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9. ABSTRACT

A discussion of the meaning of institution building, factors affecting its feasibility, and techniques for accomplishing it. Development must include the idea of institutional development. Performance capabilities in a social system are largely determined by its institutions, its resources, and the external constraints under which it functions. This paper examines three aspects of institution building, within the boundaries of a concern with bureaucracy and the public sectors of the least developed countries. In those countries new public agencies remain to be built and old ones to be changed. No powerful theories or precise recipes exist to guide these efforts. There are, however, some concepts and lessons from experience that can be applied. This information includes knowledge about (1) the basic meaning of institution and institution building; (2) factors which affect the feasibility of institution-building efforts; and (3) techniques by which to help build and reshape the kinds of institutions needed. There is a large gap between this knowledge and effective action. There are no computer programs for doing institution building. Knowledge can be used to identify practical strategies and tactics, and thus minimize mistakes. The effectiveness of that knowledge will, however, depend considerably upon the talents of the user--and his good fortune as well.

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INSTITUTION BUILDING:  
FEASIBILITY AND TECHNIQUES

Introduction

Development must include the idea of institutional development. Performance capabilities in a social system are largely determined--and limited--by its institutions, its resources, and the external constraints under which it functions--i.e., international factors which affect the choice of goals within a country. Institutions alone cannot produce development, but institutional features of a society or community set limits upon the actual developmental possibilities at any given time.

This statement examines three aspects of institution building, within the boundaries of a concern with bureaucracy and the public sectors of the least developed countries. In those countries new public agencies remain to be built and old ones to be changed. No powerful theories or precise recipes exist to guide these efforts. There are, however, some concepts, fragments of theory, and lessons from experience to inspire those who would promote public sector institutional change. This information includes knowledge about (1) the basic meaning of institution and institution building; (2) factors which affect the feasibility of institution-building efforts; and (3) techniques by which to help build and reshape the kinds of institutions which concern us here.

Between this knowledge and effective action lies a large gap. There are no computer programs for doing institution building. Available knowledge can be used to identify and perhaps avoid impractical strategies and tactics, and thus to minimize mistakes in institutional-building efforts. The effectiveness of that knowledge will, however, depend considerably upon the talents of the user--and his good fortune as well.

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1. The literature of development is full of discussions of institutional needs and the restrictive effects of given institutional features. To cite just one example, Uma Lele's study of The Design of Rural Development: Lessons from Africa (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1975), p. xiii, examines seventeen African countries and "...documents the need for, and the nature of, an overall policy and an institutional framework that are conducive to the objectives of rural development."

## The Concept of an Institution

All institution-building efforts are partly indirect. Institution building is not a type of activity--it is a possible consequence or effect of action.\* This important distinction stems from the essential nature of any institution.

The word institution is sometimes used as a synonym for organization. This is acceptable, if we recognize that an institution includes more than formal structure and process.

A leading authority defines institutions as "...regulative principles which organize most of the activities of individuals in a society into some definite organizational patterns from the point of view of some of the perennial, basic problems of any society or ordered social life."<sup>2</sup>

Regulative principles are powerful ideas about how things are supposed to be and how they are supposed to work in a society or community. These principles receive their content and legitimacy from various sources--religion, tradition, or some other fundamental indicator of what is good, proper, and necessary.

Patterns are ways of behaving. In a given society, community, or bureaucracy there are appropriate ways to behave, ways which reflect underlying regulative principles.

Humans are impressively purposive creatures. Our behavior is seldom random. It tends to follow patterns. It is guided by norms or rules. These tendencies are so ingrained--we are so much socialized and acculturated--that we take this orderly quality of behavior very much for granted. Our relations with others, and our ability to know what to expect from them, greatly depend upon this patterning of behavior. When we move from one culture into another we become acutely aware that patterns can differ. The phrase "different cultures" refers in part to different regulative principles and patterns of behavior.

In summary, an institution is much more than a formal arrangement for doing something. It is a combination of arrangements (patterns) and norms or standards from which those patterns get their form, meaning and acceptability. These norms or standards are justified by an underlying regulative principle, or set of such principles. These are shared and sanctioned fundamental ideas about what is right, proper, and necessary to the community, society or some major sector of society, such as a bureaucracy.

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\*The difference between concrete action and institutional outcome is somewhat like the difference between building a house and creating a home. The former can be specified, planned, and carried out with technical expertise. A house may be necessary to having a home. But making a house into a home cannot be reduced to determinate technology. The difference between the two is a matter of values and spirit.

2. S.N. Eisenstadt, "Social Institutions: The Concept," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 14 (New York: Crowell Collier and Macmillan, 1968), p.410 (italics added).

## Institution-Building Approaches:

### Dimensions of the Problem of Institution Building

To build or change an institution is to establish a stable set of desired behaviors in a particular place.

To do this, it is necessary to get people to accept certain norms or standards and to pattern their behaviors to fit these norms.

These norms or standards must be grounded in some underlying regulative principles.

The nub of the task of building (or changing) institutions is to establish a combination of behaviors←norms←regulative principles which, it is judged, will serve developmental aims.

Institution building is indirect because it involves changing or creating values as well as behavior. It may involve undermining and replacing existing norms. If institution building is not simple to understand, it is often even harder to do.

### Institution Building vs. Organization Building

Interest in institution building grew out of unsuccessful organization-building efforts. Many development efforts have sought to install technologies and organizational arrangements in less developed countries. Many of the results have been relative failures. Outcomes did not fulfil expectations.

These failures were at odds with rehabilitation experience in post-war Europe and Japan. Wartime destruction in the developed countries destroyed physical plant--and left most of the underlying institutions intact. Reconstruction was rapid. In less developed countries it became obvious that physical plant alone would not produce development. By the early 1960s the need was being defined as one of building institutions. The problem was how to do this.

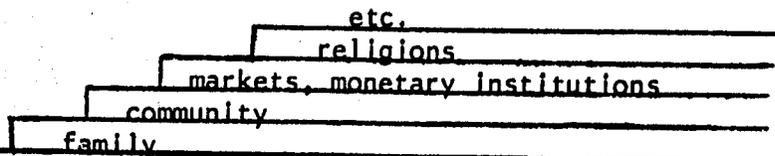
IDEALIZED EXAMPLE OF AN INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE\*

REGULATIVE PRINCIPLES answer such questions as these:

- How is the supernatural to be understood and responded to?
- What are the proper sources and forms of status and authority?
- Is life largely a matter of pleasure, or of problems to be identified and attacked?
- What are the proper bases for human collaboration?
- What is the proper meaning of life?

