time) it cannot substitute for quality.

The attitude that must be adopted is qualityis not a cost it is an investment. Likewise staff functions are not a cost they are an investment. Designing and installing an information handling system is also a capital investment and keeping it goind and updating it is recurring maintenance. Such systems cutting across departmental boundaries helps in planning at all levels to ensure realized assets are looked after and can even be improved with marginal investments to increase productivity. Such support functions play increasingly important roles the larger organizations get. We can learn from the experience of others quite freely as man made organizations exhibit generically similar characteristics the world over i.e. the form of problems (when dealing with man made systems) are ever alike.

Form and Content

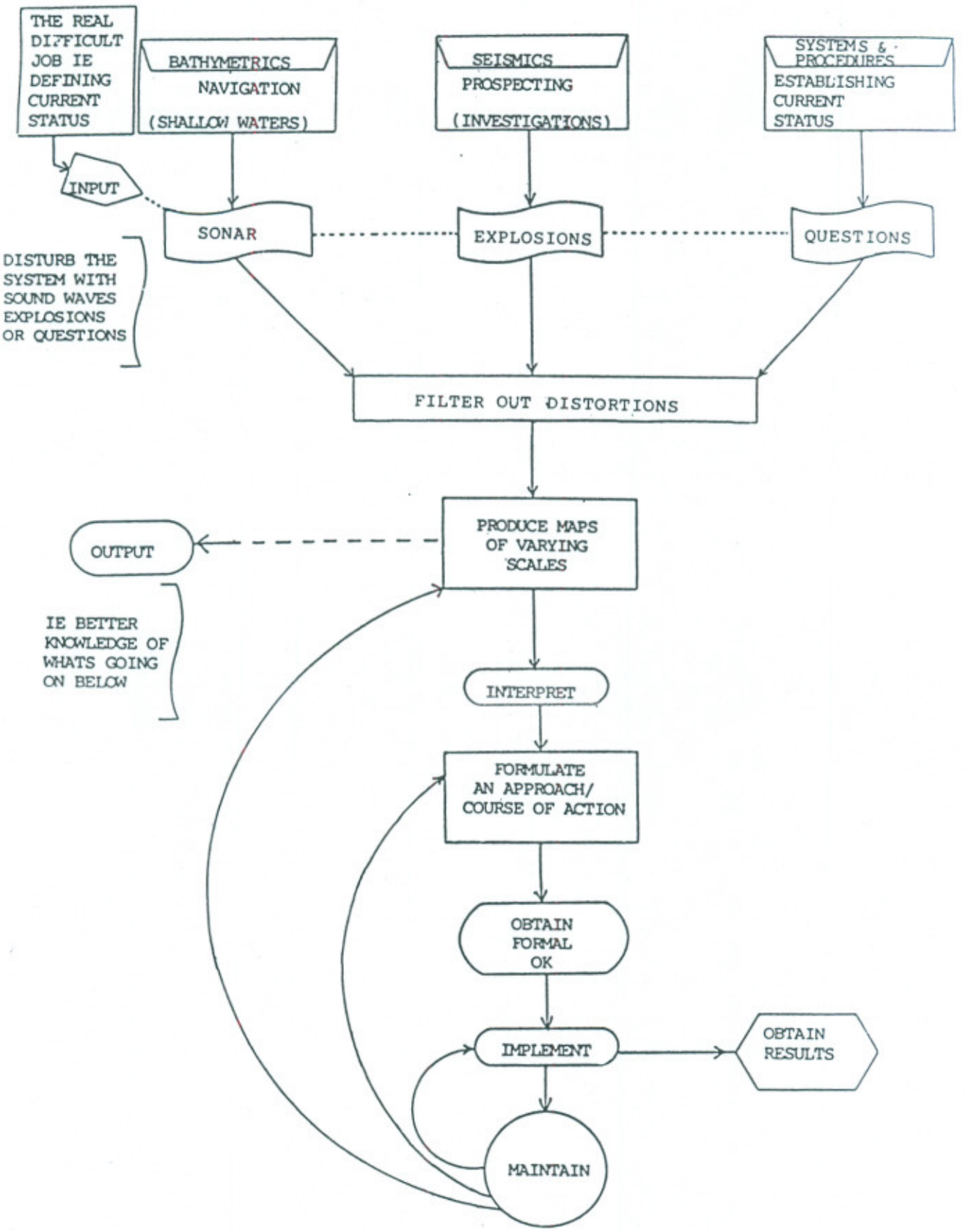
We may wich to hunt for submarines, a fast aeroplane would give the spotter large area coverage as compared to a slow aircraft but the spotter would make more errors, however, in the slow aircraft the spotter would make fewer errors at the cost of covering a smaller area. Similarly for fast and slow auditors examining accounting vouchers. The form of the problem in both cases is the same i.e. both are subject to similar sampling and observational erros. But would the spotter and auditor see the wood from the tress – – try convincing them! The use and application of such concepts lets in fresh air eliminating moribund thinking.

In order to improve productivity which is an objective of planning it is necessary to train personnel on a scale that we, in Pakistan, are not familiar with. Consider Swedish State Railways with an employee population of 37,000 having the equivalent of 25,000 training programmes a year! Or consider American Electric Power Corporation with about 23,000 employees with 37,000 training programmes a year! It would be good to see 2% of our federal budget being allocated to maintenance of the human brain. Maritime insurance on imported items could cost as little, but there is assurance if things to wrong resources will be available to put things right. Why should this assurance not be applied to the human system after all it is the person behind the gun and not the gun itself that does the trick. Another aspect that is taken care of through such enabling mechanisms is that planning beyond one's tenure is made practically possible through the pressures it generates. Hence the definition of strategy is more sound not mere sound. When one wants to move quickly the more important strategy becomes. Objectives and methods are not independent of each other in any case both are time dependent. The staff functions bring together a number of things.

