

strengthening of this country, with the objectives that I've just stated. And you can define strengthening not just in economic terms, meaning production, but you can define it in human terms as well, because better educated people are going to be able to make a better contribution to the country and people who have better health services are able to make a better contribution to the country.

The Impact of Development Assistance
on Egypt

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The Development of Cooperation

by Nicholas S. Hopkins

There are difficulties in any process of "aid" across national boundaries. It is the purpose of this brief note to explore some of the cultural ramifications of these difficulties. I will try to clarify the nature of the social process involved in aid, and will suggest that a higher degree of self-consciousness about the nature of the social and cultural process, derived from looking at the exchange relationship, will make that exchange more rewarding and less stressful for both parties. We are concerned here, of course, with the "aid" relationship between Egypt and the United States.

Of course we know from Mauss's analysis of gifts (1967) that a gift establishes a social distance between the two parties: that there is an obligation to give and an obligation to receive as well as an obligation to reciprocate. Furthermore we can add that within this general pattern of gift exchange there are specific cultural differences in understanding. On the one hand this suggests the need to define the relationship as a reciprocal one: on the other hand it suggests that some attention be given to cultural differences in the interpretation of gift-giving.

As anthropologists, we can see this is a very particular form of cultural contact, which can lead us to wonder about the impact of the process on the two cultures involved. Are we dealing here with selective borrowing, with diffusion of certain cultural traits and perhaps their reinterpretation, or with "acculturation" in the sense that one culture is becoming more like the other by incorporating certain elements from it? Phrasing the question this way leads us to ask which are the traits that are passing from one culture to another, and what is the process of human social relations that makes this passage work.

One thing seems fairly clear. The principals, or most of them, are fairly unselfconscious about their role in the process. They are convinced that they are doing the right thing, and that their way of doing things is right. If asked, they would presumably argue that they are acting in their own self-interest or in the interest of their country, without any recognition that they are involved in a particularly intense version of cultural borrowing.

The particular instance of cultural contact that we are concerned with has certain features:

1. the transmission process passes through a bureaucracy on both sides;
2. the process involves two sovereign states each one of which has well-defined goals that do not always coincide;
3. consequently the situation is heavily politicized in a number of senses, including the sense that the "aid" itself is seen to some extent as part of a political relationship reached by agreement.

My argument here is that the success of this relationship can be enhanced if people on both sides are more self-consciously aware of the nature of the process and of the human problems involved. With that in mind let us look at some of the kinds of problems in the relationship.

1. The suspicion by both sides that the other has hidden interests or

interests opposed to the other.

2. Donors suspect that recipients waste or abuse money; recipients resent the aspects of control that accompany the money.

3. There is the problem of determining who is finally in charge.

4. There is the problem of agreeing on priorities -- and then of ensuring that the priorities are maintained as such. Not only do the priorities have to be mutually agreed upon, but they must be justifiable in terms of the internal norms of each of the two bureaucracies (and standing behind that, of the political process in each of the two states). Each side has its own agenda, reflecting national goals as well as personal or personnel goals. Four areas where there have been disagreements between the US and Egypt in recent years are (1) land reclamation and new lands development versus a focus on improving production on the old lands (see Meyer 197A, Gotsch and Nyer 19A2), (2) agricultural mechanization through tractorization versus an effort to improve the context of mechanized farming (see Richards 19A1, Bermer 19A2), (3) the creation of new cities in the desert versus expansion of the existing cities and (4) whether Sinai can be developed to support a large population.

5. The bureaucracies and the personalities themselves may not be compatible. There are misunderstandings between individuals because of inadequate background preparation in cultural understanding on both sides, and such preparation must begin from the point that there are two different cultures involved before the precise points of difference can be realized. There are more specific differences based on different ways of working (for example, take the different attitudes towards evaluation). There are career paths and trajectories that meet only fleetingly. Each bureaucracy has its own way of getting things done. Hoben (1980:347) has talked of the AIN bureaucrat as an African elder in a noncentralized society, obliged to recreate his personal coalition daily in order to attain his goals. If this is the case, then how does the AIN bureaucrat extend his coalition building to include representatives of the other culture -- especially if he has no intellectual understanding of the process of coalition building in the first place?

