A Global Strategy for Human Development as an Example of Second Order Science

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Overview

• My goal is to explain a way of doing social science research that is compatible with a reconsideration of science

• First, I shall describe the work of the Institute of Cultural Affairs

• Second, I shall describe a widely held view of social science research

• Third, I shall compare the two approaches to research

• Fourth, I shall place the comparison in the context of an expanded conception of science
A global strategy for human development

• In the 1950s group of people trained in the ministry had been working with people in the suburbs on “church renewal”
• They decided to work with people in poor communities
• The financing came from Head Start
• After M.L. King, Jr. was assassinated in 1968, they started again
• A planning conference for people from the community and a few people who had access to resources
A facilitated conversation

- What is your VISION for the future?
- What are the OBSTACLES to achieving the vision?
- What are some STRATEGIES for removing the obstacles?
- What TACTICS are needed to advance the strategies?
- What ACTIONS should be taken to implement the tactics?

- At the end of the conference they had a set of plans that they worked on for several months
Participants in community discussions

- Representatives of all groups in the community
- A few local businessmen
- A few local government officials
- Later, participants from earlier community development projects
Testing a strategy for human development

• The conference, the activity generated and the follow-up activities were very successful
• Would the method work in a developing country?
• A second project was undertaken in the Marshall Islands
• Again success, so they decided to set up demonstration projects in each of the 24 time zones around the world
• Model villages would serve as examples of what could be achieved
Locations of the first projects

• The first 24 projects were established in the 1960s and 1970s in Chicago, USA; Marshall Islands; northern Australia; India; Indonesia; Washington, DC; Venezuela; Kenya; Zambia; London, UK; Egypt; North Dakota, USA; Mississippi, USA; Taiwan; Nigeria; Berlin (Kreutzberg Ost), Germany; South Korea; a Maritime Province, Canada; Hong Kong; Japan; Philippines; Malaysia; Italy, central Canada

• Some slides from the start of the project in Guatemala in 1978
Water was an issue

• During land reform in the 1950s each family received a plot of land
• Some plots had water, some did not
• Some people seemed to be very proud
• The community story was that people would give water to those who needed it
• It seemed to me that people were exchanging pride for water
• A community water well became a top priority
Family size

• During land reform, each family received the same amount of land
• Some families had many children, some had few
• Children were highly valued
• I guessed that families with few children were more prosperous than families with many children
• When I asked about this, people walked out
• But the next day there was standing room only
New businesses

• Village economics – reduce imports, increase exports, create additional businesses in the community
• Keep money inside the community and have it be passed around as often as possible
• The main import was bread. A woman said she would bake it
• A “movie” business already existed
• A laundry, a restaurant, and a hair dressing business
• A dress making business
Other projects

• A second set of 24 Human Development Projects was created in the late 1970s and early 1980s
• Human Development Training Schools in India and Kenya
• Town Meeting, a one day event in 1976, one in each county in the country in each country having a Human Development Project
• Global Women’s Forum
• “Sharing Approaches that Work” in New Delhi, India, in 1983, supported by UNESCO
Other non-governmental organizations

- Dig water wells
- Build churches
- Build schools
- Improve housing
- Work on specific illnesses such as malaria or dysentery
- ICA taught participatory methods so people would learn how to work together to define their needs and to create relationships with people who had resources
Setting up new organizations

- A farmer’s cooperative
- A businessman’s cooperative
- A preschool for children
- A parent-teacher association
  - Parents blamed teachers for not showing up to teach
  - Teachers blamed parents for not sending children to school
How ICA operated

• Each summer they would gather in Chicago to discuss the past year and to define programs for the coming year
• In the fall they would go to communities around the world to implement the programs they had designed
• Their global network was created through the World Council of Churches
• The next summer they would meet again in Chicago to reflect on what worked and what did not and to design the next year’s programs
The financial model

• In each project there were 2 or 3 couples. One person in a couple would teach in an embassy school; the other would work full time on community development
• So, they were largely self-supporting, though at a very low income level
• Donations to ICA paid for international travel
How social science research is done now

• The objective is to test a theory by collecting and analyzing data
• Experiments should be replicable by others
• The researcher tries to be objective
• Research is an effort to find causal relationships among variables at a high level of statistical significance
• The goal is reliable knowledge, not social change directly
• Success is measured by number of papers in leading academic journals
How ICA did research

• Read widely (Boulding, Mead, Tillich, Niebuhr, Schumacher). Start with current knowledge. Learn by doing. Change methods as needed. Use successful methods with additional communities

• The researchers established personal relationships with local people – celebrations, a weekly market, a newsletter

• The goal was to improve the quality of life (health, income, education) as quickly as possible by using available knowledge and expertise (irrigation, new crops, fertilizer, business practices)

• Success was measured by higher standards of living and the spread of participatory methods to nearby communities

• Networks of supportive people were created and maintained
Why is current social science so abstract?

• Social scientists are attempting to imitate natural science
• A desire to be quantitative, not merely qualitative
• A preference for general knowledge, not culture-specific knowledge
• The observer is assumed to be outside the system observed
• A theory of a system is assumed not to alter the behavior of the system
What the Institute was doing

• The ICA people were deeply involved in communities -- living and working side by side on a daily basis
• They worked to resolve conflicts
• Because they were trained in the ministry, rather than science, they were concerned with emotions, spiritual feelings, and cultural beliefs and practices
• They worked to create -- through stories, songs, and symbols -- shared concern for the community and the world not just individual advancement
Why do we create scientific knowledge?

• We want to understand how the world works
• Also, we want to act effectively -- to achieve our goals with minimum effort and minimum disruption of the planet
• Knowledge from science is used to achieve our purposes (both individuals and organizations)
• 1st order knowledge (how the world works) is used by purposeful systems
The basic idea of second order science

• First order science is exploring the world. Second order science is reflecting on those explorations
• Any improvement of first order science would qualify as second order science
• Science can be expanded by focusing on purposeful behavior
• We could shift our thinking from viewing science as creating descriptions of systems to viewing science as an active part of social systems
• We would think about the co-evolution of theories and society
How we think about social science

- In the natural sciences we assume that theories do not affect what is studied
- We carry over these assumptions to the social sciences, because we think this is the way to do science
- But we can remove our self-imposed blinders and expand our conception of science
- We could see the earlier conception of science as a special case of the new conception
An Application of the Correspondence Principle

Old philosophy of science

Amount of attention paid to the observer

New philosophy of science
Second order science and the Anthropocene

• The intent of second order science is to improve the productivity of the scientific enterprise

• A science of purposeful systems operates at a higher level than a science of causality

• By improving both our understanding and our ability to act, second order science improves our ability to manage the planet wisely

• About 10 more perspectives on second order science will be provided this afternoon
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