Using Knowledge from Social Science in Development Projects

Michael M. Cernea
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Michael M. Cernea

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ABSTRACT

1. Repeated failures have plagued many development programs that were sociologically ill-informed or ill-conceived. More recently, however, a combination of factors is leading to increased use of knowledge derived from sociology and anthropology in development projects.

2. Financially induced development aims to accelerate the pace of economic growth and social change. However, accelerating development through planned investment projects often runs the risk of creating social imbalances. The author contends that such risks are aggravated when planning is guided by technocratic or econocratic models, which typically overlook social and cultural variables. Using social science knowledge and analytical methods in designing project strategies can minimize such risks. It can also help fit the project better to the existing local socio-cultural fabric or help create new patterns of social organization.

3. The core of any development process is its actors. Recognizing the centrality of people in projects is not a matter of simple rhetoric but the key issue of the development paradigm. It has decisive implications upon the project's preparation, strategy and resource allocation. Models for development projects that do not put people first clash with the model intrinsic to the real social process of development.

4. The paper emphasizes the complementarity rather than the opposition between the two approaches through which social sciences attempt to influence society -- "the enlightenment approach" and "the engineering approach". State-of-the-art knowledge and methods from social sciences need to be converted
into operationally usable know-how and models for action and learning.

5. The author argues that the conventional "entrance points" for sociological/anthropological knowledge in the planning for development are few and of little consequence. New entrance points must be opened up. For carrying out action-oriented applied research work, sociologists and anthropologists must go outside the academic cocoon of their disciplines. They must undertake policy-oriented social inquiry and must re-structure their research work to fit operational frameworks and practical demands. The range of entrance points for sociological knowledge should be expanded to every segment of the project cycle and every aspect of development work, from policy formulation to project implementation and from theorizing to social engineering.

6. The institutionalization of development oriented, applied social science requires harmonizing the cognitive identity and the professional identity of those who practice in this area. This would entail, at least: (a) formalizing the position of the social analyst within the organizational structure of technical and development agencies; (b) substantially changing the university curriculum for training the future social scientists and social workers oriented towards development work; and (c) introducing/exposing economists and technical specialists to social science knowledge.
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Several scientific disciplines, particularly economics, preside over the processes of planned development. But until rather recently, sociology and social anthropology have not been called upon to serve extensively.\(^1\) Though planning is a knowledge-based exercise, the storehouse of knowledge and knowledge-generating methods amassed within these social sciences has been largely overlooked. However, this imbalance is gradually (though too slowly) changing.

Why is this change occurring?

I. **Increased Recognition of Social Science Knowledge**

A key premise of this change is the increasingly widespread recognition that repeated failures have plagued many development programs, which were—and largely because they were—sociologically ill-informed and ill-conceived. Although uncomfortable for development agencies, this recognition heightens interest in identifying and addressing the sociocultural variables of projects. The heavy influence of such variables upon the success or failure of projects is recognized more readily than before. Consequently, more efforts go into providing projects' "hardware" with indispensable "software."

A second process conducive to using more socioanthropological knowledge in project planning began in the mid-1970s. At that time, a reconceptualization of development policies—moving away from "trickle
down" theories to poverty alleviation through development—was proposed, and it started to modify development interventions in third world countries. Perhaps for the first time the concept of "target group"—the poor, those with an income below the absolute or relative threshold of poverty—was brought to bear upon project strategies. With it came the need to define the target group, the social actor, the beneficiaries (and sometimes the victims too) of development. The shift from a virtually exclusive emphasis on physical infrastructures to a recognition of social structures, and from free-swinging ethnocentricity in development interventions to recognizing indigenous cultures, was part of the shift in the direction of actor (people)-centered development projects.

The third premise is the work performed by development-oriented social scientists themselves, who are demonstrating their usefulness and effectiveness for induced (planned) development programs. The lack of a critical mass of anthropologists and sociologists within the development community at large has long prevented them from asserting themselves systematically and has by force undercut the cumulativeness of their contributions. The 1980s have registered a change in this respect too. The antecedent slow growth seems to have picked up speed, and although such social science professionals are, in my view, still too few, their steadily increasing number makes the intrinsic value of social analysis more visible to the rest of the development community. The 1980s have also seen a tremendous increase in the number of published (and gray) papers and reports on development anthropology and sociology. Furthermore, such factors as the rising public concern for environmental protection and sustainable development, for participation and institution building, as well as sharpening public criticism of development allocations wasted on half-backed programs and backfiring inept interventions, contribute powerfully to using more behavioral scientists to improve the quality of development work.
Thus, at the beginning of the 1990s the noneconomic and social sciences are better positioned to influence development interventions. Their pleas, not rarely before dismissed as unproven claims, have become more "respectable." The practical uses of sociology and anthropology are regarded with a bit more confidence. Much of past beliefs about the exercise of noneconomic social sciences becomes now obsolete or obsolescent.

When the shifts discussed above, particularly the orientation to poverty alleviation, started, there was little experience about how to do a socioanthropological analysis that would fit into the project process. In hindsight, it can be said that the social science community didn't know then how to use this opportunity and largely underused it. There is considerable more experience today, almost two decades later, but not enough by far.

Factors internal to the discipline also constrain its use in planning and policy making. Most damaging among such internal factors, the accumulated experiences of professional social scientists who practice applied research have not yet been systematized, conceptualized, and codified either by themselves or by academic social scientists; theory formation and the epistemological and methodological concerns of applied science are sporadic and wanting. Under an apparent but ambiguous truce, the split within these professional communities between those in academic teaching and basic research and those in development and applied work continues to exist and weakens both sides. There is limited mutual intellectual empowerment, and little deliberate building of the development-oriented enterprise, although this new enterprise is steadily laboring to expand the frontier of its parental disciplines. Such inner dysfunctions reduce the actual impact of the disciplines upon society.
If, nevertheless, development sociologists and anthropologists are entitled to rejoice in the growing demand for their expertise, then I believe that they are also under the obligation to define more clearly the types of contributions they propose for the planning of development. Will they simply supply baseline social information and background knowledge? Design social models? Formulate theories or strategies for social action? Or just offer methods for data gathering and evaluation? Furthermore, since some of these contributions must be context specific, how will they vary from one culture or location to another?

Sociologists and anthropologists dealing with different production processes (farming, animal husbandry, fishing, forestry, and so on) not only have to address different patterns of social organization; they are also faced with several common issues that result from the nature of their operational involvement and are distinct from those encountered in academic research. This paper deals with some of these common issues that I regard as essential, yet are little addressed in the current literature, namely:

- the nature of financially induced development;
- the development project as a framework for socioanthropological endeavor;
- the entrance points for sociological knowledge in development planning;
- policy permeated social inquiry;
- the methodologies for social action;
- the role of social engineering; and
- the institutionalization of social science in development work.

In discussing planning, this paper is concerned primarily with rural and agricultural change in developing (rather than developed)
countries. Today, this vast area is more than ever open to and in demand of sociological and anthropological inquiry. The role played by the state (as well as the state-sponsored international and bilateral aid agencies), in inducing and directing accelerated development in developing countries, has generated a demand for empirical knowledge and theoretical models about the structures and processes that such interventions aim to affect. The social scientists from developing countries are best positioned to respond to this demand for knowledge.

The noneconomic social sciences have a long tradition of commitment to the betterment of society. Some of the founders of sociology and anthropology, from Comte to Lester Ward and from Lewis Morgan to Margaret Mead, have pioneered this as a respectable tradition, striving also to tackle the new ethical and methodological issues involved in such work. Their interests have been continued and refined by subsequent generations of scientists focusing on specific social problems that demand research-grounded solutions. Therefore, calling for social science contributions to development is hardly a new appeal. The new challenge now, however, is to get involved in the extraordinary expansion of planning and of state interventions for inducing directed development.

There is a further intradisciplinary challenge as well. Social scientists must overcome the "disaffection for public service and governmental involvement," as Goldschmidt called it³, and the "disenchantment with ... the validity of their involvement in official activities"⁴ as Hall called it, pervasive in the social science community until quite recently. If systematic interest in these issues will expand among scientists from both developed and developing countries, these disciplines, and development planning, will gain substantially.

As a social scientist working for fifteen years within a large international development organization, I am involved in many World Bank assisted development projects in various countries. I have observed the
work of many sociologists and anthropologists in these projects and in
programs assisted by other agencies, as well as the position that
socioanthropological knowledge holds relative to technical or economic
expertise. This paper is rooted in some of my personal experiences that
have shown what sociology and anthropology can or cannot do in such
contexts.

II. Financially Induced Development and Sociological Variables

What is the nature of projects as instruments of intervention
in development? And how propitious is the framework offered by a
project for social inquiry and sociologically informed planning?

