

Experiencing the modern world: individuality, planning and the state

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'In many ways we are like Goethe's apprentice in the magic arts, who when his master left the house, conjured up the spirits of the underworld with his secret formula, and when they appeared cried out in terror: "The phantoms I have summoned will not go!"' (K. Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*, 1948: 239)

Introduction

Over the past five decades, the field of Development Studies has consolidated around a theoretical body of knowledge characterised by the Modernisation, Dependency/World System and actor-oriented approach schools of thought. These three interpretations of the world emerged from within different historical contexts and have been influenced by various economic, sociological, anthropological and historical traditions and interpretations. They have shaped different empirical studies with the presentation of a variety of ontological assumptions about development 'realities'.

These theoretical positions offer alternatives for understanding development issues and suggest varying interpretations of the modern world. Despite their differences, each position has engaged in debates that have established technology, capital and the human factor as starting points for conceptualising instrumental rationality within the constitution of modernity. The integration of technology, capital and human factors within theories of development is what Kuhn (1962) has designated to be a common frame of reference for a scientific discipline, and can be seen as establishing a paradigm in the field of development studies. This common frame of reference links three domains of human existence: work, symbolic interaction and power.

In this paper, I want to discuss the contribution of the actor-oriented approach to the development field. Specifically, I want to focus on the intellectual contribution of Norman Long, whose work at Wageningen University has helped expand the fields of Rural Sociology and Anthropology. The work he has carried

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out, both alone and with the group of researchers he has been associated with, has become known as the 'Wageningen School' of development studies.

The actor-oriented approach is a good methodological device for exploring modernity. As such, the Approach has stood uneasily with policies that attempt to bring modernisation techniques and practices to people's lives. In the same vein, the actor-oriented Perspective has systematically deconstructed and criticised modernisation policies as comprehensive packages of technical and institutional measures. According to Long this was done as:

'(1) a concern for the ways in which different social actors manage and interpret new elements in their life-world; without (2) an analysis of how particular groups or individuals attempt to create space for themselves in order to carry out their own 'projects' that may run parallel to, or perhaps challenge government programmes or the interests of other intervening parties; and without (3) an attempt to show how these organisational, strategic and interpretative processes can influence (and themselves be influenced by) the broader context of power and social action' (Long, 1992: 33-34).

The position taken by the actor-oriented approach has given rise to several criticisms from more pragmatic approaches. These criticisms have focused on the inability of actor-oriented studies to engage with 'relevant policy issues' and have accused the actor-oriented approach of avoiding engagement with the search for policy solutions to 'real' problems. However, deliberate avoidance of tackling 'real relevant policy issues' or of the search for policy solutions is justifiable in certain situations. Namely, wherever analyses or solutions lack an understanding of the social processes through which policy interventions enter the life-worlds of individuals and groups. In these situations, it is first necessary to understand these social processes, and this is what the actor-oriented approach seeks to do.

Technical policy solutions come to form part of the resources of and constraints on policy beneficiaries' strategies and are quite often interpreted differently by different beneficiaries. The actor-oriented approach contributes to an understanding of the divergence between the social, technical, political and practical aspects of policy, planning and projects. The Approach seeks to overcome the apparent naivety of policy experts and development practitioners by taking as its explicit focus of research the critical and conflictive social encounters that arise in any situation involving planned intervention. These conflicts rarely come to the attention of development experts because of their preoccupation with 'real relevant policy issues' or with finding policy solutions to 'real' problems.

Another strand of criticism has targeted the unmistakably local orientation of the methodology taken by researchers working from an actor-oriented perspective. This has led critics to question the validity and significance of descriptions and findings that have emerged as expressions of 'localism'. In the actor-oriented approach, this local orientation is perceived as a crucial locus for describing and analysing policy relations in a given social situation. By orienting research towards this locus, studies can probe and question the universal validity and significance of planning interventions designed by development experts. This view implies that the apparently universal validity of policies tells us nothing about how local processes influence and are themselves influenced by policies. From this perspective, the universal validity and significance of a policy

only represents the views of the experts and policy makers. Analyses of this kind represent little more than a general description of the actual conditions under which a policy or a project arises. In other words, the actor-oriented approach, unlike other approaches, is not merely aimed at exploring the interaction between state and civil society. It also seeks to particularise its scope and the extent of the validity and relevance of state policy towards the domains of human existence: work, symbolic interaction and power.

