

The Anti-Politics Machine

“Development,” Depoliticization, and
Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho

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Abbreviations and symbols

M	Maloti, the official currency of Lesotho. M1 equals, by definition, R1.
R	Rands, the official currency of South Africa. R1 was worth in the neighborhood of US\$0.85 to \$0.90 during the research period, September 1982 to December 1983.
BCP	Basotholand Congress Party
BNP	Basotho National Party
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DA	District Administrator
DC	District Commissioner
DDA	District Development Authority
DDC	District Development Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N.
FAO/WB	Food and Agriculture Organization/World Bank Cooperative Programme
FSSP	Foodgrain Self-sufficiency Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GOL	Government of Lesotho
ILO	International Labour Office
LASA	Lesotho Agri-Cultural Sector Analysis Project
LLA	Lesotho Liberation Army
LMC	Livestock Marketing Corporation
LPMS	Livestock Products Marketing Services
ODM	Overseas Development Ministry (U.K.)
PMU	Para-military Unit (formerly Police Mobile Unit)
TEBA	The Employment Bureau of Africa
TTCC	Thaba-Tseka Coordinating Committee
TTDP	Thaba-Tseka Development Project
TTRDP	Thaba-Tseka Rural Development Programme
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
VDP	Village Distribution Point

Preface

What is "development"? It is perhaps worth remembering just how recent a question this is. This question, which today is apt to strike us as so natural, so self-evidently necessary, would have made no sense even a century ago. It is a peculiarity of our historical era that the idea of "development" is central to so much of our thinking about so much of the world. It seems to us today almost non-sensical to deny that there is such a thing as "development," or to dismiss it as a meaningless concept, just as it must have been virtually impossible to reject the concept "civilization" in the nineteenth century, or the concept "God" in the twelfth. Such central organizing concepts are not readily discarded or rejected, for they form the very framework within which argumentation takes place. One argues about God's corporeality, or about the role of legitimate commerce in the civilizing process – not about whether a theistic philosophy is justifiable, or whether Euro-centrism is to be rejected. Each of these central organizing concepts presupposes a central, unquestioned value, with respect to which the different legitimate positions may be arrayed, and in terms of which different world views can be articulated. "Development" in our time is such a central value. Wars are fought and coups are launched in its name. Entire systems of government and philosophy are evaluated according to their ability to promote it. Indeed, it seems increasingly difficult to find any way to talk about large parts of the world except in these terms.

Like "civilization" in the nineteenth century, "development" is the name not only for a value, but also for a dominant problematic or interpretive grid through which the impoverished regions of the world are known to us. Within this interpretive grid, a host of everyday observations are rendered intelligible and meaningful. Poor countries are by definition "less developed," and the poverty and powerlessness of the people who live in such countries are only the external signs of this underlying condition. The images of the ragged poor of Asia thus become legible as markers of a stage of development, while the bloated bellies of African children are the signs of social as well as nutritional deficiency. Within this problematic, it appears self-evident that debtor Third World nation-states and starving peasants share a common "problem," that both lack a single "thing": "development."

To say that "development" is a dominant problematic is, of course, not to suggest that everyone holds the same beliefs about it. Different people mean different things by "development," and it is entirely possible to have an oppositional or radical view of "development"—just as it was possible for Reformation protestants to defy the Church in the name of God, or for nineteenth-century humanitarians to attack colonial exploitation out of sympathy with the "savages." But the dominant problematic does not seem to be thus endangered. A problematic, after all, imposes questions, not answers. If "development" is today from time to time challenged, it is still almost always challenged in the name of "real development." Like "goodness" itself, "development" in our time is a value so firmly entrenched that it seems almost impossible to question it, or to refer it to any standard beyond its own.

How and why this central value came to exist is one question that is raised by the dominance of the "development" problematic. This is a question I hope to be able to answer in future work through a detailed historical analysis of the origins and transformations of the modern figure "development," a "genealogy" of "development." But a second and perhaps equally important set of questions is raised at the same time: how does this dominant problematic work in practice, and what are its effects? If, as I intend to demonstrate in the pages that follow, all this talking and thinking about "development" is not merely ideological icing, then what are its specific effects? What happens differently due to the "development" problematic that would not or could not happen without it? The two sets of questions are closely related, but I find it convenient to treat them separately, and to attempt to make a contribution toward answering the second question before taking on the first. It is perhaps preferable to try to get a better idea of what "development" does before hazarding an explanation for how and why it came about. I will approach these questions here through a case study of the way in which ideas about "development" are generated and put to use in one specific context: Lesotho in the period 1975–84.

The argument, in brief, is the following: "development" institutions generate their own form of discourse, and this discourse simultaneously constructs Lesotho as a particular kind of object of knowledge, and creates a structure of knowledge around that object. Interventions are then organized on the basis of this structure of knowledge, which, while "failing" on their own terms, nonetheless have regular effects, which include the expansion and entrenchment of bureaucratic state power, side by side with the projection of a representation of economic and

social life which denies "politics" and, to the extent that it is successful, suspends its effects. The short answer to the question of what the "development" apparatus in Lesotho does, then, is found in the book's title: it is an "anti-politics machine," depoliticizing everything it touches, everywhere whisking political realities out of sight, all the while performing, almost unnoticed, its own pre-eminently political operation of expanding bureaucratic state power.