INSTITUTIONAL DOMAINS

function in ways reflecting underlying regulative principles



bureaucratic institutions

Patterns common to all bureaucracies:

(1) Procurement of resources

Examples of norms embedded in these patterns:  
e.g., users should pay; progressive taxation, indirect taxation; all must contribute according to means.

(2) Allocation of resources

e.g., status, expertise determine access to roles; redistribution is an aim of resource allocation to maintain the establishment to promote growth, altruism rule-of-law as a factor in allocation

(3) Energizing of resources

e.g., personalistic sanctions egalitarian incentives, protect status differences

Patterns of individual organizations-- Ministry of Finance, Agriculture, Health, Interior, etc.--are based on combinations of general system norms, plus others specific to the organization and its work.

- reward initiative
- discourage initiative
- seniority as basis for mobility
- encourage voluntary compliance
- act on objective premises
- set value of information on basis of its source

\*For an extensive case illustration of this arrangement see: W.J. Siffin, The Thai Bureaucracy: Institutional Change and Development, Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966.

### The Institution-Building Perspective

An influential line of inquiry developed under the leadership of Professor Milton Esman and his colleague Hans Blaise of the University of Pittsburgh. They recognized that building effective systems of action to serve development involves more than organizational forms and technical processes. It must build<sup>3</sup> certain kinds of norms and standards into the thinking and behavior of people.

Esman, Blaise, and their colleagues sought to identify the factors which would shape the institutional characteristics of an action system such as an organization. From experience and preliminary studies they drew up a set of assumptions: Certain internal features of an action system would have great influence in determining the norms and standards guiding the behavior of the members of a system: leadership, doctrine, program, resources and internal structure. Certain external factors were also perceived as crucial: the linkages between the system and its environment, labelled as "enabling," "functional," "normative" and "diffused."

These assumptions<sup>4</sup> were used in a number of case studies of institution-building efforts. The results have contributed much to the state of our current understanding.

Here are the chief elements of this understanding:

First, the basic insight of Esman, Blaise, and their associates remains unrefuted: To produce effective systems of action in the service of developmental aims, it is necessary to do more than transplant technologies and organizational forms from developed countries. It is necessary to establish appropriate behaviors, reflecting and supported by norms or standards which (a) fit developmental aims, and (b) do not clash head-on with powerful regulative principles of the social system (except in the case of revolutionary approaches). There are alternatives to revolution for modifying regulative principles in a society to promote development.

Second, use of the original institution-building hypothesis revealed that it did not address all of the factors important to institution-building efforts.

Third, it is therefore useful to explore such questions as these: What other factors seem to influence the feasibility of institution-building ventures? Under what conditions does institution building seem promising? What strategies or techniques are available? What guides to their use do we have?

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3. Esman's work and the related body of literature as it developed to about 1972 is summed in: Melvin G. Blaise, Institution Building: A Source Book, issued jointly by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities, 1973, and available from MUCIA's Program of Advanced Studies in Institution Building and Technical Assistance Methodology (PASITAM), c/o Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. 47401, USA, or Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, Cal. 90212 USA.

4. Ibid. See also Amy G. Mann, ed. Institution Building: A Reader (Bloomington, Ind.: MUCIA, Program of Advanced Studies in Institution Building and Technical Assistance Methodology, 1975).

These are heroic questions. The answers lie in a vast literature (and a smaller amount of knowledge) about induced social change.

### The Basic Problem

An institution is a very powerful arrangement, because its activities are justified and ordered by norms\* linked to basic principles of the social system. These norms have a double value:

1. They guide behavior which presumably is useful in the system. They are functional or practical.
2. They are also proper; they are justified because they reflect more basic values or principles. Of the various possible ways to arrange and conduct a particular set of activities, the norms indicate the appropriate ways. In short, the strength of norms stems from two sources: practical workability, and merit.

To change or replace such norms, it is not sufficient to argue that others will be more effective. New rules must also be acceptable on their merit, as right and proper, or consistent with underlying regulative principles of the system. Alternatively, some of the principles must be changed or supplemented.

Institution-building efforts usually seek to establish new functions and new ways of performing established functions. The intended value of these functions--the reason for trying to create them--lies in their intended effects.

Change agents\*\* typically begin by identifying some need for improved conditions in a social system. They then try to find a way to meet this need, by creating new conditions or outcomes in society, through effective patterns of action.

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\*The terms "norms," "standards," and "rules" are used interchangeably here. It is technically possible and sometimes appropriate to distinguish between norms and rules, the latter being explicit prescriptions to govern behavior, reflecting more general underlying norms. Such norms may also be relatively implicit, and difficult to state unambiguously and absolutely. For our purposes it is enough to note that patterns of behavior are guided by rules/norms. The justification of these rules/norms is not simply their technical effectiveness, i.e., their efficiency as means for accomplishing some formal organizational purpose.

\*\*The phrase "change agent" is gauche but useful. A change agent is a determinate source of impetus to deliberate, directed change. The label refers to a functional entity. Change agents may be external, in the sense that foreign development agencies are external. They may be public organizations, such as donor agencies or technical assistance organizations. Change agents may also be internal to a system, as in the case of domestic development agencies, political leaders, etc. The line is not always sharp and clear between deliberate, directed change stemming from change agents and change stemming more or less automatically from changed environmental conditions and unprogrammed

In such efforts the change agent faces two related value problems. One is to get the values produced by the intervention accepted within the system. The other is to design an intervention whose internal norms are acceptable as well as effective.

Change agents often assume that (1) the aims and effects they propose are good--will be valued within the social system; therefore (2) that the means they propose will likewise be valued as instruments of a desirable end; and therefore (3) that the rules or norms included in the means will tend to be accepted without serious resistance. Reality is constantly falsifying these assumptions, and relative failure is a frequent outcome of institution-building efforts.

Failures sometimes stem from poorly designed interventions, inherently deficient and doomed by lack of competence. In the unstable environments of developing countries, failures also occur with noticeable frequency because of abrupt changes in the setting--support is withdrawn in midstream, for example. But many programs and projects founder, or are transformed in ways that were not intended, because of failure to successfully address the value problems of institution building.

### Assessing the Feasibility of Institution-Building Efforts

Problems do not necessarily contain the seeds of their solution; but solutions must grow out of the comprehension of problems if they are to be anything more than fortunate accidents.

Institution building per se is not a distinctive type of problem. If institutional change is an effect of action, not a discrete kind of action, it is also a means, not an end. It is, in fact, an aspect of certain kinds of development efforts. In practice, institution building must be treated as one of the dimensions of an intervention. It cannot be entirely separated from the others.

