DEVELOPMENT AS PROCESS

Concepts and Methods for Working with Complexity

Edited by

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How can the complexity and unpredictability of planned development be understood?

How can project managers deal with the social relationships and institutional contexts in which they operate?

Linking practical experience and contemporary social theory, this book offers alternative ways of thinking about 'development as process' and new methods for field research and programme monitoring. Conventionally, the complexity of development work has been 'managed' through the use of simple project models in which planned inputs lead logically to predictable outputs. In focusing on the unintended outcome, the unmanageable element, the local variability of effects, and the importance of social relationships, the contributors in this book challenge simplistic managerial models and suggest new approaches and methods which acknowledge, explore and positively engage with the unexpected and with diversity in the development process.

Drawing on work in agriculture, irrigation, forestry, and fisheries in countries in Asia and the former Soviet Union, Development as Process examines changing information needs faced by development agencies as they shift from simple technology-led project approaches, towards an emphasis on policy change, institutional reform and inter-agency partnerships. In looking critically at the politics of information production and use in different cultural and institutional settings, Development as Process goes beyond method and technique and proposes a new look at the role of monitoring information in planned development.

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PREFACE

The idea of producing a book on process approaches was born in the aftermath of an informal workshop jointly organised by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Centre for Development Studies and held at ODI in April 1995. The workshop, entitled 'The Potential for Process Monitoring in Project Management and Organisational Change: Lessons from the Natural Resources Sector', was attended by practitioners, academics and policy researchers, mainly from the UK, but with some representation also from France, the Netherlands and the Philippines.

In many ways, the workshop was exploratory: some came with the notion that process approaches were important, but without direct experience of them; others came dissatisfied with conventional, deterministic project approaches, but at the same time uneasy over participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and other 'rapid'
methods which many advocate as alternatives; yet others came to share the experience they had gained in introducing approaches more flexible, responsive, and sensitive to idiosyncrasy than conventional project design.

Continuing interaction with the workshop participants and others, together with the editors’ long-term involvement in the study and application of process approaches in southern Asia, the former USSR and elsewhere, made it clear that a volume providing practical examples of process approaches and locating them within a conceptual frame would be welcomed by many.

This book aims to meet that need. It opens with a conceptual chapter by Mosse, followed (Chapter 2) by his overview of the case study material presented in subsequent chapters. Chapters 3 and 4 provide examples from India and Bangladesh of process approaches to information and monitoring in development projects. For the same two countries, Chapters 6-8 set out process experiences in the context of multi-agency collaboration. Chapter 5 sets out the expectations and practice of the UK Department for International Development in relation to monitoring ‘process projects’. The final chapter, taking examples from Indian forestry and Russian land privatisation, examines how process approaches can influence policy reform.