

# ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

## THE INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL PLANNING



**Memo No (939)**

**Sociology of Development**

by

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**February 1970**

جمهورية مصر العربية – طريق صلاح سالم – مدينة نصر – القاهرة – مكتب ريد رقم ١١٧٦٥

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In this study the author deals with the sociology of development. Development theoreticians, planners and administrators speak of economic and social development but too often the economic aspects are emphasized to the detriment of the social aspects.

To some extent this is understandable since the economic concepts are much easier to identify and are at least conceptually easy to quantify. The sociological concepts, on the other hand, are difficult to isolate and much more difficult to measure since precise methods for the measurement of such concepts are themselves in the developmental state.

In this study the author attempts to delineate some basic sociological principles and problems which have a bearing on the development process.

In section II certain sociological concepts involved in national development are laid forth while Section III contains a brief discussion of the Determination of National Desires. Section IV analyzes certain key problems which sociology has enabled us to identify. Section V provides a treatment of the crucial question of nation building and development.

This study then, provides the student of development with an insight into the social aspects of the development process. Further, it indicates the symbiotic relationship which exists between sociological and economic analysis.

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Unless the development specialists of any country have a profound grasp of the sociological factors involved in the development process in their country they will be unable to establish the national preference function which is the basic instrument needed in any economic planning. In fact, without the preference function determined according to the specific social characteristics of the country, the econometrician will be unable to develop a workable economic model for the country.

This study is dedicated to the development specialists, both economist and sociologists, who, working together, further the implementation of development in order to meet the needs and aspirations of their fellow citizens.



## II. SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS INVOLVED IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Definition of Development

Development is a generic concept. We can say that development can be defined, in the sociological sense, as induced progress. The starting point for this development will be different for different nations since the already established commitments have to be considered. The starting points will differ also due to the fact of differences in the availability and accessibility of resources. Whatever the starting point, we can observe that what is actually attempted is induced progress.

Development defined as induced progress indicates that the process to achieve this requires change. This is true whatever the degree of progress being sought. A societies' ability to tolerate change is an indicator which development sociologists would very much like to measure since it would yield much information with which to build comprehensive development models. The present state of technology in the field does not provide us with a precise methodology to measure such a concept as a societies' ability to tolerate change. We do know, however, that individuals and human groups do not welcome change. We humans gain efficiency and function effectively in a familiar environment because we know what is predictable. Certainly, some individuals and groups can tolerate more environmental ambiguity than others, but the need for predictability is there and it is this predictability in our environment which begins to be affected by social change. The old ways at least were known to work, no one knows for sure or can predict to himself that the new ways will. Development, therefore, affects the basic human drive to maintain predictability of environment.

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There are many factors which will inhibit or accelerate the rate at which a given nation will seek to induce progress--induced societal change toward economic betterment. One of the factors which should be considered by the sociologist is the question of what are the impeti for development. Of particular importance is the impetus of values such as:

- (1) the desire for security and national prestige;
- (2) the desire for material prosperity;
- (3) the desire to build a nation.

Any of these values or all of them and more can and do serve as impeti for development. The priority assigned to any one of them can be seen to affect the way in which development will occur. One of the more fascinating impeti for development which the sociologist accesses in a developing nation is that of efficacy.

#### The Notion of Efficacy and its role as an impeti for Development

The notion of efficacy is an important one to consider in discussing the sociology of development. As was stated above, commitment to development is a commitment to the future, to induced progress. The built-in assumption here is that progress does not happen by itself but that it can be made to happen. This implies an attitude which in itself is new to many peoples since in this attitude the future is viewed as a possibility. Now this implies that man can intervene to make possible what he wishes. Hence control over and manipulation of the environment become not only admissible, but acceptable notions. This attitude occurs at different paces in a given population. Those in power have this view often before the rest of the population.