There will doubtless be for some a temptation to read this argument as a critique of "development" ideology, an attempt to refute the "development" picture of Lesotho by showing that it is false. Such an interpretation is understandable, but it would be a serious misreading of the argument. It is true that many of the ideas about Lesotho generated by the "development" problematic are indeed false, and it will be necessary from time to time in the discussion to point this out; but the main thrust of this study is not to show that the "development" problematic is wrong, but to show that the institutionalized production of certain kinds of ideas about Lesotho has important effects, and that the production of such ideas plays an important role in the production of certain sorts of structural change.

To say this is not, of course, to appeal to some non-existent "value-free" social science. The fact that this study does not aim to rectify or to correct "development" thinking is not a sign of some sort of improbable indifference or neutrality; it simply reflects my view that in tracing the political intelligibility of the "development" problematic, the question of the truth or falsity of "development" ideology is not the central one. If one begins, as I do, from the premise that thinking is as "real" an activity as any other, and that ideas and discourses have important and very real social consequences, then in analyzing systems of ideas one cannot be content with interrogating them for their truth value. For a social scientist, there is always another question: what do these ideas *do*, what real social effects do they have? At this point the analysis more closely resembles vivisection than critique. For the question is not "how closely do these ideas approximate the truth," but "what effects do these ideas (which may or may not happen to be true) bring about? How are they connected with and implicated in larger social processes?" This is why I speak, following Foucault, of a conceptual "apparatus"—in order to suggest that what we are concerned with is not an abstract set of philosophical or scientific propositions, but an elaborate contraption that *does* something. To say what such an apparatus does is not a critique, still less a refutation. Would we say that the vivisection of a frog

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constitutes a critique? Or that it aims to “refute” the frog’s organs? When performing such cold-blooded operations, neither correction nor judgment is called for. One can aim only to be, in Nietzsche’s terms, a good physiologist.

This book marks the beginning of an inquiry, not the end. Most of the grander and more global questions about the origin and meaning of the modern figure of “development” are bracketed and laid to one side here in order to begin to answer a circumscribed, preliminary question about the way specific ideas about “development” are generated and deployed within the context of “development” agencies in Lesotho. Future work, I hope, may have something to say about the history, or “genealogy,” of “development”; this book offers only a vivisection of a conceptual apparatus: an investigation of how specific ideas about “development” are generated in practice, and how they are put to use; and a demonstration of what they end up doing, of what effects they end up producing. This leaves unanswered many questions about the “development” value and its origin, but it may perhaps give an indication of why it is necessary to question such a value in the first place.

Part I *Introduction*

1 Introduction

The "development" industry in Lesotho

Lesotho is a small, land-locked country in Southern Africa, completely surrounded by South Africa (see Figure 1.1). The former British protectorate of Basutoland, Lesotho became independent in 1966. It has a population of about 1.3 million, an area of about 30,000 square kilometers, and few economically significant natural resources. In 1981/2 the Gross National Product was about \$586 million. The country is extremely mountainous, and only some 10 percent of the land is arable; the rest is suitable only for grazing of livestock. Some 95 percent of the population is rural, and most of that is concentrated in the "lowlands," a narrow crescent of land lying along the western perimeter of the country, conventionally contrasted with the much larger "mountain" zone to the east (see Figure 1.2).¹ Fields are cropped chiefly in maize, wheat, and sorghum; livestock include cattle, sheep, and goats. The most important source of income for most households, however, is wage labor in South Africa, where perhaps as many as 200,000 Basotho are employed as migrant laborers (GOL 1983, World Bank 1981).

In the period 1975-84, this tiny country was receiving "development assistance" from the following bilateral sources:²

Australia	Israel
Austria	Korea
Canada	Libya
Cyprus	The Netherlands
Denmark	Norway
Democratic Republic of Germany	Saskatchewan (Canada)
Federal Republic of Germany	Saudi Arabia
Finland	South Africa
Ghana	Sweden
Korea	Switzerland
Kuwait	Taiwan (R.O.C.)
India	United Kingdom
Iran	United States
Ireland	

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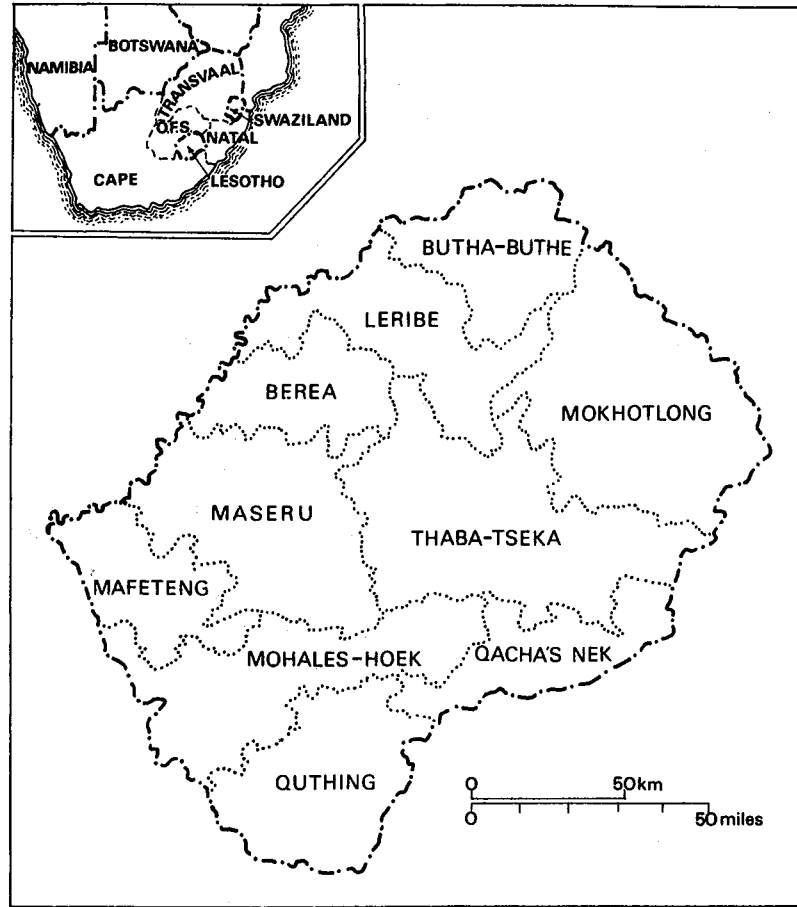


Figure 1.1. Lesotho – political. Source: GOL 1983, World Bank 1981.

