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CONTRASTING PARADIGMS: STATE-MANAGED DEVELOPMENT  
VS. ALTERNATIVE PEOPLE-MANAGED DEVELOPMENT

by

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In different times and places people have devised different kinds of social structures to provide goods and benefits essential to their welfare. Examples include the extended family acting in a corporate way, traditional village councils, guilds, cooperatives, private and public corporations, unions, government ministries and regulatory agencies. Periods of significant social change in history have inevitably been accompanied--and affected--by changes in the basic character of these structures. New forms are developed to accommodate needs of groups seeking to exploit new modes of production or changes in the bases of political power; and these demands for structural changes are legitimated through processes of legal change--once groups seeking change gain enough power to secure the result. The development, in 19th century North America, of law facilitating the organization and activities of "private" corporations; the development of law facilitating trade union activities in the 20th century, are examples. Similarly, the demand that modern states serve as vehicles for social reform or development of underdeveloped economic sectors, has led to a proliferation of new kinds of state-managed structures. In the third world state and parastatal structures have become pervasive irrespective of the official ideology used to justify them.

I.

Historically, most states in the third world were originally imposed on rural people--and used (by those who governed) to promote extraction of resources, or production of cash crops. In more recent times state structures to promote other kinds of developmental objectives have proliferated; through one organizational form (service-providing ministries; governmental regulatory bodies) or another (commodity corporations, mixed public-private, joint enterprise corporations; state-supervised cooperatives), agents of the state now manage or control production or distribution of most of the goods and services essential to the needs of rural people--and, often, the prices of crops on which producers depend for their income. These institutions have taken on a life of their own. They offer positions of power and opportunities for economic advantage. Principles justifying their existence become part of the received wisdom of the dominant groups in society. This culture of etatism can only be challenged as the people

oppressed are able to mobilize and become powerful enough as a group to demand either recognition of new structures or changes in the law governing those which exist.

Thus, the state-centered "development administration" approach to designing and managing structures for resource management is a deep-rooted legacy. In part this phenomenon of pervasive state control may reflect the continuing power of the leaders of rather autonomous bureaucracies as a class; in part it may reflect a cultural view which elites have of people who are uneducated, and, seemingly, unable to develop themselves; in part it reflects policies and ideologies of "development" widely espoused from the 1950s onwards and propagated in the literature of development administration and in schools to teach it: government--properly organized and managed--is seen as the essential vehicle to secure not only social unity and stability, but the kind of "development" envisioned by those who enjoy the power to determine the ends and means of development.

In this paradigm leaders of the state are expected to articulate development ideologies; state professional actors, working as "technocrats" and "fiduciaries" for "the masses"--as "guardians" in a platonic sense--are expected to articulate specific plans and the necessary commands; hierarchical bureaucracies (e.g., agricultural extension services) and, perhaps, ruling "parties" (which may be parastatal structures themselves) are used to help transmit these perceptions, and serve as intermediaries to "the people," who are to be "mobilized" to do what needs to be done. Thus, it has been assumed (perhaps to an extraordinary degree, if one takes a long view of history) that institutions which manage essential resources must be controlled by the state, and staffed by managers and experts whose very professional training and social orientation may tend to reinforce a commitment to decision-making processes which promote the paradigm of state control. In this paradigm the role of law, usually, is instrumental--to legitimize the powers of state structures.<sup>1</sup>

Non-state, communal structures--endogenous cooperatives, clan and religious groups--have long existed in most rural areas; indeed, they provided the historic basis for resource allocation and conflict resolution in rural communities. But traditional groups have seldom figured prominently in strategies of development administration. Governments have often simply ignored or constrained them; or have co-opted them into systems of parastatal structures (as when indigenous cooperatives are required to become state cooperatives by adopting new institutional forms, rules, offices and decision-making processes prescribed by state law and state supervisors). Often the assumption has been that endogenous rural organizations are too small or primitive to be useful; sometimes they are regarded as obstacles to change; sometimes as threats to the hegemony of state structures.

