2 Some Reflections on Anthropology in Development Studies

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This chapter will first take a look at the 'difficult' but necessary science of cultural and social anthropology.[1] There follows a brief section on the concept of 'development' in anthropology. The chapter then discusses the problems and prospects of applied and problem-oriented anthropology and its realization in Wageningen. And finally it sheds light on the Wageningen anthropological agenda as well as some specific themes in anthropology and ethnographic research. Throughout the chapter I provide information on the anthropological work carried out by the staff and research fellows of the Sociology of Rural Development group. It will become clear from the discussion that the division between anthropology and sociology is not clear-cut within this group: in fact we consider the sociology of development to be a marriage between anthropology and sociology. The 'we' here refers primarily to anthropologists working in development studies, who are more or less equivalent to the 'we' in Wageningen.

Anthropology: The Impossible Mission

In explaining the role of anthropology within Wageningen development sociology, I start with a discussion of some of the main limitations or factors that inhibit anthropologists in doing their job 'properly.'

Anthropologists are not only supposed to study the behaviour of people from the outside, in a detached way, but should also understand societies or social contexts from within, by putting themselves in the place of the people they study. We are dedicated to this emic view, however difficult: this means using the mental categories and assumptions of local people rather than our own (Ferraro *et al.* 1994, p. 41).

Moreover, societies and phenomena should be studied in a holistic way: that is, the economic, political, and social fields have to be combined with the cultural sphere comprising cognitive orientations, secular and theological ideologies, values, norms, and attitudes. We are against compartmentalization, even though we recognize that this holism has a functionalist flavour.

We cannot simply accept the answers to our questions and then take this as some kind of 'truth.'[2] Of course we are interested in what people say, but more as the beginning of an analysis: why do they talk in this way rather than another? We know that we must be careful with questioning, not only because a culture may make people averse to questions and questioning (compare Zanen 1996, p. 156), but also because there is the risk that we ask questions on topics about which people do not normally reflect. An Indian landless labourer once told me that he could work in the fields for forty-eight hours without sleeping but became exhausted by half an hour of my questioning! A better way of obtaining information can be in discussion with people about topics, experiences and opinions, rather than attacking them with questions and questionnaires. One cannot obtain 'truth' from answers about particular topics since people may, for example, hide behind a 'cult of poverty,' or respectful behaviour which may dictate the answers. In many cultures, if you ask a woman who takes certain decisions in the house, she will name her husband even if the reality in her particular case, and in general, is quite different. Men, of course, will (absurdly) exaggerate their domestic responsibilities and contributions.

Anthropologists are 'distrustful' because what people think, say and do in a similar context may be quite different and we therefore try to circle around our people and subjects; we endlessly check and counter-check people's remarks, experiences and opinions. We need and indeed like gossiping, and are in difficulty if a culture hinders people from telling things about others. The construction of life and career histories, for example, is not just a question of a long talk with the person we want to know better. It means endless conversations, or casual questioning during conversations about other things, with family members, other people who know the person, people who work(ed) for him/her and so on. And all this, in what is perhaps a rather 'secret' way, is geared to not arousing the suspicion of the man or woman who is our object of study. Indeed, in constructing the career histories of people who had failed to realize their economic projects and to accumulate through farming, commerce or transport, I almost never spoke with these people about their problems (den Ouden 1990, 1991).

This means that we most significantly implement our work through participant observation and situational analysis (case analysis), which is prone to considerable differences among researchers, depending on their training, disposition and interpersonal abilities. We are rightly accused of *Fingerspitzengefühl*, or depending too much on our intuition. Anthropological field research is thus difficult. 'Situational analysis' or 'case analysis' does not mean outlining a static situation and just giving an illustration of something. A 'good' case study should explain the operation of a process: we test particular theories by confronting them with the com-

plexity of empirical reality, which may lead to the elaborating or changing of theoretical principles (see de Vries 1992, pp. 68–69).

We, with our 'foreign faces,' are often working in unfamiliar situations without sufficient knowledge of the local language. I am not only referring here to research in culturally and linguistically very different environments. Even in the Netherlands, 'strangeness' and unfamiliarity with people's ways of thinking and speaking should not be underestimated. Culture shocks can be considerable in 'your own country!'

This brings us to 'the misery' of using interpreters and assistants. It is often not enough to simply have a language interpreter. One needs an assistant, perhaps a man and/or a woman, who is from the same milieu as the people with whom you are working, who is sensitive to the culture and can find things out for themselves when your 'white face' and 'exalted' position prevents people from speaking normally, or telling you what they think is the reality. As one is mostly dealing with 'adult' topics, the assistant must be accepted as an adult by adults in the particular community or situation, and be able to make good and easy contacts with people in high and low positions. Not only should they speak the languages of the people (here I think of 'my' Indian situation where Tamil and Telugu were a pre-requisitie), but also be literate in the language used by the researcher. Much more could be said about the problems of working with interpreters/assistants, but I will leave it at this.

