

Introduction

Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard

The last fifty years have witnessed the transformation of the political geography of the globe, as vast areas that were once known as “colonies” became “less developed countries” or “the third world.” People in the declining empires, in the rival superpowers that now dominated international affairs, in the countries born of earlier decolonizations, and in the new nations of Africa and Asia had to rethink how the world was constituted. The idea of development—and the relationship it implied between industrialized, affluent nations and poor, emerging nations—became the key to a new conceptual framework. Unlike the earlier claims of Europe to inherent superiority or a “civilizing mission,” the notion of development appealed as much to leaders of “underdeveloped” societies as to the people of developed countries, and it gave citizens in both categories a share in the intellectual universe and in the moral community that grew up around the world-wide development initiative of the post-World War II era. This community shared a conviction that the alleviation of poverty would not occur simply by self-regulating processes of economic growth or social change. It required a concerted intervention by the national governments of both poor and wealthy countries in cooperation with an emerging body of international aid and development organizations.

The problem of development gave rise to a veritable industry in the academic social sciences, with a complex and often ambiguous relationship to governmental, international, and private agencies actively engaged in promoting economic growth, alleviating poverty, and fostering beneficial social change in “developing” regions of the world. From Oxfam to the United States Agency for International Development to the World Bank to rice research institutes in India to the World Health Organization, a diverse and complex set of institutions—funded with billions of dollars—

has focused on research and action directed toward development. Meanwhile, people from developing countries have studied economics or public health in European or American universities, done stints in international organizations, attended international conferences, and staffed government and nongovernmental organizations in their home countries. Missions go out from agencies in the United States or Europe to investigate problems and set up projects and work with experts, bureaucrats, and politicians in “host” countries.

Such processes have created overlapping networks of communication within which ideas and theories of development have emerged, circulated, and been appropriated within a wide variety of institutional settings—from Washington to Dakar and back again. The goal of this book and the three workshops out of which it emerged is to locate the production, transmission, and implementation of this development knowledge within its historical, political, and intellectual contexts.

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT DEVELOPMENT

The development process has from its inception been self-critical and subject to critiques. Most projects include an element of “evaluation.” Development specialists have found old ideas to be wanting and have moved on to others.¹ For all the shifting fashions, it is possible to discern a wide—but far from universal—set of operating assumptions emerging since the 1940s, often considered to constitute a “development orthodoxy”: that foreign aid and investment on favorable terms, the transfer of knowledge of production techniques, measures to promote health and education, and economic planning would lead impoverished countries to be able to become “normal” market economies.

More radical alternatives came from Latin American theorists of “underdevelopment” who argued that international exchange itself widens the gap between rich and poor. Such arguments actually reinforced development as a category, by insisting that there is a normal pattern of economic development which Latin American, African, or Asian countries fell “under.” Marxist theorists (for example, Amin 1974, 1993; Mandel 1975) came from a different direction—moving from an analysis of production in capitalist societies to a consideration of capital accumulation on a global scale—but ended up in a similar place: while claiming that capitalism was making poor societies poorer, they insisted that another kind of directed social change could bring about prosperity and justice.²

Particularly since the 1980s, two quite distinct sets of critics have rejected the entire developmentalist framework. One set might be called ultramodernist.³ It consists of economic theorists who insist that the laws of economics have been proven valid, that the invisible hand of the market

allocates resources optimally. Therefore, there is only economics, not development economics. When governments or outside agencies try to make the market work better, they introduce distortions which make it work worse. The free market does not guarantee equality of outcome, they say, but it produces as optimal an allocation of resources as is possible.⁴

A second set is postmodernist. This group sees development discourse as nothing more than an apparatus of control and surveillance. Development is but one of a series of controlling discourses and controlling practices—a “knowledge-power regime”—that has emerged since the Enlightenment, the extension of a universalizing European project into all corners of the globe. That most development projects fail—a point postmodernists and ultramodernists agree on—actually reinforces developmentalism, they say, for the failure defines a “target population” bounded from the rest of humankind by its aboriginal poverty, ignorance, and passivity, and hence by its need for the intervention of knowledgeable outsiders (Escobar 1995; Apffel Marglin and Marglin 1990; Sachs 1992; Nandy 1988; Crush 1995).

