SOCIOLOGICAL WORK
WITHIN A DEVELOPMENT AGENCY:
EXPERIENCES IN THE WORLD BANK

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Many of my social scientist colleagues have asked me — some with simple curiosity, others with undisguised skepticism — how can sociologists working in an institution like the World Bank influence the activities of "such an economic fortress"?

Rather than discussing esoteric questions about what sociology can or cannot do about inducing development, I would like to share some of my own experiences as a sociologist at the World Bank, where I have been working for nineteen years. During that time I have watched the institution's view of sociologists and anthropologists change. It changed from seeing them as the Bank's own luxury species, valued for its rarity but not really relevant to the daily struggle in the project trenches, to treating them as rather respected and desirable (although sometimes troublesome!) professionals.

Not only the view about sociologists has changed, however, but also their number and institutional weight in the Bank. From a lonely initial staff slot in an experimental division, established years ago in 1974, the positions of sociologists and anthropologists have been
institutionalized and multiplied in many of the operational, technical and policy departments of the Bank. In addition, in 1993 a specialized division for "Social Policy and Resettlement" was established to deal centrally with the broader social assessment and social policy issues in development.

Two premises underscore my comments in this paper. The first is that the sociologist or anthropologist carries with him or her a distinct professional knowledge about social organization, social structure, and social and cultural change sorely needed for sustainable development. The second premise is that development agencies urgently need to institutionalize sociological and anthropological expertise within their everyday organizational structures and work patterns.

Development is not about commodities. It is not even about new technologies. It is about people and institutions. This is why I think that non-economic social scientists must be present, hand in hand with economists, in the core teams that prepare and design the content of development policies and programs, and that actually manage and monitor the implementation of development projects. Confidence derived from our distinct contribution to the business of induced development should encourage the social scientists to do not just an ex-post forensic evaluation of projects, or only to carry out ancillary research projects. Confidence in our distinct knowledge and skills should also prompt us to lend our hand to the crafting of induced development's philosophy, policies, goals and procedures.

Intellectually, sociologists must be more creative, competitive and militant. They should be able to criticize the econocratic and technocratic models that still inspire — and distort — development interventions in many agencies and government offices.

By econocratic models I mean interventions that focus one-sidedly on influencing the economic variables, regarding them as the only decisive ones and assuming that the "rest" will necessarily "fall in place". By technocratic models I refer to projects that address the technological
variables more or less "in vitro", dis-embedded and dis-embodied from their societal context. The sociological/anthropological perspective must reject such models as fallacious and distorted — and must correct them. It can reestablish the balance by illuminating the social fabric within which these variables are intimately embedded and which changes together with the economic and technical variables. For instance, when development programs deal with natural resources like water, land, trees, etc., they must consider these resources not just as manipulable physical assets, or only in terms of their market values, but as parts of an encompassing system of social organization that regulates their use, ownership, management, etc.

Operationally, in turn, sociologists must learn to be imaginative problem-solvers, specialists skilled at addressing hands-on cultural difficulties and at unlocking the great social potential for development available in most settings. They must be able to generate value-added, in other terms to carry out activities that others are not equipped to perform and that add to and enhance the effectiveness of development programs.

Work Patterns, Skills and Roles

It is instructive to examine the institutional barriers into which social scientists run in such developmental agencies. Social scientists have been working in such contexts for several decades. Often, many have to give up their specific professional identity (and comparative advantages) as sociologists or anthropologists as they assume positions (such as loan officer, librarian, editor, speech writer, etc.) which do not call primarily for the exercise of their trained expertise. This issue was raised forcefully in a paper about the work of social scientists in GTZ, Germany’s agency for bilateral development aid (Kievelitz 1991). What has characterized sociological works in the World Bank has been primarily the contributions made by those social scientists who have worked as social scientists across the agency’s internal units, mandated to use their professionally trained skills.

and recognized institutionally as social specialists. One interesting question is whether the patterns of applied social science work that have crystallized in the World Bank are adequate for, and replicable in, other development agencies — and with what adjustments.

The role of the in-house social scientists within development and donor agencies, as well as in regular government agencies, is a very consequential matter. I make this statement fully aware of the vast financial and knowledge resources transferred, and of the policy, technical and institutional influence exercised, through these agencies.

As insiders, we often observe that the cultural rhetoric of such agencies has been growing faster than their competence at acting on cultural issues. The staff/skills mix of development agencies is generally skewed heavily towards economists and financial analysts — much heavier than objectively required by the kind of development work these agencies perform. Along the years I often found it simply embarrassing to reveal the disproportion in numbers among professional categories in the Bank's staff, and the very small number of sociologists and anthropologists. However, the latter's ranks have gradually increased, year after year. In addition, the internal networking of social specialists, (particularly the creation of the Bank's Sociological Group which has been meeting in seminars for over a decade), has acted as a powerful multiplier of the influence we have exercised on the work and thinking of other staff.