Having just mentioned people in 'high' and 'low' positions leads me to point out the normally strong bias in our work in favour of the lower classes. They often accept our dealings with them more easily, probably in the hope of receiving some sort of benefit, either immediately or in the near future, or simply because they do not dare to refuse. The anthropologist can nevertheless be confronted with embarrassing remarks. De Vries was questioned, for instance, about the purpose of his research by a radical peasant leader in Costa Rica as follows (1992, p. 62): 'Look, you people from developed countries have not only caused our underdevelopment but nowadays you are using us as guinea pigs in order to carry out experiments on us. What is the practical outcome of your research for us; how are you going to contribute to the cause of poor peasants in this country?'

We were wont to shun the economic elites because we considered them to be exploiters, but now that we want to incorporate them into our research, it appears that they are often quite unapproachable, and completely uninterested in our work. In my own research on problems of material accumulation, apart from some courtesy visits, I had to restrict myself to the poorer members of families and people who had worked or were working for big merchants, transporters or functionaries (e.g., den Ouden 1991).

'Generalization from small samples' is called anthropology's biggest sin. If we want to understand sections of societies from within, then we

have to know a number of our 'target group' more or less personally. This means that we cannot handle large numbers of people. Of course we may think that we can generalize for whole regions or ethnic groups, but that is an illusion. After publishing an article on the management of labour in three Adja villages, Bénin (1995), I carried out further research in 1996 on one a few kilometres distance from the original three. I was quite shocked at the differences in the mobilization and management of labour (den Ouden 1996). Could sociological and economic surveys with quick problem identification have given better information about the situation in a broad region? I am convinced they could not, both because of the shallowness of such research and the rather touchy nature of this topic. During my research in southern India, in the Bamiléké region of Cameroon, and in Adja villages of Bénin, I was always struck by the differences between villages or chiefdoms. Although 'old' diversity may in some respects fade, 'new' situations are always the result of interaction between 'what was,' the internal dynamism and the penetration of external forces of change, which means that diversity in many spheres somehow continues, and indeed comes into existence. All this is again complicated by the radical transformations we find in all societies today: we are studying what are sometimes called 'hybrid societies,' in economic, political and social terms as well as in cultural patterns. In the Netherlands, for instance, regional styles of farming increasingly give way to new divisions of those styles (van der Ploeg 1992).

A recently acknowledged problem in the ongoing account of anthropologists' difficulties, is that we used to analyse (sections) of societies, and cultures as bounded units of particular regions. However, culture is now also transmitted through telephones, radio and television, books, newspapers and magazines, fax machines, and so on, not only through face-to-face interaction (cf. Milton 1996, p. 163, 218). Our understanding and interpretation of situations and of change will then be less grounded in empirical observation. However, in studying smaller units, 'local' religious or secular movements, changes in agriculture, or women's efforts to change their situation, account must be taken of the interactions, flows of information, exchange of ideas, and the outline of policy and strategies through contemporary communications technology.

This brief overview of problems has already indicated that research and writing texts are activities that are neither neutral nor objective, and that the presence of an anthropologist in the field is not without consequences for the behaviour and statements of the people studied. The anthropologist's observations and conclusions are filtered through the 'glasses' of his/her education, school of thought and psychological condition. In writing articles and books, s/he may simplify complexity and heterogeneity in order to produce 'clear' and 'straightforward' pictures and statements. We do not want just ethnographic descriptions (as if they could present 'reality'); we want to position them within a theoretical

debate or indicate new approaches towards the analysis of situations and processes (cf. de Vries 1992b, pp. 80–81). There is a clear danger of stretching 'reality' in order to participate in these theoretical debates.

Our conclusion is nonetheless, 'We all know it is difficult, but let's do something anyway.' We go on because there is simply no conclusive way to unravel and understand 'reality(-ies).' We obviously have to be conscious of the problems and limitations of our research and the texts we write and try to check and correct ourselves. But the degree of *Verstehen* is certainly curtailed when research is only carried out through surveys or other 'quick research,' often by others, rather than the researcher him/herself.

Anthropology and Development

If we interpret development as evolution, then we are dealing with one of the main pillars on which anthropology was originally based as a discipline. One of the main reasons nineteenth-century scientists such as Tylor practised anthropology was to study 'contemporary forefathers' in order better to understand European culture and society and the laws of historic evolution. Anthropology then was closely linked to palaeontology, Darwinian theories of biological evolution, and a strong belief in the cultural superiority of the European upper classes. These evolutionary theories were also well suited to legitimizing colonial rule, or, at least, fitted with the colonial *Zeitgeist*. After a long intermezzo during which evolutionist thinking was associated with Marxist doctrine and therefore objectionable, White dared in 1943 to speak of the evolution of specific societies (see Kloos 1981, p. 34). In Service's *Law of Evolutionary Potential*, and Romein's *Law of the Braking Lead* (1954, pp. 56–7), the measurement of evolution is more or less explicitly connected to society's energy production and its efficient use, and the idea that newly developing societies would not be hampered by historically grown structures and investments. These neo-evolutionists no longer talked of 'progress' in the sense of moving from 'lower' to 'higher' cultural values and institutions. The same is true of Naroll (1956) when he succeeds in indexing the complexity of societies according to the indicators P (number of inhabitants of the biggest settlement), T (team types, the number of levels of decision making), and C (craft specialization). Naroll's point of growing complexity is, somehow, again reflected in modernization theory. This approach is expressed for instance by Smelser (1971), and is still of great importance to several development economists (Rostow, for example), as well as to those 'development practitioners' who still recognize a difference between 'low' and 'high,' 'good' and 'bad,' 'traditional' and 'modern,' in the sense of 'progress.'