It is to the fear of state intervention that the Mannheim quotation of Goethe at the beginning of this paper refers. This is Mannheim's cautionary note to the social technique of planning. It seems particularly apt for an approach that has sought to deconstruct the meaning and consequences of planning interventions in different contexts.

Therefore, I would contend that these criticisms of the actor-oriented approach are missing the point. Of course, everyone has a right to an opinion and as criticisms they are relevant if based on the claim that the main function of social science is to bring clarity to problems and solutions to the social conditions people live in around the world. However, the main point is that under the modern condition, clarity and pragmatism are not supported by a common understanding concerning what should be good development policy practice.

Clarity of development objectives and pragmatism is based on the apparently unproblematic assumptions of development practitioners. These assumptions are underpinned by the idea that expert control over the techniques of planned intervention is justified because it can lead to solutions to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment. In effect, the assumptions and expertise on which such development objectives are based homogenise development situations and poverty reduction processes. One could argue that to homogenise peoples' experiences and the character of poverty and underdevelopment is something akin to a justification for avoiding the need to trace social processes to the very basis of peoples' experiences.

The enlightenment that a scientific project installs into the imaginations of clear-thinking modern men and women is the search for symbolic homogeneity. However, the homogeneity with which understandings of poverty and underdevelopment become imbued is not a convincing enough argument for us to ignore people's experiences. Symbolic homogeneity can also deny people of their political position for communicating contrasting visions about democratically shared values: values that should be incorporated into the scientific and expert projects meant to bring modernity into society. These values concern the respect for individual experience, everywhere and under every condition, in understanding and judging the meaning and relevance of the ongoing transformation of the existing human condition.

This chapter argues that the actor-oriented approach has contributed to the study of localised modernities. This has meant the need to come to grips with a theoretical and methodological tradition in sociology and has generated a set of concepts that have practical implications for research and practice in development studies.

The paradigm in anthropology and development

The intellectual origins of Long's work can be traced back to the Gluckman School in Manchester, where a concern to represent the reality of African people in the post-colonial world was seen as of paramount intellectual and political importance. The work of the Manchester School succeeded in creating a cultural paradigm that broke with an older intellectual tradition in British anthropology. This paradigm sought to encompass social transformation in a rapidly changing world. At its core was a concern with the encroachment of the market, western values and the legacy of colonial rule in the shaping of modern African societies. Despite the groundbreaking nature of this work, scholars like Gluckman (1964) and Turner (1964) were unable to distance themselves from a model of social equilibrium and thus failed to provide a satisfactory analysis of social transformation and discrepancies in cultural values (see Arce and Long, 2000).

In the 1960s, Long drew on this intellectual tradition to undertake research in Zambia, where he dealt with the role of the individual in shaping the outcomes of social change. This work contributed to an understanding of how social processes - like the arrival of new Christian groups, entrepreneurial activities, and technical transformations in agriculture - affected everyday life and, through people's experiences, laid the basis for differential responses to social transformations. His research produced an ethnography whose strength lay in Long's ability to realise and convey the importance of understanding the role of daily routine in affecting the practices adopted by people when confronted by the arrival of modernity.

In Long's research in Zambia (1968), it is the analysis of conflict in everyday life that was central in breaking with the British functionalist tradition, providing a new basis for an anthropological understanding of social change and development. Thus conflicts which arose at funerals, which broke out when immigrants returned to the community, or emerged around kinship idioms and new Christian beliefs, were signs that highlighted the way in which social processes spurred by modernity became embedded in people's everyday interactions. This research agenda, initiated in Zambia, fuelled a longer fascination with the study of small-scale entrepreneurs in processes of development and their contribution to social change, prompting Long to carry out joint research with Roberts in Peru.²

Long's critical view of Modernisation Theory, because of its treatment of tradition as a set of self-contained and mutually exclusive social practices antagonistic to modernity, motivated him to reassess people's capacity to bridge social and cultural discontinuities (see Long, 1977). From this focus, traditional traits such as religion and kinship relations were perceived as intermingling with external influences emanating from urbanisation and migration processes associated with modernity. This intermingling shows the capacity of people to experience modernity as a coexisting process of social relationships that continue some aspects of the past while establishing new relations with confidence, juxtaposing and interrelating different materialities and types of agencies.

