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State, Cooperatives and Development in Africa

The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala 1990
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This study is based partly on experiences from the author's field research in Egypt and Jordan, and partly on a literature review. Written sources are in various European languages. Quotations from non-English sources have been translated by the author.
1. Aim and Scope of the Study

Cooperation is not an aid-giving business.
A.F. Laidlaw

Introduction

Many recipes have been presented to overcome the unsatisfactory situation of the Third World. One of the most widely implemented efforts to speed up development is to organize people in rural cooperative societies. This, however, can be (and has been) done in a great number of ways, from highly diverging starting points, and with very different assumptions about ambitions and possibilities of actors involved.

Cooperation has faced renewed actuality as change agent and development motor during the last decade's reorientation of development theory (and, to some extent, of practice) towards decentralization, self-help and development 'from below'. An enhanced importance of cooperatives should be based on comprehensive, empirical studies of their potentials, constraints and prerequisites in different settings. So far, to my knowledge, this has not been done. What can be found is instead a mass of cooperative case studies, policy papers, etc. which, together with other studies, may be used to analyze cooperative experiences and to determine the necessary preconditions for cooperative success.

Experiences from, and expectations on, cooperatives vary and the roles of cooperatives as tools for development naturally differ. This is no wonder since the conditions under which Africa's peasants must toil, and the problems they face, differ greatly, from fully irrigated agriculture in the Nile valley to seasonal dry farming, shifting cultivation for subsistence needs, and export oriented plantations in sub-Saharan Africa. Some even stress that peasants' conditions and problems are "as varied, complex and enormous as the continent itself" (Haque F, 1988, p 17). Consequently, it is sometimes argued that any generalization of relations between formal cooperatives and African local communities should be avoided (Hedlund H, 1986). Others go even further, saying that it would be meaningless to try to generalize African cooperative experiences (Ståhl I, 1988). No doubt, local variations exist but certain regularities are nevertheless observable. It is the purpose of this study to investigate these regularities and possibly to explain them.
Objectives

The objective of this study is twofold. First, it aims to summarize and generalize the experiences of efforts to use agricultural cooperatives as instruments of development in Africa. Second, it aims at determining the conditions under which cooperatives can be suitable institutions for enhancement of development.

These analyses will be made against the background of a discussion of advantages and shortcomings of various perspectives in writings and research about cooperatives and development. This is the theme of chapter one.

Based on a review of literature on development, cooperation and the various actors involved in rural organization building, chapter two illuminates the various expectations placed on cooperatives as change agents. Success and failure of cooperatives is discussed not only in relation to the (real or imagined) nature and characteristics of peasants or peasant societies, but also in relation to the roles and objectives of promoters and 'supervisors' like aid organizations and public administrative bodies.

As African cooperative organizations, more often than not, have been initiated by and closely linked to, the state, the nature of the state apparatus in transitory societies, its impact on development planning, on cooperative design and performance are other matters of analysis. This is all the more important as, paradoxically, "although being widely acknowledged as significant, the relation state-cooperatives has apparently not been judged as sufficiently important to attract much systematic, empirical research" (Gyllstrom B, 1988, p 12). This is the theme of chapter three.

Chapter four, finally, summarizes the findings and attempts to determine the necessary preconditions for cooperatives to play an important role in development.

Perspectives in co-operative research

Cooperation, like 'development', is a concept which arouses much emotion. Much that has been written about cooperation and development has been made by writers from "within the movement" or belonging to bureaucracies closely related to cooperative organizations. It has often been of a rather uncritical and apologetic nature. Even when studies of cooperation and development have not been hampered by such biases, instead being made by neutral researchers, "there has been an apparent tendency among social scientists towards rather reductionist generalizations" (Gyllstrom B & Hatti N, 1987, p 7). Apthorpe and Gasper (1982) distinguish between four basic perspectives common in cooperative studies: the immanent, the transcendent, the essentialist, and the instrumentalist perspectives. In short they are characterized as follows:
Immanence. The criteria used are "internal" to the policy or institution itself, i.e. its stated objectives. Organizational self-evaluation=immanent criticism.

Transcendence. An "external" approach that takes its criteria independently of the policy/institution evaluated, without any necessary or overriding reference to the institution's self-conception or implied criteria.

**Instrumentalism.** Treats particular activities and measures simply as means towards some more general ends; ends without reference to features of particular means. An instrumentalist approach asks rather "whether" than "how".

Essentialism. Contains a particular, usually positive, commitment concerning the matter being evaluated. It tends to advocate a policy/institution rather than to analyze it critically. Thereby, it is prejudiced and unscientific.

Following Apthorpe and Gasper, instrumentalism's detachment from particular means leads to a willingness to entertain considerations about, and to be open to, the adoption of a variety of means, including different means in different circumstances—thus, it tends towards situationalism. The danger here, the writers argue, is that everything becomes merely a means towards remote and insufficiently examined abstract ends. With instrumentalism it can be the goals rather than the means to attain them which tend to be seen as not requiring much defence or even close examination. (But what if the ends are thoroughly analyzed and well understood?).

With essentialism the commitment to the valued proper and essential form of the policy or institution is likely to result in the ostensible means being treated this way, the means and the ends having been united in the "true" form of the policy or institution. Essentialism tends to treat unsuccessful examples of the policy/ institution it advocates as not being "true" examples. If institutions created to speed up development fail to do this, the recommended 'cure' is often more of the same, rather than change of approach.

Apthorpe and Gasper reject the transcendent approach because it may take its (external) criteria from a general theory of history which may have been unknown altogether to the policymakers or institution-builders concerned, or from an ideology which would be foreign or hostile to those making and implementing the policy under review. Therefore, it is 'unfair' and should be avoided. (Obviously, a transcendent approach can easily become essentialistic. This, however, cannot be a sufficient reason to reject the transcendent approach per se. On the contrary, it represents 'standard...
procedure' in science, i.e. a phenomenon/policy/institution is analyzed in the light of, and compared to, a hypothesis or theory about the 'state of things'. The outcome may be a change of theory or of the institution/policy under study, or both).

The transcendent approach is then contrasted with the immanent approach to cooperative study. While an essentialist approach can sometimes be seen as an extreme form of immanence, the strength of immanence, Apthorpe and Gasper argue, is derived from the fact that it takes its point of departure in the stated objectives of the policy/institution investigated. Immanence, they say, is an invaluable tool in identifying bias, since it means examining the consistency and coherence of a position in its own terms. An immanent approach, thus, asks: Which are the stated objectives? To what degree have they been attained? Why, why not? (Ideally, an immanent approach also asks: Which are the alternatives? How have they performed? Which are their degrees of goal-attainment?)

Apthorpe, who was co-director of the UNRISD-studies which came out as very critical of the performance—and even the suitability—of cooperatives in the Third World (chapter two), maintains (together with Gasper) that the UNRISD-studies were based on an immanent approach, which, he sais, made these studies more scientific than many other studies of cooperation and development. That, however, is only partially correct. While Apthorpe and Gasper underline that "a non-essentialist approach looks at alternatives", they admit that the UNRISD-reports "lacked extensive and direct comparisons of cooperatives with other institutional approaches to rural development". Thus, they only went half-way.

While the UNRISD studies have been subject to massive critique, much of which Apthorpe and Gasper rightly dismiss as essentialistic lamentation (see chapter two), there are a number of dangers involved when a strictly immanent approach is applied.

First, all goal-fulfilment evaluation necessarily tends to be biased and produce more or less disappointing results in so far as it is likely that stated objectives will only be partially realized. When the object of investigation is a matter as complicated as development-realization, this tendency is dramatically accentuated. This bias may be tuned down if alternative policies/institutions are investigated in the same place and at the same time from an immanent approach as well—but the bias remains.

Second, while an immanent approach may answer the question "if" and establish some degree of goal-attainment, it does not necessarily reveal "why" stated objectives have not been attained (if that is the case), nor why development has become what it has actually become. Immanence, thus, is too narrow and only insofar as the reasons for success or failure are internal to the organization will an immanent approach suffice. In most cases, to answer such questions, other approaches will be needed which take exogenous factors into consideration. To compare with alternatives can help but it is not enough.
Third, stated objectives are not always immanent objectives. With cooperatives it is often the case that their goals and roles have been determined by external actors, usually the state and international aid-agencies, and then they have been superimposed on local societies. These stated goals may conflict with goals desired by members. Apthorpe and Gasper state that the UNRISD-studies "adopted the goals proclaimed by the movements themselves as criteria" but then they go on to say: "how it was that these goals came to be proclaimed is of course an important question". It is indeed. But to answer that question it will again be necessary to transcend the immanent approach and to look outside the organization/institution in question.

Fourth, there is also a conflict between declared and undeclared objectives in policy/institution-evaluation. Development in general and, particularly, the building of development institutions are highly political matters. In the case of cooperatives, goals have generally been set by governments but at times the government's 'hidden objectives' may be as strong as—or even stronger than—the stated objectives. This makes investigations of the fulfilment of only stated goals rather obscure. Consequently, the goal-setter itself (its nature, aims and options) must be analyzed and 'hidden objectives' must be explicitly searched for. Thus, strict adherence to an immanent approach comes out as rather reductionist and, in many cases, will neither answer the questions "why", nor "whereto", which are so essential in development research.

Clearly, it will be impossible to fully explain cooperative performance by solely looking at intra-organizational factors. Cooperatives must be seen in a broader societal framework and in the light of involved actors' interests, positions, resources and restrictions—i.e. from a holistic and transdisciplinary perspective. Furthermore, realizing the political aspects of the building of development-organizations:

political phenomena can best be understood in terms of the total cultural and historical-matrix in which they are set [i.e. within] an explicit interdisciplinary perspective (Baker RW, 1978, p ix).

To understand the roles, performances, impacts and potentials of cooperatives (or of any other institution) as development instruments, it is essential that the study goes beyond the immediate focus for investigation. Nothing takes place in isolation and cooperatives are certainly not built in a vacuum. Without explicitly relating them to a wider context, analysis will be of limited value. The need to apply a broader, interdisciplinary perspective is further accentuated by the very complexity of the development process itself.
'Development' has many connotations and maybe as many definitions as there are writers on the subject. Usually, it has been associated with economic growth and diffusion of innovations. It has been called 'modernization' which, generally, means westernization. Development has been understood as spatial reorganization and as progressive distribution of the good things in life. Development contains all these aspects, but also many others. Eric Jacoby reminds us that 'development' is not homogenous and balanced, it is not necessarily "development" in any progressive meaning, as professional development theorists like to prove. It is always painful, associated with deteriorating quality of life for large parts of the population, even if it, in a longer perspective, may imply progress for the majority of the people. But the transformation-process is always connected to a re-formulation of values and beliefs (Jacoby E, 1983, p 181).

In essence, development is a conflict-ridden transition of society from one social system and one mode of production to another, and as such it represents a period of anomaly without given rules. Development, then, does not simply mean "change", "growth", or increased "efficiency" (efficient for whom?), even if that is its aim. It is a complex and, in part, frustrating process which cannot be expected to come about smoothly and without opposition (especially not when implemented and 'controlled' from above and outside).

It is widely recognized that man always, as far as possible, has tried to survive and shape his life according to those experiences that has proved to be most effective. When, for example, food shortages occur, the known mode of production is intensified and not until conditions for life are seriously and permanently deteriorating is he prepared to examine new ways to organize life and production. Karl Marx has shown that a mode of production is not abandoned until its inherent contradictions become so strong that they overwhelm the system and lead to a crisis. Then a new 'progressive' class, representing a more effective resource allocation, takes possession of power, a new era emerges and a new moral order comes into existence (Marx K, edn 1974). Ester Boserup has shown that African subsistence farmers alter production techniques, settlement patterns, etc. in response to augmenting population pressure and deteriorating levels of food production per capita, i.e. as a response to a crisis and not because they vision or have heard about 'better' lifestyles (Boserup E, 1965).

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2 It is perfectly natural that Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) wrote about anomaly at the time when he did. 19th century Europe was passing through a period when old norms and value-systems were disintegrating while no other system had yet emerged in their place.
Likewise, Marvin Harris describes a sequence of population growth — intensification of production — environmental impoverishment. Population growth leads to intensification of the prevailing mode of production which, sooner or later, results in ecological deterioration. To survive this crisis, the culture/society (if large-scale emigration is not possible) is forced to develop, i.e. to transform itself into a more effective mode of production with accompanying alterations in social norms and value systems to legitimate the new system. Harris strongly emphasizes man's disinclination to embark on so far-reaching societal transformations until there is no other choice. This is so not only because it is risky or because of the strength of the old normative system, but also because such transformations always lead to increased social control over the individual (Harris M, 1979).

Thus, it is in the phase of deterioration, when the known social system and the prevailing mode of production reaches its limits and a crisis sets in, that the need for development is more commonly felt. It is in this phase that social norms and value systems loose their meaning and evaporate or have their symbolism changed, making it easier for man to experiment, to seek new solutions to encountered problems; in short to develop.