The ultramodernist and the postmodernist critiques actually have a lot in common, especially their abstraction from the institutions and structures in which economic action takes place and which shape a power-knowledge regime. The ultramodernists see power only as a removable distortion to an otherwise self-regulating market. The postmodernists locate the power-knowledge regime in a vaguely defined “West” or in the alleged claims of European social science to have found universal categories for understanding and manipulating social life everywhere.

James Ferguson (1990) points to a way of analyzing development as a controlling discourse while locating it in a specific set of international and national apparatuses. The state in “less developed countries” and international agencies such as the World Bank each find a role by accepting each other’s: the national government allocates development resources and portrays itself as the agent of modernity, while outside agencies legitimately intervene in sovereign states by defining their services as benevolent, technical, and politically neutral. Both are content with development as a process which depoliticizes and disempowers local populations; both portray poverty as “aboriginal,” disconnected from the history which gave rise to unequal access to resources; both are content with an expertise-driven structure of development; both are reinforced by failure as much as success. Ferguson’s study opens the possibility of an ethnographically and historically situated analysis of development institutions, where the ability to deny or provide funds intersects with the ability to define what kinds of knowledge are or are not acceptable.

Locating power does not show that it is determinant or that a particular discourse is not appropriate for other purposes. That development in-

terventions are both technical and moral renders them subject to critique through research findings and theoretical revision and to debate within the framework of universal rights and global citizenship upon which the development regime draws. Within poor countries, states' attempts to portray themselves as development agents do not immunize them from having their populist rhetoric thrust back upon them or prevent a debate on what is and what is not development. The marvelous ambiguity of the word development—eliding in a single concept notions of increased output and improved welfare—does not in itself prevent debates over its meanings, within and across national boundaries. What at one level appears like a discourse of control is at another a discourse of entitlement, a way of capturing the imagination of a cross-national public around demands for decency and equity.

The strange convergence of free market universalists and anti-universalist critics thus leaves a great deal to be discussed: of all the ways to conceptualize political and moral issues in international relations, how do some emerge while others are marginalized? to what extent are the terms of development discourses susceptible to becoming the basis of popular mobilization or of claims on national elites or international institutions?

Those were some of the questions the workshops sought to address. Our goal was neither to bury development nor to praise it.⁵ We witnessed—albeit to a limited extent—some of the passionate confrontations development has engendered over the past fifteen years: postmodernists accuse developers of imposing an undesired modernity, while free marketers denounce the nihilism of the postmodernists and the statism of the more orthodox; people working in the trenches of development projects insist that they do practical work, that they need coherent and reasonable frameworks through which to make day-to-day decisions, and that the problems of sickness and poverty which they address are not going to be helped by sweeping evocations of “community values” or “getting prices right.” No side in these tussles has a monopoly of virtue, and all have something to gain by a more introspective, contingent view of the terrain upon which these battles have taken place.

Development, over the last half century, has been a framework for debate. But those debates have not taken place on level ground: some ideas have had the backing of powerful institutions and others have not. At times, conditions in the world economy have widened the possibilities of policies that could be tried, at others times alternatives have been narrowed. Social science theorizing and projects in Africa, Asia, and Latin America; funding priorities; and projects in the field have had ambiguous relations: the extent to which academic social science responds to the kinds of knowledge that political institutions demand of it and the degree to which social science helps to define what kinds of problems are rec-

ognized and deemed to be solvable are important and quite open questions. Learning does take place within institutions, but it is far from clear that ideas about eradicating poverty or disease have been influential merely because they were good.

Social scientists and development practitioners—and their ambivalent relationship to one another—should be as much the subject of investigation as the cultures and histories of African, Asian, or Latin American peoples. They are all part of a complex encounter. Our hope is that the studies in this volume will inspire more research, for perhaps the clearest conclusion of our three workshops is that we do not know the answers to the most interesting questions we have posed. Studying “up,” as anthropologists call it, is difficult: any study of the powerful focuses on people and institutions with power to exclude themselves from the realm of the discussible. Yet it is far from clear that such power is absolute or that the people involved consider that they have something to hide. The following papers, with their variety of emphases, suggest a wide range of possibilities for the future.