Projects are purposive interventions used for directing and
accelerating economic growth and social development. Not withstanding
the inherent limitations of their current format, I venture to say that
development projects offer broad scope for intensive, applied
socioanthropological work. In fact, they offer the context to employ a
much wider array of social science "products" and approaches to inducing
change than the professional social science community has invented to
date. At the same time, the sociology of development offers the
theoretical argument for an alternative model for projects, a model in
which the people, the social actor, are the pivotal element, the central
core around which all other resources should be marshalled for action,
as will be explained further in more detail.

Social scientists make the distinction between spontaneous
development, on the one hand, and induced or planned development, on the
other. Yet it is worth remembering that an overall theory of induced
social development has not yet been articulated. With measures (policies,
programs, international aid, state interventions of all types, etc.) for
inducing development being multiplied and expanded enormously, practice
has moved ahead of still absent comprehensive theory, but it is suffering badly from this absence. An absence of concern with social dynamics has been inherent and endemic in the econocratic or technocratic models guiding planned interventions. Economists, as the professional body presiding most often over the rites of project-making, have done little to incorporate cultural variables into project models.

The neglect of social dimensions in intervention-caused development always takes revenge on the outcome. Contrary to myth, it is a grievous misunderstanding to imagine that project interventions are a simple linear unfolding of a well reasoned, time-bound sequence of preprogrammed activities with all but predefined outcomes. Beyond what is being planned, and often despite it, development interventions occur as processes subjected to political pressures, social bargaining, administrative inadequacy, circumstantial distortions, and a host of either necessary or unwarranted reinterpretations.

It is true that development interventions do not take place through projects alone, but projects are the most widely used vehicle. Their underlying model contains a greater potential for case by case fine-tuning than planners typically know or use.

The debate over whether current projects are an adequate vehicle for development interventions has pointed out both strengths and weaknesses inherent in the project model of intervention.

On the one hand, projects concentrate resources on selected priorities, focus on a circumscribed geographic area, and can address specific population groups and constraints on development. Projects can also be social laboratories that use innovative approaches on a limited scale to gain experience for attempting large-scale interventions (e.g., national plans). As a form of development investment, Hirschman noted, the very term project "connotes purposefulness, some minimum size, a
specific location, the introduction of something qualitatively new, and the expectation that a sequence of further development moves will be set in motion."  

On the other hand, however, development projects have been criticized because they are only segmented units of intervention, they often bypass overall structures, are subject to the hothouse over-nurturing syndrome, and thus may develop atypically. Projects are also criticized because they tend to create enclaves and to siphon resources from nonproject activities, while sustainable development at the same pace beyond their limited time frame may be doubtful. The flow of project allocations is also prone to diversionary pressures that often channel resources away from intended beneficiaries.

Despite the recurrent debates on the merits and disadvantages of projects as instruments of development intervention, no effective alternatives have emerged, and projects are likely to remain a basic means for translating policies into action programs. Therefore, as long as the project approach is routinely being used, it is legitimate and necessary to identify and address the sociological requirements intrinsic to this model of development intervention. I contend that social scientists could gain from further exploring its potential and from overcoming its limitations, in order fully to use—and also broaden—the opportunities available for inquiry and action-oriented sociology. Since development anthropology and sociology are often seen, and even defined, as a "sociology of interventions" or a "sociology of strategies," it is fitting to examine what in the nature of interventionist state policies and programs creates a demand for social knowledge.

The systematic use of social knowledge, as a complement to economic and technical knowledge, is indispensable for "putting people first" in planned development interventions. Putting people first in projects is not just a goodwill appeal to the humanitarian feelings of
project planners, a mere ethical advocacy. It is a concept for constructing programs for inducing development and an imperative for their effectiveness. I submit that "putting people first" in development programs must be read as a scientifically grounded request to policymakers, planners, and technical experts to explicitly recognize the centrality of what is the primary factor in development processes. This interpretation implies a call for changing the approach to planning.

When the requirement to admit the centrality of people in projects is addressed to those who currently design projects--primarily, to the technical and economic planners of development programs--it becomes tantamount to asking for reversal in the conventional approach to project making. This is not to say that people are totally out of sight in conventional approaches. But many approaches are so overwhelmingly dominated by the priority given to technical factors or economic models stripped of the flesh and blood of real life that the characteristics of the given social organization and the very actors of development are dealt with as an afterthought.

The argument of this paper is that the model adopted in projects that do not put people first clashes with the model intrinsic to the real social process of development, at the core of which are--simply--its actors. This clash seriously undermines the effectiveness of projects that attempt to induce and accelerate development. Putting people first is a reversal because it proposes another starting point in the planning and design of projects than that taken by current technology-centered approaches. This specific "reversal" demands to identify--in every single technical, financial, or administrative intervention--the sociological angle and the variables pertinent to the social organization affected or targeted by intervention. This is why putting people first is not a simple metaphor, but rather a tall demand to restructure the approach to planning.
Lately, support to "people-centered" projects is pledged even in the official planning rhetoric. But this is done in a manner that often reduces the concept's applicability to projects in the so called "social sectors"—education, health, family planning, nutrition and so on. The point, however, is that "putting people first," or, in other terms, the concern for social organization as the central issue should be recognized as paramount for all projects, not only for projects in social service sectors such as those listed above. It should be recognized explicitly as a paramount objective for projects supporting productive activities, where the apparent but spurious primacy of technological or economic variables still serves as fallacious justification for neglecting social organization variables.

Development projects are in essence vehicles for financing induced growth and change. Often financial resources are a project's single most massive input injected into an area to accelerate growth. The financial investments—resulting either from loans or from central budget allocations, in other words, from sources exogenous to the project area and its own capacity for capital formation—are used as the lever apt to eliminate constraints and set development in motion.

By their nature as financially driven interventions, such projects must— but often don't—provide explicitly for complementary social/institutional reorganization. This is so because the abrupt large infusion of external resources into a rural society modifies the internal and gradual processes by which resources for development are created, saved and accumulated. When these resources are generated internally and gradually, they are more or less commensurate with the capacity of the socioeconomic structure to absorb and use surplus. However, if the financial resources alone grow suddenly by external injection, while the patterns of social organization or the institutional structures remain
the same and no matching change in the nonfinancial factors of development is sought, then serious discrepancies set in.

People's economic activities are embedded in a structure of social relations; therefore, for the theory and practice of induced development, defining accurately the "levels" of such embeddedness in different—market or nonmarket—societies becomes operationally relevant. The degree of embeddedness and level of congruence between accelerated technoeconomic activities and the existing structure of social relations is not just an academic problem, but a practical one, inasmuch as the interventionist stand of the state should beware of causing desequilibria and discontinuities.

Indeed, when investments through state sponsored programs are made only in the technological infrastructure, they are highly likely to be an implicit disinvestment in the social infrastructures of the given society. Often such disinvestment is only relative, but sometimes it is also an absolute disinvestment. Furthermore, the very know-how for investing financial resources in institutional structures is much less refined than the know-how for investing in technical/physical assets. Thus, when public investment in technical infrastructures proceeds alongside disinvestment in the social, cultural, and institutional structures within which the former are embedded, the sustainability of the technical advancement itself is undermined.

Massive financial resources may trigger a short-term development spurt but without institutional and social scaffoldings built in at the same pace, the new edifice is not durably articulated. The long-term positive effects of financially induced changes will remain at risk, even though such risks may initially stay hidden until they convert into unanticipated and undesired outcomes.
It is important to emphasize that induced development depends ultimately on the overall quality of the project, rather than on the absolute amount of its financial inflows. In other words, the developmental impact of aid resources could be increased even if the financial flow levels are kept constant or at the limit reduced, provided the overall quality of project design and its effective implementation are enhanced. For instance, participatory project implementation and improved management are likely to extract a higher "development mileage" from the available financial investments of a project, than what can be obtained by increasing the financial allocations while disregarding participatory implementation.

While the need for financial resources is indisputable, it should be understood that internationally assisted rural development programs have often languished not because of lack of finance, but because of either the inability of the given rural society to use external finance effectively or the planners' inability to formulate an efficient social construction strategy for absorbing those new financial resources. Money is not everything. In certain situations money may be the least important contribution to processes of change. The financial levers of development cannot soundly substitute for the nonfinancial ones. Most frequently, the overlooked variables are the sociostructural and institutional ones.¹² The financial in-flows of the project may temporarily create a new "reality," but this reality is thin and transitional. Salient sociocultural factors continue to work under the thin layer of the new "reality." If the social variables remain unaddressed or mishandled, then the project will be unsustainable and fail, no matter which governmental or international agency promotes it.

Sociological knowledge—and the social analyst—can help identify, conceptualize, and deal with the social and cultural variables involved in financially induced programs. In so doing, the sociologist's contribution consists not just of uncovering social variables overlooked
In the planner's approach; it often amounts, as Robert Merton pointed out, to a reformulation of the problem that requires solving. "Perhaps the most striking role of conceptualization in applied social research is its transformation of practical problems by introducing concepts which refer to variables overlooked in the common sense view of the policymakers. At times, the concept leads to a statement of the problem that is diametrically opposed to that of the policymakers."