² The research project has the title 'Regional Structure and Entrepreneurial Activity in the Mantaro Valley in Peru' and was carried out between 1970 and 1972 by Long and Roberts. Two books were published from this research project (Long and Roberts, 1978 and 1984).

This focus allowed Long to study how individuals mobilise the resources necessary to carry out entrepreneurial activity under circumstances of scarcity and extreme economic conditions (see Long, 1978, 1979, 1984). In effect, Long was reintroducing the importance of local capacity but extracting it from the context of traditional or modern cultural systems in the study of social change. This made it possible for him to approach the social actor in a way that aimed at the very heart of contemporary issues in development studies. He repositioned social anthropology as a relevant discipline, while avoiding the simplistic dichotomies of the Modernisation School. The actor-oriented approach has formed the basis of the critical position that Long has taken, enabling him to problematise concepts and themes concerning the question of how to study and analyse the contemporary dimension of social life in development situations.

During the late 1970s, criticism of the Modernisation School led Long to adopt a structural dependency perspective. His temporary enchantment with this theory focused on the national-international linkages of dependency, creating hierarchical patterns within Third World economies through which metropolitan centres extracted economic surplus from and imposed political control over underdeveloped areas (see Frank, 1967). However, he soon realised that

'...a major difficulty with the dependency model is that it paints a broad canvas and concentrates upon viewing change from the metropolitan centre. It therefore allows little room for local actors' view of change or for variations in organisations and response within a dependency structure' (Long, 1984: 7).

Long's intellectual distancing from both the Modernisation and Dependency schools left him searching for an approach that could combine a structural analysis of political and economic processes with an understanding of how specific individuals and social classes responded to processes of intervention. The issue of individuality and heterogeneity became implicit in refracting the conditions and characteristics of instrumental rationality and the institutional development of the modern state.

The actor-oriented approach

Long's encounter with the Dependency school led him back to Marx, especially in the reinforcement of his view that the issue of individuality was a significant area of intellectual concern in the study of social change. It is quite clear that, for Durkheim and even for Marx, individuality was of little importance, and if present at all, existed only as an indicator of the transition from pre-modern to modern societies (see Sayer, 1991).

The lineal and progressive view of technology and institutions has typically led to conceptualisations of modern society as a homogeneous totality: a world where exchange value imbues objects with a distinctive quality that differentiates them from one another by the product of labour they embody. Marx presents this process as the result of social relations that only arises when the labour of isolated individuals can be freely exchanged in modern society. The perspective of political economy accepts that we need to give attention to the constitution of the actor's individuality and the individual's adoption, rejection or modification of 'modern' ideas and methods in Western industrialised societies. However, the

same view has denied or ignored the issue of individuality in developing societies.

Individuality is a process that sees the actor's sense of competitiveness and coordination as something more than simply interrelated to the process of social differentiation. The social structures that researchers need to describe and analyse, as part of the process of modernity, should therefore not be used to determine the meaning that actors attribute to the organisation of their life worlds. Actors may be dysfunctional to the expansion of some modern elements but nevertheless incorporate others into their everyday discourses and practices at the same time. Individuality then is a theoretical concept that does not see actors as normatively determined entities of the differentiation process affecting their social environment. As Cohen has pointed out, Louis Dumont probably was one of the scholars responsible for perpetuating the myth that the individual and the concept of individuality are only Western concerns (Cohen, 1994: 14).

Long's efforts to understand and explain the significance of individual action (individuality) took him to Peru to explore the relationship between individuals and the social construction of physical regions and life-styles in Latin America (see Long and Roberts, 1978, 1984). Long's intellectual uncertainty with the Dependency School provided him with a problem and object of study. Namely, the examination of the relevance of economic, cultural and social processes in the shaping of local development. These processes included migration, the circulation of commodities, the local organisation of the labour force and, finally, the consequences of the penetration of capital in people's lives.

