

Engaging with anthropology to reflect on past practice and future directions in development

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History of a relationship

- Concepts and definitions
- Anthropology and Development
- Current paradigms of effectiveness, sustainability and community led participation

Key questions

- What is the current status of in-depth socio-cultural knowledge as an evidence base for development?
- Does participant observation offer any added value to participatory methodologies?

Culture as a project variable

“The success of all projects depends upon whether or not they are socially and culturally appropriate, yet it is ironically these factors which tend to be least considered.”

Anthropology, Development and the Post-Modern Challenge Gardner and Lewis 1996

Culture as process as well as object

- “Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group...encompass[ing] art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” UNESCO 2002
- Cultures are “dynamic, interactive and subject to change” (*Culture Matters* UNFPA 2004)

Does anthropology have any answers?

Key questions critical to the success of development interventions:

- What is the genuinely detailed local picture? (e.g. gender relations, economic assets, organisation of access to land)
- What are the local epistemologies that drive (or inhibit) action and change?
- How can development truly engage with local people's analysis of what has worked?

Immersion and Participation

- Immersion Technique as development strategy
- SIDA Reality Check Project
- Participatory methodologies (RRA, PRA, Ten Seed Technique, Pocket Charts, Most Significant Change, Appreciative Enquiry)

Anthropology's added value

1. The micro-level of anthropological enquiry offers in-depth understandings of local people's lived realities
2. Theoretical expertise in understanding culture, systems of knowledge and the dynamics of change
3. Subject specific expertise (geographical or by topic)