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It is useful to consider the components of power in discussing this notion of efficacy. Power can be defined as the actual capacity to bring about a course of events with the authority or capacity to enforce ones decisions because the power held has legitimately been institutionalized. When power is projected into future use the term efficacy is used. Efficacy is an estimate of the power to effect or bring about a desired future state. Those who have a high sense of efficacy think they can effect the future, that is, actually bring it about. Those in power in any social group (including nations) usually have a high sense of efficacy. At the same time, large portions of the population retain a fatalistic attitude and they can be said to be possessed of a low sense of efficacy. The larger part of any national population manifests a dependency on the forces which they cannot control and in general, most of the people do not see the effect of their relations on the social sphere nor at the aggregate societal level. A sense of high efficacy does not necessarily mean that a ruling elite is actually possessed of the power to achieve what he (she, they) think(s) he (she, they) can achieve. Nevertheless a sense of high efficacy in the elites can be a motivating factor for the people as a whole and a nation with a high sense of efficacy coupled with determination to induce progress can indeed bring it about as we can see in the examples of Japan, Mainland China, and the USSR, to cite only a few examples.

### Social Engineering

There is an important manipulative or social engineering concept which is useful to spell out bluntly when considering the notion of efficacy for it can be misused. The concept "Not only is it possible to control the environment, it is also appropriate to do so", as stated, is in accordance with any sound religious, political, social or ideological view.



The problem lies in the fact that the desire and will to control the environment often leads to the temptation to view each individual as purely instrumental to the objectives of the society. Certainly, on one hand individuals have an instrumental role in bringing about development by their personal contributions to the social order and on the other hand, individuals accept and seek a certain amount of social engineering with respect to the attainment of development goals. Where individuals become mere instruments for the attainment of goals and where the present becomes merely an instrument for the future, the social engineering has overstepped its purpose.

#### Sociology and Development Model Building

Motivations or paths toward modernity vary. There are also great variations in the role of governments as active or passive stimulators of development. The sociologists particularly concerned with the sociology of development are interested in determining what are the conditions that help determine which model would be most appropriate for a given country. It is true that various ideologies have set up a priori answers as to the suitability of their model for development purposes. We see this with respect to the ideologies of communism and capitalism both of which purport to have the solution. The sociologist, like the economist, is concerned with the pragmatic problem of establishing suitable models based on empirical evidence rather than on a priori answers.



### III. DETERMINATION OF NATIONAL DESIRES

#### Levels of Living and National Priorities

It was stated above that development is induced progress, that is, induced societal change toward economic betterment. The question then arises, what are the needs and wants the satisfaction of which a given population will perceive as being indicative of economic and social betterment. Needs and wants can be determined by a technical process in which populations are scientifically sampled to determine their needs and wants by measuring their attitudes with respect to certain elements and then ranking these elements to develop a profile of national needs and wants. More often than not needs and wants are determined by the technocrats and the politicians. Targets are established such as the eradication of malaria, and diversification of industry and economic betterment is often then defined in terms of the degree to which these targets are met. Political and technical determination of need obviously raise the problem of what the population actually wants and whether this is reflected in the politicians choices. Of course, it must be recognized that large segments of a population may be unaware of the types of economic and social measures that are necessary to bring about satisfaction of their needs and wants.

Having said this, it is useful to note that needs and wants have to do with levels of living. Basically needs are grouped or are clustered around the basic human needs for food, shelter, and clothing. Economic betterment is presumed to bring about a broader spectrum of choices. The United Nations has developed a roster of levels of living which include the general categories of needs for any nation. The ordering or ranking of these categories may and does differ from country to country.

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In its recommended roster to define levels of living the United Nations includes the following:

- (1) HEALTH, both personal and environmental;
- (2) FOOD and NUTRITION;
- (3) EDUCATION;
- (4) CONDITIONS OF WORK AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES;
- (5) AGGREGATE CONSUMPTION and SAVINGS;
- (6) TRANSPORTATION;
- (7) HOUSING, including facilities;
- (8) CLOTHING
- (9) RECREATION;
- (10) SOCIAL SECURITY;
- (11) HUMAN FREEDOMS.