Or, we can add, is diametrically opposed to that of the project planner or manager.

Specifically, in situations like those discussed here, the social analyst participating in designing a project intervention will ask basic sociological questions such as: can the existing social/institutional structures function effectively at the accelerated pace triggered by a large financial influx? What social adjustments are needed to keep step with the other elements of the intervention? The sociologist must help chart the operational steps for creating the institutional changes necessary for the social and cultural sustainability of the financially launched development. As a result, the entire course of practical action can be changed.

The penalty for not carrying out the social analysis and not incorporating social knowledge into financially induced growth programs is costly and swift. An anthropological secondary study of fifty-seven World Bank-financed projects, which examined the association between the sociocultural fit (or misfit) of project design and the estimated economic rate of return at project completion (audit) time, found that attention to issues of sociocultural compatibility paid off tangibly in economic terms. Specifically, thirty out of the fifty-seven projects were judged to have a project design compatible with traditional cultural and local socioeconomic conditions, while in the other twenty-seven projects serious sociocultural incompatibilities were identified. The most significant finding was that the compatible set of projects had an average rate of return at audit of 18.3 percent, which was twice higher
than the economic rate of return (only 8.6 percent) of the other twenty-seven projects in the second group.

Another significant finding comes from analyzing twenty-five Bank-financed projects that were reevaluated several years after the financial flows channeled through the projects were terminated. The purpose of this analysis was to assess the long term sustainability of those projects. Thirteen out of twenty-five projects were found to be nonsustainable; among the primary reasons of their nonsustainability was not insufficient financing, but factors of a social-cultural nature (mainly the lack of farmer organizations and participation) neglected during project formulation and implementation.14

Such examples only confirm with economic facts that financially induced growth interventions stand a high risk of being less effective than planned or of failing altogether, if they neglect to build-up the sociocultural structures for development.

It is said sometimes that doing social analysis for each project would increase the cost of project design and waste scarce resources. In hindsight, one learns however that the cost of not doing social analysis is much higher. Projects cannot and should not bear the unaffordable expense of not addressing the sociocultural variables knowledgeably. In fact, as a culturally sensitive development economist argued, the "advances in social science knowledge reduce the cost of institutional change,"15 the same way advances in natural science knowledge reduce the cost of technical change.

Development-oriented sociologists and anthropologists have become not only more involved with projects in the past decades but also more able to insert their contributions effectively. Although sometimes still uncomfortable with projects and straitjacketed by blueprints, technocratic biases, short time-frames for fieldwork and other
restrictions, many social scientists have gradually been learning, as the following chapters in this volume demonstrate, how to make operational contributions within this planned approach to development. Many have developed new field-research procedures and discovered that the project format opens up not one, but multiple points of entrance for contributions of social knowledge.

III. Entrance Points for Sociological Knowledge

Where are the entrance points for effective incorporation of sociological knowledge into rural development planning?

Past errors and lingering misperceptions have clouded the answers to this question. My argument is that the habitual entrance points used in the past—"social impact assessment" or "ex-post evaluation"—have been few and not the most effective ones. They must be broadened. Therefore, I argue (i) that entrance points should be multiplied and opened up in every important juncture of the planning and execution of projects, and (ii) that the single most important entrance area where sociological knowledge can and must contribute is the design for purposive social action. A quick retrospective look reveals several fallacies and lessons of experience in this respect.

Conventional entrance points. Historically and until recently, the first and main entrance point for social scientists was the ex-post evaluation of development results. Sociologists were sometimes called in to assess whether a certain project had indeed accomplished its overall objectives and triggered the desired consequences or some unanticipated ones. Unfortunately, this was the wrong end of the cycle: it was then too late to affect the project process. While the use of a sociologist
or anthropologist for this task was positive, it was not a substitute for multidisciplinary planning.

At issue here, of course, is the role of the discipline as a body of knowledge, not the task given to an individual sociologist. Although an individual expert can correctly perform a segmented role such as evaluation, the noneconomic social sciences as disciplines should not be pigeonholed into only one segment of the project or planning process. If used only as evaluators, sociologists arrive late, long after other experts have made their contributions. They appear wise after the fact and are seen as those who only complain about what others have actually done. Their skills are not brought to bear on ongoing social action; since the social process has taken place before the evaluation study, it cannot be improved or redirected in retrospect.

It is often said (with a consoling undertone) that the lessons drawn from evaluation may, of course, be useful for the next program. However, many sociologists, the present author included, have been generating evaluation findings that should have led to the modification of subsequent programs, only to find themselves in the unenviable position of having no part in the actual formulation of the follow up programs. Instead they watched new projects without sociological inputs being designed again by econocrats seemingly oblivious to earlier findings and heading towards the same mistakes. Even when the sociological evaluation findings are correct and relevant, whether or not they will materially affect new programs or policies depends on the decision of others. Incorporation of past lessons is never automatic. Moreover, skills similar to those used for identifying the social lessons of past programs are best suited for incorporating such lessons into the new design. That is why it is necessary to involve professional sociologists in the preparation process for the new project. There is no legitimacy in relegating them to the function of ex-post evaluators only.
Another role for the social sciences has emerged in what is called the social impact assessment (SIA). This is a kind of *ex ante* evaluation. In this role, the sociologist examines a development project prepared by a group of other experts and is asked to make a desk assessment about whether or not it will have positive or adverse social repercussions. Here again the social analyst is not called on to participate constructively in shaping the intimate structure and sequence of actions in development projects; rather, he or she is used simply to validate or partly modify a ready-made "package."

Sometimes the social impact assessment carried out by the social analyst is genuinely taken into account in modifying the project's plans, and this service is undoubtedly worthwhile. Some anthropologists have rendered important contributions this way. My point, however, is that the social analyst is not to be employed merely to anticipate the effects of plans conceived without him, for damage control and mitigation. The point is to involve the social analyst in the full-fledged advance planning of development. This is a much broader endeavor than just assessing impact.

A somewhat more promising "entrance" is offered to sociologists when they are invited to generate the basic social information necessary for a project. Such a contribution is often quite useful. But the role of supplier of descriptive information still allows the sociologist little influence over what is done with the information; whether or not it is used at all; or whether it is incorporated into the design for development, into resource allocation decisions, and into the sequencing of planned actions.

Thus, none of the entrance points noted above allow sociology to participate fully in the interdisciplinary modeling of planned rural development. The narrowness of the assignment—evaluation or data gathering—blocks out the crucial contribution that sociology should make
to the actual content and design for purposive action in rural development programs.

**Going outside the cocoon of the discipline.** In a powerful analysis of "why sociology does not apply" in public policy, Scott and Shore argue that sociologists have been largely ineffectual in policy-relevant work because they have remained captive to their disciplinary process and manner rather than interpolating themselves and their work into the policy-making process itself. "A main source of the present difficulty with applied sociology is that attempts to make sociology relevant to policy are conceived and executed with disciplinary and not with policy concerns in mind." This thesis is important and consequential. It entails that the work to be done by sociologists, the methods used, and their order of use should differ substantively in a policy perspective from what is habitual in a disciplinary perspective.

When guided by an inward-looking disciplinary perspective, applied sociological work begins and ends with sociology and may not fully serve the specific purposes of policy (applied) work. Conversely, with a finality oriented to the public domain, a sociological perspective would begin and end with policy—not disciplinary—concerns. The "significant other" for a social scientist writing up his field "product" in a policy or project perspective is the policymaker or the development practitioner, while for the one writing with a disciplinary perspective the "significant other" are his academic peers. To carry out policy permeated social inquiry and analysis one has to come out of the cocoon of the discipline in more than one way. When employing the policy perspective, Scott and Shore note, not only is the order of activities changed but their nature is different, too, since the purpose is "to adapt method to problems involving questions and variables outside the ken of the discipline." While Scott and Shore focus their argument on applying sociology to policy making, their analysis is valid also, mutatis mutandis,
for applying sociology to the planning process. The two areas are not identical, since planning is essentially in the realm of policy execution rather than policy formulation. Applied sociological work in one is different from the other, despite similarities or overlap. If the goal is to use sociological knowledge in projects, then this work should start from the argument on applying sociology to policy making, their analysis is valid also, mutatis mutandis, for applying sociology to the planning process. The two areas are not identical, since planning is essentially in the realm of policy execution rather than policy formulation. Applied sociological work in one is different from the other, despite similarities or overlap. If the goal is to use sociological knowledge in projects, then this work should start from the needs intrinsic to the project model itself.

The sociologist who decides to use his knowledge and skills in a project-related task needs to internalize the process of project making and to tailor his work so as to fit the structure of this process. He must then understand the project cycle, its specific stages (to be discussed in detail below), and how to adopt these stages as both starting points and intermediate ends of his or her activities.