In part, these papers approach problems in the sociology of knowledge; they tell a historical story about the end of empire and the rise of a new regime of unequal international relations; they look at the intellectual history of academic disciplines and political thinking; they analyze institutions; they explore how ideas are deployed and contested within “developing” societies. The authors, using a variety of tools, try to understand better the ways in which ideas and categories of social science knowledge have become enmeshed in the theory and practice of development.

How different fields of inquiry claim authority, police the boundaries of professionalism, and position themselves in relation to governments and foundations has been the subject of a rich and growing body of literature.⁶ Of all the social sciences, anthropology has probably worried the most over how it constitutes the object of its analysis, debating what constitutes “ethnographic authority” and how that authority is related to the structure of power in colonial and postcolonial societies (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Economics—the most self-consciously “hard” of the social sciences and the one which has tended the most to claim “development” as its territory—seems the least likely territory for such explorations. Yet Donald McCloskey, in *The Rhetoric of Economics* (1985), opens up such a possibility. This conservative, Chicago-school economist shows elegantly that an economic argument is fundamentally an exercise in persuasion. He presents his argument as an attack on “modernism,” on the claim to present a singular and scientific truth. Instead, he insists, economists—like anyone trying to make a case—use a series of tropes which convey authority within their professional milieu. Economists don’t prove; they

convince; and his central metaphor for how a social science proceeds is that of the “conversation.”⁷

The “conversation” about development is an extraordinarily extensive one, taking place all over the world, involving people from numerous cultural origins. Development experts are a very cosmopolitan community, a kind of “new tribe” (Hannerz 1990) involving the diverse staffs of institutions like the World Bank and giving rise to linkages—cemented by the languages of expertise—between developed and developing countries.⁸ Development language is simultaneously universalistic and pliable. Yet this phenomenon gives rise to a series of questions not fully developed by McCloskey and his colleagues: who is excluded from a conversation, and on what grounds? How are rhetorics defined historically and what are the processes within communities of experts that determine which rhetorics are deemed convincing and which are not? We need to take equally seriously the institutional and discursive mechanisms which made the transnational conversation possible and those which reproduced inequality within it. This calls for the kind of careful examination that puts institutions and ideas in the same frame, that looks not only at rhetoric but at historical and social processes (as for example in Sikkink 1991).

This perspective leads to questions of how discourses and practices are bounded: is there a clearly definable “mainstream” of meanings and representations and an established repertoire of actions—from the report of the visiting mission to “strategic planning” to technical assistance—that developers consistently draw on? How does the professionalization of a discipline and the creation of institutions engaged with development distinguish the persons and ideas included within acceptable practice from those labeled as marginal, as pedants, or as quacks?

This volume thus presents a view of development as a contingent, contextualized, and changing phenomenon. There is great theoretical uncertainty in the development field and even less awareness of how policymakers and development practitioners define the economic and social problems on which they work. And yet the world has fifty years of experience with development initiatives in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.⁹ The lessons of this experience have not been fully assimilated. Pressing human problems are at issue, and the question remains whether we can appreciate the complexity of social processes and the elusiveness of our categories for analyzing them without becoming paralyzed.

DEVELOPMENT IN HISTORY

Many of the activities that now fall under the rubric of development—as well as the ethos of directed progress—have a long history. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch referred in the first workshop to “predevelopmental-

ist development” before the 1930s, and David Anderson detailed the phases of British action in the areas of forestry, agriculture, and health. In mid-nineteenth-century Europe, theorists—Friedrich List most notable among them—and political leaders in “late industrializing nations” debated the need for national policies to catch up. The creole elites of Latin America since at least the early nineteenth century have wondered whether they should model their economic and cultural aspirations on European bourgeoisies or emphasize their distinctiveness; follow ideas of *laissez-faire* or pursue specifically national approaches to economic growth; join the “progressive” causes of their era, such as abolishing slavery, or defend their own way of doing things against outside pressure.¹⁰ For intellectuals and social scientists in Europe—and those defining themselves in relation to Europe—the idea of development provided a way of narrating world history, but not necessarily a rationale for acting upon that history.¹¹