A Little History

In order to illustrate these points, let us look at two moments in the history of Egypt, perhaps on the theory that the past is metaphor for the present. The two moments are the switch from French to British involvement in the irrigation system of Egypt, which occurred as a consequence of the British takeover of Egypt in 1882, and the American involvement in aid to Egypt in the 1950s, notably in the case of Egyptian American Rural Improvement Service (EARIS).

A. French and British Involvement in Irrigation in 19th Century Egypt

France and Britain were the two superpowers of their day. French engineers had been involved in irrigation in Egypt from the days of Mohammed Ali, and were the dominant foreigners involved before 1882. They helped design the first version of the Barrages, and were involved in the transformation of the Delta and Middle Egypt from basin to perennial irrigation. The British occupation led to the replacement of the French engineering advisors by British engineers. They were initially drawn from those with experience in India, and referred to themselves as "Anglo-Indians", though they were in fact mostly Scots.

The critical difference between the social roles of the two sets of irrigation engineers was political. While the French engineers were working

under a sovereign government, the British engineers felt they could assume executive authority themselves, thus resolving the question of who was in charge. (The missing element in the equation is the role of Egyptian irrigation engineers, which was not recorded in the sources I consulted, though it must have been significant.)

After the replacement of the French by the British in 1882, the leading French engineer commented:

"European engineers of every nationality, and among others distinguished French engineers, have attempted for a long time to create an organization for the system (of irrigation NSH) and have elaborated for this purpose numerous projects, but although they have done much to perfect the method of using the Nile water, they have usually been hindered in this enterprise either by the will of the sovereign, the inertia of the proprietors, or the resistance of the population. Events of the last years have placed the whole service of irrigation in the hands of English engineers, who, profiting by the freedom which the present situation of Egypt affords them, are attempting, at present, to improve and complete the work of their predecessors." (Barois 1889:A)

The British saw it the same way. Ross (1889:vi) noted that, until 1882, French advisors in Cairo worked with Egyptian engineers, but could only advise. Afterwards the Anglo-Indians toured the provinces, saw what was going on, and had a more direct influence. In consequence, Ross noted that "There can be no manner of doubt that, up to 1882, Egyptian irrigation was going down-hill... The French had their hands tied by the powers that be in Cairo, who only allowed them to use their science and skill in what suited the political options of the day". The British drive to take over had been expressed earlier, in a 1884 report from the Irrigation Branch of the Public Works Ministry quoted by Brunhes (1902:389):

"Our Indian education helped us to recognize the great similarity between certain natural conditions in Egypt and in Northern India. So we did not have much difficulty in recognizing the shortcomings of irrigation in Egypt nor in indicating the broad outline of the necessary reforms. But from another point of view the difficulties were very important. Egypt was not a 'tabula rasa' on which one could establish the most perfect canal system but a country where all life depended on a fully developed but very bad system".

It is worth noting that in 1884 the British were certain that the reform lay in the improvement of the basin system, but by the 1890s and later they had embarked on a more ambitious scheme, to perfect the transition of Egypt from a basin system to a perennial irrigation system. Thus, their first perception of the problem, based on Indian experience, was later corrected in the light of what they learned in Egypt, though how they learned it is not recorded through

the successive editions of Willcocks's tome on Egyptian Irrigation (1889, 1895, 1913). (see also Sandes 1937)

The French geographer Jean Brunhes (one of the leading geographers of his day) argued in 1902 that the changes in social organization wrought by the British were even more important than the technical changes. He felt that the new irrigation organization and technology introduced under British auspices had created the need for a new and more detailed supervision of the farmers and hence more bureaucratic control, even suggesting that this was a deliberate intent on their part. He notes, in conclusion (1902:408):

"This is a new proof of our thesis: the water of the Nile has created Egypt, and recreates it every year: meanwhile the Irrigation Service, silent and discreet, is very active and present everywhere in overseeing the distribution of the water of the Nile, is also recreating Egypt, or rather is creating a new Egypt."