One area of research - the significance of entrepreneurship as understood by the person in terms of his or her own life history - was particularly important for rethinking the notion of regional development. Contrary to his previous work in Africa, Long problematised the existence of structural social processes and gave relevance to the way in which actors organised their resources and constructed their different life styles.

Long's recognition that actors were able to create their own project of society led him to question the social position of apparently progressive actors in society. In doing so, he explained that the individuality of different actors in development situations was much more complex than simply stating that modern influences had turned people into rational 'cash registers' or logical entities when it came to taking decisions. Long explored the issue of individuality, looking at the wider cultural context in order to understand how individuals make sense of local struggles and contradictions. Their experiences in these struggles and contradictions constitute the roots of difference between how different people organise and give shape to their life-worlds according to their understanding of existing possibilities and constraints. According to Long, these differences constitute the individual's knowledgeability and capability, the two main elements of human agency and, I would add, of their individuality. Researchers, therefore, need to translate these two conceptual elements (that constitute agency) culturally in order to make sense of them. In effect, this argument has repositioned the importance of studying local culture as a medium that people use to orient their action in situations of change.

At Wageningen University, the sociology of Long has led him to stress the significance of human action in social change. At the same time, his sociological stance has addressed the issue of how actors moulded social spaces in diverse

political environments (see Long, 1984, 1984b). Central concerns here were how researchers could characterise and define the social action of actors. This was a different and perhaps more critical view than the traditional functional perspective on social change. It cannot be considered as a totally new viewpoint in the long-duree of sociology but very few sociologists have been able to organise an intellectual project around it in the way Long has done at Wageningen (perhaps Goffman during the 1950s in America is one exception).

Long's position challenged existing sociological representations in the field of development studies. Firstly, he presented a different conceptual language that avoided treating tradition and modernity as a set of mutually exclusive concepts. Secondly, he presented new ethnographic materials. Long started a new research agenda, giving attention to the importance of local capacities such as kinship relationships and fiestas for development. Processes of local development mingle tradition and modernity. Long promoted a focus on in-depth case studies against a high level of abstractions. These were organised on a comparative basis to explore why the same policy generated different responses among rural policy beneficiaries.

The research focus was re-oriented in order to come to a greater understanding of conflicts and of the expert's ideological social techniques of intervention. At the same time, a critical view of Dependency Theory, because of its all purpose and highly abstract level of explanation, caused Long to appreciate that deductive approaches need to be criticised. This was especially relevant because dependency studies were used to conform to what was politically expected of dependency theory.³ In fact, one of the main emerging factors that had contributed to Long's rupture with dependency studies is that dependency had been presented as a universal phenomenon leaving little room or interest for an analysis of local social actors.

This issue was central to his understanding of how to advance the theory of actor perspective into empirical research. In this respect, Long problematises the imposition of Western external conditions on Third World development. Over-emphasis on external conditions has neglected the content and meaning of the local dynamic of transformations. Theoretically, this has led to a situation where peoples' practices and actions against regional political alliances and the national state have been ignored. The issue of individuality and all its conflicts and struggles at the centre of capitalism and modernity had been too long absent from a social science concerned with developing societies. This prompted Long to write in *Battlefields of Knowledge*:

'A principal reason why it has been difficult to integrate structural and actors perspectives is that they entail opposing (or at least diverging) theoretical and epistemological assumptions, similar to Kuhn's paradigms that are incompatible until a 'scientific revolution' confirms the paramountcy of one of them' (Long, 1992: 18).

The above statement epitomises the questions that are at the centre of Long's actor-oriented project. According to him, a theory of social change has to capture the experiences of social actors in all their ephemeral, fugitive and contingent

³ See also the critical view developed by David Booth. His article in *World Development* (1985) and his subsequently edited book from 1994 both deal with the issue of the impasse in development sociology. Norman Long shared Booth's criticism of political economy.

dimensions. This is something more than just the elaboration of categories and concepts for a systematic examination in empirical studies of different modes of dependency and exploitation of people and resources. Long argues that we need an explanation of how modes of dependency and independence are concretely embodied in the life experiences of actors and their interpretations of local social and cultural life. Such a theory must be historical and at the same time able to describe how actors experience what Sayer has called, the quality of 'contemporaneity or presentness' (1991: 9). In other words, to speak of modernity we need to focus our attention on the actor's availability and capacity to be aware of modernity as a context⁴. This is central to the description and analysis of the actor's social repositioning and to an understanding of the re-organisation of everyday meanings and practices.