Achieving an improved staff skill mix is still an unresolved problem for the World Bank, but it has clearly become one of the organization's goals in its personnel recruitment and deployment. The issue is to counterbalance and gradually correct the excess in staffing with economic and financial skills. It is significant that the Bank's recent two internal reorganizations (1987 and

2 Missing are not only sufficient sociologists but also political scientists, institution building and public administration specialists, culture experts, social geographers and governance experts, etc., in one word — a broader array of non-economic social specialists. Therefore, while my remarks in the present article refer primarily to my peers, sociologists and anthropologists, and to their work in development agencies, I think that the basic questions raised in this paper touch upon a higher horizon. The heart of the matter is the systematic use and the institutionalization of (non-economic) social science expertise within the enterprise of inducing development.
1992) resulted, *inter alia*, in net gains in institutionalizing and multiplying sociological skills in-house. Generally, social work inside the Bank has had to gain from the increased attention given to environmental matters in development during these reorganizations. Strongly institutionalized linkages have been forged between environmental specialists and sociologists. The 1987 reorganization created several new positions for anthropologists/sociologists in the Technical Departments for Asia, Africa and Latin America. Also, in 1992 a Bankwide Social Scientists Staffing Panel was appointed for the first time, and mandated to advise senior management on how best to equip the Bank with social skills and to help carry out the recruitment, placing, training and promotion of social specialists. This panel has already contributed to an increase in the planned and actual recruitment of social scientists as Bank staff. The recent 1992/1993 reorganization has taken one big step further by creating a new division for Social Policy and Resettlement, strategically located at the Bank's center in the vice presidency for "Environmentally Sustainable Development".

These latest several changes, building upon the prior steps, are prone to have gradual, but increasing positive effects on a wide spectrum of Bank's activities. Particularly encouraging is that these new institutional arrangements have not resulted only from a more enlightened conceptual recognition of the socio-cultural variables in development operations. These institutional rearrangements have been triggered also by the pragmatic realization of Bank managers at various levels that the specialized work performed so far by the Bank's in-house social scientists has *proven it itself valuable to the institution*, actually enhancing the quality of the Bank's programs and their impacts.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about several other multilateral or bilateral development agencies, within which the institutionalization of social (non-economic) skills and knowledge is weak or virtually absent. For instance, no similar institutionalization has been achieved in the African Development Bank; nor has there been time, perhaps, to introduce so far such approaches in the recently created European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which needs them because it has to address the aftermath of the political upheavals in Eastern Europe and to assist in the on-going extraordinary social change and reconstruction of these countries.
To the best of my knowledge, the few social scientists working in or around bilateral donor agencies such as CFD (France), GTZ (Germany), Japan (JICA), and others, are not themselves at all upbeat (and this may be an understatement) about how their own agencies address social issues such as poverty alleviation, people's participation in projects, resettlement, indigenous groups, cultural contexts, etc. The absence of competent sociologists and anthropologists from many in-house intellectual and policy debates is detrimental to the performance of such development agencies.

Moreover, as these international donors influence the work patterns of government agencies in developing countries and their domestic planning of public investments, the risk is high that the same inadequate skill mix will be reproduced there, legitimizing and reinforcing rather than overcoming local econocratic or technocratic tendencies. This situation must be changed. And this is just one other key reason why institutionalizing the roles of social scientists in development agencies is so critical.

Let me discuss a significant example in connection with this issue. A senior official of a European development agency, speaking supportively at an international meeting about the role of social scientists, nevertheless construed his reasoning upon an unwarranted dichotomy within the professional staff of development agencies (Simpson 1991). He drew an explicit distinction between "decision makers", on the one side, and their "cultural advisers" on the other. The speaker argued that "decision makers" in development agencies are a group of leaders who must be enlightened enough to address some "demands" to "their cultural advisers". He probably did not realize that, through such reasoning, he was confining the cultural specialists to the background, to a second tier, implicitly suggesting that they should have a voice only when (or if?) they are asked by the "decision makers".

There is an unacceptable premise (built in) into this way of defining roles. I am discussing this example because it epitomizes a widespread misconception and ill-allocation of roles in upper echelons of many development and government agencies. This misconception takes for granted the premise that decision makers should have skills other than the cultural one and that those
other skills are self-sufficient, even in the absence of socio-cultural expertise. Although such managers "decide" all the time on matters of a social and cultural nature, they are not expected, however, to have themselves trained cultural skills, or at least to include among themselves sociological experts. This state of facts is regarded as normal, acceptable, and the reasoning to which I referred above (Simpson 1991) only suggests some need for sporadic "advise" to the cast (or caste!) of decision makers.

We must challenge sharply the epistemological reasons on which this dichotomy and role allocation are based. Why should the cultural specialists be seen only as "advisers" staying on the side-line? What professional skills are required, or seen as legitimate and sufficient, for membership in the superior caste of "decision makers"? The issue is not that sociologists covet administrators’ positions: the issue is that decision making is entrusted to a set of skills that does not include the sociocultural ones. Is there anything holy or self-sufficient about decision makers that renders the cultural specialists — the sociologist or anthropologist — either ineligible or superfluous for such co-responsibility? In their absence, the results are, often, decisions that are blind and unresponsive to the sociocultural dimensions of the issues at hand. This is why I do not share the philosophic argument that sees sociocultural knowledge as optional advice. I contend that it must be recognized as an indispensable part in the crafting of policy, and generally in development decision making.