Institution builders always aim to create or improve an action system, in order to advance a substantive objective--increased productivity, more effective administration, enlarged education, and so forth. Institutional factors are aspects of many problems of development, often vital aspects, but never the total problem. These institutional factors are often underestimated, and seldom addressed with due knowledge and deliberation. This occurs even when

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\*\*(Cont.) responses to these new conditions. Sometimes the strategy of change agents is to deliberately modify some features of the environment, in order to create conditions which will simulate an "automatic" response. An example would be establishing a new market demand for an agricultural commodity, to induce farmers to change or increase their output.

the main thrust of an undertaking is to modify or create institutional properties of an action system--as in bureaucratic reform efforts, attempts to create new kinds of public sector organizations, or to impose major new purposes and modes of action upon components of a bureaucracy. One reason for this neglect is ignorance. Another is the elusiveness of the task of inducing institutional change.

Such aims as the decentralization of authority within a bureaucracy invariably present major issues of institutional change. So do the reconstruction of a personnel system, the creation of significant policy analysis and planning capability, the establishment of effective management within a bureaucracy which normally operates with minimum need for being managed, the building of an effective service program to change behaviors of target groups in society, or the installation of new technologies in fields ranging from public works to tax collection and information processing. The prevalent strategy in these and similar undertakings is to deal with the institutional issues implicitly rather than explicitly. Sometimes this is deliberate; more often it is not.

Yet it is possible to identify and assess the institutional dimensions of a development problem, to estimate the needs for institution building or modification, to devise a plausible strategy, and to translate this into a plan of action. It is possible to ask and answer: What factors will determine the feasibility of meeting an institution-building need? How can those factors be dealt with?

It is seldom possible to do these things with great precision and assurance. But approximations are better than nothing, and awareness of important features of a situation is preferable to ignorance, particularly if the awareness is linked with good judgment and flexible, imaginative approaches to problem solving.

### The Factors Which Affect Feasibility

Ten interdependent factors affect the chance that an institution-building or institution-changing intervention will succeed. Five are internal characteristics of the projected action system. Two are types of support for this system. Two others are characteristics of the fit between the intervention and the environment; and the final factor is the state of the environment itself. The following diagram summarizes these factors and their relationships. The factors can be used in rough, impressionistic assessments of feasibility--the only kind which are possible.

The internal characteristics are: degree of self-containment, technological content, intrinsic (or functional) soundness, scope, and reversibility.

Degree of Self-Containment. A self-contained organization is one which requires no outside support.<sup>5</sup> There are none in the real world. There is, however, a large variance in the relative self-containment of systems of action. A structure is relatively self-contained when it controls most of the means it requires, and does not depend upon much outside acceptance of its outputs in order to survive.

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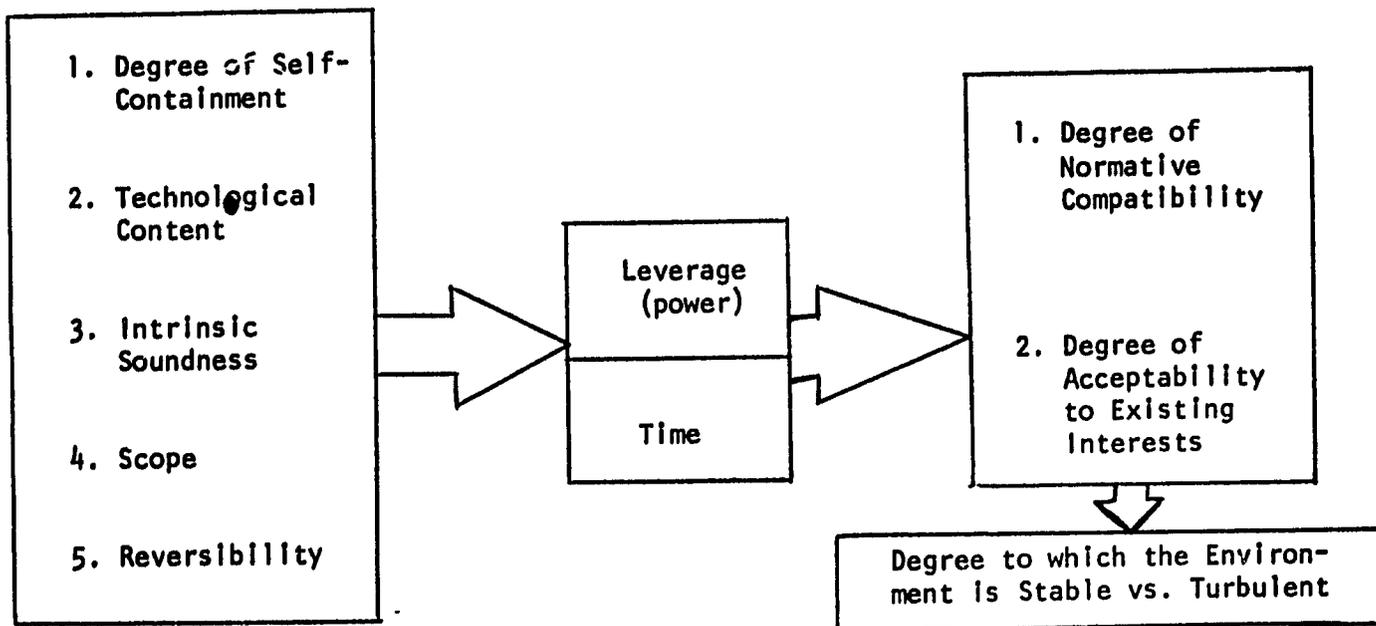
5. Herbert Simon, Donald Smithberg and Victor Thompson, Public Administration (New York: Knopf, 1950), pp. 266-67, discuss the concept.

### Factors Affecting the Feasibility of Institution-Building and Institutional Change

Characteristics  
of the  
Intervention

Support and  
Commitment  
Factors

Relationships  
Between Intervention  
and Environment



Public works projects, especially those funded by international donor organizations, are often highly self-contained. Military bureaucracies, some public enterprises, police establishments and prison systems are often relatively self-contained. Special "development bureaucracies," created to carry out high priority programs on a crash basis, or in an intensive campaign approach, are usually much more self-contained than regular agencies of a government. Arguments for regional decentralization of an administrative system are based upon the premise that greater self-containment is needed at the regional level, for one or more of these reasons: to reduce the decision-making burden at the center, to increase governmental responsiveness to important problems, or to promote coordinated attacks on those problems. Regional decentralization often runs counter to powerful sets of bureaucratic and political norms.

Self-containment in some agencies and programs may stem from their intrinsic nature more than anything else. But when self-containment is functionally possible, it can enable an action system to operate under different norms than those of the larger system. The degree of self-containment is therefore one factor influencing the feasibility of institutional development.