The form of the development idea that captured the imagination of many people across the world from the 1940s onward had quite specific origins—in the crisis of colonial empires. That colonial states were supposed to facilitate exports had long been a given, but only through investments expected to bring a rapid return. France and Britain both had firm doctrines of colonial financial self-sufficiency—each colony was supposed to pay its own way—in the name of which long-term initiatives to improve colonial infrastructure were repeatedly rejected. What was new in the colonial world of the late 1930s and 1940s was that the concept of development became a framing device bringing together a range of interventionist policies and metropolitan finance with the explicit goal of raising colonial standards of living.¹²

From Colonial Empires to Less Developed Countries

Great Britain, in 1940, and France, in 1946, moved decisively to embrace the development framework in an effort to reinvigorate and relegitimize empire as it was being challenged by nationalist movements, labor militance, and increased questioning of colonial rule (Cooper, this volume; Coquery-Vidrovitch et al. 1988). In fact, the intrusiveness of development initiatives caused more conflict than they resolved, and African political and labor leaders seized the vocabulary of state-directed change to escalate demands for wages like those of European workers, for social services on a higher standard, and for the power to direct change themselves. In the end, the colonial development effort had quite a different effect: it provided a means by which imperial powers could reconcile themselves to their loss of power, while maintaining a connection with their ex-colonies and a continued sense of their mission in shaping their future. De-

clining imperial powers were caught in an ambivalence that has attached itself to development ideas ever since: were they a description of ongoing, self-propelled models of social change, or blueprints for action?

The movement between 1945 and the 1960s toward a world of nation-states, as opposed to a world of diverse sorts of political entities, brought former colonies into relationship with the United States, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and international organizations—a world of sovereign equivalency but enormous *de facto* inequalities. In a sense, the colonizer's conceit that "other" people needed to adopt new ways of living was internationalized, making development simultaneously a global issue and a concern of states. The standard of living of a poor Bengali became an issue debatable at Geneva as well as Dacca, while the terms of such a discussion (per capita income or other national statistics) reinforced the centrality of the national unit's economic role even as it opened up its performance to international examination. The development concept was crucial to all participants to rethink unequal relationships in the era of decolonization. Yet the historical trajectory that brought the different nations of the world to this point framed development in a particular way: former colonial officials were holding before themselves a future in which their conception of economic behavior could be a model for the world, while African and Asian leaders were eager to look away from their colonial past. Neither side was looking very clearly at the present, where complex yet dynamic forms of production and exchange presented opportunities and constraints.

New actors recognized the importance of the development framework in coming to grips with the opportunities and dangers of the postwar world. For the United States, the opportunity lay in an assertion of the mutual benefits coming from expanded world commerce, as the opening of markets once dominated by European colonial governments would stimulate European recovery and enhance colonial well-being. The Marshall Plan was both a precedent for American aid and a flexing of economic muscles. By the late 1940s, however, American economic leaders became increasingly skeptical that they could wait for the benefits of opening more areas to the market. The shift away from market-driven development was encouraged by the expanding threat of communism, with its supposed appeal to the world's poor. It was in this context that Harry Truman announced in 1949 that the United States would undertake an effort to mobilize "our store of technical knowledge in order to help [the people of underdeveloped nations] realize their aspirations for a better life." In doing so he took development out of the colonial realm and made it a basic part of international politics.¹³

The growing convergence of U.S. and European interests around the need to generate development through technical assistance programs

played an important role in fostering the creation of a series of international organizations during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Founded in the context of European reconstruction and the Bretton Wood agreements in the late 1940s, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund expanded their field of action from financing European recovery and financial stability in the 1940s to fostering international development in the 1950s. Equally important was the United Nations system of development organizations—the Food and Agricultural Organization, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the UN’s Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance. The creation of these multilateral agencies contributed to the internationalization of development. Although the administration of these organizations was initially dominated by Europeans and Americans and debates within the organizations reflected specific national interests, the organizations served to de-emphasize such interests and make the case that a prosperous, stable world was a shared goal (Lumsdaine 1993). And the increasing presence of “developing” nations in the United Nations organization made it easier for their leaders to insert their conceptions of development into debates, even as western-controlled institutions funded projects and multinational corporations exercised great power over capital flows.