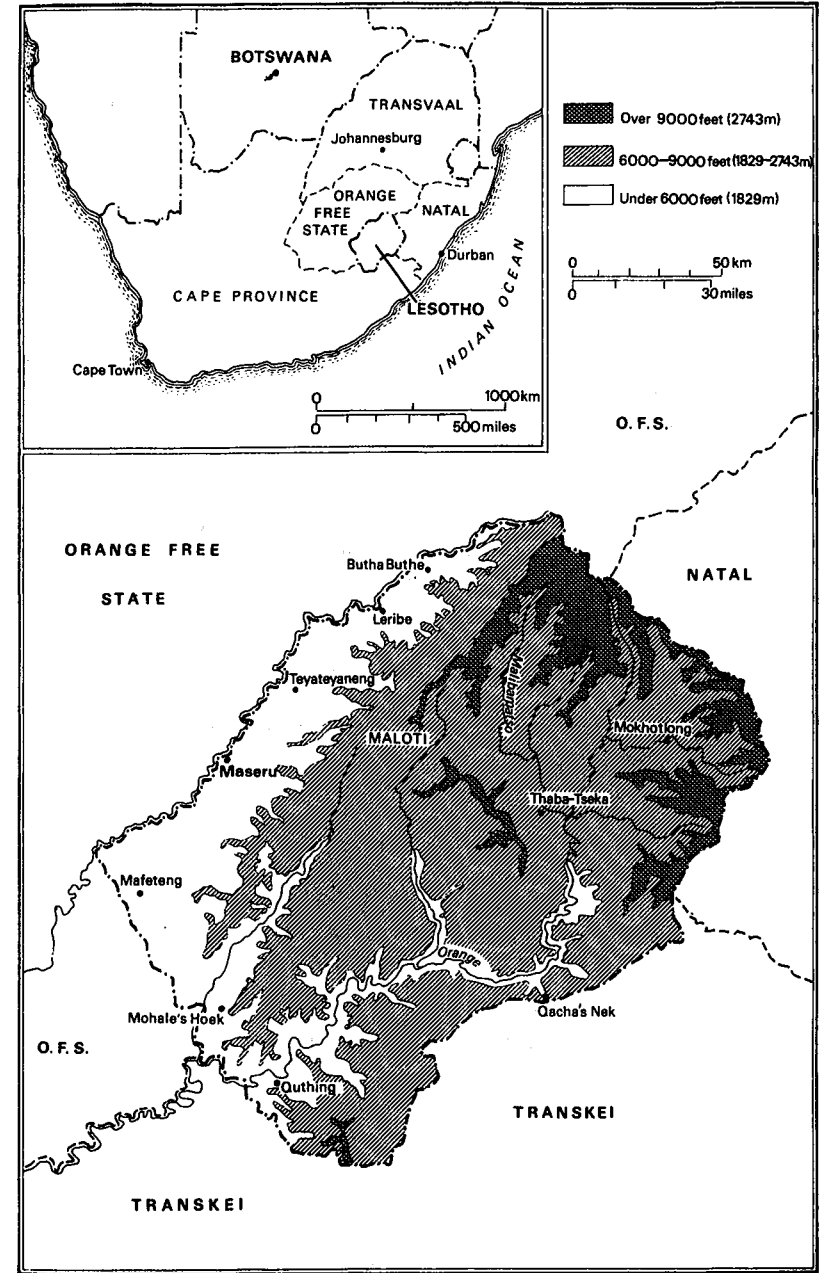


Figure 1.2. Lesotho – relief. Source: GOL 1983, World Bank 1981.

In the same period, Lesotho was also receiving assistance from the following international agencies and non- and quasi-governmental organizations:²

AFL-CIO African-American Labor Center
 Abu Dhabi Fund
 Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission
 African Development Bank
 African Development Fund
 African Graduate Training (U.S.)
 Afro-American Institute
 Agency for Personnel Service Overseas (Ireland)
 Anglo-American/De Beers
 Anglo-Collieries Recruiting Organization of Lesotho
 Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa
 Australian Development Assistance Agency
 British Council
 British Leprosy Mission
 Brothers of the Sacred Heart
 CARE
 Catholic Relief Service
 Christian Aid
 Commonwealth Development Corporation
 Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation
 Credit Union National Association (U.S.)
 Danish Church Aid
 Danish Volunteer Service
 Dental Health International
 Economic Commission for Africa
 European Development Fund
 European Economic Community
 Food and Agricultural Organization of the U.N.
 Ford Foundation
 Fund for Research and Investment for the Development of Africa
 German Volunteer Service
 Goldfields (R.S.A.)
 IMAP International (U.S.)
 Institute for Development Management (Canada)
 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
 International Civil Aviation Organization
 International Cooperative Housing Development Association
 International Development Association
 International Extension College