Self-containment facilitates the establishment of new operating norms, based upon regulative principles not common to the bureaucracy at large. The device is a favorite of international lending agencies. It is also used deliberately by governments to promote top-priority programs.

Technological Content. An applied technology is itself a quasi-institutional arrangement.

The term technology is used widely, and often left undefined. One useful definition is "a collection of rules, roles, and resources, whose product can be predicted with a high level of reliability." Others prefer to limit their definition to the idea of "rules whose results can be predicted accurately." The difference is between technology as practice, and technology as knowledge. Technology as "a quasi-institutional arrangement," is applied technology.

The rules of any technology govern its operation, including human behaviors. There may be several different ways to organize the application of the rules, but all of these ways will have one common feature: a set of clearly specified roles--duties and responsibilities--for performing the necessary actions. Resources are used or processed, and their properties are also specified. It can be predicted with assurance that this combination of inputs will produce the intended goods or services.

Some technologies are closely linked to science, as modern metallurgy or high speed data processing. Other technologies may or may not be informed by scientific principles. Converting animal hides into leather is in some cases a highly sophisticated technology based upon extensive knowledge of chemistry. But fine leathers are still produced by artisans using ancient and pragmatic technologies, quite uninformed by scientific knowledge.

The core of all technologies is the rules--the technical norms which are imperative guides to action. These specify the actions necessary to enacting the technology. When people make a commitment to a technology they place a high value upon these rules. In a sense, this commitment becomes a regulative principle, and the rules are sanctioned patterns to be honored and enforced. In this sense a technology possesses characteristics of an institution.

In the public sectors of societies many technologies are performed within organizations or groups of organizations. But even the most technologically oriented organizations have non-technological features, including one or more levels of management and control.<sup>6</sup> If an organization contains a substantial commitment to making a technology work, the whole organization will be affected by the rules of the technology. Other features of the organization cannot be fundamentally inconsistent with the technological requirements. Thus technology can sometimes help promote institutional development which deviates from the norms of the larger system.

Combining the benefits of self-containment with the power of technology is an interesting idea for those who would institutionalize action systems which cannot function effectively under the norms and regulative principles of the existing system. The requirements of technology and some of the essential requirements of the supporting organization can be stated with assurance, can be learned through education and training, and can be measured against objective standards of effectiveness.<sup>7</sup>

Interesting (and relatively extreme) examples of institutional development through technology include installation of aeronautical technologies in countries at low levels of general development. Along with military applications, there are cases of technologically and economically successful commercial airlines, run as public enterprises, with operations and maintenance entirely in the hands of domestic personnel.

A great amount of administrative technology is used to control and order action in public bureaucracies. Accounting, a wide range of financial techniques, the technologies of specialized personnel administration, economic project analysis--these are among the technologies of administration. They are frequently the focus of efforts to modernize administrative systems. If the appeal of administrative technology has been chiefly the promise of increased effectiveness, it has been reinforced by awareness that technologies are relatively easy to install, compared to other kinds of change in administrative systems.

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6. James D. Thompson, Organizations in Action (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), Ch. 1, discusses the technological, managerial, and institutional levels of the large formal organization.

7. There is a relatively large literature on the subject of technology and development, although little of it directly addresses institution-building concerns. But see the sources cited in "Technology Transfer and the Gatekeeper Function," PASITAM Design Note No. 5 (Bloomington, Ind.: PASITAM, 1976).

Intrinsic Soundness. Some institution-building efforts fail because the arrangements just don't work.

A public sector arrangement must be very bad indeed before it can fail from incompetence. The world seems full of poorly designed action systems among the public enterprise organizations of both rich and poor countries in such fields as health delivery, regulation, and rural development. The institutionalization of unsound arrangements is entirely possible. But action systems which do function reasonably well, and meet some proper measures of effectiveness within their settings, have somewhat better prospects of becoming institutionalized: They produce things which are useful in their environments. That which is valuable may come to be valued. The value of the output of an action system is one possible source of institutional support.

Yet the limited extent to which action systems are institutionalized on the basis of their manifest benefits is impressive. The values of impotent beneficiaries may offer small support for institutionalization, even when the system which produces the benefits is effective. In some circumstances, effectiveness in serving the powerless may stimulate strong resistance from the powerful. In many cases it is actually quite difficult to measure effects, and thus it is equally difficult to judge intrinsic soundness.

The negative side of this factor is more significant than the positive to the assessment of the feasibility of institutionalization. Arrangements which are grossly incapable of functioning are not likely to become institutionalized. Plenty of examples can be found in the horror story lore of development--tales of elaborate medical facilities incapable of being absorbed into the indigenous administrative system because they require domestic resources unavailable in the long run; disease eradication programs which prove to be unworkable or unsupportable in the absence of foreign assistance; water resource development projects as organizationally deficient as they are technically sound; computerized data systems which lack both data and the means of its development; and so forth.

Some violations of the criterion that an intervention should be intrinsically sound occur because of avoidable incompetence. Others reflect the fact that development is a highly uncertain endeavour. To identify the critical factors--especially the non-technological factors--affecting a new action system, and to predict the effects of that system with a high degree of assurance is often impossible.

Scope. This term refers to the length of the means-ends chain involved in an effort at institutional development. As a general rule, the shorter the chain, the more feasible the effort. It is more feasible to install and institutionalize a centralized, technically oriented and control oriented budgeting-accounting-auditing system than to institutionalize the logical next step: patterns of policy analysis and policy making which use the fiscal administrative system as a key tool.

When the scope of an action system extends across the line between a bureaucracy and its environment, institutionalization can be quite difficult.

The bureaucratic facet of the effort may be subject to considerable control, extending to the establishment of new norms. It may be relatively compatible with established patterns of action, or buffered by self-containment and reliance upon technology. The non-bureaucratic elements of the action system will have to fit (and perhaps change features of) a different normative environment.

For example, an agricultural development program may combine efforts from a number of parts of the bureaucracy, in the ministries of agriculture, finance, and elsewhere to provide information, credit, and materials. This public sector activity must be mated with the behaviors of farmers, marketing organizations, and perhaps landowners and local community leaders.

The bureaucratic aspect of the program may require, along with careful planning, coordination, and funds, some important changes in values. Bureaucrats, who may be accustomed to acting on the basis of authority and inclined to be ignorant and disdainful of peasants, will have to adopt new norms--service, a desire to understand the farmers, and a willingness to promote their wellbeing.