According to Sayer, this notion of modernity was the one used by Baudelaire in his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' written in 1859-60. This essay spelt out the elements that can make a work of art endure in a given context.⁵ According to Sayer, Baudelaire was referring to the artist's ability to capture 'the stamp that time imprints upon our perceptions' in order to 'extract the eternal from the ephemeral' (Sayer, 1991: 9). Following this line of interpretation, we can make a parallel with what makes case studies enduring pieces of work in social science. In this vein, Long writes:

'It is here that new types of theorisation and field methodologies based upon an actor-oriented approach can, we believe, make an important contribution, though we must avoid setting ourselves up as the new 'gurus' of intervention with yet more prefabricated solutions to the problem of development. The neo-Marxist theoretical bubble may now have burst, but we must guard against replacing it with a search for similar generic models of change. The essence of an actor-oriented approach is that its concepts are grounded in the everyday life experiences and understanding of men and women, be they poor, peasants, entrepreneurs, government bureaucrats or researchers' (Long, 1992: 5).

Thus, an enduring case study dealing with modernity needs to capture the quality of 'contemporaneity or presentness' that imprints in our experience the multiple realities and diverse practices of various social actors. The researcher working methodologically through the thick forest of information and symbols needs to make sense of the capacity of actors to understand unpredictable interventions and linkages of multiple realities within the context of modernity. How actors experience surrealist situations creates a social field of different and often incompatible worlds, which carry modernity itself. As Grillo succinctly puts it:

'The Wageningen approach - not surprisingly, given Long's intellectual heritage - met Marcus's demand for 'strategically situated ethnography' (Marcus, 1986: 172), which would integrate 'political economy and interpretative concerns' (ibid: 84). As Marcus and Fischer (1986: 39) put it: "Ethnography must be able to capture more accurately the historic context of its subjects, and to register the constitutive working

⁴See the work of Schutz, in which social action orientation to organise contexts, actor's awareness and self-reflection as part of the setting to which the individual may perceive and qualify as exploitative, dependent or emancipated. In this sense, modernity is not view as an external world nor for that matter tradition.

⁵ Sayer uses in his text the following phrase 'all enduring works of art' (Sayer, 1991: 9). I have kept the verb endure in my text, because I think it is one of the few verbs that conveys the notion of keeping alive the feeling of individual experience through the long 'duree' notion of time that constitutes a notion of history either as an act of suffering or enjoyment.

of impersonal international political and economic systems on the local level where fieldwork usually takes place". Marcus found this in the so-called Manchester School of British Social Anthropology (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 56 ff.) with which Long had been associated' (Grillo, 1997: 3).

To grasp the importance of Long's actor-oriented approach, we need to stress the importance of examining people's experiences. Especially the way in which Long focuses on the interplay between individual experiences of local processes (the constitution of individuality) and the centralising tendencies of modern economic and political development. We can discern how he strategically situates ethnography and how he has substantively developed a research programme for critically understanding individuality under modern conditions.

Individuals are not just able and capable, but to some extent, obliged to construct their own strategies for organising their lives. These strategies are not created in an empty space but in interaction with the social techniques that are developed in the name of the nation-state. Here too the actor-oriented approach is important and continues a long sociological tradition. In the next section, I want to briefly explore some of the elements of this tradition and situate Long's contribution to the understanding of how modern institutions like the state present themselves as objects of enquiry. In doing this, I will draw on what Mannheim understood to be the social techniques (planning) of the modern state and the impact they have on people's living conditions.

Modernity: people and planning

At the time Karl Mannheim was writing *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* in 1948, centralised planning ideas about the future of modern society were already widely current among national states in Europe. Authoritarian as well as democratic states were confronted with the challenge of becoming a modern state. The political contingencies of the time initiated an intellectual debate on the significance of individual freedom, democracy and the functions that should assume the control of sovereignty by the state. These topics are as relevant today as they were in the European political context of the 1930's and 1940's, when European states were becoming increasingly totalitarian.