More than any other development professionals, sociologists must labor to bring the social actors, the people themselves, into the processes of project formulation, planning and creative execution, and attune the other specialists--technical and economic experts--as well to the demands of putting people first. The two tasks are not opposed, they are complementary. The vital need to promote public participation goes hand in hand with recognizing that preparing a complex development project is a job that requires the cooperation of a number of professional experts, including the social scientist. Adopting the project model as a common denominator format for applied sociological work has also the advantage of enabling sociologists to interact better with the other project professionals (planners, technical experts, economists,
etc.), and to overcome their intimate biases, often self-paralyzing, against such other professionals regarded subjectively only as "rigid mindsets." If they grasp better the "technical" criteria of the other professionals, the sociologists are more apt to generate sociological answers (propose solutions) well tailored to the project's circumstances. Further, this interengagement enables the sociologist in turn to raise his challenging questions, compelling the other professionals to reflect on them and generate project-related (and project-funded) solutions.

Rural development planning in many countries follows the format of the project cycle. Aside from some local variations, the essential stages of this cycle, to which sociological contributions can be matched, are:

1. Project identification
2. Project preparation (design)
3. Project appraisal (including design correction)
4. Project implementation (including monitoring)
5. Project (ex-post) evaluation

Each stage of this cycle requires a different type of sociological contribution (either informational, analytical, or predictive) from sociologists and anthropologists, in much the same way that the specific contributions of economists vary from one stage to another. Of course, the stage sequence of the project should not be fetishized or idealized as the ultimate embodiment of planning rationality or as an inflexible arrangement of time-bound activities. As shown before, the project model has its limits and the project's social reality is much richer than its abstract model. It is the obligation of the social scientist to work so as to both adopt and adjust the model to the given social reality, and reject any procustian request to do the opposite.

Not only challenges, but sometimes barriers as well are built into this very format. Control over the project cycle is generally in the
hands of government officials, local politicians, planners, administrators, and technical managers, who decide whether and when to call in sociologists and what to ask them to do. In real life, such calls may be half-hearted or may be narrowly restricted to only one stage rather than to all of them consecutively, or may even misspecify the tasks of the social analyst. In practice, project planners or other officials often do not know precisely what to ask the sociologist, nor do they know particularly what they are entitled to expect from the project's social analyst.

To sum up, going "outside the ken of the discipline" means, in this case, adopting the stages of the project cycle listed above as the practical framework for organizing the activity of the social analyst. His or her contributions should be tailored to the specific purposes of each stage. To do so, most social scientists trained only in the ways of disciplinary academic research must go through a learning process. I will provide here only a brief characterization of how sociological work can fit into each of these stages.

**Project Identification** is the stage when the potential of a particular development intervention is approximated. On the social side, this requires a definition of the likely social actors in that development, e.g., the project area population and the place of its various subcategories in the social structure. The social and economic goals of that development must be delineated and their likely consequences, both positive and negative, must be subjected to an initial analysis—the first step in an iterative analytical process. During this stage, the social analyst has only little time for independent field investigation, but should be able to gather and assess all the available general social data (censuses, prior surveys, ethnographies, monographs, and so forth) relevant to the area and the type of intervention considered. For instance, if the potential of an irrigation dam is considered, at identification stage the social analyst should broadly define not just the
beneficiary groups in the command area but also the reservoir population certain to suffer the adverse impact—forced displacement. He should also consider the likely influx of construction manpower and the predictable boom-town effect at the construction site, and so on. At this preliminary stage, it is not possible nor is it necessary to have definitive answers or the full set of social data. But it is necessary to identify the main risks and to set in motion the subsequent data gathering, social analysis, and social design processes to be carried out during the much longer, and more in-depth, preparation stage.

Project preparation. This stage is the most important for the social construction of development interventions. At this point, the sociologist verifies the hypotheses about the development potential and translates them into planned sequences of actions. The social analyst, as a member of the preparation team, must use the full arsenal of relevant research tools, from surveys and case studies to piloting and other methods, together with his/her ability to anticipate changes in social arrangements and to design alternative organizations, institutions, or strategies for participation. Using the same example of an irrigation dam project, the social analyst must plan in detail the process of involuntary resettlement, involving both the displaced groups and the host population; plan for the displaced to be reestablished on a viable socioeconomic basis,

Project appraisal. The appraisal stage critically reexamines the preliminary version (feasibility study) of the project as produced during project preparation and, often, introduces significant corrections into the future project. Ideally, the specialist teams doing the preparation and the appraisal, including their social analysts, should not consist of the same individuals, so as to facilitate the second team to
reassess freshly, independently, and critically, the work of the first team.

The social analyst on the appraisal team should reexamine the project's assumptions regarding the social actors, their current needs and expected behavior; and should reevaluate the social arrangements recommended to respond to the induced technical changes and reshape the relations between people and their natural and societal environment.

In light of World Bank experiences with project appraisal, four main elements should be in the focus of the sociological appraisal:

1. The sociocultural and demographic characteristics of local beneficiaries, including groups that may be adversely affected.
2. The social organization of productive activities of the population in the project area.
3. The cultural acceptability of the project and its compatibility with the needs of the intended beneficiaries.
4. The social strategy for project implementation and operation needed to elicit and sustain beneficiaries' participation.

A few details on each one follow.

The social appraisal of projects should first verify that project design has taken into account sociocultural and demographic characteristics—the size and social structure of the population in the project area, its density and stratification patterns, including ethnic, tribal, and class composition. This is particularly important for project components affecting specific target groups (such as ethnic minorities, resettled populations, women). It requires an understanding of the receptivity of the existing patterns of population settlement and
community organization to the proposed arrangements for supplying inputs, collecting outputs, facilitating access to education, health, or other social services, and for ensuring the desired distribution of project benefits.

Appraisal should further ascertain that the project design is based on an accurate understanding of the social organization of productive activities: (a) how the intended beneficiaries have access to, make use of, and exercise control over natural and other productive resources available in the area, and what changes need to be promoted in the existing social arrangements; (b) how the characteristics of the household models and family systems prevalent in the area affect the development potential and constraints, labor availability and ownership patterns; (c) whether small producers have reasonable access to, and information on wider markets and regional economies; and (d) how land tenure systems and usage rights, as well as alternative employment opportunities, may affect intended beneficiaries' interest in the proposed project activities. In weighing the assumptions upon which the project intervention is built, the social appraisal needs to ensure that the technological changes to be introduced will be complemented by matching and supporting changes in local social organization patterns.

Projects must be culturally acceptable, i.e., understandable, agreed to, and capable of being operated and maintained by the local social actors and their institutions and organizations. For instance, projects for joining herders and cultivators in combined rangeland and farmland management schemes may not be workable if they ignore the history of relationships prevailing between the two given groups. Similarly, the health benefits of improved water supply or waste disposal systems may not materialize unless the intended beneficiaries appreciate the linkages. A judgment on the project's cultural acceptability and on
the beneficiaries' willingness to contribute to its success must therefore take into account their values, customs, beliefs, and felt needs.

The appraisal stage is not too late to carry out one more round of consultation and communication with the project area populations, thus facilitating various forms of public appraisal of the project as opposed to only expert appraisal. Moreover, the appraisal process must ascertain that the people likely to be affected—both positively or negatively—by the project were involved or consulted during the identification and preparation stages and that they will continue and expand their participation during project implementation, maintenance, operation, and monitoring. Whenever necessary, the project should contain explicit strategy provisions to help beneficiaries organize themselves to carry out these functions.

If the social appraisal determines that the project is likely to be highly risky in social terms, but inadequate information is available to support a firm conclusion, consideration should be given to either a pilot project or postponement of the project until sufficient information is available. If certain technical, administrative, or other aspects of a project make it socially unfeasible, they will have to be modified or eliminated. Often it may be desirable to include in the project an information, motivation, and education component to help accelerate the necessary changes in social attitudes, behavior, and organization. The appraisal should ensure that the implementation process contains a realistic time frame and mechanisms for the expected behavioral responses to occur, and that there is enough built-in flexibility for making design changes in response to sociocultural information obtained during implementation.

**Project implementation and monitoring.** The actual implementation of the project opens up a new territory for applied social science activities—in fact the broadest area in which sociologists and
anthropologists can and should work. They can bring their knowledge to bear on the organization, communication, and managerial realms of projects, on the shaping of project approaches to specific tasks, on mobilizing participation and on daily problem solving. Implementation is precisely the stage when it becomes most obvious that projects never unfold linearly, exactly as planned, but involve changes, struggles between interested parties, reinterpretations. How social scientists can work within this vast domain is illustrated in many details with actual project experiences in the volume "Putting People First. Sociological Variables in Rural Development."

To summarize, the overview of the project cycle stages provides the development social scientist with an insider's "key" to open the entrance doors into the process of planning/inducing social change through projects.