None of this will make much difference unless the program appeals to, perhaps even changes, the norms and behaviors of the target population and other important people such as landowners or merchants. Farmers may be suspicious of government credit schemes. Or they may regard the loans as gifts. They may be reluctant to change farming practices, especially if these people are quite poor and the benefits of the government program are not certain. Survival is one of the prime values of the clients; their farming arrangements are usually rooted in a tradition which is powerful because it works. The family itself may be institutionalized around this farming tradition. Certain work may be proper for the men or for the women. The community structure may be arranged in terms of traditional rights and obligations, and the program may threaten that tradition.

Agricultural development programs are but one of many activities involving rather long means-ends chains. Other examples can be found in tax collection, health and family planning, various kinds of urban development programs, development-oriented education, and elsewhere.

When a means-ends chain spans two or more institutional domains, it must be consistent with the norms that run in each of these "territories," or it must produce appropriate institutional changes. If it is hard to change the normative quality of some parts of the bureaucracy, it may be even harder to change a family tradition, or a custom-and-experience sanctioned way of farming.

If interventions of relatively large scope are more complex, they are not always less feasible. A powerful vision of a new purpose and a new program may capture the imagination not only of the national leadership, but of elements of both the bureaucracy and the public. An illustration would be a drive for self-sufficiency in basic food commodities, in circumstances where technology, such basic institutional factors as land tenure, and resources make this a promising aim. Then it may be possible to devise, establish, and institutionalize a program whose guiding principles provide considerable normative unity to different groups linked in means-ends relationships.

But effective induced institutional developments of large scope are quite uncommon. The idea of scope, and the implications of this idea, help explain why programs of rather large functional compass are usually limited in territorial coverage. Integrated rural development programs, for example, are typically confined to special project areas, and frequently organized to maximize self-containment.

Reversibility. "A non-reversible change is more likely to be institutionalized than one which can be dropped in favor of an older pattern, once the pressure is off."

Good examples of a non-reversible change in an important type of action system are found in the field of fiscal administration. When centralized, technologically sophisticated arrangements are effectively installed, it becomes almost impossible to revert to the systems which were supplanted. The earlier structure and process are usually destroyed in the course of the change-over. The new arrangement may prove to be highly formalistic, in which case actual institutional norms will differ from those intended. But the new system may also become functionally useful and valued for that quality.

Fiscal administration probably offers more opportunities for non-reversible changes than most other fields of public administration. Perhaps this is explained by the importance attached to finance in most governments of the world and the availability of technological "systems" for modernizing fiscal administration. Opportunities also exist for relatively non-reversible institutional changes in such fields as public works and military administration, where the direction of change tends to be toward more sophisticated technology. Efforts to use available technologies to cause non-reversible changes in public personnel systems--changes in the normative basis of action as well as in formal procedures--seem to have been significantly less successful.

Comment: The preceding paragraphs posit that five characteristics of an Intervention will affect the feasibility of its institutionalization. There may be others. There are certainly other ways of presenting these factors. For example, the previously mentioned Esman-Blaise formulation addresses, among other things, the factor here labelled "intrinsic soundness." It holds that certain things are vital to such soundness--good leadership, appropriate doctrine, proper program, sufficient resources, and effective organizational structure. Other requirements of intrinsic soundness have also been identified. And each of these five factors can be examined and described in detail, with illustrations--and lessons--from a wide array of experiences.

### Support and Commitment

Two vital elements affecting the feasibility of institutional development are power and time.

Time. The time dimensions of effective institution-building efforts do not reduce to tables. Both evidence and intuition indicate that they are considerable.<sup>8</sup>

Many relatively self-contained, sound, technologically oriented efforts, not too vast in scope, and not highly susceptible to reversion (partly because they were new enterprises) have required eight, ten, or more years to advance to the point where it seemed that a new pattern had been institutionalized.

Time requirements are always particular to a given effort in a given setting. They are almost always greater than initial expectations. In international technical assistance, large disparities are common between actual time requirements and the rules and desires of donor organizations.

Power.<sup>\*</sup> If time is important, power is essential. To create or change institutionalized patterns of action is to modify normative properties of some part or parts of society. Old norms may have to be undermined and new ones established--on the grounds of their merit as well as their effectiveness.

Where there are norms there are likely to be interests--groups with earnest commitments and convictions in support of established ways. It has been said that "there is no greater political force than the combination of self-interest and principle." The significance of this statement lies in its import--valued patterns are not lightly changed.

Such change requires power. The feasibility of a desired institutional development may turn on the power which is needed, and the forms and sources of power available, as much as any other factor.

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8. See, for example, "The Time Dimension in Institution Building," and "Technical Assistance and Institution Building," in Jos. Eaton, ed. Institution Building and Development: From Concepts to Application Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1972). Also Donald A. Taylor, Institution Building in Business Administration: The Brazilian Experience MSU International Business and Economic Studies, (East Lansing: Graduate School of Business Administration, Michigan State University, 1968).

<sup>\*</sup>After 3,000 years of thought and study, scholars continue to argue about the meaning of the word power. In public administration the term is often used as a synonym for "legal authority," or the legitimate right to issue orders and punish those who refuse to obey. Here, however, we are using the word in a somewhat different and broader way. By power we mean a relationship in which one actor or set of actors can control the behaviors of others. One version of this definition was presented by Herbert Simon, Donald Smithberg, and Victor Thompson, in Public Administration (New York: Knopf, 1950), where they described authority as the acceptance of proposals for action on some basis other than the merit of the proposal. (Chapter 8) Power can be thought of as the ability to achieve such acceptance--on the basis of legitimacy, sanctions, confidence, personal identification, habit, or otherwise.

Power and Institutional Adaptation. Speculation about the "amount" and kinds of power needed must be informed by knowledge of the institution setting. An institution is a relatively stable arrangement, sustained and limited by fundamental values, not to be changed by easy tinkering. Many efforts to create "modern" bureaucratic organizations and processes have shattered on the institutional rocks of a powerful tradition at odds with such norms as impersonalism, efficiency, objective documentation, and the assignment of authority and status on the basis of professional or technical competence.

If the institutional givens should not be taken lightly, they need not be seen as immutable combinations of principle and pattern. Individual institutions vary in their coherence and in their insulation from the impact of changes in their environments.<sup>9</sup> Other institutions are parts of the environment of any single institution, and there is always some overt or latent conflict among the institutions of a society or community. Some disparity of norms and underlying principles is common among a group of institutions. It may be possible to exploit such differences, using power for leverage rather than confrontations.