Unfortunately, not only decision makers are responsible for promoting this inadequate division of roles. Quite often the sociologists and anthropologists themselves have done a great deal to reinforce and perpetuate this dichotomy. Many of our professional colleagues are still prisoners of obsolete academic paradigms which hamper work in development anthropology and applied sociology. In analyzing very insightfully "why sociology does not apply?", Scott and Shore (1979) firmly indicted the inner-orientedness towards narrow disciplinary concerns and the reluctance to embrace the perspective of those who need to use sociology for practical action purposes.

I am still frequently encountering anthropologists and sociologists who continue to believe (and teach their students in the same spirit) that social scientists should never commit to
recommending a course of action, but should restrict themselves only to analyzing the social processes as these occur. In my view, this retrenchment in passivity goes against the very vocation and responsibility of the social sciences.

Of course, the involvement of social specialists in development policy or planning is not a guarantee against all errors. Social specialists too make mistakes. They are far from knowing all that they should know and far from always having adequate tools or inventories of options and practicable solutions. Prudence and humility are foremost qualities required in social development work, and more generally in applied research.

By way of complementing my prior criticism of econocratic and technocratic tendencies, it is also fair to say that we, social researchers, have our very own sins and weaknesses. The term "social" is broad and its invocation often substitutes for its definition. Its content is clouded, rather than illuminated, whenever it is not deconstructed into specific and measurable social variables on which we should focus our cultural investigative lasers. Such rigorously defined variables help infinitely more than any amorphous discussions about "sociocultural aspects". Unfortunately, what some "certified" social scientists offer to practitioners sometimes is a vague tirade about "sociocultural aspects" instead of identified variables and actionable propositions. General tirades amount to nothing more than what I would call amorphous "sociobabble". Perhaps it is "sociobabble with a heart", but it nevertheless remains sociobabble. This is circuitous general talk, not leading to action and operational steps, nor conducive to incremental knowledge.

Social researchers must pitilessly cleanse their writings of such sociobabble and replace it with professional, I repeat professional, discussions of distinct variables, and professional definitions of tools. I have in mind specific tools for social analysis and professionally charted strategies for collective social actions. Exhortations against policy or program defects would be credible and more effective if accompanied by social procedures that would effectively prevent such defects.
Induced Development: By Fiat Lux or Social Actors?

In my work in the World Bank, I have found at least two irreducible points that must constantly be kept in mind.

One is that the work pattern of development agencies results from the very nature of financially and exogenously induced development. This kind of development is pursued through planning and projects, whereas the historical pattern of human development has been spontaneous and endogenously generated. Financially induced development aims at accelerating the pace of economic growth and social change. But it also runs the risk of creating social imbalances, particularly when planned interventions are informed by inadequate models and incomplete knowledge.

The other point is that the central core around which the financial and technical resources must be organized and marshalled in development programs are the social actors, the people.

No other disciplines have more professional knowledge to offer about the social actors than do sociology and anthropology. Putting People First in development is not just a slogan. It is shorthand for a different development philosophy, and for an operational approach, that means starting with people and building projects and programs around their needs and capacities to act.

The social actors are the supportive pivot and backbone of any sustainable development process. Recognizing the centrality of people in projects is not a matter of rhetoric.

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Neither is it a self-serving bias that we might indulge in as sociologists. It is the core of the paradigm for inducing development.

Models for induced development programs that do not start from the social actor clash with the logic intrinsic to the real historical process of development. The social fabric is not a "black box" as it is often dealt with in development projects. The "black box" argument is a comfortable concept for those not equipped professionally to know and explain social and cultural structures. We stand to gain much from rejecting the "black box" concept. We must show that the "black box" of sociocultural organization is dark only to the viewer whose eyes are closed, not because there is nothing to see.

Today, we cannot afford to take the biblical approach to development interventions, which I would call the "Fiat Lux" approach. While light may have appeared when God said Fiat Lux, "and there was light", social changes never happen today just because one or another project report decrees that they must happen. If, for example, a World Bank appraisal report just states that "the project should create a network of water users organizations", despite the fact that nobody in the project area knows what a water users association is or how it can be created out of a disparate set of individuals, I can assure you that no water users organizations will emerge by "fiat".

The knowledge necessary to accomplish such socio-organizational tasks in practice comes from social science, applied research, and patient social work at the grassroots level. The conversion of such knowledge into a step-by-small-step strategy can best be done by action-oriented applied sociologists. Carefully spelled out implementation strategies ought to be explicitly incorporated into projects, replacing the "black box" mystery or the ineffective "Fiat Lux" style.

The World Bank, USAID, GTZ, ODA, and other development assistance agencies are knowledge type organizations; they are essentially in the business of promoting, developing, and transmitting knowledge, not just channeling financial aid flows. Within such organizations we have to deal with two basic stocks of knowledge — constitutive stocks and regulative stocks — the regulative ones being those which structure the ways in which such organizations operate. We have
to also deal with the continuous flows of new knowledge, which are very rich in development organizations. Anthropologists and sociologists can be much more influential if we learn to understand the relationships between these types of knowledge and how to interpret and develop the regulative knowledge. There are inherent tensions and clashes between these stocks of knowledge and their exponents. If social scientists position themselves favorably in the knowledge flows and contribute to producing and codifying new knowledge, they can become much more influential within organizations.