Proponents of state-managed development have regularly down-played the notion that conflict should exist between officials and rural people; the paradigm of good development administration assumes a fundamental identity of interests between good officials working in collaboration, rather than in conflict, with "intended beneficiaries" (sometimes called the "targets") of state programs. Of course "participation" has been stressed but usually as a means to create popular understanding of, and thus willingness to support, policies prescribed by professionals: participation usually takes place within structures and under conditions essentially controlled by the state.

Over past years there has been increasing dissatisfaction with this kind of development administration--an outpouring of literature which seeks to explain why existing state structures so often tend to underallocate resources to the rural poor--and otherwise fail them. New demands for "decentralization" and (or) increased "local participation" reflect a deepening disenchantment with earlier assumptions and aspirations ascribed to the state by earlier development planners.

Striking recognition of this new doctrine was reflected in India's Development Plan of 1978:

Critical for the success of all redistributive laws, policies and programs is that the poor be organized and made conscious of the benefits intended for them. Organized tenants have to see that the tenancy laws are implemented. Organizations of the landless have to see that surplus lands are identified and distributed to them in accordance with the law within five years. The general lesson of the experience so far is that because leakages in delivery systems and ineffective administration, rural programs fail to improve the distribution of income. The Planning Commission is proposing a massive shift of resources in favor of rural areas with an in-built redistributive character in almost every program. But whether the larger resources will have the desired equalizing effect will depend on the extent to which the organized pressure of the beneficiaries counteracts the weaknesses of the administration and the opposition of vested interests. (Emphasis added.)

These views are now shared by other frustrated planners: if the poor are to be the beneficiaries of government development programs, ways must be found to enable people to reach and influence state agencies, and to hold them accountable. By implication there must be changes in law to achieve these results.

II.

The alternative approach now pressed from diverse quarters<sup>2</sup> not only emphasizes the need for changes in structures which manage essential resources, but it emphasizes quite different, interdependent ends and means for rural development. The rural poor are not simply the "objects" of "development;" they are the "subjects" of it. They must provide the source of--and force behind--effective efforts to change the essential conditions which produce impoverishment. They must gain--or regain--the power to determine their developmental needs and the power to create and manage, or at least share power in, institutions created to meet those needs.

In this paradigm participatory organizations of people most in need of "development" (and other groups working with and for them) become major sources of an ideology depicting their goals for their development. It is assumed that through these organizations (and their interaction with others) people will gain capacities to identify their needs and develop their own plans and group activities to realize them. It is assumed that, over the long haul, this is the only way that there can be a kind of continuing "development" which brings essential resources, both material and intangible, to people who have been excluded and impoverished, over many generations, by existing structures. Thus, the creation of new rural organizations becomes imperative to any concept of development which focuses on the needs of those least developed (which is most of the people). Of course the role of the state remains crucial: it provides the means by which credit, water or other goods and services can be marshalled for allocation. But in this paradigm the primary role of state officials is to help people, working together, to do what they can do by themselves through their own structures organized for distribution or for new modes of production. In this paradigm people have the right, not only to organize local activities through structures essentially created by their own law, but also to participate in framing "joint enterprise" relationships between these, "non-state" structures and those of the state. Thus "development," as it relates to the poor, is a process of mobilization, organization, assertion of collective rights and demands and "legitimation" of these claims in state forums--a process inevitably entailing conflict even when the state seeks to facilitate group activities. The development of law responsive to such conflicts can only be worked out through experience. But clearly that law must be grounded in the essential values which give "development" (in this context) its very meaning: self-reliance, participation and affirmative obligations to allocate resources essential to needs equitably--these principles must inform the jurisprudence used to create rules responsive to particular issues.

FOOTNOTES

1. A classic essay on "development administration" is Bernard B. Schaffer's "The Deadlock of Development Administration" in C. Leys (ed.), Political Development (1969). See also Schaffer, "Administrative Legacies and Links in the Post-Colonial State: Preparation, Training and Administrative Reform" in Development and Change 9:175 (1978).
2. See sources cited in Note 1 to our Introduction.