A coherent institution can manage all of the issues which confront it about the meaning and application of its regulative principles. Religious institutions, and secular or semi-secular institutions whose legitimacy is directly based upon religious principles, come closer to coherence than other institutions. Their basic principles are relatively invulnerable to facts; they are rooted in faith and identity. Yet even a coherent institution is vulnerable to its environment unless it is also enormously well-insulated. If not, it will be bombarded by many kinds of new "facts." When some of those facts appeal to one or more interests within the institution, issues will be raised about the regulative principles of even a highly coherent institution. Various outcomes are possible:

The "facts" may be rejected and suppressed. Or the established principles may be interpreted to encompass the new facts. This will change the content of the principles themselves over time. Thus the absolutist principle that all officials are personal servants of the king and direct agents of his

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9. Actual institutions vary enormously in the degree of their coherence and insulation. By coherent we mean free of conflicting interpretations about the actual meaning of regulative principles, when these must be applied to new questions or problems. By insulation we mean protection against environmental challenges, such as new developments which affect the institution's ways of action, and raise potential questions about its regulative principles.

Anthropologists have produced fascinating accounts of extremely coherent and insulated institutions--particularly religious groups with a high degree of economic autonomy, such as the Hutterites of North America. But Marion Levy has noted, in Modernization and the Structure of Society (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), that institutions which exist in dynamic, secular environments, and are engaged in extensive communication with those environments, are usually forced to reinterpret their regulative principles and modify their patterns of action over time. They cannot ignore their environments; ideas from outside infiltrate the institution and promote modification, even subversion, from within.

authority, may be "extended" into the principle that the king in his wisdom has delegated certain jurisdictions to certain ministries, has decided to select and promote his officials on the basis of merit, and has made them subject to stable, impersonal rules and regulations. Eventually, the underlying principle of absolutism erodes to the point of being explicitly abandoned.

Evolutionary change is an appealing model--when time allows its relevance. Whenever new "facts"--such as technology or science-based knowledge--can be more or less automatically absorbed within the framework of old regulative principles, institutional change will be quite simple and power requirements will be small.

But much of the interest in institution building is based on the assumption that easy-automatic institutional evolution is not enough: Some institutional change must be induced.

The types of power which may be brought to this objective range from stark coercion to education which changes the awareness and value orientations of its clients. In between these polar points are many instruments of power--strong leadership, control of resources, positive and negative sanctions, promotion of such latent regulative principles as progress and prestige, and various incentives. When the object is to change institutional patterns of a target group, such as farmers or couples in the child-bearing age range, one important source of power is the ability to reduce the risk associated with changes in behavior patterns.

The millions of words which have been written about power do not include any objective calculus to serve us here. Power over the minds and behaviors of humans is ultimately rooted in faith, hope, inertia, and magic. Even the power of force must ultimately rely upon such sources. Here we merely offer an assertion as empty as it is important: that normative change requires power, the kinds and "amounts" of which will depend upon the objectives, the initial circumstances, and the chosen strategy of intervention.

This axiom can be supported by many statements, mostly aphorisms: "Coercion can be used to eliminate an institutionalized interest, but not as the primary mechanism for creating a new one." "Education can be used as an instrument of power, not only to create technical efficacy, but to change the sense of identity and the value orientations of participants." "Trustworthy appeals to self-interest are powerful ways to induce the acceptance of new norms." "The force of a traditional power structure will tend to be reduced, more or less painlessly, by substantial growth and differentiation of the larger socio-economic system, which will foster new institutional patterns and tendencies toward new regulative principles with minimal conflict between the old and the new."

The strategies and tactics of using power as a tool of institutional change and development are numerous. Most institution-building efforts use combinations of different kinds of power. The aim is always to strike down, undermine, or reduce institutional impediments to change; and to promote or establish new patterns which will achieve the ability to maintain themselves--through their norms and linkages to effective regulative principles.

### Interaction with the Environment

The feasibility of institutional development is affected by the extent to which the intended change is consistent with the normative environment. In practice, this means that feasibility is influenced by the impact of an attempted change upon existing interests, and by the power of those interests.

These two truisms have already been explored. A brief observation is in order about turbulence versus stability as one basic feature of the environment of an institution-building effort. This too takes on the generality of a truism: Induced institutional change will be easier in moderately turbulent environments than in those which are highly stable or marked by much conflict and disruption.

A very stable environment is, by definition, unchanging and free of pressure to change. (There are few such environments in today's world.) In a highly turbulent environment things are disorderly and out of control.

Inducing institutional change requires the ability to impose controls and influence. This is not consistent with "too much" turbulence. Also, in a highly stressful and contentious setting institution-building aims are likely to be "politicized:" Unintended political motives will be attached to them as tactics of a struggle which centers not upon these efforts, but upon a larger contest for power.

In moderately turbulent environments, where elements of the established order are being challenged--but not the order itself--where new "facts" are impacting upon the social system, where there is also considerable acceptance of the general framework of authority and society, institution-building efforts may respond to pressure and appeal to hope as well.

Judging the relative turbulence--or dynamism--of an environment is not always easy, but the question cannot be ignored by those who would assess the feasibility of induced institutional change.

Concerning These Factors Which Affect Feasibility: This section has presented ten factors which affect the feasibility of efforts to build or change institutions. In doing so, the statement seeks to put the subject of institution building into proper perspective--an aim less ambitious but more useful than an offering of formulas and recipes. One who wishes to think seriously about institutional development will here find some useful and interdependent categories, and some suggestive comments about them.

The details of this portrait can be challenged and undoubtedly improved. The general import remains: Institution building is a complex and uncertain undertaking. The most that can sensibly be expected from discussion of the subject is tentative, limited knowledge, useful for reminders and suggestions, to help those who would induce social change to avoid certain errors--the errors of underestimation and oversight.

Techniques:  
Planning, Organizing and Implementing  
Institution-Building Interventions

When the aim is to create or modify a pattern of social action, it is necessary to establish or change the basis of human behavior. Induced change is deliberate change, inspired and justified by certain aims, consciously planned.

The utopian logic of such change contains two premises: that goals can be specified, and cause-effect relations can be known. The practical logic of designed change is less pretentious. It merely assumes that something about goals can be specified; that something about causal relations can be known; that there are techniques for assessing possible goals, for establishing assumptions about causation, for implementing such assumptions (and refining them in the course of action), and for dealing with the serious problem of reducing the adverse effects of error. The likelihood of errors and mistakes is assumed in this practical logic, for the axiom of that logic is that our knowledge is uncertain and insufficient.

Every effort to cause social change by establishing some new pattern of action is partly unique. Design is situation-specific. But it is partially informed by general ideas about principles and techniques.

A technique is a prescription, or at least a potential prescription. Two kinds of techniques are discussed here: techniques of analysis, which prescribe ways of dealing with knowledge needs; and a few techniques of action. Together these offerings are but a sample of the possibilities.

Technique of Analysis: Institutional Mapping and Assessment

Wise design of an institutional change is informed by institutional mapping. This provides information about the institutional environment of a proposed action pattern.