This means that development (as it is understood here) can hardly be planned. Planning can only be effective within a system, i.e. before the known system reaches its limits or after the transitory phase has been passed through and a new logic prevails. In spite of this, planning, or the engineering of crisis, is exactly what is being tried. This desire for control (intensification) is understandable but its functionality is in doubt.

Thus, apart from expected improvements of material conditions, development — and especially planned development — implies the imposition of a new and alien rationality which, by the potential beneficiaries, may be perceived as immoral. The inevitable cultural uprooting that goes hand in hand with development has provoked not only anti-western sentiments and religious, notably Islamic, "fundamentalism" in large parts of the world. It has also brought forth many other forms of active or passive resistance at local level against development programmes imposed from above. Accomplishing development is thus far from the simple technical matter as which it is often presented.

If these are theoretical objections to the "planning of development", there are practical obstacles to development planning as well. The general

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3 As underlined by Ibrahim, Islamic fundamentalism is primarily a reaction against the conspicuous consumption of the rich, westernized elites, which sharply contrasts to deteriorating living conditions for the masses and reduced social mobility for the educated young (an emerging but frustrated middle class). In spite of its religious symbolism, it is not primarily a religious phenomenon (Ibrahim SE, 1982). Fouad Ajami likewise notes that this is only an apparent resurgence of Islam, in a period when traditions rupture, "when patience wears thin, when people no longer believe" (Ajami F, 1982, p140).
shortage of central financial resources, the common lack of reliable information, and of skilled and devoted personnel to carry the plans out are well-known obstacles to plan-fulfillment in most developing countries. Furthermore, the time needed is generally much longer than what is permitted in most schemes of planned development. To complicate matters, a general experience is further that both international ‘development aid’ projects and national development programmes are full of hidden objectives and frequently have been utilized for purposes other than those officially stated. The intricacy of the matter, therefore, demands a comprehensive and holistic approach of study if the process is to be understood in all its complexity. As mentioned above, this is so also when the object under study is not development *per se*, but institution-building aiming at development promotion (how ever defined in the concrete case).

Usually, such comprehensive approaches have not been adopted in general development studies. The so called 'modernization theories' of the 1950s and 1960s primarily searched for factors impeding development, internal to the less developed countries themselves (low rates of savings and investments, lack of 'achievement orientation', etc.). 'Dependence theory' of the 1970s, which primarily was a reaction against the biased modernization school, instead concentrated on external reasons for underdevelopment (international economic structures and the periphery's neo-colonial dependence on the world's political and economic centre). It is understandable that dependence theorists, in their polemics with 'modernizers', came to stress external relations but in so doing they, as did their opponents, paid attention only to one side of the problem.

One recent example of the risks involved in limiting research about complex processes only to aspects of development is Gillis et al. (1983) who state that "an active and positive role for government is essential" (p 24) for development to 'take off'. But then they find that a great many governments in the Third World are "unable or unwilling to pursue policies that would achieve development" (p 27). While this latter statement is correct, they go on to say: "why governments have found themselves in these situations [is an important question] but the answer to that question would take [the authors] deep into the nature of politics and society in developing nations and would divert [them] from [their] book's main task of explaining (sic!) economic development" (Gillis Met et al. 1983, p 27; my emphasis).

The above example clearly illustrates that such 'diversions' are necessary if development is to be understood or explained at all. As noted by Hagerstrand "our ability to decompose has become far more superior than our ability to put together and place our constructs back into reality" (Hagerstrand T, 1983, p 374). To fit the various pieces of qualitatively different knowledge back into a comprehensive reality calls for interdisciplinary and holistic approaches (see Andersson S, 1979; Asplund J, 1970; Pohl J, 1986). It needs also to be remembered that "everything which
is present in a (bounded) part of the world has to be recognized as playing a role there" (ibid. p 378). Furthermore, "it is not only what is visible that is taking place, but also what is present" (Hagerstrand T, 1985, p 6f). Holism, however, "need not presume that the [researcher] seeks to comprehend a society or system totally... [but it] assumes a functional connection within a system. Whatever is examined is viewed in relationship to other things of which it is a part” (Nadim NM, 1977, p 107).

An inclusion of the nature of politics and society into the analysis of Third World economics would no doubt enhance our understanding of why, and in which historical situations, governments are able or willing to play a positively active role in development, and in which historical situations they are not. Otherwise specialized 'knowledge' risks arriving at superficial conclusions that "certain cultures seem more resistant to change than others" (ibid. p 30). There are no such things as change-resistant or innovative cultures. On the contrary, all cultures tend to resist change during certain historical phases and to be innovative during others. Cultures, thus, are not static but 'culture', nevertheless, must be treated as one among several factors influencing behaviour, development and institution-building. However, to the extent that culture is considered, "to concentrate simply on the question of pre-existing social bonds is wrongly to isolate only one aspect of the problem" (Worsley P, 1971, p 37).

Perspective of the Present Study

Hagerstrand, while advocating the adoption of a spatially limited 'arena perspective', wants to "turn human geography into a study of the conditions for life in a regional setting" (Hagerstrand T, 1975, p 9). He declares that "the core-area of geography is the study of the struggle for power over the admission of existences in time and space" (Hagerstrand T, 1985, p 7). We can use exactly the same expression to define development. The struggle for power over the admission of existences in time and space is, after all, what development is all about. Development planning is part of this struggle. Planners and planning authorities are not neutral or positioned "above" the contending forces. Likewise, to change the conditions for life in a regional setting is, after all, the ultimate objective for the building of all cooperative (and other) development-institutions. Whether caused by cooperatives or not, the conditions for life change as development proceeds (and, initially, as a prerequisite for its coming about). Some changes and processes emerge from within the arena/organization, some have external causes. Some have consequences only within the arena/organization. Others also affect the world outside

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4 As the authors explicitly concentrate on economic matters and avoid analysing culture, such conclusions can not be drawn from the material they investigate.
The arena is no isolated phenomenon. Neither are development institutions. In many ways they are linked to the rest of the world.

Conflict and competition (and sometimes consensus and cooperation) among actors and interests are essential parts of any development process. Improved positions or extended *lebensraum* for some actors have positive or negative effects on other actors' positions and possibilities. It is the combined effect of these struggles which explain the performance of the organizations operating on any arena, and which eventually alter the character of the arena itself.

Africa currently passes through an uprooting process of transformation, both physically, socially, economically and politically. Its various characteristics are altered in this process. A certain type of organization, agricultural cooperation, has been introduced to facilitate this development. Cooperatives are linked to various interests and groups (members, employees, aid agencies, public administrative bodies, political institutions). They have been given certain objectives, resources and directives. They operate amidst a mass of external actors (individuals, groups, institutions) with sometimes overlapping, sometimes opposing objectives. Some aim at modernization, others want to preserve what already is. Some aim at greater central control and some at local self-reliance. Constraints, characteristics and interests of these competing/cooperating actors need to be established if we are to understand why and how cooperatives perform as they do, especially if we are to say anything about their potentials as future development instruments.
Figure: *Actors influencing the performance of a local cooperative society*
2. Cooperation and Development

Introduction

Simply put, cooperative societies, being based on the principles of voluntariness and democratic control, are economic enterprises, owned by their members and pursuing activities for the benefit of their members. Sometimes such undemanding definitions do not seem to suffice and cooperation has been characterized as "economic democracy in action" (ICA, 1978). It is widely held that cooperation is not only a business activity but, primarily, "a way of life" (Hasselmann E, 1971) and "the only form of enterprise that represents an ideology" (Johansson T, 1980), why it is also held to be "a social and cultural liberation movement" (Laidlaw AF, 1981). However, it has also been noted that

a striking feature of cooperation is that both among observers who are outside cooperation, and internally within cooperation, there are a great number of alternative and often contradictory interpretations of cooperative phenomena (Jonnergård K, et al. 1984, p 30).

Both this ideological tinge and the lack of agreement about what cooperation really is or aims at, naturally, have farreaching implications for promoting or transferring cooperative organizations to the Third World. A short review of the history and evolution of cooperation in the First and Second Worlds will therefore serve as a necessary foundation for a discussion of the principles of cooperation, its meaning and 'ethos', not to mention the suitability of cooperatives as development tools for the Third World.

A Brief History of Cooperation

Cooperation in the Western World

Some authors find great pleasure in trying to locate the roots of formal cooperation as far back in history as possible. Thus it is argued that "cooperative genealogy ...can be traced back to thirteenth century Swiss cheese-makers" (Young C, et al. 1981, p 3). Others search for the cooperative origin in a far more distant past and, for example, Adnan Abeidat
claims that "as long as ca. 3000 BC. cooperative guilds were formed by craftsmen in ancient Egypt" (Abeidat A, 1975, p 3).

As a significant institution cooperation dates from the mid-19th century and was born in the multiple disruption of society during early industrialization. It was a movement of emancipation and of spontaneous origin. Together with other popular movements of the time, like emerging labour movements, liberalism and socialism, cooperation was a symptom of the turbulent process of societal transformation. It was largely a reaction against the expanding urban-capitalist society which not only brought hardship and poverty to the masses but also, in Tonnies' words, transformed human relations from Gemeinschaft to those of Gesellschaft. In short, cooperative associations originated in a situation that in many ways resembles that of today's Third World. However, while the spread of early European cooperative ideas and examples was facilitated by economic liberalization, only a few contemporary 'developing' nations are characterized by a liberal political and economic climate.

In part, the cooperative idea was founded on an ideological heritage from 'utopian colonies' and ecological communities established in the USA in the early 1800s, from philanthropists like Robert Owen and 'utopian socialists' like Saint Simon and Charles Fourier. During its initial stages, then, cooperation contained an outspoken critical view of society. Several shortlived experiments in cooperative and/or collective organization and community-building were made in order to realize "another development". Capitalism's continued expansion made it necessary to further profilate and articulate the ideas of cooperation but now, however, this was done from within the system and emphasis shifted from political visions to business activity.

As the 'true beginning' of what is commonly known as the cooperative movement is usually understood the establishment of the credit and consumption society in Rochdale, England, in 1844. The Rochdale society was a self-help association without revolutionary aspirations (Hasselmann E, 1971). It was no longer a vision of a new society that forced the members to found a cooperative, as during the days of Robert Owen, and there was no cooperative declaration. But the cooperative was still based on the principles of self-reliance and democracy and four basic principles from Owen were accepted by the Rochdale founders, namely:

- Sales only of pure and clean goods.
- Collection of a surplus.
- Refunds in proportion to the use made of cooperative services.
- Acceptance of a limited interest on invested capital (ibid.).

Strict rules of equity among members were maintained and the economic enterprise was founded upon the principles of democracy, mutual help and responsibility. Although the Rochdale society faced some difficulties
due to negative treatment from private merchants and public authorities, it managed to provide members with higher quality goods at competitive prices. The Rochdale society has later become the model for the consumer cooperatives in the first place, but its governing principles have also guided the cooperative ideal as such.

As modern phenomena, cooperatives, thus, originated in England, at mid-19th century\(^5\), primarily in urban consumer retail enterprises. As rural institutions cooperatives first spread, in the late 19th century, in northern Europe (Scandinavia and Germany) and the German philanthropist Raiffeisen is maybe the most renumerable name from that time. For the farmers, cooperatives provided an alternative to exploiting intermediaries tied to the hostile urban world. Raiffeisen-societies were based on the principles of neighbourhood and members’ unlimited economic responsibility. The difference is therefore great between the Raiffeisen rural neighbourhood society and the Rochdale consumer society, aiming at expansion of activities and enlargement of membership, and with limited members’ liability. The Raiffeisen model has later been looked upon as the ideal form for spreading cooperation to the largely agricultural economies in the Third World (Laidlaw AF, 1981). Rochdale, however, has had the greatest influence on cooperative principles and ethos.

In the Western world the emergence of cooperatives as means for self-help was caused by a societal crisis and, in their various forms, constituted reactions against expanding capitalism but within the system. It is said that formal cooperation was a sign of emerging class-consciousness among peasants and workers as

this new spontaneous form of cooperation was made possible by the absence of strong social ties based on kinship. The nuclear family system had already been sufficiently established to make the peasants realize that their strongest allies were not their relatives but the other peasants who shared the same economic fate (Hydén G, 1970, p 64).