I must emphasize, in light of my own and other researchers' experiences, that by adopting the project cycle model as a framework for conducting applied sociological project work, the social researcher does not have to and should not abdicate his critical thinking. He must not surrender any of his tools of trade—conceptual or methodological—or his ability to critique or reject one course of project action or another. To the contrary, anthropologists and sociologists can assert their views more influentially by reorganizing the conduct of their work according to the project cycle model and by becoming insiders to the project-making process and expert team—both intellectually and organizationally. Sociological knowledge can thus aspire to statutorily inhabit the project process, rather than be temporarily called in from the cold for an in-and-out, yo-yo-type contribution.
IV. **Policy Formation Grounded in Social Knowledge**

Distinct from the project planning process and its key stages, the formulation of development policies is a substantively different terrain for the use of social science concepts and research tools. The important principle to be stressed, as Solon Kimball reminded us, is that basic conceptualizations guide the gathering, organization and analysis of data. Therefore, these conceptualizations must differ in the case of applied work in a project context, from, say, an ethnographic exercise, or from the conceptualization of work for policy formulation. "The simple conceptualizations of traditional ethnographic descriptions provide inventories of cultural items, but are inadequate for policy purposes."\(^{22}\) The demands and methodological options for using policy formulation as an "entrance point" have been discussed in detail, and arguments in its favor continue to be added from within both anthropology (see Weaver, 1985; Grillo and Rew, 1985)\(^ {23}\) and sociology (see Hall and Midgley, 1988)\(^ {24}\), obviating the need to repeat them here. The theoretical argument for putting people first in development, for designing strategies around the **social actor** rather than starting with technical factors, concerns, in fact, primarily the shaping of development policy and secondarily the shaping of project design.

The incorporation of socioanthropological knowledge into development policies is the most impactful way of employing this body of knowledge; by far more effective than influencing one or another project piece-meal. It has a **multiplier effect** produced by the institutionalized recognition of sociocultural variables in the actual programs that follow policy formulation. Implicitly and explicitly, it causes multiple subsequent uses of social science knowledge in specific programs and projects. Two instances from the experience of sociological work in the World Bank prove this convincingly.
The first is the case of the elaboration of a social science informed policy for projects that cause involuntary population displacement and resettlement. Forced displacements imposed by the construction of dams, highways, ports, etc., dismantle people's settlements and their prior mode of production, shatter community networks and patterns of social organization, and cause homelessness, landlessness and impoverishment. The seriousness of such negative consequences is compounded by the magnitude of forced displacement in certain projects: for instance, the Narmada Sardar Sarovar and Almatti dams in India will displace over 90,000 and 150,000 people respectively. The recently built Cirata and Saguling dams in Indonesia have displaced some 50,000 and 60,000 people respectively, the Kayraktepe and Ataturk dams in Turkey — some 20,000 and 55,000 people respectively; and the Sobradinho and Itaparica dams in Brazil—some 65,000 and 45,000 people, and so on.

Over many years, anthropologists and sociologists have carried out research and generated knowledge on people's responses to, and consequences of, exogenously imposed displacement. Nevertheless, the availability of "knowledge-on-the-shelf" about involuntary resettlement exercised hardly any influence on the governments and agencies engaged in the practice of forced displacement. Studies and books produced by social scientists kept accumulating, but they were not operationalized into methodologies for social actions and had little effect: they were by and large ignored by officials responsible for programs causing compulsory displacement. Development policies of most governments and major agencies, including the World Bank, did not formulate any explicit demand that involuntary resettlement operations be carried out under more stringent criteria based on social science knowledge; displacement of people was usually dealt with last, as an afterthought. This lack of sociologically informed planning backfired during project implementation stages, causing underfinanced and unplanned relocation to be executed disastrously as a last moment crash operation. What was primarily
missing was not "more research for better knowledge." Already-accumulated sociological knowledge was not incorporated into an institutionalized policy for involuntary resettlement, which could guide the agencies dealing with forced relocation.

The significant turning point occurred when, for the first time, this body of knowledge was operationalized and translated into action-guidelines adopted by the World Bank as an explicit policy statement addressing the "social issues associated with involuntary resettlement." This happened initially in 1979-1980 (when the first statement was issued) and was followed in 1986 and 1988 with new, strengthened policy papers. The formulation of this policy was grounded in social science knowledge. The policy mandates that planning for projects that cause resettlement should start effectively with "putting people first", making the reestablishment of the living standards and productive capacity of those displaced a priority concern, favoring resettlement in groups, and protecting the interests of the host populations as well.

Once a formal resettlement policy was instituted and enforced, the kind of social science knowledge that informs the policy became manifestly in demand. The policy itself explicitly prescribes the use of this specialized knowledge and, in fact, was the lever that increasingly moved the "knowledge-on-the-shelf" into actual application in operational work. Knowledge publicly available for more than two decades but largely ignored or underestimated was now suddenly put to use (thus confirming Zuckermann's observation that social science knowledge informs policy making in a "more diffused fashion" than do physical and biological sciences, "Involving longer intervals and more complex chains of influence"). For instance, between 1985-1989 several hundred field missions that included one or more anthropologists/sociologists were sent by the World Bank to projects causing forced displacement, to assist in the preparation, appraisal, or implementation/supervision of the relocation operations at standards defined by the policy. This
Involvement of sociologists/anthropologists in resettlement-related work in hundreds of Bank-financed projects the world over represents to date the highest density of anthropological presence in a single sector of World Bank work compared to any other similar period.

Even though formidable problems are always faced in resettlement, the results of the sociological contributions are tangible. They are measurable along several key dimensions: new approaches; improved planning of resettlement processes; increased allocation of investment resources; and stronger protection of the interests of large numbers of affected people. This does not mean that the social analysts were always free of mistakes in their work and certainly does not mean that it is sufficient to mobilize social knowledge to resolve all the major problems in such projects.

Another comparable example of social science informed policy is the adoption by the World Bank of its policy guidelines concerning tribal populations in Bank-financed projects. Based directly on anthropological knowledge, these policy guidelines have directly contributed to a better protection of the cultural identity and socioeconomic rights—especially the demarcation of land rights—of vulnerable tribal groups inhabiting areas covered by projects. This policy led to corrections in Bank projects and in the treatment of tribal groups by many borrowing agencies, stimulating also the enactment of new legislation regarding tribal populations in some countries.

V. Methodologies for Social Action

The need to go beyond explanation to action, beyond assessments to recommendations, raises requirements that make the practice of applied sociology and anthropology a distinct enterprise. This enterprise is not science in the classic sense and often may not be
linked to policy formulation either. It is "simply" applied sociological or anthropological work, bound to generate new and valuable "products" that are different from the typical research products of science.

The concept of an "applied social scientist" who does not do "science" may at first seem paradoxical, but the contradiction is only apparent. The applied social science work often takes its practitioners far beyond what they have studied as trained social science professionals and beyond what has been conventionally regarded as the discipline's boundaries. Some practitioners of social and environmental impact assessment studies, for instance, have realized that, important as such assessments are, "the assessment process is . . . neither science nor policy, despite the conventional wisdom which views it as a scientific procedure that lays the groundwork for well-informed policy". And indeed, this is true not just for assessment studies but for a much larger part of applied sociological and anthropological work. Moreover, much of the applied anthropological work cannot be called applied research either, as it often is labeled, simply because not every application of anthropological knowledge involves new research. This opinion, however, is not shared by all those who do applied sociology or anthropology, and a bit more consensus about the nature of this endeavor would much help the subfield. But if this view is accepted, it ensues clearly, among others, that the invention and definition of new types of "products" of applied social science work must emerge.

One such product may be the elaboration of methodologies for social action. Such methodologies may be seen as a kind of applied social science product that is intermediate between general policy work and individual project (or case) social analysis. While it is essential to contribute to defining broad or sectoral development policies that indicate directions and goals, it cannot be forgotten that policy does not necessarily articulate detailed methodologies for action to reach those goals. On the other hand, project-focused analyses are, and must
be, specifically tailored to the given set of circumstances. Yet many social processes, under many different programs, share similar basic characteristics, and consequently the types of social actions required are in essence similar as well. For situations that are more or less recurrent (save different particular conditions), the elaboration of social action methodologies can supply what is missing in both general policy analysis and piecemeal project-focused social analysis. Such methodologies can (must) be adjusted to individual situations, thus making tested approaches operational and avoiding repetitive work.

A case in point, which demonstrates them acute demand for social action methodologies, is the impasse with participatory planning for rural development. Among obstacles is also the absence of a methodology for organizing people's participation. Now we often hear sudden declarations of fashionable support for participatory approaches from politicians, planners, economists, and technocrats. Social scientists should not confuse these approaches with actual participatory planning because, under the cloud of cosmetic rhetoric, technocratic planning continues to rule. The rhetoric of intent is still far ahead of the design for action to promote participation.