International Labour Organization
 International Monetary Fund
 International Potato Production Centre
 International Telecommunications Union
 International Trade Centre
 International Volunteer Service
 Meals for Millions Foundation (U.S.)
 Mennonite Central Committee
 Mine Labour Organization
 Near East Foundation
 Netherlands Organization for International Relations
 OPEC
 Overseas Development Institute (U.K.)
 Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (U.K.)
 Save the Children Fund
 Seventh-Day Adventist World Service
 Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary
 South African Mohair Board
 South African Wool Board
 United Nations Capital Development Fund
 United Nations Fund for Population Activities
 United Nations Human Habitat and Settlement Fund
 U.S. Peace Corps
 Unitarian Service Committee of Canada
 United Methodist Committee on Relief
 United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
 United Nations Development Programme
 United Nations Volunteers
 Volunteer Development Corporation
 World Food Programme
 World Health Organization
 World Rehabilitation Fund
 World University Service

Reading a list like this, or even walking down the streets of Lesotho's capital city of Maseru amidst the cosmopolitan swarm of expatriate "experts," one can hardly help posing the question: what is this all about? What is this massive internationalist intervention, aimed at a country that surely does not appear to be of especially great economic or strategic importance? From the mid 1970s on, Lesotho has received "a disproportionate volume of aid," according to one source (Wellings 1983: 496), "most of which was disbursed on astonishingly generous

terms." In 1979, Lesotho received some \$64 million in "official development assistance," according to the World Bank (1981: 164-5), or about \$49 for every man, woman, and child in the country – more, that is, (on a per capita basis) than Somalia, Ethiopia, or the Sudan, and more than Chad and Mali put together. The purpose of this aid is ostensibly to alleviate poverty, to increase economic output, and to reduce "dependence" on South Africa. Its dispersal has given rise to a substantial "development" industry in Lesotho, employing expatriate consultants and "experts" by the hundreds, and churning out plans, programs, and, most of all, paper, at an astonishing rate.³

"Development assistance" has been used for many things, of course; but a large amount of it has gone into "projects," especially "rural development projects." A 1977 official report (FAO 1977) listed over 200 rural development schemes in Lesotho; nine of these were large, expensive "area-based" projects focusing on agricultural development. Yet, if all observers of Lesotho's "development" agree on one thing, it is that "the history of development projects in Lesotho is one of almost unremitting failure to achieve their objectives" (Murray 1981: 19). Again and again development projects in Lesotho are launched, and again and again they fail; but no matter how many times this happens there always seems to be someone ready to try again with yet another project. For the "development" industry in Lesotho, "failure" appears to be the norm.

There is reason to believe that this situation may not be unique to Lesotho. It is true that Lesotho has a high concentration of "development assistance," but many other, equally unlikely looking African countries have concentrations as high or higher than Lesotho's. Through Africa – indeed, through the Third World – one seems to find closely analogous or even identical "development" institutions, and along with them often a common discourse and the same way of defining "problems," a common pool of "experts," and a common stock of expertise. The "development industry" is apparently a global phenomenon, and there is no reason to think that the "development" intervention in Lesotho, even if an extreme case, is entirely different in kind from similar interventions elsewhere in the world. Even the particular "development" initiatives promoted in Lesotho may only be specific examples of a more general model. "Rural development" projects are to be found scattered liberally across the African continent and beyond; and, in nearly every case, these projects seem on inspection to be planned, implemented, and justified in very nearly the same way as

they are in Lesotho. What is more, these projects seem to "fail" with almost the same astonishing regularity that they do in Lesotho. As Williams (1981: 16-17) notes, "rural development does not usually achieve its objectives"; "By any criteria, successful projects have been the exception rather than the rule."

This book will attempt to make a contribution to the understanding of the "development" industry in Lesotho by exploring in detail the conceptualization, planning, and implementation of one "rural development project," the Thaba-Tseka Project, funded chiefly by the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). To the extent that this single project may be seen as part of a larger – indeed, global – apparatus, the study may have some wider relevance in an understanding of what this "development" apparatus is all about, and in providing a concrete demonstration of what it does, how it does it, and why.

The literature

But, before moving on to present the research findings, it is helpful to make explicit some theoretical points of departure. In doing this, it is useful to begin by considering the scholarly literature on "development" and "development" agencies, and explaining how this study relates to it. The question of how societies change – or, if one prefers, "develop" – is not really the issue here, and I do not propose to address the enormous literature relating to social and historical transformation; the question here concerns "development" as a social entity in its own right: the set of "development" institutions, agencies, and ideologies peculiar to our own age. The discussion that follows thus leaves to one side the enormous literature concerned with understanding social transformations, and concentrates on the relatively sparse scholarly literature that aims to understand, explain, analyze, or make sense of the "development" industry itself.