This history suggests that the present shape of the Egyptian irrigation system (the basic logic of that system remains unchanged since the turn of the century) reflects a process of intense cultural contact between European and Egyptian engineers, and between European engineers and the Egyptian people. The first thought of the British engineers was to borrow from their experience in India: the final result was closer to independent invention, probably reflecting some input from influential Egyptians, engineers and landowners, as well as from numerous Egyptian farmers. Coping with practical problems such as years of low water also affected the outcome, and was more present in the consciousness of the engineers themselves. Given the total control of the British administration during this period (in contrast to the French in the preceding period) we hear little or nothing about relationships between the British engineers and Egyptian society: the emphasis is on solving technical problems in Egypt, in order to increase production. At least in the early days, however, the British engineers such as Willcocks were aware of the relationship between technology and social differentiation in the countryside, and were alert to ways in which the British presence could be used to favor the "fellahin" vis a vis the proprietors.

B. The EARIS Project

The Egyptian-American Rural Improvement Service involved the use of advanced techniques to reclaim land and establish communities of peasant farmers on that land. The principal areas where it worked were Abis, near Alexandria, and two sites in the Fayoum. In some sense, this was seen as a pilot project for a reconstruction of the Nile Valley in which improved control over Nile waters through a High Dam at Aswan would play a part. A retrospective evaluation of the EARIS project has recently been completed by USAID, and should be consulted for further details (see Johnson et al. 1983).

The design phase of the project was initiated before the revolution of 1952, although the major influence occurred afterwards. The project got off to a good start in the enthusiasm following the 1952 revolution, faltered when the staff had to be evacuated in 1956, and essentially had ended by the 1967 war. But the major political event was the 1956 decision by the US not to build the High Dam at Aswan. This decision seems to have resulted from a change in US

foreign policy option which came when a Republican administration took over from a Democratic one in January 1953 (Nekmejian 1983). This was the era of John Foster Dulles and the Baghdad Pact, and there was less concern with development and regional problems than under the Truman administration, and more concern with building alliances to contain the Soviet threat. Thus, the US decision was seen as an outcome of Egypt's refusal to join the anti-Soviet alliance. (Remember Mauss's observations on the obligations to give, to receive, and to reciprocate.) When the IIS declined to help build the Aswan Dam, a good deal of the rationale for the EARIS project was undercut.

What was then intended as a technical development project was affected by major external events and by changes in US policy. The initial impulse under the Democrats was to encourage the revolutionary regime in Egypt in its efforts to improve social conditions. Under the following Republican administration, the emphasis on anti-Sovietism gave a different political complexion to the project, politicizing it in terms of international politics. There may also have been changes internal to Egypt.

There were some problems inherent in the development project itself. The American approach to EARIS emphasized voluntaristic, grass roots peasant participation in democratic village self-governance, and so could be seen as what later came to be called "development from below". (This could obviously be contrasted with the later, Soviet-sponsored Tahrir project, which was "development from above".) The American attitudes were based on what had worked in the American Middle West during the rapid changes of the 1920s and the Depression period. However the US staff, though technically proficient, had certain shortcomings (Nekmejian 1983):

1. The virtual lack of preparation in Egyptian culture, history and language prior to service in Egypt.
2. The complete absence of American cultural anthropologists and area specialists from the staff, with the exception of the Lebanese-American sociologist Afif Tannous who was involved in the planning stages.
3. The lack of specific training or briefing for the requirements of the EARIS project.
4. The reluctance to use Egyptian expertise, especially in the areas of land reclamation and irrigation.

Other US deficiencies recognized at the time or in retrospect by the participants included a tendency to patronize Egyptians, the status inconsistency between experienced Americans with relatively low university credentials and relatively inexperienced Egyptians with advanced degrees, and such internal problems on the American side as high turnover of personnel, problems in staff coordination and difficulties in the American chain of command.

From the American point of view, there were deficiencies on the Egyptian side as well (which are quoted from Nekmejian (1983) to show the perception of differences and problems, not to endorse them):

1. "The Egyptian tendency to procrastinate"
2. The reluctance of educated Egyptian personnel to work in the field
3. An Egyptian predilection for overstaffing
4. "The reluctance of Egyptian administrators to encourage American-conceived community development projects. The issue was community development

along democratic lines vs. 'Nasserist statist collectivism'.