According to this roster nations can be compared to see the priorities they assign to the various elements.

There has been considerable emphasis on economic indicators since economic development is viewed as a necessary condition for the satisfactions of aspirations the society may have. However, it is useful to note that non-economic aspirations may be more significant. This can be seen in many developing nations which place an increased emphasis on education and health. These new demands must be respected, however one must recognize that the ability to satisfy the non-economic aspirations is dependent on the achievement of economic levels which will support the fulfillment of these aspirations.

#### Ways of Conceptualizing Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions.

People are dissatisfied if their elemental needs are not met and if their primary values are not met or if their individual self-images are not satisfied. In sociology of development we say that a society can be said to be in a state of "relative deprivation" when the attainment of needs and values are not attainable by all.



It is useful to note when discussing needs that there is no end-point to the continuum, for example, the desire for health and for enlightenment are self-escalating needs. So in this sense it is correct to say that the needs can never be satisfied for by the time satisfaction of last years needs occurs, the population will be seeking the satisfaction of previously unidentified needs. The introduction of change itself leads to increasing dissatisfaction and the problem becomes one of either inducing change or being victimized by it.

One of the factors that may help or hinder the process of change is that modern society entails a systematic pattern of social mobility. There is geographic mobility permitted by laws, and made feasible by modern technology. There is also the social ability to be mobile in modern society. Lerner says that "The transplanted man (that is, the geographically and socially mobile man) no longer needs to be his Fathers Shadow". There is further a psychic mobility in which the high empathetic capacity is the predominant personal style of the modern man due to the fact that he lacks the bonds of inter-dependence present and characteristic of a traditional society. The need for a shared experience creates this capacity for empathy and in a sense replaces the "loss" of the traditional system of inter-dependence. Dissatisfaction with the degree of geographic and social mobility in a developing society very often are present and serve as a force for change.

Many aspirations have to do with how one earns a living rather than what one can buy. Such aspirations often require a drastic change in organized activity and a spirit of innovation. Such is the case if a country was formerly 80% agricultural and suddenly seeks to change to heavy industry with agriculture retaining 30% of the labor force. The aspiration as to how one earns a living would then be in favour of industrial pursuits rather than agricultural but vast changes in organized activity and massive retraining schemes would be required together with a spirit of innovation.

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The very innovational spirit is both necessary for change and is itself a product of change and implies economic development itself. Even if one thereby admits that economic development is at the crux of the societal change, it must also be admitted that the very process of solving technical problems are of a social-political nature. In technology itself, the change is from a simple technique to the application of scientific knowledge and of the scientific method which is rooted in a notion of causality alien to many, in fact most, traditional societies.



#### IV. SOCIOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT

##### The Problem of Atimia

One of the serious problems affecting the nation which seeks to induce progress and is attempting to set up priorities is that of atimia. Atimia is defined as loss of status or more precisely, as individual or national perception of a loss of status. Nations found out the extent of their underdevelopment at the United Nations. At the present time when the idea of nation as the major symbol with which one identifies occurs, atimia, or loss of status can cause aspiring nations to establish priorities which enhance status but do not necessarily advance economic development.

Atimia in economic and political status has effects one of which has been called the "demonstration effect" by Horowitz. The demonstration effect, according to Horowitz, means that the developing nations have defined themselves as being in a race with the developed nations. Little consideration is given to whether or not the type of political or economic system of the developed country is in fact seriously imitable. Rather, there is an assumption on the part of the leadership in the developing countries that the developed countries are imitable and that they should be imitated. Often, of course, this assumption is reinforced by the developed countries who seek to maintain dominance over the developing nations. Too little attention is paid by the developing countries to the development of their own unique solutions. (Hagen also refers to a demonstration effect but Hagen's demonstration effect has to do with individual consumption patterns.)