However, social democrats and socialists frequently criticized cooperation for "weakening the workers' class consciousness" and representing an "antiquated charlatan culture" (Andersson NR, et al. 1978, p 25). Neither was it uncommon for liberals to hold leading positions in cooperative organizations. This antipathy from the socialist side was caused by some cooperators' frequent agitation against excessive nationalizations and propagation of cooperation as an alternative to state-ownership of the

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\(^5\)In the 1820s, 20 years before Rochdale, state prisoners, sentenced to hard labour and exile in Siberia, founded a society with statutes similar in many respects to those of the Rochdale Pioneers. This society was, in the 1830s, given a more formal structure and was turned into a collective enterprise, actually based on Robert Owen’s writings (ICA, 1980).
means of production (ibid.). What was at stake, however, was not only workers' solidarity but, primarily, local influence. It was understood that both large-scale private enterprise and state-ownership would result in remote control.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries were also the time when basic education spread, thus facilitating the spread of ideas, accounting skills and other prerequisites for formal organization. Despite the fact that the activities of early cooperative associations often were complicated by narrow legal restrictions, adversely affecting member recruitment (see Hasselmann E, 1971, about England, and Bjarsdal J, 1980, about Sweden), this period was also one of general democratization of society and the abolition of former economic and trade privileges. Not only was this a time of rising class consciousness and workers' agitation for extended civil rights, but also a time when the upper strata in society searched for new ways to organize their economic activities, a factor that left niches open for cooperative (and other) experiments by less fortunate peasants and workers. Partly, it was believed that cooperation, representing a democratic alternative, would preserve the near or intimate relations between people said to characterize small-scale, pre-capitalist communities. Tonnies (1912) thus, explained the attraction of cooperation in the following manner:

The legal form of cooperatives is based on the principle of limited liability and thus follows the pattern of the stock company, ...it is evident that, under a form adapted to conditions of Gesellschaft, there has been revived a principle of Gemeinschaft economy which is capable of further significant development (Tönnies F, edn 1963, p 196).

As capitalism matured, cooperative enterprises were forced to adjust to its compelling demands and no longer came to represent alternative principles of economic association. The (presumed) Gemeinschaft character of cooperation gradually gave way to Gesellschaft relations, and "the movement... accepted the existing private-capitalistic market economy and conceived itself [merely] as a corrective within that framework" (Blomquist K, 1981, p 51). Economic, managerial and spatial concentration has characterized cooperative associations in the West. This has, for example, been the case with Swedish farmers' cooperatives with far-reaching consequences both for "the number of elected representatives and in the distance between the member and the society management" (Johansson T, 1980, p 133). Critics of modern cooperation have noted that "technocrats and bureaucrats have had too much influence, [and that] production and distribution have been determined by what is technically possible, not by peoples' needs" (Andersson NR, et al. 1978, p 123). Such experiences of cooperative 'degeneration' throughout the industrialized Western world are summed up by Young et al.:
A life cycle is clearly discernible in the well-established cooperative of the industrial world. In the beginning, a burst of moral energy was captured by the new institutions. Cooperation was a solidary riposte to the predatory forms of the capitalist economy. Participation in the early phase was high: the mundane execution of economic tasks is invested with purpose. However, once successfully launched, the very effectiveness of the cooperatives in filling an economic niche creates a new set of imperatives. To survive, the cooperative must become efficient. While cooperation is an ethos, efficiency is the incubator of technocracy. The implications of this simple fact are many. As cooperatives achieved a certain scale, they could no longer be directly managed by their members, but had to hire specialized managerial staff. Armed with the efficiency criterion, the managerial cadres tended to enlarge their role, while the representative organs of the cooperative tended to atrophy; the 'iron law of oligarchy', detected by Robert Michels in labour unions and socialist parties had its analogues in the cooperatives. As cooperatives became institutionalized, they became primarily economic agencies operated by specialized managers under the discipline of the market, with effective member participation only a residual phenomenon, and the matrix of cooperative principles a mere theoretical penumbra (Young C, et al. 1981, p 8f).

As mentioned, Western cooperatives emerged in response to a crisis, as one among several forms of adjustment to societal transformation. Looking at the ups and downs of the popularity of the cooperative ideal "the connection between cooperation and crises is well established" (Johansson T, 1981, pp 24/47). Thus has been found a covariation between periods of economic recession and the setting up of new cooperatives. While the established large-scale cooperative organizations have come to function as any other big company, the cooperative 'ethos', the vision of an alternative development, and the idea of cooperatives as self-help instruments, have survived outside these gigantic enterprises. For example, in both Denmark and Norway, "smallholders have formed their own organizations, parallel to the general ones. In Sweden, there have been attempts to do the same, but they have never resulted in anything of importance" (Bjarsdal J, 1980, p 76).

The industrialized Western world is presently facing a new crisis, manifested i.a. in severe human alienation (Braverman H, 1980), cultural uprootedness, absence of stable value systems (Lasch C, 1981), and severe environmental pollution, threatening future human survival. Eventually, the inherent contradictions of the capitalist mode of production are overwhelming the system. Unorthodox solutions to these problems must be found and

In a world of tired private-capitalism and petrified state-socialism, people search for other modes of organizing the economy. Cooperation attracts growing interest and is sometimes talked about as the third way. More and more people also ask themselves whether the existing cooperative organizations to any significant degree can contribute to the solution of these countries' problems (Blomqvist K, 1981, p 51).
Again can be found an insipient alternative 'movement', most readily observed in the environmentalists' appearance as political pressure groups and as official actors on the political arena in a number of European countries. Emphasis is here on small-scale production, local self-determination, conviviality, Gemeinschaft and acceptance of ecological limits to civilization. In this not yet matured political program, defined as neither left nor right, communal and cooperative associations are given prominent roles in shaping the new society (Gorz A, 1982; Illich I, 1982; Schurnacher EF, 1981).

Again can be observed the founding of new cooperative societies from below in the fields of production, housing and services (see, for example, Defourny J, 1983, on workers' cooperatives in Belgium; and Klugman D, 1983, on alternative cooperatives in the USA). Sometimes, such new cooperative societies have accepted limits to their own growth. In order to guarantee continued member influence, the by-laws of some such societies stipulate that they shall split into two cooperatives when their number of members reaches a predetermined ceiling.

Whether a "new world" will be the outcome of this reaction or not—and whether, in that case, that will be a cooperative society—remains yet to be seen. Demands are presently raised about legal restrictions on production and technology as well as on consumption and waste disposal, in order to reestablish ecological balance. However, there is also a growing fear that enforced recirculation of materials and ecological restrictions on production, "to become a practical possibility, will bring forth firm societal control", and lead to a "totalitarian and corporative" society (Hoffmeyer J, 1984).

Cooperation in Socialist States

Beginning in Russia in the early 20th century, cooperatives, quite differently conceived, became instruments for imposing a socialist, collectivized and centralized mode of agricultural production upon the peasantry. While socialists initially rejected the idea of cooperation as bourgeois, they later found it perfectly compatible with the socialist doctrine. For example, Lenin (1923) denounced cooperation as "huckster-like" and declared that it was "a collective capitalist institution". After the October revolution, however, Lenin assigned to cooperatives a totally unique importance, stating that "socialism will reach its goal by itself if the population to the greatest possible extent is cooperatively organized" (Lenin VI, edn 1975).

Whether Sovjet and East European cooperatives should actually be called cooperatives is, due to extreme state-control, a matter of debate. In any case, they have been accepted as members of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). The Sovjet strategy of agricultural development has been to treat agricultural production units (cooperatives and
state-farms) as "large rural industries" (Hettne B, 1973), led by centrally appointed managers with the purpose to extract a surplus from agriculture in order to finance industrial investments. The kolkhozes produce according to central plans over which peasants have minimal influence. The excessive size, the paternalistic management style and bureaucratic control of Sovjet agricultural cooperatives, have resulted in low productivity, in black markets and wasteful utilization of resources (Hedlund S, 1983).

Thus, also in non-capitalist industrialized nations cooperation soon diverted from its original 'ethos'. In both cases, but for different reasons, cooperatives fitted (or were forced to fit) into larger socio-economic systems, the development of which they were not able or permitted to direct.

Currently, also the East European nations have reached a state of crisis. The centralized and bureaucratized version of socialism in the Sovjet Union and its dependent nations faces, and (in some cases) openly admits, a range of severe shortcomings. Efforts are being made to come to terms with nepotism, corruption and black markets. Both the productive and distributive systems are deemed inadequate. Industrial modernization lags behind that of the Western economies and environmental pollution has reached even more acute levels (Anderberg S, 1988). Sovjet self-sufficiency on foodstuffs remains unacceptably low despite repeated efforts of modernization and reclamation of new land. As part of the contemporary attempts to correct and liberate the system, perestrojka, the future role of cooperatives is a matter of intense debate. Possibly, promotion of independent, member-oriented, small-scale cooperatives will be relied upon as part of the solution to the present situation.

Early Cooperative Experiences in the Third World

Early cooperation faced yet another experience, quite different from that of its 'modern' setting. In many colonies cooperatives were introduced by the colonial powers with the purpose either to aid European settlers or to drag the natives into the, externally controlled, monetized economy where they could easier be taxed and made produce for the export markets. Whatever the local expressions of colonialism were, the purpose of colonialism was nowhere to spread capitalism, market relations or "free enterprise" to the native populations. Instead was introduced a system of politically controlled production and economy. As far as the natives were concerned, not much attention was paid to the voluntary and democratic aspects of cooperation. On the contrary, cooperation in the colonies was strongly flavoured by the pervasive paternalism of foreign rule. Moreover, power over local cooperatives was often captured by, or given to, loyalistic elites, enabling them to convert cooperative assets into supplementary resources and to establish themselves as private
moneylenders. "By allowing such abuse the colonial powers, however, succeeded in securing necessary allies in the colonies' rural areas" (Gyllstrom B, 1984, p 2). Differences were great, however, between the ways cooperatives were introduced and managed in those areas controlled by different external powers.

In Portuguese Africa 'native' cooperatives never became prominent instruments for control or for extraction of agricultural surplus. Portugal, with its limited administrative capacity, gave priority to procuring land and labour for the mining and plantation companies (in Guinea Bissau, Angola and Mozambique), and made few attempts to improve or commercialize peasant agriculture (Gyllstrom B, 1988).

In order to increase agricultural production in French West and Equatorial Africa, so called 'Native Provident Societies', Sociétés Indigènes de Prévoyance, were established at village level, together with tax and labour obligations. As peasants failed to join these societies, membership was made compulsory for every head of household. The social and economic roles of such 'cooperatives', however, remained limited and their main impact was probably the perpetuation of social inequalities (ibid.). Not surprisingly, the French approach to cooperation in West and Sub-Saharan Africa resulted in the development among the native population of a "general mistrust of government aid, specifically the application of cooperative methods" (Young C, et al. 1981, p 9).

As a contrast, it has been held that, in Anglophone Africa, introduction of cooperatives during colonial rule went "relatively good" (van Dooren P, 1982). This is a remarkable statement since "in Kenya and Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Zambia and Zimbabwe), the expansion of cooperatives was affected by substantial white settler communities and the protection of their particular interests". (Gyllstrom B, 1988, p 4). Africans were barred from membership until after the second world war, but even then only small groups of 'progressive farmers' had access to credit and the cooperatives remained tools for settlers and colonial administrators (Ncube P & Aulakh H, 1986; Ndlela DB, 1981).

Similar experiences were made in French North Africa (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco) where cooperatives were introduced by the French colonists in the early 1900s. Until the early 1960s, these cooperatives were more or less restricted to settlers' agriculture. For the natives were created strictly controlled Sociétés de Prévoyance with predetermined crop programmes and marketing monopolies (Flores XA, 1969; von Muralt J, 1969).

Some exceptions to this pattern were found in different parts of Africa. Relatively self-reliant 'modern' cooperatives were found in Nigeria and Mauritius (Hanel A, 1986). In Egypt indigenous cooperatives were established as part of the anticolonial struggle in the early 1900s. They survived governmental opposition but did not become important for modernizing agriculture until after 1950 (Holmén H, 1989). In Ghana, where Africans were used to commodity trade, indigenous cooperatives
engaging in cocoa transport and marketing developed during the 1920s. They suffered continued efforts from the colonial government to convert these grass-roots' organizations into controlled formal institutions. In spite of preferential pricing for British traders (especially after the 'cocoa holdup' in 1937–38) it has been stated that peasants managed to wrest control of cooperatives from the colonial administration, and then to use this administration to serve their own ends (Young C et al. 1981). This, however, seems to be an exaggeration. But it is true that a limited freedom was maintained until the second world war (Beckman B, 1976; Gunnars-son C, 1978).

In the aftermath of decolonization, many newly independent nations of the Third World saw in cooperation a multi-purpose vehicle for achieving a broad array of national objectives. For quite a number of these young nations, the attraction of cooperation lay partly in the belief that, by emphasizing solidarity, cooperatives would provide a link between tradition and modernity, preserve Gemeinshaft, and minimize social costs of development. Partly, the attraction lay also in the compatibility of cooperation with a broad anti-capitalist perspective. Cooperation also fitted well into the conventional development thinking in the industrialized world at that time which, implicitly or explicitly, assigned the state a leading role as initiator of development and economic growth. As the State's financial resources generally were rather meagre, capital mobilization through cooperatives would help to solve this problem at the same time as cooperatives were expected to ease the administrative burden of the State (Young C et al. 1981).