However, government officials or planners are not the only ones to blame for this gap. Anthropologists and sociologists themselves have been busier advocating participation than working out social techniques for organizing it. But without the know-how to organize it, participation will remain a hot ideology lacking a social technology. True, many developing countries have authoritarian regimes that place structural and political restraints on grassroots participation, but often more participation is feasible within existing limits. We must ask and resolve pragmatic questions. Are the social sciences able to offer a methodology for organizing actual participation in different cultural contexts? Do social scientists have sets of procedures and methods transferable to planners and managers? What should be done during
project preparation to shape the project so that it elicits and depends on participation? What should be done during implementation for organizing participation?

An interesting initiative to design such a social methodology was taken by a group of anthropologists, sociologists, and planners under the PIDER development project in Mexico. Against many odds, the team developed a model for participatory investment planning at the community and municipality levels. They wanted to replace the top-down, paternalistic decisions imposed from on high with a methodology for eliciting farmers' own proposals and choices and for mobilizing their initiatives and material resources. The innovation was to develop this model itself not by a desk-bound effort but through action-research, actual tests in the field, community planning experiments, followed by iterative returns to the drawing boards. The "product," the new methodology, consisted of a conceptual framework and a set of procedures, rules, and approaches that instituted field assessments, information exchange, and structured interaction between locals and outside experts. Application guidelines and field manuals for planners were prepared. This methodology was then applied not only to many PIDER areas, but to planning for the entire Zacatecas state (over 1,000 municipalities). Such an approach can be replicated in other contexts where action research for this or other issues is needed, using similar social science craftsmanship.

The interest in generating such methodologies usable in development interventions, still incipient, is nevertheless growing. Based on fieldwork, the Institute for Development Anthropology (IDA) has designed a methodology for identifying optimal locations for the siting of deep wells to provide potable water to dispersed rural homesteads and small settlements in Central Tunisia. Represented as a series of thematic maps overlayed on satellite imagery, the methodology employs sociological, demographic, and landuse criteria, as well as the more
customary hydrologic and financial criteria, and takes into account projected population growth, political/administrative divisions, and environmental capacities. The institute also advised the government on the creation of organized, self-managed groups of potable water users, *Unités d’Autogestion*, to assume responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the new water points, fee collection, and the allocation of water surpluses. This social methodology appeared so effective, that the Government of Tunisia has invited IDA to participate in elaborating a national strategy for water user groups based on the Central Tunisia model.33

Another example comes from Sri Lanka’s Gal Oya project area. Based on prior findings from the sociology of irrigation, and on action-research in the area, a team led by Uphoff developed, jointly with local water user associations, a social methodology for determining small group capacity to undertake development tasks and for building up this capacity.34

A domain that urgently calls for such methodology creation is organization-building at the grassroots. All over the world, the degree of formal organization in rural communities lags far behind that of urban populations. This is a fundamental characteristic of rural underdevelopment that accounts largely for the vulnerability of rural societies. Many rural programs collapse for want of grassroots organizations able to foster collective actions (yet the same programs seldom attempt to establish organizations that aggregate and enhance individuals’ capacities). Farmers’ organizations, pastoral associations, credit groups, and water users’ organizations, for example, are all critical for development, but the methods and knowledge to help construct them on a large scale have not been codified and made widely available. The organizations existing in traditional societies serve many purposes and can sometimes be used as a matrix for building stronger formal organizations.35 High-yielding social organizations are no less important
for development than high-yielding crop varieties, and intensified agriculture cannot occur without intensified human organization. Sociological methodologies for building farmers' organizations or revitalizing existing ones are scarce. Sociologists and anthropologists should recognize this as a broad domain for inducing institutional innovation.

There are, of course, complex epistemological and ethical questions about such methodologies as those mentioned in the examples from Mexico, Tunisia, and Sri Lanka. Would they be operationally valid across cultures? Any extrapolation would require testing adjustments, and critical learning processes, before they are actually offered for application.

The ethical legitimacy of preparing such methodologies is questioned by some, as on a more general plan the validity and legitimacy of action research has also been both contested and defended in recurrent debates within the professional social science community. Denying on ethical grounds the legitimacy of engagement in policy formulation and program work has undercut rather than empowered the transforming influence of social science. As has been correctly emphasized by many social scientists, given "the enormity of social illfare in modern times... it is morally indefensible to adopt a noninterventionist stance when human suffering is all pervasive and when sociological technology has meliorative relevance." Although these issues are not discussed here in detail, my stand in brief is that action-oriented sociological work is ethically legitimate and that such sociologically informed methodologies for action are epistemologically feasible. The extent of crosscultural regularities in agrarian production patterns and social structures sets both the ground for, and the limits of, this feasibility.
Overall, these new, applied science products, including methodological instruments, are insufficient and are being elaborated more by happenstance than by design. This mirrors the underdevelopment of development sociology and anthropology. The situation also largely reflects the fact that the academic mainstream of these disciplines gives little consideration to explicitly working out the theoretical and epistemological tenets of their applied domains.

At the beginning of the 1980s, a broad review of advances in development anthropology concluded that "anthropologists working in development have not yet created an academic subdiscipline, 'development anthropology', for their work is not characterized by a coherent or distinctive body of theory, concepts, and methods. Development anthropology has, however, become an incipient profession and field of study . . . (and) has produced a body of technically informed, substantive findings . . . "37 More or less the same can be said about development sociology, although the theoretical work on development concepts is here more advanced. Furthermore, there is unacceptably little intellectual exchange and synergy between sociologists and anthropologists working on development. While some significant advances have been made during the 1980s towards accumulating building bricks for a "subdiscipline," the beginning of the 1990s finds the valid demand for a distinctive body of theory, concepts, and methods still wanting.

The idiosyncratic contribution of an individual anthropologist or sociologist to a certain project may be very valuable, but if it is mainly the product of this individual alone rather than the translation of a systematic methodology, it remains a piecemeal and particularistic contribution. Development agencies often have to rely excessively on a sociologist's personal aptitudes and on the accident of his or her flair and inspiration in the field, rather than on the discipline's methodological and conceptual instruments. This reflects the infancy of the discipline itself. Although the creativity, intuition, and ad hoc judgment of the
social analyst are critical for the project (and help develop the discipline itself), in the long term it is essential to have a systematic body of sociological know-how that is transferable and usable in operational work by sociologists and nonsociologists alike. Unless such methodologies are developed, behavioral sciences connected with development will only advance slowly.

VI. Two Models: "Enlightenment" and "Social Engineering"

In discussing how social science knowledge can influence society more effectively, a distinction is often made between two models: "the enlightenment model" and "the engineering model." Generally, the differences between the two get stressed, while their complementarity is overlooked. "Enlightenment" counts on dissemination of sociological knowledge through education, which is a useful but obviously insufficient strategy. Enlightenment alone implies a tortuous, uncertain, and slow way to return the benefits of social knowledge to society and influence its progress. Moreover, the enlightenment model postulates the dissemination of findings and conclusions as available in academic social science but it does not respond to the need of operationalizing social knowledge for action purposes. For this and other reasons, complementarity between the two models is necessary. The social engineering action model is rooted in knowledge of the social fabric and dynamics. It postulates the translation of social science knowledge into new know-how and change-tools, and it uses this knowledge purposively to organize new social action and relationships.

For a while, social scientists have shied away from using the very concept of social engineering, to avoid the unwarranted twin misinterpretations of applied social science as manipulation or as condescending paternalism. Lately, however, as the action-orientation in social research matures, the term is returning with renewed intellectual
strength and validated usefulness. In fact, as Hirschman noted, it was
on the crest of radical thinking and revolutionary action that the very
idea of social engineering and of the perfectibility of the social order
first arose--namely, at a time when "it was... novel to think that
human happiness can be engineered by changing the social order." Since
that time, social knowledge has grown more precise, expanded, and
deepened to levels at which it is increasingly usable as a guide to plan
and as a means to democratize the planning process itself by facilitating
broader participation in it of the development actors themselves. This
meaning of social engineering is ethically and professionally acceptable.
What should be avoided and opposed is not social engineering itself, but
its abuse for reprehensible goals. As Rossi and Whyte wrote in a
balanced definition,

social engineering consists of attempts to use the body of sociological knowledge in the design of policies or institutions to accomplish some purpose. Social engineering can be accomplished for a mission-oriented agency or for some group opposed to the existing organizational structure, or it may be undertaken separately from either.... When conducted close to the policy-making centers, it is often termed social policy analysis.... When practiced by groups in opposition to current regimes, social engineering becomes social criticism.46

It is worth noting that nowadays social engineering is by far not a monopoly of social scientists. In fact, social scientists do a very limited amount of the "social engineering" that inevitably occurs in every plan and social policy decision in contemporary society. When technical specialists, economists, or managers decide on a development program without so much as consulting a social scientist, they do ad-hoc social engineering of their own. When subsequently they implement that plan, they again do social engineering. Unfortunately, however, most often they aren't even aware that at least part of what they do is social
engineering, the same way Molière's famous Monsieur Jourdain wasn't aware that he was making prose everyday, while simply speaking. However, as Monsieur Jourdain made rather bad, ungrammatical, and halting prose, in the same way present day planners and technicians quite often do poor social engineering, unassisted by the professional competence derived from sociological and anthropological knowledge.