Modernization theory and (neo-)Marxist theories, centre-periphery theory included, follow 'some broadly determined development path, signposted by 'stages of development' or by the succession of 'dominant modes of production'' (Long 1992, p. 19), and are therefore evolutionary in nature. But by the 1990s, we no longer care for such terms as 'evolution' and 'progress,' nor do we like modernization and Marxist paradigms and terminologies. Such theories and terminologies are too simple, too Eurocentric, too structuralist; social actors are disembodied like robots and, furthermore, such theories hardly explain differential responses to change. Evolutionary thinking, nonetheless, continues in many circles of anthropologists and development sociologists. See for example the structuralist approaches to 'globalization' that stress global unifying tendencies, processes of homogenization and scientification, and the disappearance of specificity. All are 'determined by 'iron laws' or 'normative frames' – be they located in the market, political or cultural domains – embedded in the present situation' (Long and van der Ploeg 1995, p. 67).

By discussing the continuation of evolutionary paradigms and approaches, we have more or less left the 'anthropological field' and have briefly looked at broad structuralist models of particular development sociologists and economists. But a large number of anthropologists were and are supporters of such theories which, of course, colour their anthropological analyses. Here we think, for instance, of the studies of French (neo)Marxist anthropologists such as Rey, Meillassoux and Godelier. In contrast, in the Wageningen anthroplogical scene, development is translated in a relatively neutral way as a process of social transformation.

Applied and Problem-oriented Anthropology

Returning to the 'normal' difficulties of anthropology in adopting an emic and holistic view, and in undertaking participatory observation and case analysis, it becomes clear that anthropologists must likewise have great problems with applied anthropology and attempts at social engineering, if by this we mean policy-oriented research which must quickly produce results in terms of practical recommendations. Anthropologists have doubts about the efficacy of results achieved through rapid policy-oriented research and problem identification, and are inclined to label this type of research and its results as naive. It is mainly departments of extension studies within the agricultural sciences which, for understandable reasons, have favoured and promoted such research techniques as Rapid Rural Appraisal. In Wageningen, this has sometimes occasioned rather heated discussions between sociologists and extension practitioners. A few weeks' research by a multi-disciplinary team let loose on a local

population for several hours a day to carry out interviews (often also group interviews) and observation, can easily result in insufficient information about the situation and ongoing processes, with the result that researchers are too easily persuaded of the significance of the 'problems' ventilated by informants. This is illustrated by the following example.

In March 1996 a multi-disciplinary team using Rapid Rural Appraisal came to the conclusion that one of the most pressing problems in a village of Mono province, Bénin, was the unemployment of young men, usually farmers' sons with a modicum of education. Working alongside this team in 1996, and also talking with landless labourers in some neighbouring villages, I found that this was not strictly the case. There was in fact sufficient work for a considerable number of wage labourers, since farmers often hired wage labour when they were unable to mobilize non-commoditized family labour. However, the so-called 'young unemployed' (and 'schooled'), disliked farm work and were often only willing to do it in order to keep up their payments to rotating credit associations. Hard working young farmer's sons, starting their own farms, for instance as sharecroppers, were very rare. This was quite a different story from that of many young men in neighbouring villages, belonging to another ethnic sub-group, who found and readily combined work as wage labourers in the morning with work as 'independent' sharecroppers in the afternoon (den Ouden 1996).

Another difficulty with rapid appraisal studies is that local communities and their problems are seen too much in isolation from the wider political economy and migratory context. People's migratory histories, contacts with migrants and the latters' influence on local decision making are often important (see Alderson Smith 1984; Laite 1984). Given their research instruments and distrust of what people say, anthropologists try to place the items to be investigated in their broader cultural, socio-economic and political contexts, and to do so they need time. Hence, their work frequently results in broad explorative studies with 'information overkill' and with the identification of factors which are not so easy to manipulate by development practitioners (Speckmann 1994, p. 10).

On the other hand, anthropologists – afflicted by the holistic approach – are not so able alone to sum up the technical, economic, political and financial aspects of development, which, almost by definition, are multidisciplinary. This means that, despite their broad view, the reliability of their advice is restricted and must be combined with the results of other kinds of research that fall outside the social and cultural field. Sole reliance on anthropology, or putting anthropologists in charge of a development project, could then be a great mistake, the more so since even anthropologists can be naive disciples of their 'home society' (see the results of the Vicos experiment in directed culture change in Peru (Beals and Hoijer 1971, pp. 613–14).