Many newly independent nations define(d) themselves as "African Socialist" or "Arab Socialist" states. In such countries (for example Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zimbabwe) cooperatives have been given prominent roles as instruments both for direction of production and ideological mobilization of the population. During the 'cold' 1950s, therefore, Western powers often looked with suspicion at ambitions to use cooperatives as rural change agents as these were associated with socialism. During the 1960s, however, Western powers began to see cooperatives as "perfectly compatible with the maintenance of private property" and they became quite acceptable to international development agencies, now treating cooperatives as "neither socialistic nor redistributive" and more important "in the sphere of marketing than in the sphere of production" (Worsley P, 1984, p 147; see also Holdcroft, 1982, about changing emphasis away from 'community development' towards cooperation and the 'green revolution').

What was implied by this newborn interest in cooperatives as instruments for development? Which type of organization was it that was to be introduced to the developing nations? Which is the ideology behind cooperation? To answer these questions we need to take a closer look at the principles (said to be) governing cooperative activity and 'ethos'.
'Schools' and Principles of Cooperation

The umbrella term 'cooperation' covers a wide range of particular forms, experiences and objectives. Cooperatives in different parts of the world have diverted from the declared cooperative principles in various directions. Instead of talking about the cooperative theory, it therefore seems more accurate to talk about theories of cooperation. Laidlaw (1978) identifies four main schools of cooperative thought:

The cooperative commonwealth school, maintains that the cooperative movement should aim to embrace all fields and permeate all activities of life until it becomes an all-inclusive system.

The school of modified capitalism claims that cooperation is essentially capitalist, but with a different set of rules which serve to restrain the capitalist system and to curb its excesses.

The socialist school believes that cooperatives are essentially socialist institutions. They are public rather than private institutions, or junior partners of the State in centrally planned, socialist economies.

The cooperative sector school, finally, views cooperatives as constituting a distinct economic sector in their own right, essentially different from both capitalism and public enterprise, but with some features of one and certain features of the other (Laidlaw AF, 1978, p 60f).

In spite of such highly diverging ideological and theoretical perspectives, these different 'schools' refer to the same set of 'basic cooperative principles'. There has, however, been an endless debate over these principles. While the cooperative 'movement' dates back to the first half of the 19th century, it took almost one hundred years, from the founding of the Rochdale society in 1844 to the ICA congress in Paris in 1937, until the first official ratification of these principles. They were then:

- Open membership.
- Democratic administration (one member--one vote).
- Distribution of surplus in relation to the extent members make use of the society's business activities.
- Limited interest on share capital.
- Political and religious neutrality.
- Payments in cash.
- Promotion of education.

However, these principles were by no means undisputed and the debate about their formulation remained intense. Above all, it concerned the role of the state and the question of neutrality in political and religious matters (Hasselmann E, 1971). In 1966, the ICA accepted a renewed version of what has since commonly been referred to as the "international cooperative principles":


- Voluntary membership without artificial restriction or discrimination.
- Democratic administration (one member—one vote) and control.
- Limited interest, if any, on share capital.
- Surplus, if any, should be distributed in an equitable manner in proportion to the members' transactions.
- Promotion of education.
- Cooperation with other cooperatives at local, national and international levels (ibid.).

As the most fundamental difference between cooperation and other 'modern' forms for economic organization remains the relation man-capital. In cooperative organizations man is superior to capital (one member—one vote), while in joint stock companies capital is superior to man (influence being proportionate to the number of shares owned).

Equally important is that, in this new catalogue of basic cooperative principles, the principle of neutrality has been left out and the relation between cooperatives and the state has not been resolved. At the same time, a new principle of international and 'movement to movement' cooperation has been added to the list. ICA has become an international apex organization for, at least, two basically different cooperative systems, the Western liberal and the Eastern socialist, and for a number of schools of cooperative ideology. This has, on the one hand, increased ICA’s numerical strength and opened up new possibilities for trips abroad and international careers for top cooperative representatives. On the other hand, it has become increasingly obscure what is really meant by the term cooperation. This, naturally, has implications for the transfer to, or promotion of, cooperation in the Third World.

In order to reduce the weight of ideology and to avoid the cultural bias inherent in export of organizational principles, the ILO has formulated an alternative, more relaxed, definition of cooperation which does not attempt to define cooperative societies by a list of predetermined principles and practices. ILO’s recommendation No. 127/1966 thus states that a cooperative society is:

an association of persons who have voluntarily joined together to achieve a common end through the formation of a democratically controlled organization, making equitable contributions to the capital required and accepting a fair share of the risks and benefits of the undertaking in which the members actively participate (ILO, 1966).

Transferability of Cooperative Ideology.

This attempt to emphasize business activities and to reduce the ideological element in cooperatives has, however, not yet solved the problem. As late as in the mid-1980s it was thus stressed that, in developing the Third World,
cooperation...has normative connotations. It is a movement of social reform and implies a restructuring of society along lines consistent with cooperative ideology (Verhagen K, 1984, p 18).

Nevertheless, cooperatives are sometimes promoted with the sole purpose to spread technical innovations without being tinged by ideological objectives from the promoters' side. It has often been witnessed that technology transfer is a highly problematic matter. However, even when technicality is thought to supersede ideology, "undifferentiated transfers of institutions and organizations is no less problematic than transfers of production techniques" (Kotter H, 1984) and ideology reenters the question of technical modernization.

From a 'technical' point of view, Puri underlines that in Third World rural districts many of the conventional Western tenets cease to be functional. For example, the time-honoured cooperative principle of patronage refund is not so meaningful in agricultural credit societies where the patronage of members is primarily by way of borrowing from the society. Likewise, the so called principle of cash sales, derived from European consumer cooperatives, is not applicable to agricultural supply cooperatives in an African or Asian context where credit is the greatest need (Puri SS, 1979, pp 26-29). But matters like these soon lead to more far-reaching ideological considerations. For example, the question of credit "is often considered a technical question, maybe because of the technicality of the details. But it...is one of the basic decisions about the kind of rural society that is going to be created (Widstrand CG, 1970, p 15f). Not only Western promoters of cooperation in the Third World stress the importance of ideology. Puri sais that because the cooperative movements in the Third World are generally new, they have not yet degenerated and the focus of the debate has not yet shifted to 'operational' problems as in the Western world. Consequently, he sais, "the leaders of cooperative movements in non-European countries are often inclined to look upon ideology as constituting the core of cooperation" (Puri SS, 1979, p 23; my emphasis). Puri, no doubt is correct in this observation but the reasons are likely to be others than those he brings forth. The question is which, or whose, ideology it is that shall be allowed to govern these cooperative movements, that of 'specialists' and national political leaders or that of the peasants?  

6 In most European languages 'peasant' has a negative ring and is often used as an insult. Nevertheless, the concept peasant is frequent in development literature. Here it is used, as suggested by Andersson (1985), "to define a general empirical category of agricultural producers". Development literature commonly differentiates between "primitive cultivators", "peasants" and "farmers" but, as noted by Andersson, the problem with "peasant" is that, even in common English, it has pseudo-scientific signification, not only separating "peasants" from (capitalist) "farmers" on the one hand, and from (primitive)
Cooperatives are self-help institutions. They are also promoted in non-Western settings as change agents. To the extent that emphasis is laid on change, it is widely held that 'traditional' peasants, for a number of reasons, lack 'achievement orientation' and are incapable of bringing forth the necessary, progressive adjustments of life and production. A world-wide and age-old (urban) view of peasants and peasant societies depicts them as fatalistic, risk-avoiding, conservative or hostile to change (Barke M & O'Hare G, 1984; Mabogunje A, 1980). Some writers maintain that "especially during the mid-1950s and early 1960s", development experts and international advisers blamed agricultural development problems on "bad extension... lack of skilled personal, and... the poor economic attitudes of peasants" (Long N, 1980, p 146). The obvious cure for such problems was: more control, more education and more experts. However, this view of the inadequacy of peasants did not quite disappear in the late 1960s as suggested above. Big, influential development institutions like the UN and the World Bank still see cooperatives as instruments for "mass-transfer" of external innovations (UN 1970, 1974) and "delivery systems" for large scale projects (Kirsch O et al. 1980).

Not only is the traditional peasant culture often presented as stagnant but, particularly, as anti-cooperative. 20 years ago it was thus noted that it is "the traditional structure of African society, which constitutes the endogenous obstacle to cooperative penetration" (FloresXA, 1969, p 229). Views like these were fairly common in the 1970s. Although they have since met considerable opposition, they are still influential. Hydkn for example, not only explains cooperative shortcomings but sub-Saharan development problems in general by reference to an "uncaptured peasantry" tied to a traditional and parochial "economy of affection", impeding any progressive adjustment (Hydén G, 1983). In fact, Hydén is apt to explain virtually all Africa's development problems as being caused by "the anomaly of the African peasantry" (Hydkn G, 1986). (For a critique of Hydén and such sweeping generalizations about cooperatives and development in Africa, see, for example, Hedlund H, 1986, pp 10-20).

In other African regions where peasants long have been 'captured', i.e. their surplus has been appropriated by higher classes, and where it has not been possible to escape into the bush, notably in Egypt, exploitation...
and oppression has forced peasants—but for completely different reasons—to seek (limited) refuge in an 'economy of affection' (Wittfogel KA, 1957). Also in such stratified social environments peasants are said to display "lack of self-help initiatives" (El Menoufi K, 1982) and it has been questioned whether in societies with a hydraulic' heritage "cooperative development can be brought about at all" (Kirsch 0,1977, p 263).

Peasants' anti-cooperative and anti-developmental attitudes, it is maintained, are further enhanced by religion (von Muralt J, 1969; de Planhol X, 1979; Treydte KP, 1971) and by 'culture' in general (Gillis M et al. 1983) or specifically (Patai R, 1973). For a number of reasons, therefore, cooperatives have not been expected to emerge from within peasant communities. Despite the fact that Western writers on cooperation often like to underline that early European cooperation was "a direct continuation of the popular forms for mutual economic aid that were found in the pre-industrial society" (Johansson T, 1981, p 17), the various institutions for mutual aid that have been found in Africa are often not reckoned to have the same potentials. On the contrary, it is frequently underlined that

traditional and informal kinds of cooperation are not at all the same as formal cooperation... and the latter does not necessarily evolve from the former (Laidlaw AF, 1978, p 71).

[and] entirely new concepts of financial management and technical and administrative effectiveness have to be imparted to villagers if the group approach is to be successful (Lele U, 1978, p 43).

However, it would not be correct to claim that there is a general consensus that peasants are always and everywhere tradition-bound and hostile to change. Many scholars do conceive peasants as rational beings (we will return to some of them below). It is easy to understand why urban-based technocrats and representatives of the central authority so often maintain this paternalistic attitude. But the point I want to make is that surprisingly many development theorists (for example, Hydén, Mabogunje), regional 'experts' (Mayfield) and even such influential aid- and development-organizations as the UN still maintain this view.

No doubt, peasants and rural communities all over Africa lack much that would facilitate development (skills, financial resources, contacts, knowledge), but maybe what they lack most is incentives. Rather than displaying a general hostility towards development, there are natural reasons why peasants often have been found suspicious of outsiders and officials (Weitz R, 1971; Wolf EA, 1971). As pointed out by Worsley, "peasants are always dominated by outsiders; economically, politically, and culturally, they are underdogs" (Worsley P, 1984, p 72). Consequently, they are keen to know the price of development and to maintain as much
self-reliance as they can in the process of modernization. This has spread the stereotype of peasants as being
cunning, secretive, hidebound by tradition, lacking in enterprise or effort, and probably concealing the wealth they had in their socks and mattresses, and hiding their real hostility behind a mask of deference. Overall, they are untrustworthy, incomprehensible, even irrational (ibid, p 120f).

Although there is presently a considerable number of researchers expressing more favourable opinions about peasant abilities, such reasoning served to legitimate external interference and outside control of aid projects. It also served to justify the creation of large, centralized planning and development authorities. Later on "in many instances [it] served those responsible as a kind of justification for the failure to achieve the ends sought" (Weitz R, 1971, p 70).

The matter of cooperative ideology seems largely to be a question of levels. It may very well be that cooperative ideology is a subject of high priority among international experts, cooperative leaders, national planners and politicians who vision a type of society that, presumably, is to be created by building cooperative organizations. Such considerations, however, seem largely to be limited to this elite and, generally, ideological discussions among ordinary members are avoided, hindered or even prohibited. Members, on the other hand, are more interested in material goods and technical innovations (Migot-Adholla SE, 1970), and less concerned with ideology.

**Expectations on Cooperatives as Agents of Change**

Despite the somewhat diffuse conceptualization of cooperation, but strengthened both by the vision of peasant fatalism and by the planning euforia that prevailed during the 1950s and 1960s, expectations about the roles and potentials of cooperatives as development instruments have been both varied and far-reaching, to say the least. From comparatively 'humble' notions of the "fundamental importance of cooperation as a means to solve the problems of agriculture and food-supply" in the Third World (Bonow M, 1969, p 207), expectations range all the way to realization of the cooperative doctrine (Verhagen K, 1984), and the recreation of a social community that tends to disappear in the process of development (Hirschfeld A, 1978). Others state that "a good number of experts" always have considered cooperation "the most valid of the solutions for the Third World and its problems" (Konopnicki M, 1978, p 7).