**Where And When Do Sociologists Come In?**

The conventional entry points into development planning for sociologists and anthropologists have traditionally been very narrow, constraining and Procustean-like. We have learned in our daily work at the World Bank that the range of entry points for sociology clearly can and must be broadened. This is probably true for bilateral development agencies as well, and for the work of in-house sociologists in various government agencies. But such broadening and multiplication of "entry points" is not a gift that will be graciously handed over to sociologists in a neatly tied package.

**Key Organizational and Process Junctures.** Social scientists doing applied work inside an organization must themselves locate the key junctures within it (I think of both organizational and process junctures), and use each juncture as an entry point for sociological expertise. At times we will have to repeat the kind of applied social science work that has already been done. At other times we must innovate and carve a new sociological "product" that can fit one or another particular entry point. If we manage to craft new and useful "social work" products, then social science will be increasingly in demand.

The spontaneous interplay between supply and demand for social science specialists, in my experience, is far from perfect in real life, theory, academics conducting teaching programs as development issues also attest to it (Evers 1991). However, we should not passively wait for a better
balanced interplay to happen only spontaneously. Analytical advocacy and substantive interdisciplinary alliances can be very effective. Social scientists should not just count that demand will eventually occur anyway. As I demonstrated in another study (Cernea 1993), the cognitive dissonance of many planners and policy makers towards the bodies of knowledge available "on-the-shelf" typically translates into a crippling failure to demand and use social knowledge. Thus, it often remains one of the institutional barriers to overcome. Nonetheless, demand will probably increase, gradually, as frustrated development practitioners seek new approaches and ideas. But social scientists could do a lot more than we are doing now by adopting a pro-active rather than an expectant stand, taking initiative, expanding the supply of knowledge, and putting forward our analytical and social-construction skills. This way, a supply driven strategy can accelerate the use of social science in planning induced development.

One basic "guns versus butter" argument in most agencies is the cost of carrying out social science analysis. Sometimes we hear that it may be too expensive to do social analysis. This, simply, is not true! Social analysis obviously carries a cost, as does economic analysis or anything else. Yet the correct measurement of its value lies not in the price tag of the social study, but in the short and long term price to be paid for not carrying out adequate social planning. Here the evidence is unequivocal. In the Bank we carried out a study of 57 completed projects that matched quality of social analysis with achieved economic rates of return (Kottak 1991). About 30 (53 percent) of the projects conducted some form of social and cultural analysis, before or at appraisal stage; 27 (47 percent) either had none or minimal social analysis. Comparing rates of return, we found that the projects with social analysis achieved an 18.5 percent economic rate of return on the average, while the average ERR of the latter group was less than 9 percent. This last average, I should point out, implies that the borrower might have been better off leaving the money in the Bank and collecting the interest. I don't want to carry the argument too far, but that and other studies confirmed that social analysis pays off.

Another important theme concerns the need for social scientists to internalize the organizational/cultural structures and work processes of their agency and tailor their own activities to fit them. Within the World Bank, for instance, we operate on the basis of a "project cycle". This
cycle is a sequential series of stages in the development of a project: project identification, preparation, appraisal, implementation/supervision, and project evaluation at completion time. We try to define in each process of the cycle how and with what type of analytical or methodological "products" we can contribute.

I can assure all interested that this is an effective approach. Our sociologists have gradually learned how to tailor their work, tools and time allocation to one or another stage of this process, even though there are unforeseen difficulties over how to integrate sociological analysis and recommendations in every single case. The linearity implied by the concept of a project cycle is only apparent, however. The indispensable ex-ante social charting of a project's path must be complemented by ongoing sociological monitoring during implementation.

There are other entry points for sociological knowledge, in addition to the stages of a project. Let me give an example from my organizational experience as one of the Bank's lead advisers for agricultural projects between 1983-1987. Projects are appraised by the Bank's regional divisions. Before they came to the loan committee for a vote on Bank financing, these projects were supposed to pass through the central agricultural department for review and sign-off by one of the lead project advisers. Each adviser was assigned a number of projects, and through periodic reviews in each of the pre-implementation stages he had to assess project quality and consistency of projects with wider policies. As lead Sociology Adviser, my "basket of projects" consisted of projects with major sociocultural issues. The adviser's signature, in addition to the clearance from the regional department, was essential for the project to proceed to the loan committee; sustained objections had to be escalated to the Bank's senior management. This was a very powerful way to institutionalize, inter alia, sociological analysis and review, because there was a formal organizational mechanism and an incentive for bringing sociocultural requirements into the project's formulation. Many projects were sociologically improved in this manner; but on more than a few occasions the objections raised

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4 The space here does not allow for the inclusion of supportive case descriptions, but those interested may find many such examples discussed in detail, project-stage by project-stage, in the volume Putting People First. Sociological Variables in Rural Development (see in particular: the chapter on social forestry projects by Guggenheim and Spears; on rural roads projects by Cook; on livestock development projects by Dyson-Hudson, and others).
on social and cultural grounds had to go all the way to Bank management. We won the battle of arguments many times, and we also lost some. But sometimes even the likelihood of escalating the argument was enough to make the staff in charge rework a project component or to rethink an approach.