The literature on this point is divided, along sharply ideological lines, into two main camps. On the one hand are those who, either as insiders or as sympathetic outsiders, see "development" planning and "development" agencies as part of a great collective effort to fight poverty, raise standards of living, and promote one or another version of progress. For these writers, of whom a figure like Gunnar Myrdal is perhaps a paradigmatic example, the "development" apparatus is to be

understood as a tool at the disposal of a planner, who will need good advice on how to make best use of it. It goes without saying for these writers that a "development" agency is at least potentially a force for beneficial change; the reason for analyzing such an entity is to enable it to perform better, to avoid failures and to maximize its success. From broad, reflective works like Hirschman's *Development Projects Observed* to detailed, empirical studies such as Morss *et al.* (1976), the focus remains technical and managerial. In this literature, the "development" apparatus is scrutinized at all levels, but always with an eye to locating what goes "wrong," why, and how it can be fixed. Even the broader and more speculative discussions in this vein remain a brand of policy science, locating problems and arriving at recommendations addressed to planners within "development" institutions.⁴

Most anthropologists who have explicitly made development agencies or projects the focus of their research fall into this camp. An early example is Reining's analysis (1966) of the Gezira cotton scheme. For Lesotho, there is Wallman's important study (1969) in a similar vein. Several writers on "development anthropology" have urged that many problems encountered by "development" agencies can only be solved by taking an anthropological view of the "development" institutions themselves (Brokensha *et al.* 1980, Cochrane 1971). More recently Chambers (1980) has written on "experts" in rural Africa, while Hoben (1980) has published a policy-oriented anthropological analysis on the functioning of the USAID bureaucracy.

The most ambitious attempt to date at an anthropological analysis of "development" as an international institution is Robertson's *People and the State: An Anthropology of Planned Development* (1984). Although more sensitive than many to the politically loaded contexts in which "development" planning may be embedded, Robertson, too, ends up falling comfortably within the tradition of seeing the "development" apparatus as a practical tool for the solution of universal problems. "Development" planning, for Robertson, is to be understood as "mankind's most ambitious collective enterprise" (1984: 1), the activity of nation-states attempting to bring into being "ideal worlds." "Development" agencies, in this view, are left with the task of trying to implement these often unrealistic plans. The role of the scholar in this apparatus is to try to see to it that the "ideal worlds" pursued by states are consistent with what we know about how real societies actually work, so that "development" planning can set itself objectives capable of being realized. "Development" projects are thus to be interpreted as lamentably

inexpert attempts by society to remake itself; while, for social science, utopian theorizing is apparently the order of the day.

The second approach to conceptualizing "development" institutions is the radical critique associated with neo-Marxism and dependency theory.⁵ Authors representing this tradition do not generally spend much time discussing the international "development" establishment, and have little regard for those "Fabians" like Myrdal who put themselves at its service. The issue is generally treated in the context of a political denunciation along the following lines: If (and this is the first postulate of neo-Marxism) capitalism is not a progressive force but a reactionary one in the Third World – not the cause of development but the obstacle to it, not the cure for poverty but the cause of it – then a capitalist-run development project is a fundamentally contradictory endeavor. If it is meant to promote imperial capitalism (and why else would capitalist institutions like the World Bank, USAID, etc. do it?) then it cannot at the same time be an instrument for development, at least not for "real" development. The purpose of a development project is to aid capitalist exploitation in a given country, these writers argue, either by incorporating new territories into the world system, or working against radical social change, or bribing national elites, or mystifying the *real* international relationships, or any number of other mechanisms which seem to be called up as needed on an *ad hoc* basis. The implication is that any concrete aid program, be it an early 1960s "big dam" project, late 1970s "basic needs," or whatever, is explained, almost by definition, by the "logic of capital."⁶

A related argument has been advanced by Lappe and Collins (1979, Lappe *et al.* 1980), who reason that: (1) poverty is not a *sui generis* fact or a consequence of global scarcity but only a symptom of powerlessness; (2) international aid projects by their very nature, whoever they claim to "target," do not make the radical changes in political and economic structures that could alone empower the poor; therefore (3) aid projects cannot be expected to help to eradicate poverty since they only reinforce the system which in the first place causes the poverty. Lappe and Collins offer a powerful and well-documented political argument, but it does not help us to understand the different forms of intervention that have over the years been practiced under the name of "development" since it gives only a negative characterization of what an aid project (or, by implication, *any* national or international maneuver that falls short of posing a fundamental challenge to the entrenched system of exploitation) does: it does *not* help the hungry as it is supposed to, it only

strengthens the powerful. The argument is still organized around the politically naive question: "Do aid programs really help poor people?" Thus attention is paid to what aid projects do, but once again only to show that they "fail," i.e. that they do not reduce hunger, or to claim that they are "showcase projects," which "distract our attention" from the "overriding functions" of development aid, functions specified only as strategic and imperialistic (Lappe *et al.* 1980: 122).

We have, then, an important body of recent literature, and two fundamentally opposed notions of how to interpret the "development" apparatus. Which position will the present study take?

This question can perhaps be illuminated by making a comparison with Paul Willis's important book *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Willis's book encounters an enormous body of literature, the "education" literature, and finds that literature divisible into two camps based on the authors' attitudes toward the fundamental nature or purpose of the institution "the school." The liberal, from the eighteenth century onward, regards the public school as an instrument for creating an enlightened, egalitarian society, a society with equal opportunity for all. Thus the question in recent times has been how to use and reform schools so that they can help to eradicate the economic, social, and political gaps which separate whites and blacks, workers and middle-class, men and women.⁷ Against this view has arisen a Marxist critique which argues that, contrary to the claim that schools are either actually or potentially forces for democratic ends, these institutions were established from the very beginning to achieve the opposite. Schools, the Marxists argue, were established by the capitalist state in order to reproduce labor power for an industrial order whose jobs were organized hierarchically. They are not tools for engineering social equality – they are by nature mechanisms for reproducing labor power for a class society. This is known as the "reproduction" thesis.⁸