A comprehensive, rigorous, and highly reliable map or portrait of an institution or set of institutions is costly in time and talent--and seldom necessary. For most of the world much of the needed knowledge exists. What matters is to ask the proper questions.

These questions depend upon the particular circumstances. When bureaucratic change is being considered, it will be important to know what principles and patterns of authority exist, how status is achieved and graded, what sanctions and incentives are used, how information and communications arrangements work, what conventions govern the procurement and use of resources, how the efficacy and acceptability of behavior are assessed in the system, and how "agency-client" relations are structured.

Professionals--anthropologists, social anthropologists, or sociologists--<sup>10</sup> can be used to map institutional terrain, and to help interpret findings. What matters is not the use of particular kinds of professionals but the ability to get answers to questions such as these:

Are institutional features of this situation key constraints? Are certain key norms or underlying principles likely to be challenged by a contemplated intervention? What interests support the status quo? How strong are they? Can conflict between the new pattern and the norms and interests of the status quo be managed? Can normative features of the existing situation be exploited, or constructively manipulated? Can the intended change be fitted to the existing institutional situation? Alternatively, can the change be insulated from the status quo? Should it be? Given the institutional situation, does the proposed intervention make sense?

Questions of this sort are seldom asked and answered in efforts to design and install new patterns in a given institutional setting. Even simple sketches of the institutional setting of action, and rough assessments, can help improve judgments about interventions and their possible effects.

#### Technique of Analysis: Finding and Evaluating Analogies

"...problem-solving systems and design procedures in the real world do not merely assemble problem solutions from components but must search for appropriate assemblies."<sup>11</sup> One means of this search "...is previous experience. We see this particularly clearly when the problem to be solved is similar to one that has been solved before."<sup>12</sup> Simon's brilliant discussion of the architecture of complex systems includes the idea that we analyze problems and design responses by finding analogous situations and seeing how they were handled. The key is to find the right analogy.

In developed countries, providing problem-solving analogies has itself been institutionalized--in professional associations, commercial organizations which sell solutions (in the forms of technology and consultancy), and other agencies. Together they provide an incessant flow of information about problems and solutions.

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10. See, for example, H.G. Barnett, Anthropology in Administration (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1956), and the journals, Human Organization and Economic Development and Cultural Change.

11. Herbert A. Simon, The Sciences of the Artificial (Cambridge: M.I.T Press, 1969), p. 69.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

These analogies or models are sometimes exported. One finds examples in all the fields of administrative technology and elsewhere within public administration. But the analogies are usually culture-bound. They are based upon assumptions about behavioral patterns and regulative principles which may not apply to less developed countries.

This fact has certain implications for effective techniques of institution-building analysis:

1) Interventions modelled on experience in developed countries should be evaluated before they are adopted, to determine the compatibility with the local/institutional situation, through institutional mapping. Models which don't fit the status quo may be desirable; but their implications should be noted when an intervention is planned--not after it has encountered difficulties in implementation.

2) Analogies should be sought, as much as possible, from situations which appear to be institutionally similar. The assumption of similarity should itself be assessed. Efforts to emulate the famous Malaysian Op Room/Red Book model to promote certain kinds of rural development were less than successful. One reason was inability to duplicate the splendid leadership which was part of the Malaysian intervention. But in some of the places where the Op Room/Red Book technique was used as an analogy, the institutional patterns of the bureaucracy were significantly different. So were the institutional structures of the rural sector. So were the results.

Analogies are powerful instruments of planning and design--when they are understood and properly assessed. They reduce the task of problem-solving analysis to more manageable proportions. And they enable the lessons of experience to cumulate, enlarging the knowledge which can inform efforts to promote development through induced social change. The United Nations Division of Public Administration and Finance has contributed significantly to building and disseminating such knowledge, but large needs remain.

#### Analysis and Design: The Crucial Area of Technique

The analytical foundations of efforts to induce social change--to upgrade the effectiveness of bureaucracies, to design and install new modes of action in public sectors, to establish programs in ministries by which to induce changes in society--are weak beyond description. There are many reasons, not the least of which are the ways in which decisions about development are made and supported. Another is the failure to recognize and use available knowledge. If analysis as the basis for designing interventions can be called a technique (or a field of technique), then no other technique offers greater promise for the reduction of errors and improvement of results. An important part of that analysis is institutional analysis: the mapping of the institutional environment, and the analysis of the institutional implications of potential interventions.

### Techniques of Action

The array of techniques for manipulating institutional conditions and promoting institutional change would fill one or more books--even if the subject matter were limited to the bureaucracies of the less developed countries. Here are a few observations about action techniques.

Autonomy as a Technique. Under certain conditions the creation of a highly self-contained intervention is a very effective technique:

- 1) The primary aim of the intervention must be to establish some good or service which is practically certain to be useful.
- 2) Technical feasibility must be well-established.
- 3) Prevailing bureaucratic norms and patterns must be judged incompatible with a successful intervention.
- 4) Sufficient self-containment must be assured; the organization must have considerable capacity to control its exchanges with its environment.
- 5) The product or products should have a monetary value, and the effectiveness of the arrangement should be subject to economic measures.

Creating an autonomous unit within a public sector may also be a sound technique in other circumstances. Reference has been made to highly self-contained organizations for top priority development programs and projects. A degree of autonomy is an important feature of public service training establishments when their aim includes institutional development, not just the maintenance of status quo. But there are limitations and dangers in autonomy as a way of bypassing established institutional patterns: servicios in Latin American countries as means of creating agricultural extension services were institutionalized. They persisted. But their insulation extended to their intended clients--they were not responsive to the farmers who were supposed to be served.<sup>13</sup>

Some perverse consequences of autonomy are vividly documented in the biography of Robert Moses, the epitomizing politico-technocrat, in the United States of America in the first half of the Twentieth Century.<sup>14</sup> His autonomy included vast power to set goals without external checks or review.

When autonomy is matched with subjection to economic norms, it is possible to determine whether the autonomous organization is serving intents. When effects are not monitored, autonomy tends to become dysfunctional--unless it is served by distinctive institutional norms reinforced by an image of high prestige, special importance to the larger system, and extraordinary perquisites.

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13. Theodore Rice, Extension in the Andes: An Evaluation of Official U.S. Assistance to Agricultural Extension Services in Central and South America (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1975).

14. Robert A. Caro, The Power Brokers: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York (New York: Knopf, 1974).

Using autonomy to get results limits the scope of those results. The "modern" institutional patterns of self-contained agencies do not inevitably spread into the larger bureaucracy. It is, however, possible to nurture such a spread: if the relatively self-contained and distinctive agency is the Ministry of Finance or the Central Budget Agency, and if it can be established as a training ground for elite managerial bureaucrats who then infiltrate and help change other key agencies over time. This strategy, however, involves substantial modification of the typical institutional arrangements of bureaucracies in less developed countries, where interministry movement of personnel is not a well-established pattern.