The picture changes of course if anthropologists are asked to illuminate questions that are limited in scope and territory, such as 'How do people of a particular area and/or ethnic group think about forests and trees, and what cultural categories do they use in this process?'; 'How are rights of control over land differentiated and what changes are taking place?' Or, as the question put to Speckmann by a chief engineer in Senegal: 'What are the drinking and ablution customs of these people?' (Speckmann 1994, pp. 7–8). It is probably not difficult to discover that socio-economic stratification, gender, age grades, ethnic differences, or affiliation to different national political parties, can inhibit participatory approaches in which everybody is assumed to have an equal say in identifying problems and in the various stages of a development project. But what solution can the anthropologist supply when the donor or those responsible for a project want to stick to a participation model regardless of its inherent constraints and complexities?

Problem-oriented research resulting in a sound picture of cultural, socio-economic and political situations and of the changes taking place can be achieved in a delimited area, providing the anthropologist is given a period of, say, at least three months. As every social scientist and field practitioner knows, in the end an analysis of a particular situation is a prerequisite for success in attaining the goals of a policy or intervention strategy.

The discipline of anthropology has a long tradition in policy-oriented research. During the colonial period, colonial officers in charge of tribal areas were not only asked to define which genealogical 'fathers' or kinsmen merited leave for an employee in the case of death; they were also asked to analyze situations for pacification and/or conquest. For example, officer-anthropologists, such as Snouck Hurgronje and Rattray, were employed respectively, in this capacity, to help in the Dutch Atjeh war and the British wars with the Ashanti in the Gold Coast. The role played by anthropology in the colonial period led Lévi-Strauss to depict the anthropology of that time as 'the daughter of this era of violence' (1966, p. 126). Anthropologists were also used during the Second World War and the Cold War for military and counter-insurgency purposes (Kloos 1981, pp. 169–170). Project Camelot, a research project funded by the US army to study the causes of civil violence in Latin America and other regions of the world, resulted in heated debates and led to attempts to establish codes of conduct, in 1971 by the American Anthropological Association and in 1975, by the Society for Applied Anthropology (Ferraro 1994, p. 46).

Anthropological research by Wageningen development sociologists, as part or on behalf of development projects aimed at providing answers to direct development questions, (either) has been relatively rare. Van Lier's research on the Afar Settlement Project in Ethiopia for the FAO (van Lier 1972), de Zeeuw's analysis of land tenure in an area of Burkina Faso as

part of his normal duties within a Dutch development project (de Zeeuw 1995), and Seur's studies of drinking water projects for German development organizations, are rather exceptional and, even then, often do not provide clear recommendations. One could also include here Spijkers' work (1983) as a FAO associate expert for the international agricultural research institute (CIAT) in Cali, Colombia, which encompasses a number of anthropological aspects.

Far more anthropological research has been done in problem-oriented fields.[3] In 1981, the Directorate General for International Cooperation of the Netherlands (DGIS) asked the then Wageningen Department of Rural Sociology of the Tropics and Sub-Tropics to take on a research project concerning the potential role of social scientists on agricultural research stations. As a consequence, research programmes were begun in two different kinds of agricultural institutes in two different locations: at the Centro de Desarrollo Agropecuario, Zone Norte, in the Dominican Republic from 1981 to 1985; and at the International Rice Research Institute, in the Philippines from 1982 to 1986 (Box and van Dusseldorp 1992, pp. 1–2). It was crucial, in these cases, to make actual assessments of the social impact of new crop varieties and techniques, and to explore how social scientists might function as intermediaries between cultivators and agronomists at the research stations. The term 'sociologist' was used in a broad sense in this research to include anthropologists (van Dusseldorp and Box 1990): and Polak, the Philippines' project leader, was in fact a well-known cultural anthropologist. Although the directors of these projects, Box and van Dusseldorp, used the term 'social agronomy' (the discipline which describes, analyses and predicts socio-cultural phenomena in crop cultivation), they also emphasized that 'the requirements of [cultural] 'understanding' were paramount' in the case studies and the analysis of adaptive trials (Box and van Dusseldorp 1992, p. 2). The Dominican Republic and Philippines research certainly included in-depth anthropological analysis of the styles and strategies of farmers, of the interfaces between farmers, extensionists, merchants and researchers, and of the socio-cultural acceptability of new technologies by both men and women. It was influenced by a growing interest in farming systems research during the 1980s, in which 'attention [was] being given to the way in which farmers themselves [were] experimenting on their plots, and to developing a dialogue between the experimenting farmers and experimenting scientists' (Box and van Dusseldorp 1992, p. 3).

The research project 'Sociological and Administrative Dimensions of the Planned Development Process' at the local level in rural areas of Sri Lanka, which focused on local participation in planned development, took place in this same period (1981–85) and was also partly financed by DGIS. Likewise, the emphasis lay on 'qualitative research methods applied to the in-depth study of cases' (Frerks 1991, p. 2).

It is impossible to discuss all the bigger research projects, mono- and multidisciplinary, of the past and present, but many publications and MSc and PhD theses are closely connected with these projects. Here, I simply wish to recall some of the projects directed by staff of the department of Rural Development Sociology with important anthropological components.