Different Developments?

One cannot appreciate the power of the development idea without realizing that the possibility that modern life and improved living standards could be open to all, regardless of race or history of colonial subjugation, was in the 1950s a liberating possibility, eagerly seized by many people in the colonies. Development gave African and Asian leadership a sense of mission, for they were positioned to assimilate the best that Europe had to offer while rejecting its history of oppression and cultural arrogance. These elites positioned themselves to broker relationships among diverse societies, world markets, and international organizations.

As Stacy Pigg (1992) writes in regard to Nepal, intellectuals and political elites—through education and ties to the development apparatus itself—became part of a world-wide community intent on classifying, analyzing, and reforming indigenous social institutions, which increasingly settled into the generic category of “backward,” “village,” or “bush.” As she puts it (1992: 512),

By virtue of their participation in this language of categorization, cosmopolitan Nepalis stake out their place in a global society and legitimate their political authority over villagers who do not understand their villageness. This is why the ideology of modernization in Nepal is not simply a matter

of western influence, but a matter of simultaneous Nepalization and globalization.

We thus need to see the engagement of people in former colonies with the development concept in dynamic terms. They had already turned the post-1930s version of colonial development into claims for material welfare and political power, so that the development framework turned into something quite different from what it originally was supposed to be. From the Bandung conference of 1955 onward, a “third worldist” conception of social justice emerged, built around claims for a larger share of the world’s resources to be devoted to the poorest countries without compromising the latter’s sovereignty (Diouf, this volume).

In different countries, there emerged important variations on the development theme which did not necessarily accept the idea of North-South interaction as naturally beneficial to both parties or of development as an act of generosity of the rich to the poor. It is thus too simple to assert the emergence of a singular development discourse, a single knowledge-power regime. The appropriations, deflections, and challenges emerging within the overall construct of development—and the limits to them—deserve careful attention.

It is a mark of the power and the limits of the development framework that emerged out of the crisis of colonial empires that it was both embraced and reshaped by policymakers and social scientists from Latin America, a century beyond its own decolonization. For Latin American elites, the development framework offered new terms for articulating grievances in regard to the trade, investment, and financial policies of domineering economic partners and opened a new arena in which they could assert leadership, both abroad and at home. Most interesting were the contributions to development theory and policy. In the late 1940s, when economists in the United States and Europe were just beginning to work through what interventionist policies in the world’s poorest economies implied for their discipline, the Argentinean banker Raúl Prebisch and some of his colleagues presented a “structuralist” approach to international economics that reversed the notion of mutually beneficial interaction that was crucial to the appeal of development to leaders on both sides of the colonial divide. They distinguished between a “center” of the world economy producing manufactured goods and a “periphery” producing primary products, and they argued that the operations of the world market tended over time to go against the latter.¹⁴ Such arguments had an ambiguous relationship to the pragmatic, coalition politics that led to Brazilian and Argentinean “developmentalism” in the 1950s (Sikkink 1991), and some of their features—such as the call for import substitution industrialization—resonated strongly with the more pro-trade

theories that were just becoming the orthodoxy in the United States and Great Britain. A more radical set of deductions from the structuralist analysis of Prebisch appeared in Latin America in the 1960s in the form of dependency theory, with its insistence that first world development was in fact the *cause* of third world underdevelopment and that delinkage was necessary for a true course of development to be pursued in the periphery. The influence of Latin American structuralism spread to Africa as well (Rodney 1972).

