

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology: Class 27  
**Applied Anthropology and Development**  
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- **Applied anthropology:** application of anthropological knowledge and approaches to solve social problems
  - a very broad field
  - from the cultural aspects of social work, government, and the justice system to designing effective marketing
- **Development anthropology:** applied anthropology for economic development issues
- **Economic development:** the process of modernization that leads less developed societies to become more like the industrialized nations, supposedly for the general good
  - even when well-intentioned, often assumes that outsiders know better than locals
  - anthropologists are trained to respect local knowledge
    - often helps in planning more effective programs
    - and getting locals to feel ownership, responsibility, buy in
  - anthropologists often see problems planners miss
- Anthropology and public policy
  - Western, industrial, market economies (especially corporations and the governments that support them) focus on making a profit
    - efficiency, minimizing costs that are paid for, maximizing value of output
    - other possible values are less emphasized
      - minimum living standards
      - security (reliability or risk reduction)
      - equity (even distribution of wealth)
      - quality of life
      - etc.
  - costs that do not affect profit are typically not considered
    - **externalities**
      - costs borne by someone other than those involved in the exchange
      - usually the collectivity
      - example: gas companies and drivers who buy gas do not consider the cost of global warming in their transaction
        - those costs will be paid by someone else
      - example: tobacco companies and smokers don't consider the costs of treating lung cancer caused by cigarette smoke
        - those costs will be paid by someone else (insurance, state, etc.)
- role of anthropologists in development projects
  - studies the totality of societies, not just economics
    - also social org, politics, agriculture, ecology, values, beliefs, etc.
    - so they tend to notice externalities and include them in the whole picture
  - trained to see things through eyes of others
    - empathy

- cultural relativism
- because they look at things from multiple points of view, anthropologists are more likely to predict undesirable outcomes beforehand
- anthropologists see that policies are culture-bound
  - not objective, self-evident, true
  - anthropologists tend to be more able to avoid naïve realism
  - notice culturally constructed categories like "citizen", "the poor", "deviant", "terrorist"
    - and recognize that they may not make sense in other cultures
    - may be loaded with unfounded assumptions
- often results in anthropologists being spokespeople for people affected by decisions
  - but sometimes they speak for themselves, like the Kayapo
  - anthropologists are increasingly aware that not only do local opinions have to be included, but that outsiders' roles may best be just to help the locals do what they figure is best for themselves
  - avoiding still more cultural imperialism, paternalism
- **Green revolution**
  - 1960s programs to bring hybrid crops, pesticides, fertilizers, etc. to non-industrial world
  - example of problems in Java
- Common pattern in development/globalization
  - encourage crops that can be sold
  - subsistence farmers turn to cash crops for better return
  - now depend on sales for cash to buy food
  - now subject to global market fluctuations
  - usually need annual loans for seed, fertilizer, pesticide
  - thus always have loan payments
  - one bad year can mean bankruptcy
  - which means losing land forever, usually moving to city for wage labor
  - Example: Cuzqueña beer company encouraging Sonqo farmers to switch to barley for beer
- Grameen bank example
  - set up by a Bangladeshi economic professor (Ph.D. from Vanderbilt Univ. in the US), Muhammad Yunus
  - recently he and the Grameen bank won the Nobel Peace Prize
  - offers microcredit to very poor Bangladeshi women
  - specifically makes equity, health, and other social concerns its primary goals
  - astutely uses existing values and cultural constructs, no doubt contributing to its success
    - one method: lends to self-organized groups of five women
    - no further credit to the members if any one defaults
    - so all work together for economic success
  - even though this was not set up by a development anthropologist, the approach is the same, and any anthropologist would be proud of it
- Malawi "hunger period" example: goat project
  - Oxfam version includes boreholes (wells); planting gardens; goat manure for fertilizer

- What do applied, development anthropologists actually do?
  - through studying a specific group of people, recognize key problems that might be solvable
    - advocate, organize, write grants, visit government officials, etc. to help set up programs to solve the problem
  - when working with a development project
    - provide cultural background from their own work or from reviewing the literature
    - conduct rapid, focused ethnography ("rapid assessments") early on to gather accurate, current information about subsistence practices, economics, family and gender relations, etc. to help plan the project
    - consult with other project members to ensure that local cultural reality is fully considered in the design of the project
    - often, devise ways to explain and "sell" the project that will be sensible and convincing to the target population
    - help establish necessary connections and trust for the project by being a "cultural broker"
    - monitor the project's effects and peoples' responses, problems, etc. as it progresses
      - in the broadest sense, which requires essentially ongoing ethnographic work during the project
    - often, take an important role in negotiating the political, social, and personal problems that often come up
    - mediate between project personnel and the target people to maintain understanding and exchange ideas in both directions
      - some groups may not need much help in this sense
        - they may have their own members who can cross the cultural line
        - and/or the rest of the team may already be familiar with the local culture and competent to do this themselves
      - while other groups may really need such an anthropological mediator/translator/"cultural broker"
        - especially if the project involves technology or practices that are very unfamiliar
        - and/or if some of the project members are technical or medical specialists who are not familiar with working in other cultures
    - assess results using a variety of data and analyses, including ethnography, but also other kinds of data anthropologists collect
      - health
      - diet
      - time allocation, etc.
    - report on the cultural and social aspects of progress and results to granting agencies, governments, etc.
    - not to mention all sorts of practical, logistical tasks that come up