- 'Rice development within irrigated areas of Malaysia,' 1981–84, directed by Kalshoven, which had a strong interdisciplinary character (see Kalshoven and Daane 1984). The project was funded by the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research, and WAU.
- The Bénin 'farming systems' project (1985–92), which carried out research on changes in the rural environment of the Adja plateau of south-west Bénin), was based on cooperation between WAU and the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences of UNB, Bénin, and was funded by the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education, and WAU. The anthropological publications of Fanou (1992), Mongbo (1995), den Ouden (1995) and others were a result of this project (also Daane *et al.* 1997).
- 'Irrigation organization, actor strategies and planned intervention in western Mexico,' 1987–91, was directed by Long and financed by the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research and the Ford Foundation also had a strong anthropological perspective. Of the many studies, I recall the work of Arce (1993) and Villarreal (1994).
- 'Zimbabwe: Women, Extension, Sociology and Irrigation, ZIMWESI,' started in 1992, is chaired by Long, and funded by the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education, and the Directorate General of International Cooperation. In 1997 this project will produce at least three PhDs in the anthropological domain.

Many of the MSc, PhD studies and other publications connected with these and other research projects are of a more fundamental academic character and are not immediately problem-oriented, though aiming at 'a better integration of theoretical understanding and practical concerns' (Long and Villarreal 1993, p. 140). This work is anthropological due to the fact that in-depth ethnographic studies are emphasized – but avoiding 'ethnographic particularism – which integrate micro-interactional processes and institutional structures (Long 1989, p. 227).

As I discuss below, more work has to be directed towards improving our research techniques, given 'the growing need to identify a set of appropriate analytical concepts and a methodology for exploring intervention processes that would prove useful not only to the researcher but also to the field practitioner' (Long and Villarreal 1993, p. 141).

The Wageningen Anthropological Agenda

The Wageningen agenda may be arbitrarily divided into four parts: (i) problem-oriented research; (ii) anthropological studies of the development fabric; (iv) the study of globalization and localization, and (v) the analysis of culture.

Problem-Oriented Research

Understanding a particular situation and processes of change is important for specific interventions in rural areas by the state, international organizations and NGOs, certainly if projects aim to change people's behaviour, activities and organization. Anthropologists should be able to produce background material, make impact studies and answer specific questions. This means that special attention has to be given to 'policy-oriented research,' which can nonetheless produce sound in-depth analysis.

An actor-oriented approach can help the researcher quickly to identify the social actors implicated in the intervention 'game,' their differences in power, access to resources, organization, values, priorities, attitudes, and language/discourse; as well as the interfaces between those actors and the conflicts, negotiations, goal displacements, (non)flows of information, and modes of 'structural ignorance' taking place in these contact fields. An actor-oriented approach could also be seen as a necessity for understanding the process of policy preparation and the directions and signals given by the organizing authorities during the implementation and evaluation phases.

Analysis of the 'lifeworlds' and 'livelihoods' of actors, both quite central to the actor-oriented approach, is far more time consuming. Lifeworlds comprise influences on actors from their environment, from the networks in which they operate. Livelihood emphasizes the way actors organize their lives, and the actions they take in order to survive or improve their positions. Complex organizing principles are used and manipulated by social actors: these include ethnic, familial, friendship, territorial, class, and religious principles.

A genealogical approach can be used as a 'quick method' when studying, for example, changes in agricultural patterns and in the use and mobilization of labour, occupational structures, the role of migration and contacts with migrants, and patterns of (intra-familial) inequality (den Ouden 1980; 1989a,b, 1995).[4] Starting with a small selection of male 'elders,' I traced back to their deceased fathers and paternal grandfathers and then looked at all their male descendants and the women with whom they were or are married. Abbreviations and modifications to this approach are, of course, possible. Van der Schenk (1988) started with an adult woman and extended backwards to her living mother and maternal grandmother in order to study female economic activities and problems

of access to land in Bénin. During a few weeks' research in 1996 I had time only to work with the male descendants and their wives of the deceased fathers of the selected elders (den Ouden 1996). It is important to emphasize that the genealogical approach is more than just a general way of talking with people about various topics; one must analyse situations and processes of change in relation to real people, living or deceased, migrated or not, who make up the often elaborate genealogies.

It would be useful to cooperate with experts of the department of Communication and Extension Studies at WAU to see whether existing 'quick' research methods could be 'improved' in certain fields so as to make them more acceptable from an anthropological/ethnographic point of view. The challenge would also be for sections of development planning to produce 'action research' methods leading to both useful 'knowledge for action' and an anthropological understanding of events. It is, however, quite likely that anthropologists, when trying to answer questions about situations and processes in changing societies as part of their scientific work, will produce analyses that are considered too complicated for development practitioners. Could anthropologists water down their wine somewhat, without becoming too naive or losing their credibility? Perhaps. But it is the anthropologist's primary task to alert practitioners to the heterogeneity in cultural styles and group and individual strategies which permeate present-day 'hybrid,' as well as more 'stable' societal situations.