Planning agencies or policy bodies should be wary of relying on mechanical engineers to do social engineering. They should ensure the same level of professional competence for the social components of projects as they provide for the technical components. The applied social scientist who responsibly takes on the challenge of social engineering, for instance by planning for social development, provides an important service: he or she replaces the amateurish, do-it-yourself brand of social engineering of the nonsocial scientist with the state-of-the-art tools of knowledge and social understanding offered by a field of professional expertise. Certainly, social engineering does not decide upon or establish the goals of development, but with a clear understanding of what "putting people first" signifies, it can be employed to chart the relationship between means and goals in programs. For instance, in poverty-oriented rural development programs, it can bring about better strategies to support poverty alleviation. Another area concerns local institutions, where informal leadership identified through ethnographic analysis can provide efficient structures for reaching villages.

Although social engineering is only one way in which behavioral sciences can influence social action, it is the one that compels social scientists to descend from the realm of generalities to produce operationally usable know-how. It also requires sociologists to think through carefully the consequences of their recommendations rather than assume condescendingly that they know what is best for the people. In this vein, the sociologist should conceive of his/her role as not just a
producer of expert solutions, but rather as a facilitator whose task is to free and bring to bear the huge innovation potential of the "plannees" themselves. The social scientist is the only kind of expert who is professionally trained to "listen to the people." Social knowledge thus developed becomes a "hearing system" able to amplify the listening for managers and policymakers too.

Hard dilemmas and controversial trade-offs confront the development researchers doing social engineering. Sometimes they are required to compromise in their quest for data, to leap over unknown parameters and, yet, to provide their best judgment and advice with only imperfect information. But it is simply not possible to always know everything before doing anything. Dilemmas caused by imperfect knowledge are best addressed when recognized squarely and realistically, without exaggerated claims about the "scientism" of all that is done under the auspices of development anthropology or sociology. There must be concern for building in learning mechanisms and flexible adjustment procedures. The strictures of the planning process itself will never easily allow the ideal setting for generating and using social knowledge.

Experienced sociologists and anthropologists have struggled against such strictures; they have emphasized the need for applied work to continue, notwithstanding imperfect knowledge, which one has to both live with and overcome. Reflecting on his own work as sociologist-planner and simultaneously "certified" scholar, Herbert J. Gans described well the practitioner's dilemmas and the need for creative answers:

Most of the questions which must be answered before planning can take place on a rational basis have not yet been sufficiently studied; yet the planners cannot wait for further research. Sociologists who participate in guided mobility programs must be able to come to conclusions on the basis of past research, a modicum of impressionistic observations, and a large amount of freewheeling hypothesizing— that is,
guessing. They must gamble further by being willing to build the products of this highly unscientific approach into experimental programs. There is no doubt that this type of sociological endeavor will lay the practitioner open to criticism from colleagues in the discipline as being unscientific or controversial, but it will be countered by appreciation and the surrender of an ancient stereotype about the unwillingness of sociologists to come to conclusions on the part of the planner. Moreover, the sociologist must revamp the concepts that he uses so that they can answer questions posed by the plan and in such a way that they will lead to ideas and techniques for action programs.41

Breaking new grounds by working on the cultural variables of major development programs, applied social researchers have the rare chance of making "social inventions," to use Whyte's felicitous concept; this is what they do, for instance, when they chart "new sets of procedures for shaping human interactions and activities and the relations of humans to the natural and social environment"42 or when they develop new "incentive structures"43 apt to help improve the involvement of social actors in purposive development activities.

Without discounting the caution dictated by limited knowledge, sociologists should become more operationally prescriptive. Sociologists and anthropologists often have many hundred "don'ts" to only five "do's." By focusing on program design and execution as entrance points, social scientists will force themselves to be more pragmatic, more operationally useful, and more versatile in development work. They will also become aware of variables and relationships that otherwise would have escaped their attention.

In sum, my overall argument is that applied social scientists have to learn to generate new products that are usable by development practitioners. These new products should not be regarded as replacements for the traditional products of research (such as
taxonomies, explanatory hypotheses, concepts, and theories), but as supplementing them with methodologies for social action. Such new social science products and approaches—whether they are called social technologies, social engineering, sociotechniques or, in Firth’s term, human engineering—would respond to the needs of induced development, enrich the traditional spectrum of social science products and make social knowledge more effective. The scope for such creative contributions is virtually limitless and the need for them is urgent.

VII. Institutionalizing Development Social Science

To generate new intellectual products, the noneconomic social disciplines have to work hard in their own gardens. Expansion of their research agenda and more concern with their own institutionalization are essential.

Promising new research areas and issues are emerging, both within sociology and anthropology and at their frontiers with other sciences: agricultural sociology; common property resource management; collective action; farming systems research; crop sociology; social forestry; the development role of the state and of the nongovernmental organizations; and others. Every one of these research areas is relevant for induced development and holds substantial potential for expanding applied social research.

The metaphor of entrance points in the process of planning development has obvious implications for the institutionalization of development social science and the actual settings within which development sociology and anthropology are practiced and taught. The process of institutionalization of development sociology and anthropology can be conceived, paraphrasing Robert Merton’s analysis of the sociology
of science, as a process of intensified "interplay between the cognitive and the professional identities" of the development social sciences.

Solidifying our "cognitive identity" requires not just applied work; to a decisive extent, this cognitive identity will depend upon the general progress of basic theory and research in sociology/anthropology. Indeed, it is on the shoulders of basic research only that applied researchers can have the secure pedestal of a distinct body of knowledge, supplying them the lenses to see the wider horizons.

Solidifying our "professional identity" requires other processes; in this respect, Merton has called attention to the definition suggested by Edward Shils that meticulously captures a set of organizational and intellectual dimensions:

By institutionalization of an intellectual activity I mean the relatively dense interaction of persons who perform that activity. The interaction has a structure: the more intense the interaction, the more its structure makes place for authority which makes decisions regarding assessment, admission, promotion, allocation. The high degree of institutionalization of an intellectual activity entails its teaching and administered organization. The organization regulates access through a scrutiny of qualification, provides for organized assessment of performance, and allocates facilities, opportunities, and rewards for performance—for example, study teaching, investigation, publications, appointment, and so forth. It also entails the organized support of the activity from outside the particular institution and the reception or use of the results of the activity beyond the boundaries of the institution.

In the case of development sociology/anthropology, at least three processes appear critical: first, the position of the social analyst should be formally institutionalized within the organizational
settings of technical, administrative and development agencies; second, substantive changes must be made in the training of sociologists and anthropologists oriented to development work; and third, the equivalent of a sociological renaissance is needed in university curricula for training technical specialists and economists for development work.

As long as professional social researchers remain outside technical and administrative agencies, knocking on physical doors to gain intellectual entry, the actual use of sociological knowledge in planned development will be hampered by more obstacles than if sociologists were among the insiders. Their inclusion is necessary to reduce organizational ethnocentrism on both sides. True, some agencies have begun to institutionalize sociological skills. Yet these cases are still few and far between. National (governmental) and international organizations are lagging behind despite their professed creed or given mandate. There are, for instance, many livestock departments in agricultural ministries all over the world, which are properly staffed with veterinarians to deal with cattle but lack any sociological staff trained to understand the social organization of animal husbandry and of pastoral populations and thus able to work with cattle owners. Staff sociologists could certainly enhance the capacity of these agencies to improve animal husbandry.

It is of exceptional importance that indigenous sociologists and anthropologists from developing countries participate intensively in applied development activities. Unfortunately, however, this is still far from happening. In India, for instance, and this is true for virtually all developing countries, "most organizations, including those that recognize the value of anthropological contributions, are functioning without qualified anthropologists on a regular basis. . . . Obviously this situation must change if government directed development is to benefit from anthropological knowledge."
I have no naive illusions that the inclusion of sociologists or anthropologists in technical settings will solve all social problems, but in their absence many programs remain socially underdesigned and register a high rate of economic, technical, and sociopolitical failure. Cooperation across disciplinary fences is difficult enough; across additional bureaucratic walls it becomes virtually impossible. The issue is not just one of philosophical recognition but also one of resource allocation. The social scientist may have to play second violin to the technical experts, which is perfectly acceptable; in other circumstances he may fulfill the role of project manager; but only the well-orchestrated joint efforts of technical and social experts can produce harmonized development work. The institutionalization of the social professions will generate various patterned models of interaction with other disciplines and enhance the quality of development planning.