Another process entry point is project supervision. This is where you can see whether plans become practice: how the project matches real life conditions or clashes with them, and how it is received by the population. It is not easy to modify a project in midstream, but it can be done. In my experience, what counts most during supervision is the ability of the project sociologist to gather and present facts, especially field facts. The approach I always recommend to consultants or staff sociologists is to load their field reports with facts, above anything else. Formal bureaucratic organizations tend to react more receptively when the sociologist knows his social facts and demonstrates what is really happening, rather than offering a general (or emotional) advocacy.

**Re-tooling for Applied Social Research.** To carry out this type of action-oriented field work — integrating data collection with social analysis and with the crafting of recommended strategy — some amount of re-tooling in social research is also necessary (see Cernea 1992). It is imperative to do two things simultaneously: to streamline some of the much too lengthy and cumbersome traditional procedures of field investigation inherited from our disciplinary arsenals, but also to protect the accuracy of the improved (or new) investigative research approaches.

Among the new trends in field research are the sets of procedures developed over the last decade or so, and collectively known as "rapid appraisal" methods, "rapid assessment", etc. Many of these, particularly those which emphasize the participatory element and correct the rigidities and biases of the one-way subject-object relationship between researchers and the people they study (built-in within some traditional approaches), represent a genuine breakthrough. Accelerating the generation of social data is required for meeting the schedules and demands of multidisciplinary development planning. Indeed, applied research does need faster assessment procedures than basic academic research tends to practice. Sociologists in the Bank, challenged and motivated to respond to practical demands, have learned how to craft and apply such new procedures, thus facilitating the generation and incorporation of social and cultural data and variables in development project work.
The gnoseological advantage, i.e., the fertility of rapid participatory research techniques (in terms of the volume and relevance of the information they can generate) stems not just from their "rapidity"; it stems primarily from the propensity of these participatory research techniques to elicit the judgment and the store of knowledge of the people "studied" themselves, to mobilize people's ability to sort out, check and organize existing but defuse and unstructured information. In many instances, this approach is superior to limiting the same people to the role of docile, initiative-deprived "respondents", as the conventional methods commonly do. Therefore, crafting such new, more effective investigation techniques and approaches should be seen as integral to the broader re-tooling process (both conceptual and methodological) that I think is necessary in development oriented social science.

However, as sociologists who are practicing rapid assessments often, we have realized in the field that the rapid assessment procedures have their own in-built limitations. Therefore, we responsibly warn other colleagues about their limitations and dangers of too rapid research techniques (Cernea 1992). Some of these rapid procedures are unreplicable on a large scale in a regular manner. Even worse, others are nothing more than superficial procedures, unable to meet the tests of systematic data collection or in-depth assessment of complex cultural realities. Development researchers need to distance themselves from the uncritical acceptance of such "procedures", rapid though they can be, and warn against those rapid approaches which are not slow enough to avoid haste, biases, first-heard but unverified information — in short all kinds of superficialities which may seep in as a pay-off for speed.

It should not be forgotten either that certain categories of data cannot ever be collected by rapid investigations, but only through patient, old-fashioned long term research. Instant coffee is feasible — and occasionally it may even be tasty — but instant sociocultural analysis is a danger to our health (and to development).
Institutionalizing Demands for Social Analysis

It is important to institutionalize agency norms about the type and products of social analysis that must be incorporated in project documents. This makes social analysis mandatory in project preparation. In practice, we can hardly hope at this stage to have a Bank anthropologist for every single project. But the task managers for each project must ensure that a specific social analysis is carried out and certain key data are present. And if he cannot do it himself, he knows that there are social specialists available whose services he can use, primarily indigenous social scientists in the country where such projects are implemented. I cannot emphasize enough, in this respect, the importance of involving and employing country nationals who are social scientists, a topic with which I dealt elsewhere in detail (see Cernea 1982).

The following example is relevant regarding the manner in which the use of social scientists should be built into the basic work processes of development agencies. The World Bank's 1971 internal guidelines for project processing and appraisal required only technical, economic, and commercial appraisal for every new projects proposed for Bank financing (World Bank, 1971). Thus, during many long years of lending for development, Bank in-house rules did not formally and explicitly require the consideration of the social and cultural dimensions of projects at the crucial moment of their appraisal. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, in-house social scientists criticized these guidelines time and time again. We said that they were one-sided, insufficient, biased, and that the Bank needed to institutionalize sociological appraisal as well. Finally, this argument "won" and the internal guidelines for project appraisal were rewritten in 1983 and issued in January 1984. These revised guidelines comprised a section explicitly on the sociological appraisal of projects (World Bank 1984).