Meanwhile, newly independent India experimented with combinations of Soviet planning models and capitalist production in ways that reveal points of convergence as well as the clear contradictions of the opposed visions of societal transformation and economic growth. India's experience revealed as well the possibilities—and the tensions—of combining an explicitly progressive, western-influenced notion of development (associated particularly with Nehru) with a conception of Indian history (symbolized by Gandhi) which stressed the virtues of tradition and simplicity (Bose and Gupta, this volume). Yet as Bose makes clear, this dichotomy oversimplifies the complex political debates that took place from the 1930s onward: critics of the “modern” nation-state could become enthused about the possibilities of “science” or economic planning, while the most vigorous developmentalists often saw themselves as doing what was necessary to preserve the distinctiveness of Indian culture.

What was striking about the 1940s was how much was open for debate: the usefulness of specific colonial institutions or social structures, the specific aspects of what was “western” or “Indian” that were to be preserved, emulated, rejected, or changed. The Indian National Congress attached itself to development as a national project even before the British government had made up its mind about the colonial variant, and after 1947 India set itself the task not only of building a nation, but also an economy relatively insulated from foreign investment and control. As Bose points out below, once independence came about, this identification of development with nation made it harder for a newly independent country to debate exactly what either concept should mean. Development had come to bear the weight of a new leadership's quest for legitimacy, just as in Great Britain by 1947 the political and economic burden development had come to bear made it difficult to probe the meanings of the concept too deeply (Cooper, this volume). National development had its achievements, not least of which was the creation of a knowledge-building apparatus, so that India not only was capable of managing its economy but contributed some of the most important figures to the economics profession worldwide. India has also produced a strong attack on the very idea of development and fora, like *Economic and Political Weekly*, where different viewpoints clash at a high level of sophistication. As Gupta's chapter re-

veals, debates are not simply an elite phenomenon; social movements among the poor also articulate and press demands for reforms, while other movements oppose projects like large dams perceived to be harmful to communities (see also Fisher 1995). Both Bose and Gupta show that struggles do not line up neatly between the friends and foes of development, between “modernity” and “community,” but engage differences in a more nuanced manner and involve people who have been immersed as deeply in international organizations and communication as in local social movements.

Africa was the latest of the late developers, the least able to generate its own academic knowledge. Yet African political leaders and intellectuals also pushed a distinct view of economic development, one less oriented than the conventional view toward a generic “developed economy” and more focused on the communitarian roots of African economies. As Mamadou Diouf shows (this volume), Senegalese planners drew on relevant foreign knowledge—notably from French social Catholic theory—and began with a detailed investigation of social and economic structures in different parts of Senegal. They tried for a time in the late 1950s to establish a distinct kind of political-knowledge regime, eventually frustrated by the ability of certain Senegalese to appropriate the fruits to themselves and by the continued power of French firms and the French government. There were other variants of these approaches—some self-serving attempts by elites at self-aggrandizement and at covering up inequalities within their own states, some more far-reaching attempts to find distinct paths (Young 1982).

The heterodoxy of development theory in the last half century implies neither randomness nor equality: certain sets of ideas and theories have gained prominence at particular periods of time, while others have been excluded from international debates. As is already clear, some of our authors have shown how within particular domains the development construct has become a framework that rationalizes and naturalizes the power of advanced capitalism in progressivist terms—as the engine bringing those on the bottom “up” toward those who are already there. Packard’s discussion of health, for example, shows a “hegemonic” discourse at work; Pigg finds the appeal of development to the Nepalese intermediaries of development efforts precisely in its lying outside the norms of village life. Bose, Cooper, Gupta, and Diouf put more stress on the ways in which this very framework became a basis for claims and mobilization, clashing with often powerful forces intent on containing or suppressing such initiatives. Carter, Ferguson, Sharpless, Finnemore, and Sikkink show how the contents of such a discourse shifted within institutions and gave rise, in various situations, to orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and ambivalence in social science disciplines. Disciplinary knowledge could variously give coherence

and depth to elites' world views, bring out the complications of development prescriptions, or point to fundamental flaws in policy frameworks and underlying biases in public discourse. At the workshops there was considerable debate over how to think through arguments about the power of certain discursive frameworks and the importance of agency in transforming them. The point is not to decide whether or not development discourse is truly hegemonic, but to examine projects of building and fracturing hegemonies: how financial, political, and discursive power was deployed, how such projects were contested within their own terms and through efforts to redefine the terrain of debate, and how one can find where room for maneuver remains in international institutions and in the numerous sites where development initiatives encounter the complexity of particular social struggles.¹⁵