The necessity of decentralization in delegation of authority in a centrally controlled economy calls for efficient channels for moving information i.e. a sensitive nervous system to provide confidence at the higher levels that delegated autonomy is not being misused. This approach provides more time for thinking as it prevents an individual from having to do his deputy's assistants work! Coordination can be thus built into the system rather than depending on personal

expedition as at the present. Key issues can in turn be more energetically handled and flexibility to roll with the punch becomes a reality. This means centralization and decentralization are really two sides of the same coin. One extreme is tyranny and the other anarchy. Delegating authority through centralizing information is a compromise permitting the best balance between the extremes of tyranny and chaos.

The application of the approach brought out above will make it possible to pinpoint accountability more accurately, it will permit integrated planning on a life-cycle basis and help to improve the productivity of existing investments. This does mean admission of doubt in our capability of achieving satisfactory results using yesterdays techniques for tomorrows problems. It is this doubt that presages real development.


THE REAL DIFFICULT JOB IE DEFINING CURRENT STATUS
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NAVIGATION
(SHALLOW WATERS)
SEISMICS
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SYSTEMS & PROCEDURES
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SONAR
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QUESTIONS
DISTURB THE SYSTEM WITH SOUND WAVES EXPLOSIONS OR QUESTIONS
FILTER OUT DISTORTIONS
PRODUCE MAPS OF VARYING SCALES
OUTPUT
IE BETTER KNOWLEDGE OF WHATS GOING ON BELOW
INTERPRET
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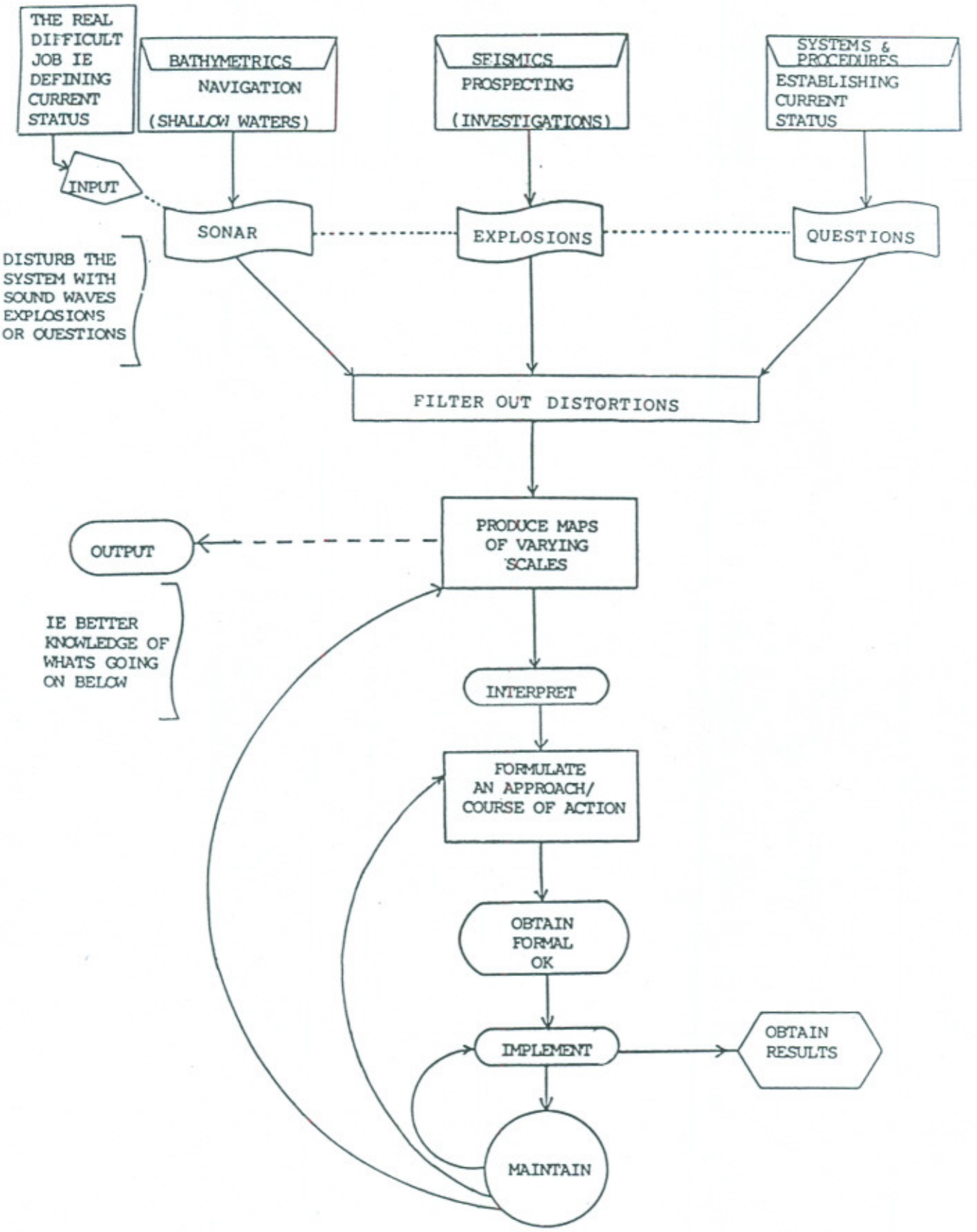
OBTAIN FORMAL OK
IMPLEMENT
OBTAIN RESULTS
MAINTAIN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