Thus, it is held that cooperatives can, "theoretically and in the long run, resolve most if not all problems of development" (ICA, 1978).

In more 'down to earth' terms, promotion of cooperative organizations in developing countries is expected to:
- Increase agricultural production through the pooling of resources and introduction of modern farming techniques.
- Extend the supply of credit and agricultural inputs, as well as the marketing of produce, thereby linking producers to markets, reducing overhead costs and eliminating exploiting middlemen.
- Cater for the poor and minimize social stratification.
- Establish "cooperative awareness" among members.

Here, it is a question of parallel objectives which interlock and overlap. It is not seen as possible to realize one if the others are neglected. Naturally, priorities differ both in time and space but cooperation, it is generally argued, is—or should be—a broad attack on several front-lines at the same time.

The prevailing systems of credit distribution (availability) in large parts of the Third World are generally seen as one of the most severe obstacles to development. High interest rates on loans together with insecure and confiscatory tenancy regulations deprive small farmers of all incentives to modernize. Provision of cheap and secure credit to smallholders is therefore usually seen as maybe the most important aspect of cooperative activity. Better-off farmers, it is argued, are in no need for such credit and, therefore, cooperatives do not attract them. This would minimize the risk that rich farmers should dominate local cooperative societies. Consequently, it is maintained, cooperatives will mainly benefit the middle and lower strata of the rural community, thereby enhancing their competitive power. Thus, it is held, "cooperation is typically a movement of small farmers" (Young C et al. 1981; see also Worsley P, 1967, 1984). In case local cooperatives become dominated by the better off, "a greater degree of involvement by donors [is recommended] to ensure that the benefits of aid actually reach the poor". Also is suggested the setting up of special cooperatives for "the rural poor themselves" (COPAC, 1978, pp 7–12). We will return to the matter of cooperative credit below.

As another guarantee against old influential groups or patrons misusing the cooperative for their own benefit is usually seen the principle of democratic rule. The mass of small peasants is thought to outnumber the few wealthy farmers. However, democratic rule presupposes active participation in cooperative meetings and decision making, not only in economic affairs. Participation, in turn, presupposes knowledge and understanding of cooperation, small business administration, etc. and some sense of common interest based on horizontal solidarity. Consequently, member education and creation of "cooperative awareness"

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7While this is more relevant in an Asian or Latin American context than in Africa south of the Sahara, it is valid also in North Africa and the Middle East.
constitutes another objective usually seen as the most important task for cooperative organizations.

Provision of credit and agricultural inputs, as well as introduction of modern farming techniques and educational programmes are generally seen as parts of comprehensive, national development schemes. Particularly when constituting parts of a larger package including general, infrastructural development. A representative argument is that

...three conditions emerge that must be fulfilled for the community cooperative organization to succeed in its role as a representative of the farmer's interests. First, it must be recognized and supported in this role by all the institutions and agencies, government, public and private, that supply agricultural services to the farmer. Second, it must be all inclusive—that is, it must cover all those service activities that are essential for the farmer managing a conventional farm... Third, it must be recognized by all members of the community as the determining organizational body in all spheres of activity (Weitz R, 1971, p 101; my emphasis).

We can trace a mixture of two somewhat contradictory strands of ideology in policies aiming at realizing development by means of cooperative organization building. One emphasizes development from below, learning by doing, local self-reliance, mutual aid, the pooling of resources in voluntary organizations, and a 'healthy independence from government'. The other emphasizes planned development. In the latter case, peripheral areas are integrated into the nation through long-term social and economic development schemes. Government assistance is here seen as a necessary precondition for the success of rural cooperatives and education can only be provided by those already 'modern' and 'enlightened'.

Combined, the various expectations on cooperatives add up to a rather shattered view of their role in development. Not all objectives are consistent. Consequently, cooperative implementation has been problematic and is partly to blame for the limited results of rural development efforts in poor nations. The performance and suitability of cooperatives, as well as the entire idea of using cooperatives as development instruments, have, particularly during the last decade, been severely criticized, and sometimes rejected all-together.

**Criticism of Cooperatives and some Comments on the Critique**

Experiences from cooperatives in the Third World differ and the records of cooperation are mixed and uneven. This is so not only from one country to another, but also from one region to another within the same country. However, many Third World cooperative organizations also share a good number of common experiences and development patterns. Based on these, some general, and quite negative, conclusions have been drawn from the many post-colonial experiments with cooperation. Laidlaw notes that "most observers would say that the performance of cooperatives has
been disappointing [or even] ...a failure" (Laidlaw AF, 1978, p 51). Likewise, Newiger declares that "cooperative performance in many developing countries leaves much to be desired" (Newiger N, 1983, p 37). Others have noted "a disconcertingly wide gap between expectations and achievements" (Puri SS, 1979, p 3), or even argue that rural cooperatives "aggravate dependence at the local level, rather than [encouraging] self-reliance" (Verhagen K, 1984, p 181). Such conclusions won quite a few supporters in the late 1970s and the critique may be summarized in the words of a very influential UNRISD-report:

rural cooperatives have seldom achieved the development goals set for them by economic and social planners. This has been most clearly evident when the goals have included structural changes (UNRISD, 1975, p 10).

The critique of cooperatives has, thus, been massive. Such generalizing statements do, however, not reveal much about the factors behind the real or alleged shortcomings of cooperatives as instruments for development. A closer look at the complaints most frequently mentioned is therefore needed. As with expectations, shortcomings are interrelated but for analytic clarity they will be discussed here under the following headings:

- Cooperatives bring no structural change.
- Cooperatives do not benefit the poor.
- Cooperatives suffer from bad management.
- Cooperatives are exhausted by government interference.

**Cooperatives Bring no Structural Change**

Rural cooperatives in developing countries have not only been expected to fulfil the objectives of spreading organizational, attitudinal and economic innovations. They have often been assigned social objectives as well. The UNRISD-studies, which based their investigations on the stated goals of 40 cooperative organizations in 10 developing countries (UNRISD, 1975; see also Apthorpe R & Gasper D, 1982), found that

Among the ideals associated with the cooperative movement has been the aim that class distinctions among members should be eliminated or at least greatly reduced and that the cooperative should promote egalitarianism with regard to the means of production and with regard to income and benefits (UNRISD, 1975, p 6).

Equality, or the promotion of egalitarianism, are, as we have seen, not mentioned among the cooperative principles. Rather, equity, is a basic cooperative principle. However, both a good number of Western cooperative 'idealists' and many vaguely socialist regimes in the Third World have frequently assumed that cooperation would constitute a
means to reduce social stratification—or to impede its emergence in a Gemeinschaft society that was reckoned to be egalitarian.

Contrary to expectations, it has frequently been found that cooperative societies are led or controlled by members of local elites able to exploit the widening access to markets and sources of technical innovations for their own benefit. This way, it is said, better-off farmers and local notables become influential patrons to whom many are tied in informal clientage (Young C et al. 1981, p 23). Similarly, it is argued that the domination of cooperatives by large farmers "enabled them to build up networks of patronage" (Worsley P, 1984, p 148). Unavoidably,

formation of credit-groups involving tribal chiefs has often resulted in the credit going largely to the various members of the chief's clans, and relatively little to small farmers (Lele U, 1978, p 43).

But it can hardly be correct to claim that patronage networks were created by the establishment of rural cooperatives. On the contrary, patron-client relations generally characterized social structures in 'traditional' Third World rural settlements long before cooperatives were introduced. Consequently, rather than causing the emergence of patronage networks, a better conclusion is that cooperatives often have been incorporated into already existing social structures (see Kirsch O et al. 1980; Gyllstrom B, 1988).

An important aspect of development has been the state's role as provider, i.a. through the use of cooperatives, of the material means for development (credit, inputs, marketing). In the rural community, development establishes new contacts with, and links to, the outside world. Access to these linkages will unavoidably be unequal. Local chiefs, shaykhs and other notables appropriate—or are given—the roles as brokers/intermediaries between local communities and the outside world in general, and with the government in particular. In these roles they come to function as gate-keepers and factional struggles in cooperative boards and committees are not uncommon. No wonder, it is "extremely difficult for central governments to make use of these rural cooperatives for planned social change" (Hydén G & Karanja E. 1970, p 218), especially when considering the frequently noted image of governments in the Third World as "a body providing services and not as one mobilizing [people] to change" (Mabogunje A, 1980, p 268). To blame this on peasant mentality or on 'inequate' village social structures is, however, to miss the point. There should be no wonder if government supervised cooperatives have not been able to change such structures. After all, more often than not, the state, positioned at the top of a nationwide 'delivery system', has presented itself just as a provider of material goods (see below).

Furthermore, it is likely that the need to uphold clientalist networks is enhanced during 'modernization' when formerly isolated, peripheral
communities are increasingly being linked to a wider economy. That is, at least for an initial period, and at least for the most vulnerable segments of the population, it is likely that the need to maintain these networks will be enhanced by 'development'. Even if patron/client relations are unequal and doubtless serve as instruments for domination and exploitation, they also contain reciprocal elements serving to guarantee the poor peoples' survival also in bad years. Thus, it has been noted that "small farmers tend to look upwards rather than sideways for co-operation" (Verhagen K, 1984, p 177). On the other hand, while local patrons are able to exploit the linkages to the outside world, they are also increasingly being tied to the 'modern' monetized, market oriented economy and, subsequently, become less dependent on the need to maintain patronage networks. Eventually, they find that the costs of maintaining positions as local patrons become too high, and they fail to fulfil their traditional roles (ibid.). This would force their former dependants to search for other (horizontal) ways to attain social security and to organize economic activities. In this vacuum cooperatives may very well evolve from below as genuine self-help organizations.

Thus, we may conclude that much of the disappointment with cooperative performance as instruments aiming to change social structures has been caused not by the cooperative mode of organization per se, but by the fact that cooperatives have been introduced both from outside and too early, i.e. before peripheral communities were effectively linked to a wider economy and before traditional social structures were sufficiently undermined. Therefore, due to the way they were introduced, these cooperatives have contributed to the perpetuation of the very structures identified as obstacles to the development of genuine cooperative organizations.

In order to accomplish development, a more realistic task for the state would be to concentrate on the building of necessary collective infrastructure (irrigation systems, schools, roads, etc.), thereby facilitating the spread of ideas, contacts, market relations and incentives for modernization, instead of trying to tie peripheral areas to the national centre through distribution of assets and inputs that can (are likely to) be privately monopolized. In any case, to blame cooperatives for not resulting in social, structural change is to ask too much of them. As noted:

It is not realistic to believe that cooperative societies are capable of creating the preconditions for their own development (Münkner HH, 1976, p 14).

But once these preconditions are present, establishing self-reliant, local cooperative societies may be viable measures for small peasants with common needs and ambitions to respond to, and eventually to influence the direction of, structural changes which are already under way.
Cooperatives do not Benefit the Poor

A matter closely related to that discussed above concerns the relation between cooperatives and the poor. Above we have seen that cooperatives frequently have been assumed to be the poor peoples' organizations. Consequently, the bulk of criticism of cooperative performance has centred around the redistributive effects of cooperatives. Not only has it been noted that where cooperative enterprises are economically efficient, they still "do not involve or serve a large majority of the rural poor" (Newiger N, 1983, p 39), but also that they "bring little or no benefit to the masses of poor inhabitants" (UNRISD, 1975, pix).

There is no need to doubt such observations, but the expectation that cooperatives should (mainly) benefit the poor, or even that the objective of cooperation (primarily) is to serve the poor rural population is a false assumption. As shown above, this objective is neither mentioned among the basic cooperative principles, nor is it mentioned in ILO's more relaxed definition of cooperatives, and for good reasons. In order to cooperate, you must have something to pool, and most of the Third World's rural poor have not.

In order to clarify this misunderstanding, Munkner (1976) has tried to identify which groups or social strata that can be expected to benefit from cooperatives, and which groups or strata that are likely to benefit more from other measures. Munkner distinguishes between rich, relatively rich and poor peasants. He says, that for people who are rich, for the affluent, the concept of cooperation is of little relevance. Hence, cooperatives would only attract the relatively rich. The term poor, he says, is also too general. Thus, he also differentiates between the relatively poor (those able to make small savings but not earning enough to build up reserves), the real poor (persons living at subsistence level, having no capacity to make even small savings), and the destitute (persons having an income below subsistence level or no income at all).

Between the rich and the real poor there is a middle layer. Cooperatives can be used as instruments to strengthen this middle layer by offering people from above subsistence line the chance to work their way up to the middle layer. For poorer groups, with nothing to pool, cooperatives do not represent a realistic type of organization. For these groups other means will be necessary. However, if the middle layer is cooperatively organized in genuine self-help organizations, this could release resources and enable governments to concentrate their efforts on programmes explicitly directed toward the poor (Münkner HH, 1976, p 9ff).

