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The Development Encounter and Academic Anthropology¹

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The beginning of the encounter of academic anthropology with development coincides with my entry into the discipline and into the academy. While I cannot claim that my experience is in any way typical, it probably reflects that of many in academic anthropology, so I will here revisit some moments that crystallized these changing attitudes. I will also explore a number of topics and opportunities presented by the current interest in the human dimensions of global change so as to think about the future of development anthropology.

Development and Life in the Academy

In 1970 when I began graduate study in anthropology in a department with a surprisingly large number of faculty with interests in applied and development anthropology for that period, the tension that even then afflicted so many in academic anthropology was probably less seriously felt. The message that I gained from Elizabeth Eddy, Sol Kimball, Paul Doughty, Otto von Mering, and others was that applied anthropology was not a separate field, but rather that it had to do with the application of anthropological theory and method to the solution of human problems. A discussion emerged at the time about creating a degree in applied anthropology—and Kimball and others soundly rejected that path. They felt that a separate degree would lead to evaluation of those degrees as less valuable than those in academic anthropology and possibly to lesser theoretical sophistication as pressures for practical courses mounted through time for holders of such a degree.

This issue has been visited many times by many departments since then. In one version, discussed

by the Society for Applied Anthropology, graduates would be “certified” as applied anthropologists if they followed a certified minimum set of certification requirements set by the professional society in certified departments. In another, applied anthropology develops into a “fifth” field, with its own quota of students to consider for admission, its own support for those students, often based on external contracts, and its own courses and track for developing necessary skills. One or more universities have gone to a degree in applied anthropology. This issue, not likely to go away, shows the tension that exists between academic and applied graduate training. It is very much tied to the number of requirements in place for the doctoral degree and the amount of flexibility the degree requirements give students to acquire the skills they need to work in development and applied anthropology.

I would hazard to say that in departments with flexible requirements, or with a low number of required courses, one is less likely to see the emergence of the fifth field solution or pressure for a separate degree. The fifth field represents a solution for departments where course requirements are so onerous that they leave little room for taking skill-oriented courses outside the discipline. It is a path likely to be chosen by a growing number of departments as a product not only of an excessive number of required courses, but also as a product of the intellectual battles afflicting cultural anthropology. Where “text” has overcome respect for empirical reality, the best path may be to create separate tracks to ensure adequacy of training to carry out development anthropology.

The sentiment that it is not desirable to acquire skills that lead to providing technical assistance to others probably persists in a lot of professors even to this day. What was in an earlier age justified under the guise of ivory tower detachment and theorizing, is now justified under the rubric of critical theory and critique of development. In either guise, it constitutes an affirmation of a preference for detachment from—rather than engagement in—the struggle of people worldwide for justice. A concern for justice, equitable distribution, human rights, and the self-determination of people informs many, if not all, development anthropologists.

The preference to denounce the forces of change and to focus on how they negatively affect people, whether in our own or in far away societies, is a

deeply ingrained tendency of our discipline. By the same token, the discipline (as represented by its academic faculty) has a remarkable aversion to becoming a "policy science," i.e., one able and expected to provide analysis in and recommendations for making policy decisions at any number of levels. Society's perception that this is the case limits anthropologists' impact in the world today. Fortunately, the large and growing body of development anthropologists has ensured a continuing and growing role for anthropology at a number of levels in international development. They have kept anthropology in the development process as an important partner that speaks for cultural diversity and development with a human face. They have done so by bringing to the fore ethnographic reality that challenges the assumptions and goals of developers, and in more than one case by succeeding in redesigning development projects so that they meet the needs of local peoples. This never-ending struggle calls for a persistent commitment of anthropology to engage the development community and, by engaging it, change its assumptions, goals, and implementation.

The constriction of the job market in academia and the expansion of opportunities in such development agencies as USAID, consulting firms, federal and state government, and the World Bank have affected academic anthropology. As the job market tightened in the mid 70s, academic faculty began to discuss the need to place students and to prepare them for nonacademic employment. This led most major departments not only to offer courses in applied and development anthropology, but to focus new faculty lines on development internships, to explore linkages with nonacademic employers, and to open up the curriculum to acquire skills needed to operate effectively in those settings: statistics, epidemiology, rapid assessment techniques, and a broader set of skills in the social sciences. This happened by the efforts of a few rather than by the consensus of the many. In most cases it happened informally, rather than by fiat or formal decision-making at the level of the whole department. It was a case of grass-roots activism by a small number of faculty, and sometimes from the pressure of students who voiced their need for practical and skill-oriented courses.