In the new guidelines for appraising projects, we incorporated four key elements that we believe should be the focus of every sociological analysis and design work during both the preparation and the ex-ante appraisal of investments for development projects. These are:
(a) the social, cultural, and demographic characteristics of the intended local beneficiary populations, and of the groups that may be adversely affected;

(b) the social organization of productive activities of the project area population (farming systems, production associations, etc.);

(c) the cultural acceptability of the project and its compatibility with the needs of intended beneficiaries;

(d) the project’s social strategy, specifying the roles of all relevant social actors and of their interaction in project implementation, with particular focus on organizing peoples’ participation.

These four key requirements for basic social analysis-cum-design may appear deceptively simple: yet they are not so easy to carry out. They are cornerstones indispensable to any attempt to induce development through planned intervention. However, I have to say that much too often project officers and task managers do not do all that is necessary to meet these requirements in the preparation of new development projects. Experience provides persuasive evidence that when such analytical and design demands are fulfilled, the given program starts with much higher chances of success and sustainability.

I recently saw a GTZ-edited brochure describing "Applied Project Economics." I hope my economist colleagues from GTZ, or from the World Bank, wouldn’t mind my saying that in narrow economic terms it may be seen as a technically correct brochure, but that it will prove misleading to practitioners because it hardly reflects any trace of sociological awareness about the projects’ cultural contexts. The kind of applied economics it preaches is crippled by indifference and disregard for the social fabric within which the economic process is embedded. Should a disciplined economist rigorously follow all of this brochure’s prescriptions, he will methodically miss the social variables; through no fault of his own, he would produce a socially unfit project. Unfortunately, this is still happening often enough, because such narrow econocratic approaches are not challenged.
Policies with Sociological Content

Let me put forward another argument: the need to incorporate sociological knowledge in the agency’s overall policies, not only in individual projects.

One of the obsolete academic paradigms to which I referred earlier, that hampers development-oriented anthropology, is the traditional belief that the social scientist’s role is to generate data but refrain from recommending or charting the action to be taken. The social scientist is defined as producer of empirical information, while the policy maker or administrator alone is seen as the one to decide whether to use the data and what the course of practical action should be.

This prejudiced view has been so long adhered to, and so widespread, that even some social scientists embraced or rationalized it on various grounds. Here is an explicit statement to this respect:

"A wise anthropologist will not try to tell an administrator what he ought to do; it is his special task to provide the scientifically collected and analyzed knowledge that the administrator can use, if he likes."

One may not recognize this statement; some social scientists, perhaps many, may even be prepared to underwrite it today, despite its self-limiting definition. Anyway, this proposition carries traditional authority. It was written by one of our most respected forefathers in social anthropology, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1950).

Respect and authority notwithstanding, I think we should not conduct ourselves according to that prescription. Such an abdication of responsibility is neither acceptable nor necessary. On the contrary, I think that we should not shy away from the responsibility of becoming part of the policy making process. There is no grand merit in willingly limiting our contribution only to supplying data. Of course, crafting action-programs or institutions is not an easy responsibility, but
it is a crucial one for development social science, because we have a valuable contribution to make. And we have to make it with prudence and without arrogance, well aware of the limitations inherent in our knowledge and analytical tools.

When social variables are reflected in policy guidelines, social concerns become part of the institution's normative structure rather than just the agenda of some individuals. Every policy, as a regulative stock of knowledge, is a multiplier. The multiplied results triggered through policy formulation are far more effective than the piecemeal feedback of happenstance lessons from past projects into new ones. Once the social cultural prerequisites are written in as policy components, those guided by that policy are mandated to consider the cultural variables, to look into people's social organization, and to bring in the professional skills needed to do the job competently.

This dialectic between social science knowledge, practical experience, and policy guidelines shows that social policy formulation must be approached as a set of evolving norms and not as issuing diktats in behalf of governments or any other policy makers. Translating research findings into policy prescriptions is the road to large scale impact. We must admit, however, that development anthropologists are often themselves not yet equipped with enough operational knowledge and experience from actual projects, and familiarity with agency culture and procedures to be able to effect that translation easily. This, however, is a trade that ought to be learned, because simply leaving social science knowledge to the cobwebs of the shelf for an administrator to use — "if he likes" — it is not enough.

To succeed in formulating policy, we must have a significant and persuasive message and be apt in articulating it. In the World Bank we have done that for certain domains, although much is still to be done on many others. Experiences in some policy domains are discussed below.

**Indigenous People.** The first example refers to the formulation of policy directives for Bank staff working on projects in territories inhabited by indigenous populations. For many years Bank projects were unable to take into account the distinctive cultural and social organization of tribal peoples. This was harmful. In 1981-1982, policy guidelines to protect tribal people were
formulated for all Bank assisted projects affecting tribal groups (World Bank 1982). These were applied to many subsequent projects in Brazil, Peru, India, Columbia, etc., and the design and strategy of these projects were modified and improved due to these guidelines.