Here 'public works' designed to supply or upgrade physical infrastructure would not only give incomes and job opportunities to the rural poor and drain surplus labour from agriculture. It would also provide the necessary links between local communities and the wider economy, diversify local economies, create niches for entrepreneurs, and speed up...
structural change. With basic physical infrastructure available, it would also be easier for local cooperatives to get access to both innovative inputs and markets for their produce.

The two assumed cooperative objectives and targets of criticism discussed above are interrelated. The ideas that cooperatives should result in structural change and/or primarily benefit the poor are extra-cooperative objectives, imposed upon these organizations from above/outside. They have no support in the cooperative principles. Instead, they reflect not only the great expectations many foreign cooperators, aid organizations, and Third World governments have had when building nationwide cooperative organizations, but also their vague conceptualization of what cooperatives actually are. This also explains why, in many countries, government supervised rural cooperatives have not primarily been seen as economic enterprises but administratively have been tied to Ministries of Social Affairs.

Just as cooperatives can not be expected to accomplish structural change, they can not be social elevators for those who have nothing to contribute. Just as cooperatives, when they first emerged in 19th century Europe, were based on voluntary association of people who made joint contributions and shared a common goal, contemporary Third World cooperatives need members able to pool resources they already possess, even if these are few. Just as in 19th century Europe, cooperatives need access to a market and a surplus producing group of peasants, and they can only function on an equitable basis when local, traditional dependencies have been relaxed. Consequently, it has been noted that cooperatives generally tend to serve a rapidly developing commercial peasant class which is already integrated into the market economy. Functioning cooperatives may therefore well be a feature of relatively advanced (monetized) agrarian systems and primarily a response to the requirements of cash production, rather than designed to meet the needs of excluded or subsistence groups (Harvey C et al. 1979, p 12–16; see also Flores XA, 1969; Gyllstrom, 1988; Ståhl M, 1989).

**Bad Management**

Neither before nor after independence, have rural cooperatives in Africa, generally, been established from below as spontaneous self-help organizations in a local setting. On the contrary, a widely held view has long been that "cooperatives can only serve as an instrument, albeit an important one, of ...an all embracing ... strategy" (Long F, 1978, p 38). Such an all embracing strategy usually included land redistribution and in many countries, after independence, cooperatives followed upon a land reform as a second stage in a planned, comprehensive, and highly politicized effort at rural transformation. Even where attempts to alter rural socio-economic structures were more modest, cooperative organizations
have often had a wide array of both economic, social and political objectives. Furthermore, in many cases national planning departments "were often commissioned with the task of establishing large numbers of cooperatives at a fast pace" (Hanel A, 1986, p 4), irrespective of the fact that skilled administrators, especially officials with 'cooperative awareness' were in extremely scarce supply.

Whatever their origin, most local cooperatives still bear "the imprint of whatever agency or organization originally promoted them. Thus, they at heart embody an authoritarian or at best a paternalistic approach to rural development" (Verhagen K, 1980, p 13). More often than not, peasants have been coerced or, at best, induced to join cooperatives. For the peasant to obtain government credit, membership in cooperatives has usually been a prerequisite, if it has not been outright compulsory. As a rule cooperatives have been granted monopolies in trade with specified products and the scope of cooperative activities has been strictly dictated by central authorities. In order to guarantee both the production of essential crops and a reasonable income for the producer, prices on agricultural inputs and products have generally been centrally determined. However, "official marketing boards, which were meant to protect the farmers' interests, were gradually transformed into instruments of taxation" (World Development Report, 1978, p 1). This 'abuse' of cooperatives still goes on (see e.g. Gyllstrom B, 1988) with the effect that peasants are either deprived of incentives to raise production or turning them towards private traders and moneylenders. Moreover,

governments often tend consciously or unconsciously to consider cooperative societies as mere components of the overall administrative machinery... When cooperatives are not set up spontaneously ...the critical problem always seems to be the 'weaning' process, namely the paternalistic tendency of the authorities to retain a governing role much longer than the maturity of the cooperative leadership would warrant (COPAC, 1977, p 5).

Due to the belief in the superiority in Western 'scientific' models, foreign assistance has often been a prerequisite for the founding of many Third World cooperative organizations. The effectiveness of such external aid has sometimes been hampered by the manner in which cooperative experts were selected in their home countries before being assigned to carry out cooperative development projects in the Third World. In many cases indigenous planners have come to depend on "foreign experts who may have a good technical grasp of specific problems but not a good understanding of the culture and society in which the technological project is to be applied" (Long F, 1978, p 37). One common result has been that men, being 'heads of family', are often registered as members in local cooperatives although, in large parts of Africa, it is the women who do the farming (see, for example, Allison C, 1985; Gronberg EB & Johansson M, 1988).
Cooperative 'veterans', i.e. men "with many years of cooperative experience from his home country", but not necessarily with sufficient flexibility to operate in different cultural, social and economic milieus, were often assigned as cooperative 'missionaries'. Soon they found a "lack of cooperative spirit" and witnessed "irrational behaviour" (Dulfer E, 1975, p 8), why they tended to direct discouraging emphasis to the creation of 'cooperative awareness'. When such Western 'experts' tried to use cooperatives as schools in (Western) democracy—"Schulen der Fundamental-demokratisierung"—(Klöwer GG, 1977) as a prerequisite for allowing the members to run their 'own' societies, they conveniently forgot that, in Europe, "early [cooperative] societies were not particularly democratic [and only] in a few cases there was ...an early implementation of one member — one vote" (Dahl F, 1980, p 79).

It seemed necessary to demonstrate that accepting supervision, and the 'schooling in democracy' was instantly awarding. Training programmes and 'awareness raising' activities were coupled to external supply of assets and financial resources. In order to make such 'contributions' attractive, foreign experts and aid-assisted cooperative officials "attempt to create needs, which, although objectively genuine, are not subjectively felt" (Flores XA, 1969, p 235). To satisfy these needs "donors hope to strengthen poor peoples' capacity to demand services of government" (Jiggins J, 1986, p 3). Rather than fostering a 'cooperative spirit', the result is an enhanced tendency among rural inhabitants to look upon cooperatives (like all other official organizations) as mere external resources to be utilized for locally preferred objectives (Dulfer E, 1975; Hanel A; 1986, Hydén G, 1983; Mabogunje A, 1980). Generally, governments have accepted such claims in order to gain political support in peripheral areas. However, such practices, rather than promoting self-reliance and local creativity, tend to deprive local people of most incentives to modernize and cooperatives, rather than being progressive change-agents, are turned into stagnant institutions dependent upon permanent government subsidies.

Again, this is not the outcome of peasants' ignorance or traditionalism. Rather, it is a consequence of the central authorities' and their assisting foreign experts' approach to motivate rural people to establish cooperatives. Although there are reports that peasants sometimes appreciate central control (Hedlund H, 1986), it is mostly the case that peasants have a 'natural' suspicion of governments and outsiders, and on many occasions they correctly realize that they are being exploited (see, for example, Waterbury J, 1978). Furthermore, when officials assigned to work in parastatal cooperative organizations are (perceived as) either paternalistic or corrupt, it is no wonder if there are no social checks to the manipulation of cooperative resources in the local community.

The common measure taken to overcome such attitudes has been to increase central control, to adopt a blue-print strategy which, being inflexible, tends to enhance organizational indifference to local needs and
conditions, thereby further alienating cooperative managers and officials from the members (Hydén G, 1983). Paradoxically, paternalism is seen as the cure for paternalism and many governments seem caught in a vicious 'supervising' circle.

In a recent study of agricultural cooperatives in Kenya Gyllstrom concludes that the government's neglect of infrastructural support combined with the priority given to downstream activities (supported by external aid organizations) has "permeated the expanding market system with an inordinate range of laws, regulations and administrative structures. In rural environments characterized by low productivity and high distance friction, the structure and behaviour prescribed for cooperatives have created unrealistic threshold requirements and made their management excessively dependent on spatially extended networks of decision-making and supervision. It has seriously obstructed not only the democratic features usually associated with cooperatives but also largely eliminated essential ingredients of entrepreneurship such as creativity, flexibility and adaptability". Furthermore, shortage of arable land combined with rapid population growth aggravates land fragmentation and drastically increases "transaction frequency" in the cooperatives. However, this transaction frequency is not related to the total turnover or sales of the cooperatives but to the functional membership of each society. Given the basic social and economic characteristics of the rural environment, the surplus generated "will be divided between a growing number of producers and thus result in a gradually widening mismatch between the cooperatives' [prescribed] mode of organization and environment requirements. Thus, if societies are used as the predominant marketing channel and distribution system, the increasing number of members and produce lots will substantially increase the total number of transactions and administrative costs. However, this cost inflation will not be accompanied by a corresponding expansion of the total volume and value of handled goods and services. The increasing cost of services supplied have principally to be paid by the farmer and, hence, will negatively affect production and income generation" (Gyllstrom B, 1988, p 285f).

Such processes are not limited to Kenya but seem to be rather common. They negatively affect the attraction of cooperatives and, when membership is compulsory, black markets flourish. As a consequence, demands are raised for intensified control. Employed staff are taken away from training and extension tasks and are instead used for control and 'supervising' purposes. This is one of the reasons why extension services so often have been neglected (see, for example, Holmén H, 1989; Ståhl M, 1989).

Paternalism is not only a matter of officials' attitudes. It has been built into the official administrative structures of large national organizations from the onset. As mentioned, many national cooperative organizations
were hastily set up with no adequate preparation and lacking skilled personnel. Legal restrictions often prevent members of local cooperatives from engaging in business activities they find economically profitable. For example, in both Kenya and Zambia agricultural cooperatives generally deal with one crop only. This crop is specified by government and cooperative members have no right to expand activities even when they have the desire and capacity to broaden their economic activities (Gyllstrom B, 1988; Gronberg Eb & Johansson M, 1988). In some cases local societies have expanded their activities, but at the risk of being fined (Hedlund H, 1986).

Bad management and paternalism are not necessarily the same thing but both features are closely related to the size and complexity of local cooperatives. Government supervised cooperatives are of many kinds but their common denominator is that they usually have been designed by planners external to communities in which they operate. They range from relatively simple 'one-crop-one-purpose' societies to the large and complex 'multi-crop-multi-purpose' cooperatives which not only engage in a manyfold of activities, but also need large numbers of members to be economically viable, as well as large cadres of experts and employees to handle the complicated management of diverse, large-scale activities. While the relatively simple single-crop type of society sometimes faces problems such as those described above, the multi-crop-multi-purpose society gives even less room for member participation than do the simpler varieties. Officials' paternalism and the need to create 'cooperative awareness' are likely to be both stronger and of longer duration the greater the society is and the more complicated its tasks are. In all types of societies matters are aggravated by unnecessary loads of paperwork and complicated registration and auditing procedures. In regions where levels of distance friction and illiteracy are high, this often results in untimely deliveries of inputs and late payments for marketed produce (see e.g. Gyllstrom B, 1988).

Scarcity of resources is the endemic sign of underdevelopment, both at local and national levels. In order to better utilize scarce resources it is hoped that scale-economies may be gained by building 'complete', nationwide, three tier organizations (national, regional, local levels) from the start, rather than beginning in a small scale from below (see Dubell F, 1976). It is argued that "many of the advantages often attributed to cooperation are, in fact, advantages of large-scale formal organization" (Young C et al. 1981, p 215). Large-scale economic enterprise, however, demands an administrative capacity and speedy communications which most underdeveloped nations do not possess. The question, therefore, is whether there really are any advantages with large-scale formal (cooperative) organizations in African rural areas. Obviously, many of the shortcomings in the management of cooperatives can be explained (as is
also the case in the 'developed' West) by severe social diseconomies of scale and there is a growing realization that

the equation of cooperative societies with state-sponsored or state-controlled cooperatives and the propagation of ideologically tinged cooperative models instead of promoting the simple organizational pattern of cooperative organization which is open for adjustment to local conditions, has generated a bad reputation for cooperative societies in general (Münkner HH, 1984, p 31).

Critique of cooperatives, as they have generally functioned, seems to be well deserved. The bad reputation of cooperatives has, however, very little to do with 'inappropriateness' of cooperatives as such. Nor can it be explained by reference to peasants' traditionalism or unwillingness to modernize. Rather, when seeking to understand the 'failure' of cooperatives as development instruments, examining the adequacy of the promotion policies and strategies pursued leads us to other explanations. It then becomes clear that outside goal-setting, inflexible bureaucratic routines, and paternalistic management attitudes are the major causes for mis-management, non-participation and dis-satisfaction. Whether local peasants can be described as cooperative or not, a problem with the approach of promoting cooperation from above is that

the cooperative spirit can not be generated by government fiat (COPAC, 1977, p 4).

