

Editorial

Eve Crowley et Geert Diemer



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Bulletin de l'APAD

Editorial

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- 1 Anthropological researchers and development agents have often made a poor team. Classical anthropological field research is a painstaking and time consuming endeavour, for which bureaucratic and financial timetables and urgent development assistance can not always wait. Detail and diversity, Malinowski's "minutiae" of everyday life, are often unwieldy for decision-makers from other academic backgrounds because they lack the analytical frameworks to screen the data and to identify trends and implications. The anthropologist's focus on smaller scales, local levels, and socially derived units of analysis contrasts with projects and policies for development which require generalizable reference points and rationales situated at higher scales of analysis.
- 2 Of late the two seem to meet, however. Anthropologists, whether looking for jobs or doing research, no longer ignore the processes shaping public development policies. At the same time, planners note that anthropologists were right after all in stressing the particularities of development paths ; they register setbacks when programs do not take into account cultural and ecological diversity. Over the last few years the role of anthropologists in development has even expanded.
- 3 This growth has been enhanced by at least two events. First, the Rio convention, which recognized diversity of all forms, including cultural and biological, as a resource, rather than as a constraint. Second, Kottak's ex-post study of World Bank projects. It showed that, several years after they had been terminated, projects that gave explicit attention to social and cultural fit performed considerably better economically than projects which neglected this fit ¹.
- 4 These changing development practices engendered this issue devoted to *Les sciences sociales et l'expertise en développement*, the theme of APAD's latest conference. It focuses on the themes of the plenary sessions ; the papers presented at the workshops will be published in issue # 8. The papers were discussed partly against the backdrop of Norman Long's actor-oriented approach to social analysis that this *apadien* presented in his inaugural address. In this issue it is, unduly summarised, presented in the form of a translation into French of the second chapter of his book 'Battlefields of knowledge'.

- 5 The theme of the first session was called *Dialogue et négociation entre socio-anthropologues et opérateurs de développement*. The papers show that one of the challenges for anthropologists is translating for development agents interested purely in utilitarian aspects of human behaviour
- the "cultural dimension" of any human behaviour and development effort ;
 - the social beliefs and practices that guide human behaviour and that, from the perspective of the development agent, Most often "constrain", apparently inexplicably, the course of development and
 - the social institutions upon which any attempts at sustainable development must be founded.
- 6 The present volume includes contributions on this topic by Dia, Van den Breemer *et alii* and Quiminal. The former two report and analyse collaboration between on the one hand social scientists and on the other irrigation engineers and foresters respectively. All technicians and most social scientists were directly dependent on state agencies.
- 7 Quiminal concludes from her experience with migrant labourers and a ministry of development cooperation that a sociological researcher need not merely help implement some policy but may also bring about forms of real collaboration, in her case between migrant labourers and that ministry. Her conclusion, it seems to us, applies especially to a situation where the anthropologists do not depend on that ministry for their livelihoods and can run the risk of being banned from the list of consulting anthropologists. She implicitly reminds us that the only demand for anthropological expertise that is solvent originates from the public domain. If anthropological experts remain true to their holistic axiom, let them specify how this dependency affects both their thinking and their behaviour.
- 8 The second theme was called *Le marché de l'expertise et la place des socio-anthropologues*. Doka-Diarra and Tidjani Alou detail the strategies that their colleagues follow to wring cash out of the donor agencies yet the authors affirm that sociological expertise is a necessary tool for development. Their affirmation raises the question of the contribution of social scientists to the growth of Asian tigers like South Korea or of a North African lion like Tunisia. One can only regret that no paper was devoted to this theme. Forster also proposes strategies to help anthropologists make money in development. Anthropology students should study not only research methods and theory but also be trained as facilitators and communicators and acquire some back-ground in adult education and social psychology. The papers by Motaze Akam and Nzhi Engono seem to indicate that social scientists can not contribute significantly if the public domain denies them their proper place.
- 9 The third theme was *Problèmes méthodologiques*. Experts in applied anthropology usually come from a research background and received classical training. They do not benefit from a pluridisciplinary perspective generating applied anthropological methods. However, the rigorous research methods of classical anthropology are often ill-suited to the demands of policy makers and development workers because they are highly localized. The methods also rarely provide practical solutions to practical problems, although anthropological theory potentially holds the key.
- 10 Some compromise of methods is required if anthropologists are to maximize their contributions to development and their chances on this job market. The question then is: "what form should this compromise assume?" To counter the tendency towards

"windshield surveys" anthropologists will have to combine quick and dirty techniques with classical field methods to design research tools that better fit the terms of reference. In this issue Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan report on an experiment with such new tools.

- 11 Anthropologists are no longer content to criticize development agents' disregard of social detail, if only because this approach had minimal impact on the development process. Workshops such as the Bamako meeting show that many would rather engage in a constructive dialogue with development agents and the makers of development policy.
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NOTES

1.In : M. M. Cernea (ed.), Putting people first, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 431-464.

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