Mannheim shared then the view that a number of significant modern transformations were taking place in society. One of these was affecting the old conception of property that dated back to Roman Law. He was quite clearly aware that '*taxation and compulsory charity*' could re-orient the unrestricted 'enjoyment of income and interest, that is, the right of individuals to dispose their capital'. He referred to this as the exercising and guiding direction of the state on consumerism through credit control mechanisms.

Mannheim observed planning as a social technique that could transform the original form of capitalism without abolishing claims of private property. According to Mannheim, forms of rational adjustment could remove certain functions of the ownership of capital from the competence of capitalists without creating significant social and political contradictions. He wrote:

'the entrepreneur may still retain his organising function, have a relatively higher income, and keep his social prestige, but he will be deprived of his power just as the

feudal lord was deprived of his political power at Louis XIV's court' (Mannheim, 1948: 350-351).

Mannheim's incisive understanding of his time and the nature of the changes taking place in Europe, critically converged over the question of the ideological differences between liberal democracies and totalitarian states. He pointed out their similarities; perhaps he did this in a theoretical continuation with the pessimism of Weber about the growth of scientific rationality. However, unlike Weber, Mannheim argued that planning as an outgrowth of scientific rationality should not simply be conceptualised as intrinsic to totalitarian political regimes.

In close approximation to Marx's understanding of the expansion of scientific rationality in the modern world, Mannheim perceived planning as an administrative and regulating force distinct from liberal conceptions of government. Nonetheless, he located it as very much part of what can be conceptualised as the constitution of the modern state. He argued that the state was becoming a service (welfare) state. *'the state no longer confines its attention to the three spheres of legislation, administration, and jurisdiction, but is changing into a social service state. This change is being rapidly accelerated by the universal preparations for war'* (Mannheim, 1948: 336). However, the main challenge for Mannheim was how to prevent the social technique of planning from degenerating into a dictatorship. The main problem then was to figure out how *'to combine democratic responsibility with rational planning'* (Mannheim, 1948: 336).

What are important in Mannheim's perspective on modernity and the state are his observations. Firstly, on the passing away of the liberal conception of government in Western democracies and secondly, on the arrival of the notion of government as essentially welfarist in character. What's interesting in Mannheim's analysis is his critical ideological ambiguity. Mannheim indicated the political danger of centralised planning and democracy. At the same time his clarity in perceiving the challenges of modern society led him to argue that as a technique of governance, planning is the only form to organise and carry out increasingly complex social programmes. According to him, state planning is needed to regulate people and resources. This is the only form of governance able to co-ordinate social production on the required scale, with the necessary technology to achieve social reproduction and political survival.

The modern state then is the result of a discontinuity with parliamentary democracy. One of the most obvious characteristics of the modern state for Mannheim is that it becomes not just a mere canalisation of forces of social change, but an active regulator of the current of these forces. He illustrates the new characteristics of the modern state with reference to the strategic importance of the trade cycle in contemporary society. According to him, this cannot be left to the manipulation of the economic and social processes that brought change to society. The new complexities of the trade cycle pose new problems i.e. to confront these complexities involves an attitude, which should attempt what Mannheim refers to as a form of modern management (see; Mannheim, 1948: 337). One could paraphrase Giddens (1984, 1991) at this point and suggest that Mannheim falls short of formulating the significance of an expert technical system. However, both authors can be seen to coincide in the understanding that planning as a social technique is probably an institutional response to the fear of insecurity affecting individuals and groups in a modern society.

Perhaps it is at this point that we need to remember that people living in non-industrialised countries have been generally unprotected from the effects of colonial rule and policies. This sense of insecurity has not diminished with the struggle for national independence in Africa, Asia and parts of Latin America. Problems with national bureaucracies, internal political contradictions, and the national boundaries left behind by the colonial legacy have generated social and institutional dynamics where risk and lack of trust is an everyday reality. In this context, people and their institutions are constantly re-assembling and re-organising those elements, which they consider to be part of modern social life in non-industrialised Western countries.