One more factor, which has been discussed a great deal less, is the transformation of anthropology itself by the people whom we have been studying. The

earlier anthropological assumption of permanence and of unchanging traditions has yielded in the past 25 years to a picture of anthropological subjects who have never stopped changing and who welcome change as potential opportunities for betterment (Moran 1996). While some in the academy may still resist this notion, I believe the great majority of anthropologists today accept this as a given. The implications of this developmental inclination of human societies, whether pre-industrial, developing, or developed, have changed the discipline.

Most Ph.D.-granting departments 25 years ago had one or fewer faculty who listed development as one of their primary interests, whereas today we would find most such departments with anywhere from 2 to 5 such faculty, depending on their total size. This faculty is likely to teach courses not only in development and applied anthropology, but also economic anthropology, ecological anthropology, political anthropology, research methods, and a number of other core courses in the graduate and undergraduate curriculum.

Academic anthropologists working in development anthropology are now, therefore, much less likely to be treated as less theoretically sophisticated than their less applied colleagues. The price that has had to be paid for this respect is that it probably reduced the frequency and length of the consulting work that many have undertaken in order to give enough attention to academic publication and other academic tasks. This may have reduced the depth of experience that some might have acquired had they had a more single-minded focus on applied work. But I think it was a price worth paying if one wished to work in the academy and at the same time improve the environment for development anthropology within it.

Much less often mentioned or thought about is the impact of development practice on anthropological theory and method. Whereas anthropology prides itself on long-term fieldwork, often of a year or more, in practice academic anthropologists rarely spend a year or more in the field beyond the original dissertation research, with only a small percentage of them repeating such an experience once or twice again in their total career. More common are shorter visits of a few weeks in the summer to update knowledge of the population originally studied. Yet, the methods used in these return visits are rarely discussed.

By their very nature, such short visits require a different set of procedures if they are to collect systematic data and rise above the development tourism often criticized by academic anthropologists. Ethnographic tourism is not much of an improvement. Development practitioners have over the years developed methods for rapid assessment that are far superior to unsystematic visits to one's study community. The quality of data (and its productivity for theory) of short ethnographic visits could be much improved by systematic use of methods from development anthropology and farming systems research. Likewise, much of development practice challenges many of the elegant but unrealistic theories formulated by those whose experience is limited to one community, or to less empirically based studies. Development anthropologists are more likely than purely academic anthropologists to have done research in a broad range of societies that give them a richer understanding of the diversity of strategies found in human communities. What is needed is a more systematic way to bring these experiences into an empirically informed version of critical theory that advances our understanding of the human species and its diverse wants and needs.

The expansion in hirings in development anthropology rarely came through formal recognition of the equal value of development anthropology in academic anthropology. Rather, it came from hirings in those areas of theory in anthropology that have tended to be characterized by quantitative, materialistic research, such as economic and ecological anthropology; from the discipline's traditional interest in area studies expertise; or from such macro-theoretical interests as political economy and gender. This reflects a still secondary role for development anthropology in academic anthropology, and the primacy of theory and cultural area in hiring decisions. What is clearly needed is to build anthropology for the 21st century through hirings that integrate empirically rigorous, practice-based, and theoretically sophisticated research that addresses issues that matter to the subjects of study.

In short, the past 25 years have seen a clear expansion in the number of faculty in academic departments who list development as one of their areas of expertise. This comes from an internal concern with student placement and from the recognition that the peoples anthropology studies are much more interested in change than we had recognized. This focus

on "Change"—not only cultural, but also economic, environmental, and political—brings us to a discussion of the situation in the decades ahead.

Global Change and the Academy

Just as the inclination of the world's societies to embrace change has influenced anthropology in the past 25 years, so is the current globalization process taking place with full media coverage likely to transform anthropology and the ways we carry out our work. Some of this work may still continue to be carried out under the cover of development—i.e., now, sustainable development.

Since 1989 we have seen the emergence of a dynamic community of academic and applied scientists concerned with the state of the earth and particularly with the human dimensions of global environmental change. The call has been international, and funding for this work has grown steadily. In 1996 the U.S. Global Change Program spent 1.8 billion dollars. Social science funding within this effort grew from \$1.3 million in 1989 to \$25 million in 1996. The scale of this work is expected to continue to grow for at least another decade, if not more. It is likely to influence the way anthropology participates in a changing global landscape.

Research on the human causes of global change over the past decade have shown that such human activities as deforestation and energy consumption are multiply determined by population growth, economic policies, available technology, cultural forces, values and beliefs, institutions, policies, and their interactions. In addition, this work gives considerable weight to identifying human vulnerabilities to change and identifying ways to adapt or mitigate the impact of these vulnerabilities. This may be done by building more robust institutions, anticipating change, or putting into place better monitoring methods.