The Analysis of Development Intervention

In discussing anthropological inputs into the study of the fabric of development, I follow Olivier de Sardan (1995) in defining development as 'all social processes introduced by intentional operations to transform a social environment, conducted by institutions or actors exterior to this environment but trying to mobilize that environment, and based on an attempt to graft resources and/or techniques and/or knowledge.' (p. 7, my translation). Olivier de Sardan uses the term *configuration développementiste* for that whole, largely cosmopolitan universe of experts, bureaucrats, NGO employees, researchers, technicians, project leaders, and field officers, who somehow live from the development of others and who mobilize or manage for that purpose considerable material and symbolic resources (1995, p. 7). The 'developmentist configuration' defines the very existence of development from this perspective. This opens the way for in-depth anthropological analysis of the interactions between the multiple social actors involved in or influenced by the policy and projects designed to transform other people's ways of life. The interfaces between the various social actors in the process which brings about a particular development policy and its concomitant ideas/ideology[5] and language/discourse should also be included in such an analysis.

Long's thinking on the analysis of induced change (deconstructing planned intervention) is very much in line with Olivier de Sardan's approach. Intervention is taken as 'an ongoing, socially constructed and negotiated process' (Long 1992, p. 35), 'an ongoing transformational process that is constantly reshaped by its own internal organizational and political dynamic and by the specific conditions it encounters or itself creates, including the responses and strategies of local and regional groups who may struggle to define and defend their own social spaces, cultural boundaries and positions within the wider power field.' (1992, p. 37). We have to understand wider 'structural phenomena' when studying the processes of policy preparation and implementation because many of the choices and strategies pursued by the social actors involved have been shaped by processes outside the immediate arenas of interaction. We also have to keep in mind that induced change cannot be disconnected from the study of local dynamics, endogenous, 'informal' processes of change, and social change in general (Olivier de Sardan 1995, p. 6).

Much excellent in-depth anthropological analysis of development interventions, understood as 'an ongoing, socially constructed and negotiated process' has recently been done.[6] Here one might mention the Wageningen work of Frerks (1991), Seur (1992), van der Zaag (1992), de Vries (1992a), Arce (1993), van Donge (1993), Villarreal (1994), and Mongbo (1995) and several others.

Let me briefly highlight one topic from this anthropological analysis of development intervention as a transformational process, namely, what happens in the interfaces between 'developers' and the 'to be developed,' and, in particular, how differences in ideologies, cultural codes and languages are bridged, if at all. There must clearly be a battery of mediators between the local population and the interventionists in order to achieve some kind of understanding, goodwill, indulgence, or acceptance. Olivier de Sardan (1995, p. 153) distinguishes two types of mediators with a central function: the field officers (*les agents de développement de terrain*) and the brokers (*courtiers*). Arce and Long (1987) give an example of the dilemmas and role conflicts of field officers in the problems of a *tècnico* in a Mexican region who tries to bridge the gap between the interests of peasant producers and administrators. Such officers have a 'mission,' they have to defend and implement certain goals, they should follow certain methods of extension and animation but, in fact, their bridging role is full of pitfalls which they often cannot discuss openly (see Olivier de Sardan 1995, pp. 154–59). As a mouthpiece between techno-scientific knowledge and popular knowledge, the officer has, somehow, to know them both, including the languages. He or she not only has to translate concepts such as 'fertilizer,' 'diarrhoea' or 'investment,' but also concepts from development language such as 'development,' 'self-development,' 'sustainable development,' 'participation,' and 'resource protection.'

The problems associated with participatory ideology are clear from a Niger example where the local population compares the present participatory approach with earlier projects: 'The former project was like a stranger who offered a stick to an old and tired man so that he could get up. The present project is like a stranger who does not hand the stick but throws it on the ground, asking the old man to make an effort to pick it up.' (Olivier de Sardan 1995, p. 167, my translation)

Similarly, there are various categories of brokers, of go-betweens within the local population, who play strategic roles. These intermediaries try to channel external resources to the local arena, and their activities take place on the interface between the local population and the development institutions and their representatives. 'Traditional' chiefs or lineage/family elders are not the most obvious intermediaries: they can often neither speak nor read the language of the developers, nor are they well-acquainted with the (urban and often 'white') development world. Well-educated migrants often act as go-betweens on behalf of their village/region, and sometimes even have their 'own' NGOs to recruit followers in their 'homeland': state officials, university staff, and merchants. These 'highly' placed migrants may well need local brokers, just as field officers do. At the local level, what Olivier de Sardan (1995, p. 163) calls *courtiers aux pieds nus*, 'brokers on bare feet,' may be local state officials, but are not necessarily so. The population must be convinced that particular persons are good at attracting resources from (specific) outside agencies. These may include, for instance, a local priest, a school teacher, the elected or nominated village chief, a big farmer with knowledge of and contacts in the outside world, and local people who were formerly employed by state agencies or NGOs. These local intermediaries do not always occupy high positions in the village, nor are they always esteemed and trusted by many people: they can be quite marginal in the local communities or 'suffer' from status inconsistencies. Anthropological research makes it clear that there might be different intermediaries for different outside development agencies or private 'benefactors' at the local level. It would, in fact, be a mistake to suppose that these intermediaries are always important local leaders in many domains. Mongbo's (1995, pp. 196–97) example of Aloka, a former white collar worker who still does not wish to dirty his hands with farm work, has a rather marginal and unclear position in this Béninese village. Though used for contacts with (and by) development agencies – 'You are the one who knows these people. How do you think we should introduce our case to make sure that we win it?' – , outside the development arenas he does not have much social status and recognition and is considered lazy and irresponsible.