Willis, for his part, rejects the Liberal argument as politically naive and takes it as a fact that class relations are reproduced under capitalism (working-class kids *do* get working-class jobs) and that the schools play an important part in this. But he moves beyond "reproduction theory" by refusing to be satisfied with this. Yes, reproduction occurs through (in part) the school, but "for all we are told of how this actually happens, schools may as well be 'black boxes'." This, he observes, is neither theoretically nor politically adequate. Instead, Willis offers a detailed ethnography of what actually happens when the apparatus of schooling

is brought to bear on a group of working-class kids. He finds that there is no mechanistic imprinting of the characteristics required by the capitalist state on its passive victims, as the reproduction theory might suggest, but rather an ongoing battle between school power on the one hand, and resistance based in working-class culture on the other. And it is, ironically, *through* this resistance that the task of "reproduction" is eventually accomplished. The resistance provoked by schooling is thus an essential part of the explanation for how labor power is reproduced. The school indeed accomplishes the task assigned to it in reproduction theory, but in an unexpected and startling way, a way which underlines the ambiguities of resistance and the scope for choice and political action in a world that is always structured but never determined.

Similarly, when one reads much of the literature on the "development" industry, one finds oneself doubly dissatisfied – with the liberals, whose only concern seems to be with directing or reforming an institution whose fundamental beneficence they take as given – and with the neo-Marxists, who seem satisfied to establish that the institutions of "development" are part of a fundamentally imperialistic relation between center and periphery and take the matter to be thus settled.

But the matter is not settled, any more than the issue of the school is settled by showing that the schools are part of a system of reproduction of labor power. For if, as the neo-Marxists argue, an international development project is to be understood not as a humanitarian attempt to overcome poverty but as an important instrument of imperial and class-based control, then one ought to be interested enough to look and see *how* this control is effected. One cannot, as Willis rightly notes, expect things to simply snap into place through mysterious "black box" mechanisms simply because Capital "needs" for them to do so. A structure always reproduces itself through a process, and through a struggle; and the sense of a structure, Willis shows, can only be grasped through that sometimes surprising and ironic process, and never by merely labeling the structure with the name of those whose interests it serves.

A few recent studies of "rural development" make an important start toward such an understanding of the "development" apparatus by looking at the interventions of "development" agencies not for what they don't do or might do, but for what they do. The edited collection by Heyer, Roberts, and Williams (1981), for instance, is not much interested in the polemics over whether or not "rural development" is *really* a matter of "helping the poor," or as one formula (Chambers

1983) has it, "putting the last first." They quickly dismiss this liberal view, noting that empirically there "appears to be little foundation for the assumption that the activities of rural development programmes lead to the improvement of the welfare of the rural population, let alone the rural poor" (Heyer *et al.* 1981: 10). But this is seen as neither surprising nor especially illuminating; after all, as Keith Griffin remarks in his refreshing preface to the volume, "More often than not, the government has represented interests other than those of the rural poor and it is hardly surprising, therefore, that public intervention has in practice been harmful to the majority of the rural people rather than beneficial" (Heyer *et al.* 1981: vii). For Heyer *et al.*, this is not the main issue; the task is not to denounce the "rural development" establishment for what it is not, but to analyze it – not in terms of its own proclamations, but as a social institution in its own right, supported and maintained not by "capitalism" in the abstract, but by historically specific political and economic interests in each case. This attempt to see "rural development" interventions as real historical events, susceptible of the same sort of political-economic explanation as any others, is found in several recent works in addition to the volume by Heyer, Roberts, and Williams (1981), including Williams (1976, 1985a, 1986), Beckman (1977), Bernstein (1977, 1979) and the articles in Galli (1981).

It is an important advance to have moved the discussion on the "development" industry beyond the widespread ideological preoccupation with the question of whether it is to be considered a "good thing" or a "bad thing," a benevolent force to be reformed or an exploitative maneuver to be denounced. Insofar as works in the political economy tradition like Heyer *et al.* (1981) and Galli (1981) insist that "rural development" is the name for a complex set of institutions and initiatives encompassing "multiple, and often contradictory, interests" (Heyer *et al.* 1981: 12), they are in full agreement with the aims of the present work. However, the way in which most of these authors have gone about analyzing the complex reality they have identified as "rural development" is significantly different from the approach that will be taken here.

First of all, the political economists are often too quick to impute an economic function to "development" projects, and to accept the premise that a "development" project is primarily a device for bringing about a particular sort of economic transformation – a transformation variously glossed as "capitalist penetration," "commoditization," "capitalist development," "the expansion of the capitalist mode of

production," etc. In this vein, for instance, Beckman (1977: 3) claims that rural "development" projects "serve to subject peasants to the imperative of producing for an external market under monopolistic relations of exchange," while Bernstein (1977: 65) declares as if self-evident that rural "development" projects "operate objectively to incorporate the peasantry further into commodity relations."