Anthropological contributions in this area in the past have been many, as in the development of famine early-warning systems in Africa. The issues that are likely to gain in significance are:

- understanding the social determinants of consumption patterns;
- understanding how people choose to reduce energy use or evaluate alternatives to current energy uses;

- improving monitoring of environmental hazards and believable forecasts of possible vulnerabilities at local to regional scales;
- better understanding of the links between local, national, and international institutions; the role of policy instruments in changing institutions; and the role of property-rights institutions;
- better understanding of the social driving forces of land-use change at various scales; and
- improving decision-making by incorporating nonmarket valuation and judgmental processes.

While this list is far from complete, it includes a number of promising elements for our discussion.

It is no secret to the development community that human patterns of consumption have a lot to do with equity and distributional issues. What is much less well understood, and where our community has a rare depth of experience, is in explaining the kinds of lags that exist between increases in income and adoption of particular consumption routes. More importantly, under what conditions does one find improved income and health, without a necessary increment in energy consumption, meat consumption, and other environment-costly consumption choices. Particular human needs and wants can be satisfied by a variety of products and processes that bring about very different magnitudes of environmental change. What choices are most costly in environmental terms and which contribute most notably to human health, security, or well-being are concerns shared by those of us long interested in development and human ecology. Culture, fashion, advertising, and globalization all contribute at present toward emulation of high energy consumption patterns. Can this be changed? A volume was recently published by the National Research Council reviewing the state of knowledge on social determinants of consumption that also lays out a detailed account of research needs (Stern et al. 1997).

Since at least Margaret Mead, applied anthropologists have been interested in the process of technological change. The current questions are somewhat different. Instead of wondering how technology affects pre-industrial populations, the new questions seem to be under what conditions do people choose environmentally friendly technology and choose to lower energy consumption or energy-consuming products while still maintaining desirable living stan-

dards. Like the issue of consumption, one of the important interests here seems to be how people "learn" about the costs of technological choices, who is responsible for limiting choices to high energy/low immediate cost, and to using the same means to produce a consumption society concerned with other goals, such as long-term benefits, low energy/high immediate cost considerations.

Many people in development anthropology have experience in early warning systems (EWS) work. The current work in this area is increasingly technical and sophisticated, using orbital satellites regularly to assess the probabilities not only of famine but of disease outbreaks and many other hazards. This work in the future will require familiarity with GIS and remote sensing at some level so as to participate effectively in impact analyses, but it does not overlook the on-the-ground methods advocated by most anthropologists. Rather, it advocates linking these field methods to larger-scale observational systems (Liverman et al. 1998). These systems have moved from a focus on famine to international forecasts related to phenomena like El Niño, and ways to reduce devastating losses to producers by shifting the types of crops and the timing of planting. Alongside improved forecasting through use of orbital satellite data, there are urgent needs to develop ways to provide effective warning systems, not only about famine, but about health hazards from pollution, nuclear proliferation, and the new viruses and antibiotic resistant diseases. The poorest of the poor tend to be disproportionately affected, and the development community has much to offer academic efforts to address these problems effectively. A particular contribution that needs to be made, and for which anthropology is poised, is the need to design Early Action Systems. This requires that we design, in ethnographically realistic ways, the institutional mechanisms that must act when crisis stages are reached. At present such institutional design has been carried out for EWS, but all too often local, regional, and national institutions seem to be immobilized from actions by their use of crisis for political ends. A particularly rich opportunity for advancing knowledge and human well-being is present in the need better to understand how social institutions influence environmentally significant human actions. Social institutions help us make more effective and well-informed decisions; they set targets for participants that represent shared information and, in many cases, consensus. However, the challenge of better coor-

dinating local institutions with national and international institutions remains. There is a very broad range of institutional approaches for resource allocations—some market-driven, others using social needs, or a hybrid of these. More needs to be known about what characteristics of national institutions are more conducive to sustainable resource use by local institutions. The challenge here is to understand the linkage between local, national, and international institutions—especially how to evaluate the robustness of local institutions in taking responsibility to implement, for example, resource conservation where power differentials and violence may be used against leaders in local institutions charged with implementing national and international accords.

One of the areas of the human dimensions of global change that development anthropology has contributed to in the past has been understanding land-use and land-cover change (LUCC). Many important research questions remain that provide a fertile link between academic and development anthropology; we still do not adequately understand how individual perceptions, attitudes, and socioeconomic status affect land-use choices and how such external forces as trade, international political economy, local rules for access to resources, distance to markets, or infrastructure interact in the calculus that people use in making decisions. The role of population in land use is accepted, and there is growing consensus that in the future migration, rather than fertility and mortality, will be the key link between population and environment. Environmental changes will cause people to move, and population movement will change the environment more rapidly than fertility/mortality did in the past. These flows are now not just intra- and inter-regional, but increasingly international in nature. Not only will the aggregate migration flow, but its ethnic and economic composition and traditions will influence the kind of landscape change that will occur.