5. The inclination on the part of some Egyptians to disregard advice technical and managerial matters (remember the frustration of the French century earlier)

6. The frequent failure of the Egyptian government to provide counterparts technical personnel and to meet funding deadlines (in other words, a different sense of priorities in terms of the functioning of the bureaucracy)

The history of this project shows more clearly than the British involvement in irrigation the role of interpersonal relations and differences between bureaucracies. Like the French before IRR2, the Americans were in an advisory position only, and felt the frustrations of the role. Egyptian policy on land reclamation changed for reasons that had nothing to do with the relationship (Springborg 1979), and the changing international relations also affected the environment of the project. It appears that in advocating community development dimension to the project, the Americans were proposing something for which they were themselves not prepared in the professional sense (expecting experts in land reclamation to act as community developers does not count as preparation) and for which the Egyptians were not eager. This difference of opinion as to goals and priorities added to the frustration. The EARIS project is none the less considered a success from both sides, and is referred to retrospectively as a successful American venture in land reclamation, with the implication that the current US reluctance to spend money in that area should be revised in the light of history.

CONCLUSION

Toward the beginning of this paper, I mentioned four areas where there have been substantial policy disagreements between Americans and Egyptians in recent years (new lands; agricultural mechanization; new cities; Sinai development). There are many ways in which these issues can be approached, and it is not my intention to analyze them here. I want to focus on the issue of how much information or knowledge is needed in order to act, and on the use of information in decision-making. In this area, there are some similarities and some differences between the Egyptian and the American styles. Hoben (1980:34) points out in his analysis of USAID decision-making that "Detailed economic, financial, environmental, and social analyses are carried out, in large measure, to justify the decisions already made in documentation required by the donor to demonstrate that the project conforms to policy and is sound". In other words, governments do not want analyses to produce surprises and challenge decisions. However, within this broad framework there are sometimes national cultural differences.

On the American side:

1. Most American social scientists feel that a fair amount of information should be gathered to serve as the base for project choice, design, implementation and evaluation. This, of course, provides a role for social science in the aid process. The major justification is that the avoidance of mistakes saves money and anguish. On the other hand, as Hoben (1980:365) points out, "As long as success is judged according to the ability to transfer resources -- to obligate funds -- in a timely and efficient manner, rather than according to the developmental impact of their efforts, donors will continue to have a powerful incentive for establishing and maintaining resource allocation routines that eliminate disruptive inputs from host country decision-makers,

including farmers". Or indeed, one must add, from any other source.

2. Americans in general expect a fair amount of information before getting too deeply involved in the decision-making process, even if that information is selective. They feel this pressure even more when they are in a foreign country where they are unsure of their ground because of unfamiliarity and lack of general preparation in the individuality of that country. When this demand for information reflects general insecurity and ignorance, it can be mindless. Information per se tells you nothing without a proper theoretical and historical framework.

3. The interest of USAID in information fluctuates. During the past decade, for instance, anthropology has grown in importance within USAID/Washington, and in particular within the Near East Bureau (Hoben 1980:365). On the other hand, the transition from the Democratic (Carter) to the Republican (Reagan) administrations led to a decline in the demand for social science information about the culture and society of the recipient of aid, about the likely social impact of different programs, and about how to design programs to reach the poor masses. It should be noted that the Reagan administration was also quite hostile to social sciences in the US, seeing them as something close to subversive, and attempted in a variety of ways to cut the budget allocations for social science research, both pure and applied.

4. Many of the organized efforts to collect information in Egypt during the past few years have not produced the results expected of them. One could cite here the University of California Agricultural Development Systems project, at least in its economics area, which produced virtually no new information, or the Ford Foundation sponsored Farm Management Survey which, perhaps for technical reasons, has only been available in small fragments quoted in individual research papers but never as a whole. These relative "failures" have given research a bad name. If research is to be effective in promoting development, then its results must be made available quickly and in appropriate form and language.

On the Egyptian side:

1. The Egyptians involved in a project are likely to be professionals in the area who have devoted a lifetime to it, and consider that all the prior work has been done, the options are clear, and so on, whereas the Americans, as relative newcomers (and rotation keeps bringing new ones in), may insist on "more studies" in order to convince themselves that a program direction is right. The Egyptians are likely to feel that one should get on with the program, rather than studies.