It is clear in reading scholarly literature on "development" that the word "development" is used to refer to at least two quite separate things. On the one hand, "development" is used to mean the process of transition or transformation toward a modern, capitalist, industrial economy – "modernization," "capitalist development," "the development of the forces of production," etc. The second meaning, much in vogue from the mid 1970s onward, defines itself in terms of "quality of life" and "standard of living," and refers to the reduction or amelioration of poverty and material want. The directionality implied in the word "development" is in this usage no longer historical, but moral. "Development" is no longer a movement in history, but an activity, a social program, a war on poverty on a global scale. Liberals and "development" bureaucrats regularly conflate these two meanings, implicitly equating "modernization" with the elimination or alleviation of poverty. Against this view, the critics insist that the two are different, that capitalist development in Africa is very often the *cause* of poverty and not its cure, and that it is usually not in the interests of the rural poor at all. For the liberal, a rural development project brings "development," in one or both of the above senses, and that is all to the good. For the critics discussed above, a rural development project is part of "the expansion of the capitalist mode of production" – "capitalist development" – which is often not so good at all for the poor "peasants." Class formation, growing inequality and landlessness, decreased self-sufficiency, and increased poverty are commonly cited results. But the point to be emphasized here is that both the "development" establishment *and* many of its most articulate critics accept that a rural development project does in fact – for better or worse – bring about some sort of "development," some sort of economic transformation toward a well-defined end point.⁹

The second major point to be emphasized in the political economy type of approach of the writers under discussion is the extremely important place occupied in their analyses by "interests." The existence and structure of the "development" industry, and what happens when it is deployed in various different settings, are analyzed by identifying the

various interests that are involved. A "development" project is taken to be explained when all the different interests behind it have been sorted out and made specific. The interested agents may be classes, national governments, or individuals, but whoever the actors are taken to be, explanation takes the form of attributing an event or a structure to a particular constellation of "interests."

With regard to both of these points, the approach taken here will be rather different, for both empirical and theoretical reasons. Empirically, "development" projects in Lesotho do not generally bring about any significant reduction in poverty, but neither do they characteristically introduce any new relations of production (capitalist or otherwise), or bring about significant economic transformations. They do not bring about "development" in either of the two senses identified above, nor are they set up in such a way that they ever could, as will be seen in the chapters that follow. For this reason, it seems a mistake to interpret them as "part of the historical expansion of capitalism" (Galli 1981: x) or as elements in a global strategy for controlling or capitalizing peasant production, a solution to "the peasant problem" (Williams 1981).

At the same time – again, empirically – there is no easy congruence between the "objective interests" of the various parties and the stream of events which emerges. Unquestionably, there are a number of different interested parties whose interests can be identified and made explicit. The interests of the World Bank in promoting "development" projects have been well analyzed by Williams (1981), Payer (1983) and others; the economic stake of a country like Canada in "development" interventions in Africa has been made clear by Freeman (1984). But while it is certainly relevant to know, for instance, that the World Bank has an interest in boosting production and export of cash crops for the external market, and that industrialized states without historic links to an area may sponsor "development" projects as a way of breaking into otherwise inaccessible markets, it remains impossible to simply read off actual events from these known interests as if the one were a simple effect of the other. One may know, for instance, that Canada sponsored a rural development project in Thaba-Tseka, and one may know as well that the Canadian government has an interest in promoting rural development programs because it helps Canadian corporations to find export markets for farm machinery (among other things), but this pairing of facts does not constitute an acceptable level of explanation, and in fact leaves many of the empirical details of the Canadian role absolutely mysterious.

Theoretically, as well, the approach reviewed above is inadequate to

the task this study sets itself. The most important theoretical differences will be brought out in the following section.

Some theoretical points of departure

The first issue to be raised, perhaps, is that the present study is an anthropological one. Unlike many anthropological works on "development," this one takes as its primary object not the people to be "developed," but the apparatus that is to do the "developing." This is not principally a book about the Basotho people, or even about Lesotho; it is principally a book about the operation of the international "development" apparatus in a particular setting.

To take on the task of looking at the "development" apparatus anthropologically is to insist on a particular sort of approach to the material. As an anthropologist, one cannot assume, for instance, as many political economists do, that a structure simply and rationally "represents" or "expresses" a set of "objective interests"; one knows that structures are multi-layered, polyvalent, and often contradictory, and that economic functions and "objective interests" are always located within other, encompassing structures that may be invisible even to those who inhabit them. The interests may be clear, and the intentions as well; but the anthropologist cannot take "planning" at its word. Instead of ascribing events and institutions to the projects of various actors, an anthropological approach must demote the plans and intentions of even the most powerful interests to the status of an interesting problem, one level among many others, for the anthropologist knows well how easily structures can take on lives of their own that soon enough overtake intentional practices. Whatever interests may be at work, and whatever they may think they are doing, they can only operate through a complex set of social and cultural structures so deeply embedded and so ill-perceived that the outcome may be only a baroque and unrecognizable transformation of the original intention. The approach adopted here treats such an outcome as neither an inexplicable mistake, nor the trace of a yet-undiscovered intention, but as a riddle, a problem to be solved, an anthropological puzzle.

It is at this point that the issue of discourse becomes important. For writers such as Heyer *et al.* (1981) and Galli (1981), official discourse on "development" either expresses "true intentions" or, more often, provides an ideological screen for other, concealed intentions: "mere rhetoric." The bulk of "development" discourse, with all its professions of

concern for the rural poor and so on, is for these writers simply a misrepresentation of what the "development" apparatus is "really" up to. The World Bank may talk a lot about helping poor farmers, for instance, but in fact their funds continue to be targeted at the large, highly capitalized farmers, at the expense of the poor. The much publicized "new strategy," then, is "largely rhetoric," serving only a mystifying function (Williams 1981).

In the anthropological approach adopted below, the discourse of the "development" establishment is considered much more important than this. It may be that much of this discourse is untrue, but that is no excuse for dismissing it. As Foucault (1971, 1973) has shown, discourse is a practice, it is structured, and it has real effects which are much more profound than simply "mystification." The thoughts and actions of "development" bureaucrats are powerfully shaped by the world of acceptable statements and utterances within which they live; and what they do and do not do is a product not only of the interests of various nations, classes, or international agencies, but also, and at the same time, of a working out of this complex structure of knowledge. Instead of ignoring the orderly field of statements produced by the "development" apparatus on the grounds that the statements are ideological, the study below takes this field as its point of departure for an exploration of the way in which "development" initiatives are produced and put into practice.