Demarcating a New Terrain for Academic Inquiry

The break toward a new conception of change in colonial societies came from colonial states—and the challenge of their subjects—not from the academy. But these changes influenced western academia in two ways. First, the world-historic trend toward decolonization, the creation of new nation-states, and the uncertainties of how such states would fit into international relations set out a terrain for inquiry.¹⁶ Second, the colonial initiative—followed by the initiatives of new states and international organizations—created a sudden, very large demand for new kinds of knowledge. The Colonial Office in the 1940s created a whole range of advisory committees which included academic expertise (Anderson, workshop paper) and the huge expansion of the technical side of bureaucracy—a redirection from the district administrator who “knew his natives” to the specialist who knew his science—created a demand for training more relevant to the conditions of poor societies in the tropics.¹⁷

Intellectual and practical priorities affected academia: universities were offering training courses for colonial servants even before they had much knowledge to offer. Eventually universities did develop new subjects or new emphases within old ones.¹⁸ The most striking innovations occurred in economics, itself still experiencing the Keynesian revolution (Hall 1989). The key texts of what became a new subdiscipline of development economics appeared in the mid-1940s, in studies of how states and international organizations could promote industrialization and how a “big push” could get poor economies into a position where self-generating growth could begin—studies focused as much on southeastern Europe as on former colonies (Rosenstein-Rodan 1943). By the mid-1950s, Arthur Lewis—himself from the British colony of St. Lucia and in his graduate student days a sharp critic of the stifling effects of colonial rule and land-

lord power—was among the pioneers of an attempt to develop a systematic theory of development, one which addressed the specific conditions of extreme backwardness and proposed ways in which economic analysis combined with planning could lead to strategies to push such economies into a terrain where “normal” economic rules applied.¹⁹ Some of the pioneers of the field in the 1950s—Albert Hirschman comes most directly to mind—did not see themselves as recipe writers for a “how to” approach to development, but as intellectuals thinking about and acting on social change in a far broader sense. Whether such perspectives could survive the routinization of practice and the abstractions of theorizing was another question (see Carter’s contribution to this volume).²⁰ In any case, the creation of graduate programs in development economics, the founding of journals, the holding of conferences—and the recruitment of economists into national bureaucracies and international organizations—helped to shape an international community of expertise, with members from almost every country in the world.

Where academic initiatives were to be located was very much in question. Nationalist elites wanted education to have a strong national dimension; the providers of development assistance recognized education as a key component of any program. But who would control the contents of that education? However influential the initiatives of the British or French governments or of the Rockefeller Foundation in shaping higher education in former colonies, academic structures—research institutes as well as universities—could become the focus of challenge and argument, where alternative conceptions of development itself might be nurtured or contested. But would they, or would academic institutions become mechanisms for extending orthodoxies? Equally important—and depressingly relevant to the crisis of African education in the 1980s and 1990s—would institutions remain strong enough to be agents of anything, from challenge to conformacy? Contrasting instances are India—where a strong institutional base has supplied the ranks of development economists throughout the world and served to attack the development establishment head-on, as with the Development Studies Institute in Delhi or the journal *Alternatives*—and Latin America, where the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) provided an articulate and influential site for critical studies (Sikkink, this volume). Looked at globally, “academic” knowledge of development cannot be seen as singular, yet the institutional resources behind different approaches can hardly be seen as equal.

Three papers in this volume allow us to examine how different academic disciplines in the West—economics, anthropology, and demography—confronted their own quests for generalizable knowledge with the specificity of situations in developing societies. Dudley Seers (in Martin and Knapp 1967) called development the problem of the “special case.”

Within economics, this created ambiguous reactions: here was a new set of problems for economic analysis, yet the profession valued universalistic theories and powerful models above all else, and was not well equipped to deal with the messy particulars of markets that did not clear or of nonoptimizing institutions. Bardhan (1993) believes that development economists contributed to the mainstream of the discipline in ways not fully recognized. Michael Carter (this volume) argues that it is precisely through engagement with the complexities of “real markets,” information asymmetries, and the nonoptimal outcomes of rational economic behavior that the cutting edge of economic theory emerged, both drawing upon and contributing to analysis of inequality, exploitation, and poverty, as much as growth.