Too often cooperatives have been instructed to do what they are not meant to do (control that production follows a national plan, administer rural taxation, maintain political stability, and provide social security to the destitute), while, at the same time, they have been hindered to do what they are meant to do—enable their members to help themselves through innovative economic activities.

Government Interference and Hidden Objectives

While the above discussed shortcomings to a large extent have been caused by interference of governments and aid personnel in cooperative affairs, there is an essential difference between bad management in general and states' hidden objectives which not only are at the root of those problems, but which furthermore explain why they have been so persistent.

Not only have governments taken upon themselves the tasks to create 'cooperative awareness' among the peasants and to control the 'proper management' of cooperative organizations in order to increase agricultural production and develop national economies. Other, less formal, objectives, believed best to be attained by building large-scale, nation-wide cooperative organizations, turn out to be at least as important. Thus, while in many instances those rural inhabitants obliged to join
cooperative societies have been found to view them primarily as sources of subsidies, governments make use of cooperatives to establish political support in peripheral areas. Large sums of financial ‘aid’ have been transferred to the Third World with the intention to build ‘modern’ cooperative movements. However, in many cases,

the recipient government sees the donor resources as the means to buy political influence in a remote area which has no priority claim on its own scarce resources and as a channel for the accumulation of resources which can be allocated to other uses the government considers a higher priority (Jiggins J, 1986, p 5).

Thus, rather than promoting resource-saving, self-reliant, development programmes and local initiatives in rural areas,

government interest in deriving immediate political benefit from its support of cooperatives is a major consideration which may restrain efforts to promote efficiency (Young C et al. 1981, p 31).

From the need to buy political support and then to maintain it by means of continuous 'gifts', there is only a short step to the 'need' for increased control. Control, however, is generally attained by co-opting local chiefs and patrons into political and/or administrative structures, not by spreading scarce resources equally. Thus, “it is a well-known fact that...cooperatives have been used as political spring-boards for clan leaders” (Hydén G, 1983, p 116) which, having secured a political career, “tend to lose touch with their kinds and become conservative” (Agbonifo PO, 1985, p 165). Moreover, upholding political control, most often, is in conflict with the need to uphold economic efficiency. Governments have frequently accepted ineffective rural cooperatives as phenomena on which (limited) local demands are raised as a tolerable cost for maintaining political stability. Cooperatives are thus manipulated in both ends, centrally by national political elites and top bureaucrats, and locally by village notables and corrupt managers.

The relation between state and peasants is, however, not always as unambiguous as the above paragraph suggests. Villagers and their elected representatives also have certain formal means to control local managers and officials. In a case study from Kenya, Hedlund found that mistrust of the local manager and the Cooperative Union (province level) “developed an ambition on the board of directors to strengthen the bonds with the Cooperative Ministry, so that ministerial officials more effectively should be able to control the activities of both the Union and the manager” (Hedlund H, 1986, p 90). This way the central political authority is strengthened while bureaucrats and individual cooperative officials become scape-goats for structural deficiencies. Thus, for reasons other than development promotion, it may well be functional to maintain the
operations and organizational designs of otherwise dysfunctional, state-supervised, large-scale, cooperative organizations.

Likewise, it may seem functional for governments and bureaucracies (in the short perspective at least) to close down or delimit effective but uncontrolled cooperatives which have proved to be economically functional for their members. It is argued here that the 'fatalistic and conservative peasant' is largely a myth, maintained by (urban) actors aiming to dominate peasants economically and/or politically. Peasants are willing to change their ways when they feel a need for it and if it is socially and economically worthwhile. It is thus sometimes the case that peasants, even when poor, subjugated and illiterate, establish local cooperatives or pre-cooperatives in reaction to the poor performance of parastatal cooperative organizations and/or excessive interference from national administrative institutions in local affairs.

The Basaisa village cooperative in the Nile delta of Egypt is a case in point. Here, the villagers decided in 1978 to establish a cooperative for the purpose of diversifying the local economy by promoting activities outside the highly regulated agricultural sector. Another objective was to introduce technical innovations that government institutions did not provide (for example, electricity). The society was not officially registered until five years had passed and the members knew that the project was viable. Apart from economic improvements, the isolation of Basaisa has been broken, traditional sex-division of labour has been eased, and the traditional clan-loyalty is being replaced by a broader community solidarity. The demand for self-reliant activities in rural Egypt is great. Presently membership includes people from 16 nearby villages and visitors come from far to share the experiences (Holmén H, 1989b).

Likewise, Hopkins et al. (1988) found that in the highly regulated land reclamation areas of western Egypt (Tahrir province) official institutions like Community Development Associations and agricultural cooperatives tend to be controlled by a small elite of village leaders and key government officials who monopolize government supplied scarce goods and charge irregular fees for doing their job, etc. This has provoked a great deal of protest against government action and inaction. But it has also brought peasants together through participation in informal groups and "where it not for the informal involvement of farmers, for instance, the irrigation system would not work" (p 124). Peasants have joined together to oppose authority, on one occasion being able to change the head of the cooperative (cooperative managers being appointed by the Ministry, not elected by members). Peasants have also made preparations for establishing a separate, downwards accountable, cooperative society but their proposal was turned down by the official authority (Hopkins N et al. 1988).

In sub-Saharan Africa, Kirsch et al. assert that independent rural thrift societies, operating amidst tightly supervised agricultural cooperatives,
represent a promising development in the cooperative movement since they are trying to develop without any significant government assistance. In Cameroon saving societies have promoted the creation of consumer shops, grain mills and transport services. In Kenya they have proved to be a good platform for member initiatives in irrigation and settlement schemes. In Ghana, on the other hand, funds generated by rural thrift societies could not be channelled back into productive use for the peasants because of their distrust of the credit union of the official agricultural cooperative movement (Kirsch et al. 1980).

In Mali, following the Sahel drought around 1970, small-scale cooperatives have been set up among (former) nomads and small peasants with the assistance of a western nongovernmental aid-organization (EAA-European Action Accord). If the local population is willing to prepare some people for health education and literacy training, the EAA provides loans to establish a shop for consumer goods, owned and controlled by the members. The profit generated is then (voluntarily and invariably) used for collective purposes (like erecting a school building, road improvement, etc.). Gradually, the consumer shops are turned into productive cooperatives and profits are used for cattle improvement and for the purchase of technical equipment. While, in most cases, the boards and chairmen initially were local noblemen and clan leaders, already after a few years there are movements in the cooperatives, the chiefs are ousted and more representative members are elected. In the mid-1980s, there were 36 societies and the project coordinator explains their relative success by the area's great distance from the capital city. He bluntly states that "central government and all elements in the power structure are not... interested in the development of a new power structure". Should these downwards accountable societies spread and become powerful, "there will be counter forces against the cooperatives" (p 25f), (van Hulten M, 1985).

Burkina Fasso presents a similar example of how conditional cooperative self-reliance often is. Beginning in the 1910s, 'cooperatives' were introduced in the then French colony Haute Volta. These para-administrative societies (Sociétés Indigènes de Prévoyence), where membership was obligatory and the local presidents were selected by the French Governor, aimed at supplying scarce goods to the peasants (grain storage, stand-by food supplies), at securing the flow of cash-crops for export (groundnuts, cotton), and at collecting taxes and membership fees, which were often viewed as 'extra' taxes (COPAC, 1981). In the 1940s and 1950s, measures were taken to organize the SIPS more in line with the cooperative principles but, due to preserved administrative control, continued tax-collection obligations, and failure to meet local needs and priorities, they failed to mobilize popular support.

After independence, and with the help of the central government and foreign donor agencies, Regional Development Organizations (ORD) were
created (1965) as the main bodies responsible for social and economic development through a decentralized system of Village Groups (VG). Initially, VGs expanded rapidly but, apart from some exceptional cooperatives in more developed regions, many soon lay dormant or were closed down. Reasons for this were i.a. lack of information and superficial extension work.

A new reorganization came in the 1970s with an emphasis on 'communal development areas and villages' giving more room for local initiatives, and promotion of rural institutions of a cooperative nature. The result of this measure was that "outside the 46 organized and highly-structured cooperatives which show signs of stagnation, has developed an informal sector of VGs, more modest in size and objectives, who's main ambition seems to be to keep in touch with the day-to-day concerns of their members" (ibid. p 8). These informal groups, which have been able to reflect the different regional realities within the country, are generally of a pre-cooperative nature without employed staff or managers, and with no standardized accounting procedures. They engage in a wide range of activities (boring of wells, building of roads and tracks, maternity homes) and in the early 1980s it was estimated that they controlled at least 25% of the marketed cereals and 60% of the cotton. They were deemed to represent "the most dynamic aspect of the cooperative movement" in the country (ibid. p 17).

The lessons to be learned are two: One is that "what some would call a lack of policy, and others excess of liberty, has at least encouraged the emergence of structures that are better adapted to the real situation of the people" (ibid. p 30). The other lesson is that, even in a country like Burkina Fasso, skies are dimmed by darkening clouds. 1979 saw (for the first time) the establishment of a Department of Rural Institutions inside the Ministry of Rural Development and the drafting of a new law on the future status of cooperatives. While the declared objective is to support cooperatives and Village Groups, these measures expressed the determination of the central authority to bring cooperative development under its direct control (ibid. p 3040).

While, thus, an economically ineffective cooperative system (to some extent) may be politically advantageous for the central administration, and effective but self-reliant cooperatives may be eliminated or at least constrained by administrative measures, we still have not looked at the root causes behind such patterns. The reasons are not likely to be bad political leaders, but rather structural and historically situational circumstances. We will return to these matters below, in the chapter about the transitory African state and its relation to cooperatives and cooperative ideology. For now it will suffice to note that

governments may pay lip service to cooperatives but their policies may also stack the cards against the success of cooperatives (UNRISD, 1975, p 31).
Concluding Remarks on the Critique of Cooperatives

The massive critique directed against Third World cooperatives is partly justified but much of it misses the point. The so called 'cooperative crisis' is largely a "crisis of unrealistic expectations" (Dülfer E, 1975, p 14; Stoffregen H, 1975, p 272). We have seen exaggerated declarations that cooperatives would solve most, or even all, development problems, that cooperatives should serve all, and particularly the poor, peasants. This they can not do. There is no panacea to development, not even in cooperative disguise. Cooperatives are economic associations but they have been given social and political objectives which they are not able to realize. Instead, "cooperatives with the least political or social content, being mainly concerned with straightforward economic benefits, may in the end, paradoxically, have a greater impact than those that explicitly but ineffectively seek to transform society" (UNRISD, 1975, p 13).

Cooperatives need to emerge from below in response to felt needs. Thereafter they may grow gradually into more complex organizations if, and when, their members so decide. As a rule, however, they have been built from above and outside, partly because the evolution of self-reliant cooperatives "turned out to be a slow process" (Hanel A, 1986), and partly for other reasons. However, it is argued here, outside goalsetting, (actual or formal) compulsory membership, bureaucratic management and complex large-scale organizations cause passivity, foster corruption and mismanagement, and destroys incentives for local development.

Shortcomings of cooperatives should not be explained by reference to 'anomic' or conservative peasants, nor to the unsuitability of cooperatives as such. Experiences have been similar in other, non-cooperative rural development organizations under external management. The problem rather lies in the governments' priority of short-sighted political objectives over long-term economic and productive objectives which has made economic ineffectiveness acceptable. Not only is this reflected in control measures and the overloading of cooperatives with unnecessary administration and paperwork. It is also reflected in the common overvaluation of currency which creates disincentives for agricultural production at the same time it provides opportunities for the urban elite to enrich itself as importers of luxury consumer goods for the wealth few. Supervised quasi-cooperatives have generally not been permitted to operate in accordance with the 'international cooperative principles' which most African governments have adopted as official guide-line for their cooperative organizations. Seen in this light, much of the critique of cooperatives as instruments for development has been unjust and misdirected.

Renewed efforts have therefore been made to determine when cooperatives could be able to speed up development. It has frequently been demonstrated that "external control causes apathy and refusal"
(Müller JO, 1984, p 49), that "self-help actions do not follow from
government enterprising" (Munkner HH, 1985a, p 153), but "are only
taken as a last resort, when there is no hope for outside assistance"
(Munkner HH, 1983, p 18). If cooperatives are to successfully contribute to
development, a reduced degree of government involvement and a
rapprochement of the principles of voluntariness, self-reliance and
democratic control are therefore seen as necessary prerequisites (Hanel A,
1985,1986; Kuhn J, 1985; Munkner HH, 1984). It is underlined that "small-
scale farmers, even though they are poor, have the power to refuse to
cooperate [with official organizations]" (Munkner HH, 1985b, p 237), but
also that "even if resistance is manifested, it is not the same thing as re-
jections of impulses for change" (Lundquist J, 1975, p 26). It is now
underlined that "autochtonous organizations ...are not necessarily static
and backward oriented, but rather flexible and capable of adjusting to
changing needs and circumstances" (Munkner HH, 1983, p 21). These are
important notions, since, after more than a century of colonial and neoco-
lonial penetration, and all the changes which actually have taken place,
African societies can no longer be called traditional.