2. The sense that research should be "Egyptian" in personnel and goals is related to this. There is some worry that "American" research would lead to a shift in goals and priorities, and that it will not make the case from the Egyptian point of view. The disputes over the four issues mentioned above have tended to confirm this in Egyptian eyes.

3. There is always some suspicion that information collected for project purposes also serves other purposes which might be harmful to Egypt and Egyptian interests.

4. There is simply less of a habit of collecting information and

developing the capacity to use it, though on the American side this also leaves a lot to be desired.

5. One source of additional frustration on the Egyptian side was the objection to seeing large fees go to American consultants and expertise while their Egyptian counterparts were paid at much lower rates.

6. At the 75th anniversary celebration of Cairo University in December 1983, President Hosny Mubarak called for Egyptian universities to involve themselves more in the process of development, and to seek appropriate solutions to the social and economic problems of development. One can expect that Egyptian academics will be receptive to this call, inasmuch as most of them already conceive of their role in this way. Such a program inevitably will involve Egyptian social scientists more in research and research-related activities, and Egyptian practice and experience may evolve rapidly. However, it will be necessary to avoid the situation that exists in agriculture, where the experimental facilities in the faculties of Agriculture have no administrative link or substantive input into the extension programs of the Ministry of Agriculture.

In general, our level of social science knowledge of Egypt is such that we are still doing "first generation" research, in other words, simply trying to determine the basic facts of the case. Elaborate scientific methodology, hypothesizing, and theory building must await the accumulation of sufficient solid data. There is still a low level of information quality, and rapid change makes much of what exists go quickly out of date. We should be less concerned with who does the work, and more concerned that reliable data are gathered and are useful both for development projects and for continued theory building. On the other hand, social science should be allowed to retain its critical role and to evaluate projects in terms of their national and societal functions.

This paper has posed the problem of international cooperation through foreign aid as a cultural process involving diffusion and other forms of relationship between the two cultures or societies involved. The general argument is that this process will be a more rewarding one if the participants acquire some degree of self-consciousness about their respective roles, and that knowledge and understanding not only of the culture of the other but also of one's own culture is a necessary step to this self-consciousness. This consideration has naturally led us to consider the role of information (particularly social science information) in development. Provided they have the proper degree of perspective on their own roles, social scientists can make a valuable contribution to Egyptian development.

Whose Knowledge Counts: Discourse and Development in an Egyptian Rural Community

by Cynthia Nelson

"All genuine knowledge originates in direct experience. But one cannot have direct experience of everything: as a matter of fact, most of our knowledge comes from past times and foreign lands...Moreover, what is indirect experience for me is direct experience for other people. Consequently, considered as a whole, knowledge of any kind is inseparable from direct experience. All knowledge originates in perception of the objective external world through Man's (and Woman's:C.N.) physical sense organs. Anyone who denies such perception, denies direct experience, or denies personal participation in the practice that changes reality, is not a materialist" (Mao Tse-Tung, 1937: 8)

I Introduction

The above quotation immediately situates the problematic of this essay which can be rephrased in terms of three questions: (1) What is the relationship between theory and practice in the production of knowledge and the uses of such knowledge in the practice that changes reality? (2) What are the epistemological issues underlying the linkage of indigenous technology and equitable development? (3) What methodological stance provides a more adequate basis for research aimed at progressive social change? Therefore, we prefer to think about the issues posed by this symposium less in terms of technology *per se* and more in terms of the knowledge surrounding the control and use of technology in changing reality. Hence what knowledge, whose knowledge and how knowledge is used to change reality become the critical questions. This essay will address these questions by drawing upon direct experience participating in a project whose articulated objective is: exploring the relevance and potentialities of renewable energy technologies for the development of an Egyptian Village (hereafter referred to as the Basaisa Experience).²

II The Context of the Debate: Energy, Technology and Development

There is a growing realization that the expected benefits of the capital investment growth models of development so popular in the 1960s have not "trickled down" to the rural poor as optimistically anticipated. This in turn has stimulated global interest in and concern about the nature of technologies

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