Autonomy, and the concomitant creation of elitist development bureaucracies, must be seriously entertained as a technique for promoting development in many of the least developed countries, where the task of general bureaucratic reform is too vast to meet certain key problems of national development.

Leverage Interventions. Even the most compartmentalized bureaucracies are cross-linked by sub-systems, notably those of fiscal administration. Some constructive change within the broad ambit of a bureaucracy is possible when the power and technology of fiscal administration are used to impose a degree of rationalization upon the larger system.

This technique has certain limitations: It enhances control; it does not necessarily stimulate innovation and creative programming.<sup>15</sup>

Foundation Building. Laying the foundations for future institutional development is one of the most appealing techniques for addressing problems of bureaucratic institutional change. More countries probably have institutes of public administration (or comparable organizations) than have national airlines.

Two decades of experience suggest that this potentially important technique of promoting bureaucratic institutional change has not been an impressive success. The reasons are several; none is more important than insufficient soundness in the design and implementation of many of these organizations. Quite a few have been victims of a developed-country institutional pattern in which "public administration" is emphatically separated as a discipline from the penetrating analysis of development problems.

Disappointment with conventional public administration has led to the hope that economics and "modern management" can serve as better sources of training and education for bureaucratic managers. These hopes are not likely to be fulfilled. Contemporary management education, or much of it, emphasizes sophisticated techniques of control which are not particularly germane to the public sectors of developing countries. The socio-psychological approaches to organization and management are also a mixed bag. On one hand, they address important problems of motivation and incentives. On the other, they

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15. See: N. Caiden and A. Wildavsky, Planning and Budgeting in Poor Countries (New York: Wiley, 1974).

tend toward ethnocentric ideas and techniques whose validity is often much more questionable than the professors are inclined to acknowledge. As for economics, it offers valuable perspective, and insights into crucial dimensions of development. If not balanced by larger views of how things work, and can sometimes be made to work, in the world, however, economics inspires myopia, and a false sense of causality. If it is a necessary element of the education of those who would shape and manage development, it is also an insufficient element.

In the final analysis, change in the institutional patterns of bureaucracy requires effective schools and institutes of administration. Ironically, the greatest unmet needs of those schools and institutes are to be sufficiently autonomous to bring fresh perspective to bear on the bureaucracy; sufficiently competent in various technologies to establish bona fides as useful, relevant agencies; sufficiently knowledgeable of the local situation to avoid misrepresentation of those technologies; and sufficiently competent to design and implement wise strategies of training education, and analysis.

Specialized agencies for administrative reform can also be vital foundations for strengthening the apparatus of public administration. One of the interesting issues of our time is the effort to institutionalize such agencies--organizations whose primary tasks are to analyze realistic needs for administrative reform, help design practical strategies, and promote their implementation.

Establishing such organizations poses distinctive problems of an institution-building type. Administrative reform agencies cannot be effective if they are highly autonomous. Yet they must be free from the norms and constraints which inspire the needs for bureaucratic reform. Technology can be one source of powerful tools for such organizations; but its potency is not unlimited. Strong linkages to centers of power in the government are essential. But nothing is more important to the effectiveness of administrative reform agencies than a keen insight into the institutional characteristics of the bureaucracy, and a shrewd knowledge of strategies for dealing with some of those characteristics. In short, administrative reform agencies require capabilities similar to those of effective schools and institutes of administration--plus the capacity to act.

#### Concerning Knowledge to Inform Technique

The crucial "technique problem" of upgrading and expanding the effectiveness of public sector institutions in less developed countries is not the lack of available knowledge of techniques: it is the lack of the effective use of that knowledge. To be effective, knowledge must be reasonably reliable; and it must be applied. Knowledge in books and the minds of scholars is not much help.<sup>16</sup>

There are several important domains of such knowledge, some of them almost utterly neglected by those who teach, study, and practice development. One is the field of tactics and techniques of manipulation and bargaining.

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16. For example, such statements as Jerald Hage and Michael Aiken's Social Change in Complex Organizations (New York: Random House, 1970) and Jack Rothman's Planning and Organizing for Social Change (New York: Columbia, 1974) are irrelevant unless they manage to influence thinking about the design of social interventions, in the places where the effective, influential thinking occurs.

There is a world-wide literature in this field, and rich experience in every culture. Techniques of building consensus and resolving conflict differ from one institutional setting to another. Knowledge of these mechanisms, and the circumstances in which they apply, is important to institution building. Yet such knowledge is often neglected or ignored.

Interesting and important questions of ethics are posed by some ideas of how to manipulate support, acceptance, and consent. The evidence suggests, however, that much manipulation involves the identification and acknowledgment of self-interests and mutual interests, as a basis for interventions which are likely to work because they are sensible and valuable. In any case, the techniques of power and persuasion are essential parts of the knowledge-base of induced social change.

Another area in which the disparity between knowledge and its application is great is techniques of organization. Much is known about ways to design and organize systems of action under conditions of uncertainty, but a great deal of that knowledge is ignored in practice. False analogies are frequently used in attempts to change and strengthen the bureaucratic patterns of less developed countries. Technique ideas which clamor for attention include the use of redundancy as a means of minimizing mistakes when action occurs in highly uncertain circumstances.<sup>17</sup> The norm of redundancy needs to be built into many efforts to modify institutional patterns of developing country bureaucracies. Incremental strategies of intervention, which have the effect of reducing the scope of institutional development efforts, also need to be consciously incorporated in the design and organization of interventions.<sup>18</sup>

These are only illustrations of the basic need--the need for effective knowledge of how things work. One of the most basic ways in which "things work" is institutionally--through the patterns which provide order and meaning to the behaviors of human members of the institutions which determine what can be done, and what ought to be done, in communities, societies, and the bureaucratic facets of societies.

These institutional arrangements can be shaped and changed. The commitment to doing so is both bold and harrowing. It requires judgments of what will be good for others, and willingness to act on those judgments. Such judgments, and the efforts to implement them, should be as competent and as careful as they can be.

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17. See Simon, Sciences of Artificial pp.109-110, and Martin Landau, "Redundancy, Rationality, and the Problem of Duplication and Overlap." Public Administration Review, July/August 1969, pp. 346-58.

18. Hirschman, Albert O., and Charles E. Lindblom, "Economic Development, Research and Development, Policy Making: Some Converging Views," Behavioral Science, 7(1962):211-22.