The academic training of sociologists and anthropologists should be profoundly restructured, if producing professionals with an action-oriented outlook is to be addressed responsibly. Enough has been written on this issue to make repetition unnecessary, yet it is unfortunate that the social science academic establishment reacts so slowly to the imperative. True enough, all the textbooks for training such sociologists and anthropologists are not yet on the shelves. But there is little time to wait. Moreover, if the opportunities opened up by the pressure of practical demands are used, then both empirical and analytical materials for textbook synthesis would accumulate faster.

Last but not least, in my own experience at the World Bank and in different countries, an enduring obstacle to the influx of sociological knowledge into development work has been that many technical experts lack understanding of what social science and social engineering could bring to their own efforts. The magnitude of this obstacle on a global scale is underestimated. The gap persists, and in fact is being recreated with every class graduating from technical institutes, because
of the manner in which technical experts are "grown" in the groves of academe. Biologists and economists, agronomists and veterinarians, urban planners or foresters, industrial or irrigation engineers, who tomorrow will have a strong say in the design and execution of development programs, are often being trained today as though people did not matter for the solution of technical issues. Thus, they remain ignorant of the sociostructural and cultural dimensions of technical/production processes because of outdated training philosophies and practices. The experts produced by this training are being deprived of a crucial lens—the social one—for looking at, and understanding, their own technical field. They are not being prepared to cooperate later with the social experts, don't know what to ask from them, and remain unaware of what they are entitled, as technical specialists, to receive from the social specialist. Correcting this situation is not a task for only a year or two, but rather will require a generation at least.

If any renaissance is in store for social sciences in their development role, it will not take place unless social science knowledge (not just introductory principles, but the sociology of the specific subarea of technical activity) is diffused among technical specialists as well. Teaching social sciences to students in fields other than sociology and anthropology is at least as important and consequential as teaching future sociologists.

To sum up, putting people first is not simply a fashionable slogan but is a formidable work program for social sciences. It is also a heuristic device demanding always that we identify, in every seemingly "technical," "financial," or "administrative" intervention, the sociological angle and the variables pertinent to the social organization affected or targeted by the intervention. Sociologists have to face the nuts and bolts of development activities, to roll up their sleeves and deal with the mundane, pragmatic questions of translating plans into realities in a sociologically sound manner. They need to link data generation, action—
oriented research, social analysis, design for social action, and evaluation into a continuum, and thus stretch sociology's contributions far beyond simple pronouncements.

The planning models for rural development are far from perfect, and although sociologists should learn to work within existing frameworks they must at the same time change them with their input. Financially induced change programs need sociological knowledge and must incorporate the social cultural variables. Financial resources are not necessarily the key ingredient in all development program. Sometimes they are the least important. The range of entrance points for sociological knowledge and skills should be expanded to all segments of development planning, from policy making to execution and evaluation, and from theorizing to social engineering. It is essential to design purposively for social action.

The conventional range of operationally usable products generated by social scientists is still narrow and insufficient; forward-looking action methodologies should enrich the domain. The support for participation will be more effective if passionate advocacy is accompanied by social methodology. The newly emerging research orientations are more interdisciplinary than the old ones; they deserve the support and commitment of development-oriented social scientists. Training philosophies must change as a crucial step to avoid producing new cohorts of socially incompetent technical experts or technically illiterate sociologists. Such changes and the new orientation toward increasing the action relevance of the social sciences will result in a better response to the fundamental calling of social sciences: not only to analyze and explain, but also to assist in transforming the fabric of society.
Notes and References

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1. For the present argument, I use the terms sociology and social anthropology interchangeably. I believe that the broad substantive overlap between what sociologists and social anthropologists actually do within the framework of development programs justifies this use; the differences between the overall perspectives of these two disciplines, although real, are not treated here. References to social sciences should be generally read as references to noneconomic social sciences, particularly anthropology and sociology.

2. Other such internal factors, which cannot be elaborated here but deserve wider discussion, include the state of the disciplines' theory and body of knowledge, the quality of its practitioners' applied craftsmanship, the patterns of their professional formal organization, and obviously their views and value judgments on whether or how applied social research should be conducted. For the status of applied anthropology in the United States, see a broad and very instructive historical overview on disciplinary growth and internal problems in: William L. Partridge and Elizabeth M. Eddy, The Development of Applied Anthropology in America, in E.M. Eddy and W.L. Partridge, eds., Applied Anthropology in America, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

publication of the American Anthropological Association, No. 21, 1986).


5. Vernon W. Ruttan, one of the few notable American economists who set explicitly to explore what development economics "can learn from anthropology," noted that

"almost no attention has been devoted by economists to the role of cultural endowments." He went on to observe that "professional opinion in economics has not dealt kindly with the reputations of those development economists who have made serious efforts to incorporate cultural variables into development theory or into the analysis of the development process. Their work has typically been favorably reviewed and then ignored. . . . But in spite of the failure of research on the economic implications of cultural endowments to find a secure place in economic development literature or thought, the conviction that "culture matters" remains pervasive in the underworld of development thought and practice. The fact that the scholars and practitioners of development are forced to deal with cultural endowments at an intuitive level rather than in analytical terms should be regarded as a deficiency in professional capacity rather than as evidence that culture does not matter." (See "Cultural Endowments and Economic Development: What Can We Learn from Anthropology?" in Economic Development and Cultural Change, 36, no. 3, 1988, p. 250, and pp. 255-256).


9. Yves Goussault suggests the following as a possible definition:

"The sociology of development is a sociology of intervention. It is basically linked to the social changes provoked by the interventions of states and capital in various social sector as well as in the overall structures of societies. In this capacity, it is a sociology of strategies...." (Yves Goussault, "Où en est la sociologie du développement?" Revue Tiers Monde, t. XXIII, no. 90, 1982: p. 242).


12. The following comment was made by an anthropologist who reviewed an earlier version of this paper:

"Indeed, money is far from being everything. In the large institutional development project I did for the Treasury in Saudi Arabia, I discovered that even given unlimited funds, certain social and organizational changes were often impossible through money alone. In fact, the funds themselves became a problem. . ." (Theodore E. Downing, letter to the author).


18. Edward C. Green insightfully captured such self-defeating disciplinary biases, when he wrote:

"for their part, anthropologists may view economists, agronomists, engineers, and the like as narrowly focused technicians whose rigid professional mindsets and cultural distance from local populations prevent them from coping with human factors or seeing the larger picture, especially when dealing with cultures quite different from their own." (Themes in the Practice of Development Anthropology, in Edward C. Green, ed., Practicing Development Anthropology, Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1986, p. 7-8).


21. In 1984, explicit guidelines to analyze these four sets of factors during the appraisal of projects were formally introduced in the World Bank's Internal policy and procedural directives (see World Bank Operational Manual Statement no. 2.20 on Project Appraisal [section on "sociological aspects"], January 1984). These guidelines are mandatory for Bank staff; they also strongly influence the work of planning staff of borrowing agencies in developing countries. These formal appraisal guidelines mandate a more in-depth analysis of the basic social variables than what was described as the "social aspects analysis" in the well-known manual published by the Bank: Economic Analysis of Agricultural Projects by J. Price Gittinger, ed. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), see pp. 15-16.


31. The question skeptically asked by Gelia Castillo--"how participatory is participatory development?"--is warranted and should be asked about every development program (see How Participatory is Participatory Development? A Review of the Philippine Experience (Manila: Institute for Development Studies, 1983).


should be adaptable and generalizable for group credit programs, range or forest management, agricultural extension, and so forth. "All that is needed is some modification in the questions that are formulated, though not even in the way the questions are derived and pretested" (p. 44).


43. Edward H. Greeley, "Project Development in Kenya," In Edward Green, ed., Practicing Development Anthropology (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986). Greeley underscores that the first lesson he learned from his experience as an anthropologist working on USAID projects in Kenya was the importance of focusing "on the incentives of individuals, groups, and institutions."


48. Gerald Murray discussed the role of the anthropologist as "manager" in a social forestry project in Haiti that was managed over several years by several anthropologists in sequence (see G. Murray, "The Domestication of Wood in Haiti: A Case Study in Applied Evolution," in R.M. Wulff and S.J. Fiske, eds., *Anthropological Praxis* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987).

49. W. Goldschmidt has been among the few to raise his voice in criticism regarding the responsibility of the "more senior anthropologists" who have cultivated remoteness from applied tasks among their students:

"Anthropologists . . . have not prepared themselves for the serious and difficult task of translating their deep understanding (of national cultures) into the workday realities of decision making and the crossfire that goes with such a role. Or perhaps, I should say, we more senior anthropologists have failed them, we have failed to prepare them for such tasks, and thus it is we who are to blame for not making them ready when they are wanted. Rarely in our curricula are there programs that translate theories into actionable policies. . . . It is necessary for the anthropologists to prepare their students for public service" (W. Goldschmidt, *Idem*, p. 4).

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