As in the case of reducing vulnerabilities, land-use and land-cover change studies will continue to emphasize improved methods for spatial analysis of landscapes and human communities. This data will increasingly be georeferenced so that spatial and temporal changes can be monitored. Advances in connecting prospective migration data that incorporate social network analysis and link these to biophysical and spatial data provide powerful tools for understanding human impacts.

One of the areas where interaction between academic and development anthropology could be particularly fruitful in the future is in advancing current understanding of decision-making processes, especially those involving nonmarket and noneconomic valuation. A number of programs have targeted this area as of high priority to advance our current understanding of how we may adapt to or mitigate global change scenarios. These issues have been prominent in development anthropology, as we have struggled to argue for the importance of native systems of knowledge and the value of social systems, community processes, and social capital. Conflict between market and nonmarket criteria for decisions at any number of levels are present and their calculus poorly understood.

Conclusions

The relations between academic anthropology and development have changed academic anthropology in modest ways. While anthropology departments remain focused on other subjects far more than on development, there is a notable increase in the presence of development anthropology in major departments as a field secondary to more theoretical fields such as cultural ecology and economic anthropology. The boundaries between these areas are not always clear and reflect the openness, or lack thereof, of the rest of the department to applications of anthropological knowledge. In this process, a voice for rigor in methodology has come from applied and development anthropology. Courses in research methods in cultural anthropology are likely to be offered, more often than not, by faculty with experience in quantification and interests in verifiability of field data. These interests have not been central in recent years in cultural anthropology, except in ecological, economic, and development anthropology. In so far as we can look forward in the next century to a return of anthropology to a concern with people rather than their texts, development, ecological, and economic anthropology may stand at the very center of anthropology departments trying to restore the discipline with the kind of breadth that brought most of us into anthropology. If anything, the agenda of the human dimensions of global change further challenges our discipline. Students and the public continue to expect us to address the challenges posed by adaptation and mitigation of global change by attention to theory and method,

theory and practice, and attention to a fast-moving landscape where human vulnerabilities loom large.

Note

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Nov. 20, 1997, and will appear in a *Bulletin of the National Association of Practicing Anthropologists in the near future (Theory/Praxis in Applied Anthropology)*, edited by C. Hill and M. Baba).

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NGOs and Development: The Space for Social Science Intervention

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Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) have been active in promoting development since the 1940s. In direct contact with some of the poorest communities of the world, they have provided economic and health services to millions of people. They have evolved from exclusively relief missions to organizations primarily oriented toward promoting sustainable development. In this essay I will trace the most salient elements in this evolution. I will discuss some of the challenges that NGOs face in the continual process of redefining development and tailoring their services and structures to meet new needs and expectations. I will also point out a few roles that social sciences can and will likely play in this process. The discussion will be focused on the experiences of US NGOs working abroad.¹

Development action before the 1980s

Until the 1980s, international NGOs primarily focused on providing tools, medicines, food, and other simple inputs, as well as services for poor people in developing countries to be able to meet their food, health, shelter, and other basic needs.² Often motivated by religious beliefs, NGOs operated under the assumption that poverty in developing countries was mainly the result of inadequate numbers and quality of goods, services, know-how, and educated people.

The development agenda was thus presented in terms of transferring resources and/or knowledge from developed to developing countries. In post-emergency contexts and/or when social and political stability prevailed, NGOs moved beyond commodity distribution to include knowledge transfer. Hence, they focused on technology training and organization of project participants so the participants could better reap the technological innovations proposed by development projects. In some cases, development agencies carried out infrastructure development projects ranging from road construction to building clinics and housing units. For all practical purposes, some NGOs assumed the development role that traditionally had been associated with, or expected of, the governments in host countries.

To implement their activities, most NGOs supported their projects with small and large donations from individuals and civic and/or religious organizations. Some other NGOs used US government funds, particularly those tied to food purchased from the US farmers and either distributed in exchange for public works or sold in capital cities. The proceeds of those activities were used for development projects. The scale of the goods transferred and the people affected in the process greatly depended on the sources of funding, but basically the approach was to provide aid to those in need.

It is hard to gauge the extent to which NGOs were successful. With the exception of emergency relief interventions, development projects were relatively small and focused, largely site-specific, with target problems and project beneficiaries clearly identified. Their economic projects emphasized self-help initiative approaches, and often generated substantial and tangible benefits for participants. NGO staff stayed in the field for long periods of time, and were comfortable working with small groups and commu-

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