The Study of Globalization and (Re)localization

Earlier anthropological studies mostly emphasized the deterministic nature of the commercialization of agriculture, and the incorporation of rural populations into the state and national and world-markets as irreversible processes of change which 'happened' to rather passive recipients. A few of these older studies do pay attention to the local 'patterns of interpersonal relationships and their dynamics within several local institutions and spheres of activity' (Verrips 1975, p. 118) and to the differential reactions of local actors (e.g., Verrips 1975, pp. 114–15). I do not want to play down the importance of certain general effects of particular external forces: radical changes are taking place in the micro situations we analyse and we must try to indicate general tendencies. It would be nonsense to reject all studies where the focus was not explicitly directed at internal change and the growth of new local forms of heterogeneity, or at the differential actions and reactions of social actors to the external influences. An actor-oriented approach should not become stuck in ethnographic particularism, thus disguising general tendencies which transcend the peculiarities of social actors,' individuals' and groups' actions and reactions. A bottom-up perspective should 'assist us in forging a theoretical middleground between so-called 'micro' and 'macro' theories of agrarian change' through the analysis of the heterogeneous reality (Long 1989, p. 231).

However, much more precise ethnographic analysis is needed in order to study current social transformations. Globalization needs close attention today, together with the heterogeneity that it entails in the rural areas throughout the world. 'Indeed much of what we now witness is essentially global in scope, entailing the accelerated flows of various commodities, people, capital, technologies, communications, images and knowledge across national frontiers' (Long 1996, p. 37).

Milton, discussing environmentalism, makes a connection with culture, but acknowledges that globalization discourses cross the boundaries of what we normally think of as cultures, and in this respect speaks of transcultural perspectives and discourses (1996, p. 218). She uses the term 'discourse' because: 'The movement of cultural things in the global arena is essentially a product of communication.' These cultural things 'lose their ties to particular societies and groups' (p. 217). Here culture is seen as 'consisting of everything we know, think and feel about the world, regardless of the processes through which it is acquired' (p. 215).

Van der Ploeg (1992, pp. 21–25) writes of the 'production of disconnections' for the agricultural field in which, for instance, agriculture is disconnected from the local ecosystem, the quality of craftsmanship is expropriated, tasks are delegated to external institutions, and parameters for organizing time and space are externally established. The process of globalization does not, however, imply that farmers lose all room for manoeuvre: they relate their farming activities in different ways to markets

and technology, to the recommendations of extension services, in order to overcome their particular problems and because of their own styles, strategies and priorities (van der Ploeg 1992, pp. 26–34). 'Shifts in consumer tastes, technology development and transnational or supermarket strategies set off a whole series of repercussions that can significantly affect farm decision-making' (Long 1996, p. 53), forcing farmers to make choices (Marsden and Arce 1993; also van der Ploeg 1992, p. 37).

Long (1996, p. 46) stresses 'the complex inter-dynamics of globalizing and localizing processes that generate new modes of economic organization and livelihood, new identities, alliances and struggles for space and power, and new cultural and knowledge repertoires.' The different actors involved (such as simple commodity producers, commercial farmers, transnational companies, agricultural bureaucrats, credit banks, various agrarian organizations, supermarket chains, national governments, the European Union) struggle to advance their own particular interests, resulting in negotiated outcomes insofar as this is possible. Local/regional situations are transformed by becoming part of wider 'global' arenas and processes, while 'global' dimensions are made meaningful in relation to specific 'local' conditions and through the understandings and strategies of local' actors (Long 1996, p. 47).[7]

It is clear that much in-depth anthropological analysis is needed in this field in order to understand changes in rural areas, the nature of globalization, and the actors and interfaces between them. This research can also elucidate the room for manoeuvre of specific categories of people – men, women and young people – involved in farm, off-farm and other economic activities.

The Analysis of Culture

Here I focus on 'culture' as a more independent property of groups and societies. We are concerned with cultural representations and codes, cognitive orientations, secular and religious ideologies, styles of thinking and doing, the giving of meaning, cultural categories of verbal and non-verbal communication, and common knowledge. We can elaborate this theme by taking into consideration ethnic and kinship identities, solidarities and obligations as part of the 'cultural order.' This 'cultural order' or 'symbolic order' can perhaps best be understood as the way in which the world of singularities is arranged into several manageable classes (cf. Kopytoff 1986, p. 70). Here I leave aside the debate about the opposition between 'utilitarianism' and a 'cultural account.' That is, as Sahlins (1976, p. 55) puts it, 'whether the cultural order is to be conceived as the codification of man's actual purposeful and pragmatic action; or whether, conversely, human action in the world is to be understood as mediated by the cultural design, which gives order at once to practical experience, customary practice, and the relationship between the two.'