Indigenous people are commonly among the poorest segments of the population and often their social economic status makes them more vulnerable and restricts their capacity to assert their interests and rights in land and other productive resources. How to approach indigenous people affected by development projects is a complex and controversial issue. Debate is often phrased as a choice between two opposed positions. One of these positions is to insulate indigenous populations whose cultural and economic practices make it difficult for them to deal with powerful outside groups. The advantages of this approach are the special protections that are provided and the preservation of cultural distinctiveness; the costs may be the foregone benefits from development programs. The other position argues that indigenous people must be acculturated to dominant society values and economic activities so that they can participate in national development. Here the benefits can include faster improvements in social and economic opportunities, but the cost is often the gradual loss of cultural differences. The trade-offs are delicate and difficult to calibrate; moreover, it is not the outside "developer" or social researcher who is mandated to decide on what trade-off is appropriate.

At the center of the Bank's approach is to ensure that indigenous peoples do not suffer adverse effects during the development process, and that Bank financed projects in indigenous areas deliver culturally compatible social and economic benefits. The Bank takes the position that the strategy for addressing the issues pertaining to indigenous peoples must be based on the informed participation of the indigenous people themselves.

Bank social scientists have successfully argued — and have included this into the formal Bank guidelines — that identifying local preferences through consultation, incorporation of indigenous knowledge into project approaches, and early use of experienced specialists are required steps in the preparation of projects that affect indigenous peoples and their rights to natural and
economic resources. Informed participation could enable those concerned to weigh alternatives, ponder trade-offs, and make the choices.

The experiences accumulated during the 1980s in applying these guidelines in Bank assisted projects affecting indigenous groups were analyzed in both internal reports and published studies (see Davis and Wali 1993). Taking into account these experiences, as well as anthropological research carried out independent of Bank activities, the Bank's social scientists reworked in 1990-1991 the earlier (1982) guidelines and enriched them. A new document, the Bank's Operational Directives 4.20 on Indigenous Peoples, was issued formally in September 1991 (see World Bank 1991), and it embodies the up to date research knowledge available and the operational experiences and opportunities of project interventions. The new guidelines adopted broader criteria to reflect the diversity of definitions and sensitivities in different developing countries. They emphasized more strongly the need to fully respect the cultural uniqueness and human rights of indigenous people and to ensure that the social and economic benefits they receive are in harmony with their cultural preferences. Restrictions were strengthened to limit Bank financing of borrowers' projects that affect indigenous people without including suitable mitigation plans.

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5 Significant in the new Bank guidelines is the requirement that for investment projects which directly affect indigenous people the borrowers must prepare a special development plan consistent with the Bank's policy. Among the key prerequisites for a successful project approach explicitly listed in the guidelines are: (a) the preparation of a culturally appropriate development plan based on full consideration of the options preferred by the indigenous people affected by the projects; (b) studies to anticipate adverse trends likely to be induced by the project and develop the means to avoid or mitigate them; (c) staffing of the institutions responsible for government interaction with indigenous peoples with specialists who possess the social, technical, and legal skills needed for carrying out the proposed development activities; (d) local patterns of social organization, religious beliefs, and resource use should be taken into account in the plan's design; (e) development activities should support production systems that are well adapted to the needs and environment of indigenous people's, and should help production systems under stress to attain sustainable levels; and (f) the plan should avoid creating or aggravating the dependency of indigenous people on project entities (World Bank 1991).
Policies for Population Displacement and Resettlement. Another relevant case of research-policy-practice linkage is the development of the World Bank's policy for projects that cause population displacement. Forced displacement is common in projects such as irrigation and power dams, highway or port construction, urban infrastructure, etc. The history of what happens to the people forcibly displaced is usually a sad one.

Bank sociologists managed to write policy guidelines for such project-caused displacements in 1979-1980 and the Bank institutionalized these guidelines in a formal statement (World Bank 1980). This was the first time any international development agency officially adopted a policy in this complex domain. This policy drew directly upon social science research that demonstrated how difficult it was for most displaced people to reestablish viable forms of production, society, and culture once they lost the land basis and sociocultural frameworks of their existence. By instituting normative demands upon Bank-assisted operations\(^6\) to avoid or mitigate the adverse consequences of forced displacement, the policy prepared by the Bank's social specialists positioned the Bank in the forefront of international and national development agencies dealing with involuntary resettlement issues.

Several years after the introduction of the new policy, we undertook a review (in 1984/85) to assess the policy's effectiveness and the consistency of Bank projects with it. The study found that between 1979-1985 involuntary resettlement in agriculture and energy alone occurred in some 40 projects located in 27 countries, and the total displacements amounted to at least 750,000 people. It also concluded that whenever the new policy was applied, consistently or even partially, it has led to substantial improvements in the planning or execution of resettlement. The study also generated a number of findings regarding recurrent weaknesses in the way projects involving resettlement were prepared or carried out, such as:

- an engineering bias diverting infrastructure projects away from the social problems of resettlement;

\(^6\) These guidelines, mandatory for Bank staff, also influence the activities of planners in borrowing agencies in developing countries, of consultants, and consulting firms, etc.
poorly planned relocations;
- systematic undercounting of displaced populations;
- absent or inadequate planning to restore production;
- chronic underfinancing of resettlement components;
- host populations slated to receive resettlers in their midst were neglected in the project’s vision;
- affected people were given no voice in planning resettlement.

The study recommended improvements in the Bank’s social, economic and technical treatment of displacement, as well as a number of institutional measures to increase the coherence and applicability of the Bank’s policy.  