Anthropology, as James Ferguson shows here, has been skeptical of the idea of development and deeply caught up in it. Its place in the division of labor among mid-twentieth century social sciences was based both on a theoretical stance that stressed the integrity of individual societies and a methodological one that stressed fieldwork and hence the complexity of particular instances. Yet anthropology had never quite got over its older evolutionist perspective on societies, and by the 1930s many of its practitioners were drawn to models of progressive change that could liberate Africans from the racial oppression they observed around them. Hence anthropology’s deep ambivalence about development: welcoming yet distrusting social and economic progress, worrying about the damage change might inflict on diverse cultures yet acknowledging the misery of the present. When development institutions asked anthropologists to contribute their culturally specific knowledge to projects, anthropologists found at the same time job opportunities, a chance to insert their sensitivities into projects and to validate the usefulness of their discipline, and a danger of becoming immersed in a system of deploying knowledge within which they would have a secondary role (see also Escobar 1995 for a biting critique of anthropology’s encounter with development). Anthropology—as several contributions to the workshops made clear—has at least complicated the social sciences’ picture of development, showing its unpredictable effects, raising fundamental questions about the clash of cultures, and pointing to the possibility of ethnographic analysis of the development apparatus itself.²¹

Demography, John Sharpless points out, is a postwar discipline. Sharpless shows that its breakthrough into public policy required a conjuncture of intellectual and political processes: a fear among policymakers of a population crisis that would undermine economic growth and lead to political subversion, academic work that seemingly pinpointed where the problem lay and where intervention could take place, the new availability of technical solutions (birth control pills) to the problem, well-endowed

foundations seeking their own role in the process, and a government willing to treat population as a policy problem. Yet there is a major ambiguity in the relationship of this discipline and policy: demographic transition theory implied that fertility changed with complex transformations in society, yet intervention implied change at a single point.

The authors of this volume both exemplify and scrutinize the varied disciplines in which their own training, expertise, and affiliations lie. Finemore and Sikkink participate in political science's efforts to fashion a causal grid to explain change, but they insist that their field needs to take ideas more seriously than to see them as the direct product of interests.²² By doing so, they end up with a picture of change in institutional frameworks that gives considerable attention to specific conjunctures and stresses process—notably “learning”—in how change comes about. Historians—such as Bose, Cooper, Diouf, Packard, and Sharpless—follow narrative threads, illuminating how various processes come together in certain moments, the contingent ways in which conflicts get resolved, and the way such resolutions shape the options that exist down the road, but they do not necessarily try to specify causality in a generalizable way. Carter's perspective on his discipline of economics is a critical one, but he sees more possibilities within economic analysis than many outsiders' perception of a neoclassical orthodoxy would allow; the problem is both that the highest prestige in the profession is allocated to people who produce elegant general theory rather than sort through particularities and that when it comes to influencing policy, it is the complexities of recent theory that drop out. The anthropologists represented here—Ferguson, Gupta, and Pigg—expand their profession's basic concern with close, detailed observation toward a wider range of objects of study and interrogate the process by which categories are created—in Ferguson's paper toward an introspective reflection on the discipline not so much for its own sake, but to open space for a deeper engagement with poverty, power, and directed change in a global context.

One can see the tension between the contextualizing fields (history, anthropology) and the universalizing fields (economics), as well as the more profound tension inherent in the relationship of social science and policy and the fact that abstract theory and empirical research both arise in concrete situations, in relation to funding possibilities and distinct knowledge communities with their own prestige systems. Carl Pletsch (1981) argues that the Cold War strongly shaped the way in which the kinds of knowledge asserted by the colonial “experts” gave way to different disciplinary domains: the realm in which universalistic social sciences actually had relevance, mainly the West (where sociology, political science, and economics reigned supreme) versus the nonwestern exceptions (given over to anthropology, history, and new area studies centers focusing