I use the concepts of 'cultural order' or 'symbolic order' with much hesitation, since these terms and paradigms again land us in the middle of a debate. Rosaldo speaks about (1989, p. 94) 'an unresolved tension about whether to describe cultures as loosely tied bundles of informal practices, or as well-formed systems regulated by control mechanisms, or as the interplay of both.' Order, or even 'non-order'? (1989, p. 102).

Here I limit myself to the remark that culture is both man-made and changed by man. It is a social construction in which a synthesis is never fully realized. To quote Olivier de Sardan (1995, p. 11) 'la 'culture' est un construit, soumis à d'incessants processus syncrétiques et objet de luttes symboliques.' Emic representations, the way of thinking and living, do not change from one moment to the next and this hampers the possibilities to change society (Zanen 1996, p. 14). Long recognizes this 'treacly' nature of culture and emphasizes the need to examine how individual choices are shaped by larger frames of meaning and actions, by cultural dispositions (Long 1992, p. 21).

It is clear that with interventions in the field of anti-degradation/erosion programmes, water supply, health care, or 'improving' the situation of women (to name but a few of the interventions discussed by Zanen for a Dutch project in the Mossi region of Burkina Faso, 1996, pp. 136–43), one has to find out how people think about these matters, their cultural meaning and, of course, the cultural changes taking place. Or, to indicate some other topics: What are the 'emic definitions of survival, self-achievement, and well-being?' (to use the heading of a section of the study of Mongbo (1995, p. 172). What about 'democracy' and 'participation'? What are the attitudes of men and women *vis-à-vis* interrogation, asking questions, also questions about other people? (Fiske 1985, in Zanen 1996, p. 156). When Zanen (1996, pp. 134–35) finds out that, in Mossi society, irrigated rice cultivation, horticulture, animal husbandry and commerce are far less subject to cultural restrictions and ritual activities than the cultivation of millet and sorghum, and that, therefore, women and young men have much freedom in starting those 'free' activities, this is of great importance for specific development interventions.

Although it is obvious that knowing and understanding the cultural order(s) and processes of acculturation (or even hybridization) are important for analysis of planned and non-planned transformations, it remains amazing that the study of cultural components was underplayed for so long in the Wageningen tradition of development sociology, and is still often forgotten or ignored as too thorny. Here also I have to confess a *mea culpa*. There is now a growing attention to the study of discourse, especially in the situational analysis of interfaces between social actors, for instance between 'developers' and the 'to be developed' (Arce, Villarreal and de Vries 1994; Mongbo 1995). The cultural element also sneaks in, implicitly or even explicitly, when discussing 'the way of. . .' or 'styles of . . .' (van der Ploeg 1994, pp. 18–19; den Ouden 1995, p. 3).

It is clear that in an actor-oriented approach both the lifeworlds and livelihood of actors are very much influenced by cultural patterns. But still the cultural order of societies is often considered more a Leiden affair than a Wageningen interest. Perhaps the Wageningen emphasis on class and power relations, on economic, political and social relations and interactions *tout court*, is responsible for this neglect of the field of cultural. The important work of de Haan (1994) on the cultural ideas and meanings of farm families in the eastern Netherlands, pointing to the endurance of inheritance ideologies, remains quite exceptional for the Wageningen scene.

Notes

1 I am grateful to Norman Long, Henk de Haan, Alberto Arce and Monique Nuijten for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this chapter.
2 In this section I appear to be suggesting that sociologists only make their inquiries with structured questionnaires and surveys, shun observation and favour quantitative research and analysis. That, of course, is not strictly true. Many sociologists will argue that there is nothing special about the so-called anthropological way of doing fieldwork and will claim that it is also part and parcel of sociology. On the other hand, if I suggest that anthropologists shun quantitative research, it would likewise be an exaggeration: anthropologists count and quantify a number of facts, do significance tests and use various computer programmes in their work, for example in network studies.
3 The contributions of anthropological research to the drafting of regional development plans in the sixties and seventies, directed by van Dusseldorp, are not always clear. Here we recall contributions to the Euphrates project in Syria in the mid-1960s, to the regional plan for Trengganu, Malaysia, at the end of the 1960s, to the regional plan for the First Division of Sarawak, Malaysia, in the early 1970s and to the regional plan for the south-west region of Saoudi Arabia in the mid-1970s.
4 Compare working with cognatic genealogies by Gabayet (1983) and Hüsken (1991).
5 Olivier de Sardan (1995, p. 53): 'Codes culturels qui servent à évaluer les actions proposées.'
6 Also outside Wageningen much work has been carried out in this field. I have mentioned the work of Olivier de Sardan (1995), several times, but we might also refer to that of Bierschenk (1988), and Crehan and von Oppen (1988).
7 In his discussion of global and local networks of small-scale entrepreneurs in Mexico, Verschoor (1997) uses a quite different perspective. He sees entrepreneurs as constantly trying to set up a global network of actors who will provide resources in exchange for an expected product or service. With the aid of these resources, entrepreneurs then create the necessary room for manoeuvre to organize a local network in which the product or service expected by actors in the global network can be advanced.