All of the study’s policy, operational, and staffing recommendations were accepted by the Bank’s management, a new policy note was issued in 1986 to supplement the prior guidelines, and the Bank’s policy was made publicly known (World Bank 1990; Cernea 1988, 1993). Moreover, work for improving the policy and its operational procedures continued further: social scientists in the Bank, with suggestions from social scientists outside, have recently updated and strengthened again the directives regarding displacement in Bank projects (World Bank 1990).

As a result, a considerable number of additional sociologists and anthropologists started to be employed throughout the Bank to help intensify work along the recommended lines. Internal statistics reported increases in the use of social scientists by the Bank and, even more significantly, by its borrowers. Ongoing evaluation studies are documenting the improvements that are taking place (Butcher, 1990; Guggenheim 1993). Moreover, in 1993 a new review of the Bank’s

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7 It is worth emphasizing even in passing, that such in-house studies of the concordance (or gap) between policy and actual project performance, represent a promising research domain which social scientists should visit more frequently. These studies can be carried out in-house on many topics on which one or another agency has issued normative statements.
entire portfolio of projects entailing population displacement has been undertaken. Its purpose is to analyze the effectiveness of the resettlement policy and to raise the standards of resettlement operations consistent with the Bank's guidelines. Over 130 projects that cause involuntary resettlement have been identified in the Bank's active project portfolio in 1993 and the Bank's social specialists are leading the comprehensive, field-based analysis of resettlement in these projects. A review report will be completed in early 1994. This ongoing, in-depth review demonstrates that the difficulties of displacement are far from being solved just by issuing a good policy. But the quality of resettlement operations in many developing countries is being gradually improved due to these concerted and persistent efforts. Better implementation strategies and more financial resources are being channeled towards achieving sound resettlement solutions.

These activities show convincingly why and how social science knowledge and socially skilled staff can and must be incorporated into development agencies: they bring a professionally distinct "added value" by crafting policies, monitoring their application, contributing to project design and implementation, assessing impact, and keeping alive the linkages with basic social science research.

In turn, I believe that the social science disciplines themselves, sociology and anthropology primarily, have been conceptually enriched by the kind of innovative work performed by social scientists in the World Bank, as this work often broke new paths. Delicate methodological and epistemological questions about how to convert social knowledge into policy prescriptions have been and are being addressed, and the experience of solving them contains lessons applicable elsewhere, in comparable domains.8

**Other Policy Domains: Education, Urban Development, Forestry.** Sociological work has contributed directly to crafting Bank policies on other sectors and issues as well, particularly with respect to human resources development and poverty alleviation. The policy paper published by the

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8 For a detailed discussion of such conceptual and methodological progress of the dilemmas of balancing trade-offs between operational options, or of the need to craft institutional procedures and analytical tools, see Cernea (1993).
Bank on its goals and support to primary education systems in developing countries, for instance, is grounded in a sociological analysis of social and cultural equity criteria, children's family background and other social variables (World Bank 1990b; Lockheed and Verspoor 1991).

New institutional grounds were explicitly broken in the Bank's practices also when the first internal policy was issued about the Bank's work with, and support for, nongovernmental organizations. This policy directly benefitted from prior sociological analyses and studies done in the Bank (World Bank 1990c; Cernea 1989) and has been followed up by a Bankwide exercise for distilling the lessons on participation from a number of ongoing projects (see Williams and Bhatnagar, 1993). Social scientists have also been among the principal authors of the Bank's policy paper on urban policy and economic development (World Bank 1991a).

The Bank's 1991 important policy paper for the forestry sector (World Bank 1991b), as well as the Bank's operational activities in many afforestation and reforestation projects, have also benefitted directly from, and incorporated distinctly, the contribution of sociologists and anthropologists, both those on the Bank's staff or on the staff of borrowing agencies. Currently, the new social division of the Bank is orchestrating a "thematic team" effort for preparing a broad social policy paper, to be accompanied by operational guidelines for social assessment.

Despite considerable progress, there is much on the social/cultural side of development projects that is still not addressed systematically. There is much which sociologists in the Bank do not yet do, either because of their still small number vis-a-vis the volume of tasks, or because of still unreversed biases inside the institution or among borrowing agencies. This job of incorporating sociological concepts, knowledge and methods in development work is far from simple, and I do not want to leave the impression that sociology in the World Bank was a discovery just waiting to happen and be embraced by absolutely everybody. We have gone part of the way. However, the longer half is still ahead. To quote Rainer Maria Rilke, "do not believe that he who seeks to comfort you lives untroubled among the simple and quiet words that sometimes do you good. His life has much difficulty and sadness, and remains far behind yours. Were it otherwise he would never have been able to find those words."
Yes, there is still much to do.

To conclude, even as I write or speak about my own and my colleagues' experiences, I find our work extraordinarily challenging and exciting. I think that all sociologists and anthropologists who work in development are in fact fortunate, in a way perhaps more fortunate than their academic colleagues, because their work is immediately consequential. It affects people directly, and we hope — and often see it — that it affects people for the better. If you do good work, the results can be enormously gratifying; you can prevent many bad things from happening, and help good things come to pass.

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