It is this understanding that, according to Hall and Midgley, directed researchers towards the study of developing societies, specifically '*about the processes that might transform the predominantly agrarian economies of the colonised world into economically self-sufficient industrial societies*' (Hall and Midgley, 1988: 1). What is more interesting is that these authors argue that the social science knowledge and understanding of these transformations of agrarian economies '*could be applied to assist the governments of the newly emergent states to plan the modernisation of their economies and the transformation of their social structures*' (Hall and Midgley, 1988:1). According to these authors, planning and administration were believed to defeat the twin ugly sisters of the modern world - '*backwardness and dependency*'.

I have tried to show the roots of the continuity between the passing away of the liberal conception of government, the development of the social technique of planning and the constitution of the modern state. As presented here, these rhizomes have established the modern state.

The technique of social planning is not just an intrinsic feature of developed or developing countries, but also a characteristic of the modern world. '*The tradition of non-intervention in the Liberal sense was abandoned when the state undertook social reforms, and indirectly, through taxation, tried to bring about a growing equality in income and to transfer property from the rich to the poor*' (Mannheim, 1948: 336). As far as the technology of planning as a necessity of the modern state is concerned, the issue of individuality acquires a theoretical importance for the interpretation of modern social relations that are created within the state's unitarian order. However, this unitarian order must be critically de-constructed and analysed to understand how precisely such relations carry forward or resist experts and policy makers projects of modernity.

The ghost of the actor in state planning: agency or structure?

Long has examined the role of state planning in agrarian development from the distinctive sociological perspective of the actor-oriented approach. It is to this that I want to turn my attention to now.

Long's interest in state intervention can be detected in his early publications, such as his 1977 book: *An Introduction to the Sociology of Rural Development* (see Chapter 6). Nevertheless, it was not until 1985 that he first seriously attempted to integrate his considerations about state intervention with his more general actor-oriented position. Two main models of state intervention were dominant at the time. Namely, the state as an instrument for resolving the crisis

of capital accumulation and the institutional incorporation model⁶. Long criticised both positions and in so doing upheld the position that none of the approaches 'shows [an] interest in or sensitivity towards the ways in which the representatives [of the state] interpret their mandates and define their work tasks vis-à-vis the farming population' (Long, 1985: 118). According to Long, approaches like this directed researchers to simplifying assumptions of the relationship between bureaucrats and people in society, favouring the development of coherent and clear models. Focusing more precisely on the importance of studying and explaining differences within a farming population and between contrasting agrarian situations, Long then turned to the implications of what he identified as '*the sets of relationships that evolve between intervening agencies and local groups, and [he asks researchers] to make this a point of theorisation*' (Long, 1985: 118).

Long's contribution to state intervention marks a critical moment in sociology with the formulation of the actor-oriented approach in development studies. He challenged the kernel of the no-longer-clear theoretical illusion that the disembodied structures of the logic of capital and institutional incorporation could pass over issues of differentiation and actor's experiences in processes of social change. Long's unequivocal defence of the idea of studying differential social responses to changing circumstances is a clear manifestation of the significance he attributes to the process of individualisation in social change. This is the focus that prompted the analysis of how different social categories within a population develop complex interactions, such as competition and co-operation, with '*the dynamics of the larger politico-economic structures*'. This led Long to write:

'Farmers are not simply to be seen as passive recipients, but as actively strategising and interacting with outside institutions and personnel. The understanding of agrarian change is therefore complex and requires working from the very beginning with the concept of heterogeneity. Farmers and other local actors shape the outcomes of change. Change is not simply imposed upon them' (Long, 1985: 119).

Long's conclusion, which drew on the critical understanding of widely discussed and accepted state intervention models, reversed the more traditional and conservative application of other actor-oriented perspectives. His criticism was also based on the understanding that even if it was possible to isolate a central tendency within an agrarian structure or population, it was important to examine the '*minority patterns*' as well. According to him, these patterns should not be understood as dependent on the central tendency, but on '*the factors specific to scale, social composition of the farm or household and to the objectives and values of the farmers in question*' (Long, 1985: 120).