It should be clear from the above that the approach to be taken to the problem of the "development" industry in Lesotho will be, in keeping with the anthropological approach, "decentered" – that is, it will locate the intelligibility of a series of events and transformations not in the intentions guiding the actions of one or more animating subjects, but in the systematic nature of the social reality which results from those actions. Seeing a "development" project as the simple projection of the "interest" of a subject (the World Bank, Canada, Capital, Imperialism) ignores the non- and counter-intentionality of structural production, and is in this way profoundly non-anthropological. As in the case of Willis's treatment of the schooling apparatus (1981), one must entertain the possibility that the "development" apparatus in Lesotho may do what it does, not at the bidding of some knowing and powerful subject who is making it all happen, but behind the backs of or against the wills of even the most powerful actors. But this is not to say that such institutions do not represent an exercise of power; only that power is not to be embodied in the person of a "powerful" subject. A "de-

velopment" project may very well serve power, but in a different way than any of the "powerful" actors imagined; it may only wind up, in the end, "turning out" to serve power.

At this point, the theoretical approach of the present work links up with another important body of literature, closely associated with the work of Foucault (1979, 1980a, 1980b). Using a decentered conception of power, a number of recent studies (e.g. Foucault 1979, 1980a, Donzelot 1979, Pasquino 1978, Procacci 1978, Jones and Williamson 1979) have shown how the outcomes of planned social interventions can end up coming together into powerful constellations of control that were never intended and in some cases never even recognized, but are all the more effective for being "subjectless." This theoretical innovation makes possible a different way of connecting outcomes with power, one that avoids giving a central place to any actor or entity conceived as a "powerful" subject.

Perhaps the best example of this kind of analysis is Foucault's "genealogy" of the prison (1979). The prison, Foucault shows, was created as a "correctional" institution. It was intended to imprint on the inmates the qualities of good citizenship: to make criminals into honest, hard working, law abiding individuals, who could return to a "normal" place in society. This idea of "rehabilitation" was behind the establishment of modern prisons throughout the world, and it continues to be offered as the chief justification for maintaining them and, from time to time, reforming them. But it is obvious upon inspection, according to Foucault, that prisons do not in fact "reform" criminals; that, on the contrary, they make nearly impossible that return to "normality" that they have always claimed to produce, and that, instead of eliminating criminality, they seem rather to produce and intensify it within a well-defined strata of "delinquents." While such a result must be conceived as a "failure" from the point of view of the planners' intentions, the result has quite a different character when apprehended as part of a different "strategy." For the constitution of a class of "delinquents," Foucault argues, turned out to be very useful in taming "popular illegalities" and transforming the political fact of illegality into the quasi-medical one of pathological "delinquency." By differentiating illegalities, and by turning one uniquely well-supervised and controlled class of violators against the others, the prison did end up serving as part of a system of social control, but in a very different way than its planners had envisioned. "If this is the case," Foucault writes:

the prison, apparently "failing", does not miss its target; on the contrary, it reaches it, in so far as it gives rise to one particular form of illegality in the midst of others, which it is able to isolate, to place in full light and to organize as a relatively enclosed, but penetrable, milieu . . .

For the observation that prison fails to eliminate crime, one should perhaps substitute the hypothesis that prison has succeeded extremely well in producing delinquency, a specific type, a politically or economically less dangerous – and, on occasion, usable – form of illegality; in producing delinquents, in an apparently marginal, but in fact centrally supervised milieu; in producing the delinquent as a pathologized subject . . . So successful has the prison been that, after a century and a half of 'failures', the prison still exists, producing the same results, and there is the greatest reluctance to dispense with it. (Foucault 1979: 276–7)

The point to be taken from the above argument is only that planned interventions may produce unintended outcomes that end up, all the same, incorporated into anonymous constellations of control – authorless "strategies," in Foucault's sense (1979, 1980b) – that turn out in the end to have a kind of political intelligibility. This is only another way of approaching the problem noted by Willis (1981) in his discussion of the school cited above: the most important political effects of a planned intervention may occur unconsciously, behind the backs or against the wills of the "planners" who may seem to be running the show.

This will turn out to be one of the key problems raised by the operation of the "development" apparatus in Lesotho, and the approach that is adopted owes much to the literature so briefly discussed above. The complex relation between the intentionality of planning and the strategic intelligibility of outcomes is perhaps the single most important theme winding through the pages that follow. As this theme appears and reappears in the chapters below, one cardinal principle will be illustrated again and again: intentional plans are always important, but never in quite the way the planners imagined. In the pages that follow, I will try to show how, in the case of a development project in Lesotho, intentional plans interacted with unacknowledged structures and chance events to produce unintended outcomes which turn out to be intelligible not only as the unforeseen effects of an intended intervention, but also as the unlikely instruments of an unplotted strategy. Specifically, the remaining chapters will show how outcomes that at first appear as mere "side effects" of an unsuccessful attempt to engineer an economic

transformation become legible in another perspective as unintended yet instrumental elements in a resultant constellation that has the effect of expanding the exercise of a particular sort of state power while simultaneously exerting a powerful depoliticizing effect. It is this unauthored resultant constellation that I call "the anti-politics machine," for reasons that I hope will in the end become clear. The remaining chapters aim to explore how such an unlikely "machine" works, and to understand better what it does.