



Anthropologie
& développement

Development in the Rear-view Mirror
Vacant memory, living memory: stories and facts about past development

Call for papers for a thematic issue of the journal
Anthropology & Development

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Scope

Africa sees one development aid intervention after another, year after year. These “convoys” of aid are relentlessly delivered through projects that adapt as much as the situation seems to require. In their wake they leave behind marks and traces which overlap and evolve at the same time (sometimes at the wrong time) that international recipes and guidelines for aid change. Thus, on multiple levels, from the village to national public policy, development aid passes through myriad stakeholders, communities, places and locations, marking the African landscape with its codes, language and resources. Researchers and aid professionals therefore wonder: how can we grasp all the increasing traces and vestiges of projects that overlap and are erased over time? On a time scale, the implementation of aid seems especially based on a forward-looking projection of the effects of an intervention.¹ Consequently, the experience acquired in the implementation of projects or programs is sometimes forgotten,² which causes the history of development and reproduction to sputter and get

¹ Rob AHEARNE, “Le développement ? C’est du passé”. Une lecture historique des récits du progrès dans la Tanzanie du Sud”, (2014) 135-3, *Politique africaine* 23

² Olivier RUË, *L’aménagement du littoral de Guinée (1945-1995): mémoires de mangroves. Des mémoires de développement pour de nouvelles initiatives*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1998.

stuck. The academic and professional literature, particularly in the context of the aid effectiveness debate, emphasizes this absence of historical consciousness among development professionals, who generally tend to operate in the eternal present.³ Often challenged, the “project” approach,⁴ right down to its etymology, carries this idea of forward “projection,” leading to a denial of the legacy of the past, or at least a form of structural amnesia. Already by the mid 1980s, the idea was that “the natural tendency of a project is always to believe that the story started with the project”.⁵ With few exceptions, successive interventions have not contributed to a process of collection and analysis of knowledge surrounding the effects and impacts of aid in the longer term. Development aid diagnosis and evaluation methods only partially or superficially embrace the concept of history or memory. In other words, these aid vehicles seem to be missing their rear-view mirror. However, the goal of the dossier is not to revisit the limits and critiques of the project-based approach, which are amply detailed in the literature,⁶ but rather to challenge the paradox that characterizes the realm of development: the blatant contradiction between the memories, which certainly could all too quickly be described as “vacant,”⁷ of aid professionals (even though an analysis might show that they are actually “fragmented,” not mobilized or guided) and the “living” memory of those who directly or indirectly benefit from the various aid interventions. Using the notion of “memory” in its broadest terms⁸ introduces different relationships to the past for stakeholders, whether or not professionals, in the developmental

³ Jean COPANS, *Usages du développement : mémoires, politiques et sciences sociales*, No. 202-203, Éditions de l'EHESS, 2011.

⁴The “project” approach is the primary instrument of the organization and implementation of development aid and public action; for example, see the work of Pierre-Marie Aubert on forest management in Morocco: “Projets de développement et changements dans l'action publique,” (2014) No. 4 *Revue Tiers Monde* 221-237

⁵Dominique GENTIL and Marc DUFUMIER, “Le suivi-évaluation dans les projets de développement rural. Orientations méthodologiques,” *AMIRA* 1984.44.7-80.

⁶ Albert O. HIRSCHMAN, *Development projects observed*, 7. print, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution, 1967; Jean-Pierre OLIVIER DE SARDAN, *Anthropologie et développement, essai en socio-anthropologie du changement social*, Karthala, et al. Hommes et Sociétés, Paris, 1995; Benjamin GARNAUD and Julien ROCHETTE, “Rôle et limites de l'approche projet dans l'aménagement du littoral à Nador (Maroc)”, (2012) No. 211-3 *Revue Tiers Monde* 169-188.

⁷At least in appearance, notably due to the rotation of officers, the lack of preservation and archiving of data and the random management of knowledge and archives.

⁸Here we rely on the approaches and definitions of memory as constructed representations of the past; of traces and eliciting those traces as proposed by Marie-Claire LAVABRE, “Paradigmes de la mémoire,” *Transcontinentales. Sociétés, idéologies, système mondial* 2007.5.139-147; Marie-Aude FOUERE, “La mémoire au prisme du politique,” *Cahiers d'études africaines* 2010.197.5-24.

configuration. It takes into consideration the dynamic and especially diachronic nature of interactions between the program and the place by questioning the local history of aid, which is only rarely examined in the academic or professional literature.

Hence, if this rear-view mirror could be installed, what would stakeholders in different positions in a development project learn? What images, inevitably partial or distorted, would they portray? What material markings would be etched into the landscape? Where would the blind spots be? Which elements would stakeholders remember from the road they had travelled? In recalling the past, would the evaluator or the researcher draw the same single map of “development” in their region? Finally, how and to what extent do these memories influence future development interventions?

This *Anthropologie et développement* dossier explores development memory on several levels in order to revisit the critiques of aid failures. The tangible and intangible traces, representations and fantasies these projects and programs leave behind are thus re-examined in another light to see how they have been appropriated. It attempts to foster new perspectives on development aid by overcoming old ideas on two fronts: the temporality of the project approach and the frameworks and tools used to evaluate aid. While impact studies and evaluations aim to determine a project or program’s role in social change—for procedural or accountability reasons—the study of development memory operates outside the temporal and socio-territorial space of the project. Analyzing memory is also one way to demonstrate other forms of the dispersion, either through networks or capillarity, of innovations and supposed changes brought about by a program or programs.⁹ The “development memory” approach also questions the material traceability of interventions in the area and their non-material traces in stories, practices and knowledge. One of the aims of this dossier is to also consider these two aspects simultaneously and dynamically. The contributions in this dossier will analyze the diversity of actors in the developmental configuration, but there will be a focus on the discourse

⁹As highlighted by Crewe and Harrison regarding fish farming and fish ponds. *Whose Development? An Ethnography of Aid*, London; New York: New York, Zed Books, 1998.

and representations of development by those who are not aid professionals and, therefore, might have a weaker voice in this area. It may also propose methodological and empirical reflection on how development memory is created and its use by individuals in their everyday life, including outside the development configuration.

The dossier offers new sociological, historical and anthropological insights into development interventions from the perspective of their tangible and intangible memory. The expected contributions will be to professional and academic knowledge that, through empirical data and methodological discussions, can question development “in the present” based on representations of the past.

Calendar:

Proposals for articles should be submitted ***by 31 December 2020*** to Frank Fortuné (f.fortune@socooperation.org) and Matthieu Brun (matthieu.brun@scpobx.fr), as well as to the editorial staff of the journal (revue@apad-association.org).

Proposals for articles, of approximately 5,000 characters (including spaces), may be written in French or English.

The proposal must include:

- a title;
- a summary detailing the research theme and issue, as well as the materials on which the article is based;
- bibliographic references (not counted in the 5,000 characters' limit).

Each proposal must include the full names of the authors, their professional status and institutional affiliation, as well as their e-mail address.

Publication planned for mid-2022.

More information about the journal can be found here:
<https://journals.openedition.org/anthropodev/523>