Without taking sides in favour of agency or structure, Long tries to combine an understanding of the actor's individualisation processes with political and economic analysis to explain differential responses to structurally similar circumstances. In doing this he has stressed the drawbacks of structural analysis in exposing the contradictions of the state for resolving crisis and capital accumulation or institutional integration. Criticising these positions, Long focuses on how these elegant intellectual interpretations, despite acknowledging

⁶ See the work of De Janvry (1981) for his position on political economy and Benvenuti (1975) for his position on institutional incorporation.

social actor's interactions and negotiation capacities in shaping the outcomes of social processes, tend to transcend the experience of actor's discourses, beliefs and their functions.

Long, in my view correctly, perceives this as analytically reducing peasantry and bureaucracy into passivity. Instead, he suggests conserving, rescuing and recalling the experience of actors for an understanding of modern society. It is in the life experience and the projects of peasantry and bureaucracy where we can find the content of the modern world. In my view, we could designate the actor-oriented approach as one that has contributed to a theory of every day experience rather than to a theory of consciousness.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has discussed the contribution of the actor-oriented approach to development studies. In particular we have focused on the work of Norman Long and his research on state centralised planning.

The connections drawn between the work of Karl Mannheim and that of Norman Long may come as a surprise, most of all to Long himself. However, both Mannheim and Long have sought to interpret how people experience the modern world. Their invisible intellectual relationship is based on a theoretical concern to question and interpret rational tendencies in modern life, with both authors presenting rationality as a contested process.

In the case of Mannheim, the notion of Western democracy is deconstructed, signalling the end of liberal democracy in Europe. In contrast, Long is concerned with the intrusion of centralised development planning into people actions, shaping and constraining their options. Both, Mannheim and Long are concerned with issues of freedom and human rights in processes of social change. For Mannheim the victory sought is that over National Socialism, while for Long it is victory over poverty and dependency. Although these goals are different, both interpretations grapple with the issue of power, as the main differential factor that generates changes between and among individuals and the orientation of their interactions. Both are concerned with the way institutions, such as the nation state, take over the representation of civil society and the orientation of what people want from processes of development. Mannheim and Long are both aware that social change is not simply a functional response to political circumstances or an adaptation to the good intentions of development professionals and politicians. Social change is not simply the technical task it is sometimes represented to be by experts.

There are nevertheless large differences between the work of Mannheim and that of Long; indeed any attempt to reconcile them at an epistemological level would be futile. Mannheim's confrontation with planning at the verge of the Second World War sought to redefine notions of democracy and governability in Europe. In contrast, Long's actor-oriented approach moved away from a political economy bias of understanding modern reality, as a class warfare epic of developing societies. However, these views of modernity are complementary in their understandings of modern society. In spite of their epistemological incompatibility, both representations involve a shift of understanding towards the

heterogeneity and complexity of modern institutions, agency, technical devices, and peoples' actions.

In the actor-oriented approach, case studies open up windows of enquiry upon the allegory of actor's experiences of modernity as something other than moral resistance to state institutions or rational strength from the selfish individual against the faceless society. In the actor-oriented approach, the study of the differential attribution of agency to institutions and to a diversity of social actors connects symbolically the different ontologies presented by Mannheim and Long. Their understanding of social action, the organising practices of society, and the lifeworld of actors forms a trilogy which registers people's experiences as exploitation and suffering, but also as happiness. In this respect, people's negotiating practices make their own history, interacting and providing meaning to the institutions they are embedded within, serving to shape the condition of their own livelihoods.

In Mannheim's concept of society and Long's conception of people's everyday lives, it is in the connections between sociology and anthropology that we are able to capture people's experiences and routines, as important domains within modern structures and state power. Social actors' own identity and modern individuality become interpretative points of reference for the organising capacity and the use of knowledge in all its ability to incarnate itself within social practices, taking a position and making claims, vis-à-vis contradictions in the modern world. In Mannheim's and Long's intellectual contributions, actors operate and reinterpret instrumental rationality within their life worlds in order to work out the predicament and tribulations of the modern idea of emancipation. In this vein, experiencing the modern world means to deal with different ontologies and their complementary sense of history has to be combined within a supplementary connection of the sociological and anthropological relevance to actors seeking to make sense of a multiplicity of interconnected life worlds.

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