To overcome the mounting problems of poverty and under-
development within the national territory at large, both recent studies of
cooperation (Gyllstrom B, 1988) and general development literature (not
particularly directed towards cooperation) has abandoned the 'compre-
hensive planning paradigm' and instead recommends decentralization,
deconcentration and regional diversity (Cheema GS & Rondinelli DA,
Mawhood P, 1985; Nellis JR, 1983). Now is emphasized that the role of the
state should be limited to the provision of a legal framework for
peripheral, independent, economic organizations and such necessary
infrastructure that small rural communities can not afford on their own.
Planning authorities and public administrative bodies are now to function
as support systems, not as managers of local economic affairs.

However, it is easier to say Amen than to do it. Development strategies
can not be freely chosen. Inevitably, the development strategy any
territory chooses to pursue will be the product of prevailing power-
structures and the historical development of that particular territory
(Hettne B, 1973). Just noticing that the central government is autocratic
and ineffective and therefore should be decentralized does not do much
good (even if the observation is correct). While recommending liberali-
ization and decentralization, most current writing about cooperation and
development does not pay enough attention to the nature of the transitory
Third World state. It is commonly assumed that the state fills the same
function as in the industrialized countries. This is highly unlikely. The im-
perative of the developing state is likely to differ from that of the capitalist
world. The obvious questions to ask are then: Which is the nature of the
contemporary African state? Is decentralization a realistic alternative? When/under which conditions?

No matter how desirable decentralized development strategies may be on paper, a shift of policy towards real political and economic decentralization is not easily realized. It was not by chance that so many Third World governments became highly centralized and the risks involved in reducing government control sometimes seem dangerously great. Before returning to the possible future role(s) for rural cooperatives in development, it is necessary that the nature of the Third World State, and the forces leading to its high degree of centralization, are explicitly examined. This will also shed some light on the likelihood of sincere de-control policies to emerge.
3. Overdevelopment and Centralization of the Third World State

Introduction

"State structures in the Third World are widely regarded as rigid, over-staffed and corrupt, [why] ...the question of administrative reform lies at the heart of the debate" about development today (Brett EA, 1988, p 4). Africa is no exception to this general pattern. But the matter of administrative reform is not only a question of curbing bureaucratic deficiencies and improving the efficiency or planning capacity of administrative institutions. Before trying to present receipts for administrative reform, one must investigate the causes for and structural determinants behind the present pattern.

This chapter therefore aims at analyzing the nature of the African state, its role, purpose and options in society. That will give us a perspective when discussing implementation of administrative reform measures.

Emergence of the Centralized State

Of fundamental importance for understanding the nature of the African state is the colonial experience and the two concepts class and nation. At the time of colonization most territories occupied by European powers did not constitute nation states. Neither had they, as a rule, become nation states at the time of de-colonization, which in most cases occurred less than a generation ago. On the contrary, colonies were arbitrarily cut out by imperialist powers without consideration of the people already inhabiting these territories. Instead was created an etatist system based on neo-mercantilistic principles and heavy taxation of agricultural and mineral resources. An alien administrative apparatus which did not spring 'naturally' from the territory in question, but which instead was structurally linked to some distant 'motherland', was superimposed upon these domains from above and outside. Its ultimate basis was force, "there is no other way in which a small group of alien rulers can establish control over a people not their own" (Clapham C, 1985, p 18).

Autochratic rule was invariably combined with the principle of 'divide and rule', the underpinning of ethnical, religious and regional cleavages, in order to prevent the spread of national identities and united resistance among the subjects. When, after the second world war, there was no longer any need for direct political control over colonies, these newly
independent but poor and unintegrated 'nations' were handed over to (or sometimes taken over by) domestic leaders who's sake it now was to unite these artificial creations. Whether decolonization went peacefully or was the result of armed struggle, liberation from colonial rule came to be seen as (and was largely symbolized by) taking over the unnatural and outwardly oriented state apparatus and governmental institutions, rather than in destroying them.

Governments of these young 'nations', plagued as they were by all the common features of underdevelopment (poverty, illiteracy, unstable and undiversified economies based on primary production), faced two overwhelming tasks which both led to further spatial and political centralization of the administrative and economic structures inherited from colonial rule: to accomplish development (however defined) and to consolidate political hegemony over their unintegrated territories, i.e. to build a nation. It has been extremely difficult to realize both goals simultaneously and probably one has to follow upon the other.

Both the problems met by the new governments and the causes for their centralization and non-accountability originate outside as well as within these countries. Neither is it correct to explain bureaucratic mismanagement by referring to its "irrational context" (Brett EA, 1988, p 9), nor simply to say that the post-colonial state is a "transnational project" (Beckman B, 1988, p 27), even if the latter notion points at important aspects. Beckman is correct when stating that "too much current writing on the African state substitutes tales of corruption and mismanagement for an analysis of social forces and processes" (ibid. p 26) which could explain such behaviour. The deficiencies of the state must, thus, be treated as symptoms rather than as root causes and it is highly likely that neither the state's behaviour nor its context is 'irrational'. Rather, we must seek rational explanations to the ways post-colonial states function. This must be made both within the state's immediate context and in relation to a wider context to which it is a link.

Beginning with external causes for centralization and inefficiency, we may note (apart from the take-over of already established autochthonous institutions) the importance of external recognition for most young governments at the time of liberation. Foreign offices and Corps diplomatiques were immediately set up as the first sign of independence and the newly liberated 'nations' were to be represented in international organizations like the UN. Hand in hand with such signs of external recognition went development aid. In order to modernize, these young nations received assistance from their former masters and other 'developed' nations. Sometimes 'assistance' took the form of overt neocolonial intervention, for example, support of externally oriented comprador bourgeoisies (Stavenhagen R, 1972), strengthening the policiary and military capacities of 'friendly' regimes and/or efforts to destabilize governments out of control. In their building of 'new societies', Third World
governments not only depended heavily on external financial support, but also, to a high degree, on foreign advisers which tended to lay great emphasis on the government’s leading role in development and "insisted that borrowers have comprehensive and long-term plans for the investment of external capital" (Cheema GS & Rondinelli DA, 1983, p 11; Long N, 1980). Development theories of that time also emphasized urbanization/industrialization. It was expected that a 'modern', state-sponsored sector would lead the way in a temporarily 'dual' economy, create demands for the goods of the traditional sector, thereby forcing it to modernize and approach the market, while at the same time 'modern', entrepreneurial attitudes would 'trickle down' on the natives (Hirschman A, 1958; Lewis WA, 1954; Rostow WW, 1960) The cooperative form of organization fitted well into such development strategies both as a suitable network for the channeling of development promoting measures and as a means to visualize the new government in remote areas. Normally, the state was given far-reaching authority in both supervision and control of the emerging cooperative movement. Special ministries or public authorities were soon established to implement the intentions. As mentioned earlier, the newly independent governments here rested on an externally imposed tradition of political control over economic life which, in most cases, had been introduced by the colonial powers.

Thus, external demands made it conditional that central planning departments and administrative institutions expanded rapidly in order to receive and better utilize development aid. External 'development aid', which might not be so impressive when counted per capita, when concentrated often exceeds the state's absorptive capacity. As a result, bureaucracies mushroomed all over Africa, particularly in the capitals. Western and international aid-agencies have found it very hard to deal with others than governments in recipient countries and aid-money, therefore, went directly to central authorities which became, by far, the greatest investors and, more important, employers in their countries.

Internal causes added to this centralistic trend. The absence of a strong middle class with investible resources made it essential that the state took the role as initiator of economic development. This also fitted well the ambitions of the urban, educated elite who often constituted the back-bone of African nationalist movements (Smith AD, 1983). To get development off the ground, making national development plans was seen as essential. Plans, however, could have a symbolic value far greater than their practical utility as tools for development. As Galal Amin somewhat

In Jordan has been noticed that development is hampered by an "increased inefficiency in project implementation as foreign aid becomes so readily available that planners' efforts are diverted from using resources most efficiently to attracting more foreign-supplied resources" (Mazur MP, 1979, p 78). Similarly, Kenya is reported to have problems absorbing the vast financial means supplied by over 40 'developed' nations (SvD nov 11,1988).
ironically puts it: "Just as each of the... countries has a flag and a national anthem, so it has a plan" (Amin G, 1980, p 52). He further states that in many cases "the declared targets, or indeed the whole plan, was never intended to be more than window-dressing" (ibid. p 59). This is particularly so when one considers the scarcity of data in developing countries, and even more so as data, when they exist, usually are of questionable reliability. But presenting a plan could be beneficial not only in order to attract foreign capital. It could also demonstrate that the new government was a government for the whole people. The fragile social base of the urban educated elite made it conditional to 'govern by intent', to spread, or at least to give the impression of spreading, progress equally among regions, ethnic and religious groups.

This was of fundamental importance since "once the unifying ideal of independence was achieved, compromises and coalitions made in the name of that ideal began to fall apart". (Griffiths IL, 1984, p 67). To avoid balkanization, priority had to be given to state over nation. That is, it was conditional for the regime to first build the state as an instrument to build the nation. 'Development' was often given less immediate priority. Consequently, before the state (and the leader) was firmly established, no uncontrolled centers of power could be allowed to emerge and "in the years which followed the granting of independence, each new state ... moved quickly towards a one party system" (Lloyd PC, 1969, p 233). For the same reason "many new [African] states... refused to expand the private sector of the economy, even when such expansion would clearly contribute to economic development" (Foltz WJ, 1966, p 125). Likewise, it has been noted that "top-policy makers (in the Arab world)... almost always seem ready to sacrifice economic development if it comes in conflict either with their gaining a political advantage or with the economic interests of a politically influential group" (Amin G, 1980, p 60).

While, thus, alternatives to the state were largely done away with, even at the risk of sacrificing development, the building of a large administrative apparatus, centred in the capital and giving employment to the small educated elite, also served to secure loyalty from the, primarily urban, 'politically relevant strata' which thereby became directly dependent on the state for employment, prestige and wealth. For reasons described above, but also because they lacked "acquaintance with the operation of the state as a complex machinery" (Wolf EA, 1971, p 294), the peasants, which in many countries made up more than 80 percent of the population—even when they had played an important role in liberation struggle—were less politically relevant and 'politics' ("the most highly rewarded of all [Third World] professions" (Lloyd PC, 1969, p 233)) became largely an urban matter.

Both internal and external forces contributed to this strengthening of central governments. On the one hand this led to extreme social and spatial concentration of power, wealth and progress. On the other hand
these circumstances, together with excessive overloading of the state with development tasks for which it can not be said to have been prepared, also resulted in a relative overdevelopment of the state. In Alavi's words:

the excessive enlargement of powers of control and regulation that the state has accumulated and elaborated extend far beyond the logic of what may be necessary for the orderly functioning of the society over which the state presides (Alavi H, 1983, p 302).

While these tendencies of overdevelopment of the state directly after independence probably were unavoidable, perpetuation of centralism and overdevelopment in the post-colonial period has had lasting and injuring effects on development. Governments’ dependencies on (primarily) urban political support has (through the use of cooperatives or otherwise) led to taxation of agriculture and preference for exportable cash crops, earning hard currency for the government and securing cheap, subsidized food for the (mostly) underpaid public employees, over food production and 'fair prices' for the peasants. Such urban bias explains much of the low agricultural performance in most African countries. In most cases, governments have provided peasants few incentives to improve production. Also outside agriculture governments have generally become more and more involved in the process of production with programmes commonly emphasizing government-led industrialization and nationalization of foreign as well as indigenous companies. Alavi points at four consequences of this perpetuated pattern:

First, states under peripheral capitalism deploy, in the name of development, vast economic resources, often considerably exceeding the amount of private investments. The state's own resources are multiplied by borrowing from abroad and by regulations that aid-money is to be channelled through the state apparatus. The resulting vast scale of public expenditure establishes an independent base and a vested interest for those in command of the state apparatus.

Second, the state operates (beside administrative organs) the vast, moneyconsuming and employment-generating military apparatus and the likewise excessively enlarged police corps.

Third, the deployment of state power vis-à-vis the 'fundamental classes' by way of proliferation of state control creates a series of hurdles that potential investors must overcome—and this they do by bribing state officials at all levels. Not only is part of the surplus this way siphoned-off for the private gain of those in command of the state apparatus, the amount of would-be private investments are further reduced.

Forth, the political role of the educated, salaried, middle-class in peripheral capitalist societies is of considerable importance. The middle class' appropriation of an alien language and culture distances them from most of their fellow countrymen. They are subjects to a far greater extent than any other class to influences and ideas that emanate from the
metropolitan countries. They play an active and vigorous role in politics and much of the thrust of their political demands is directed toward positions of power in the state apparatus as such. The state is the biggest and the most renumerative employer for them and, given corruption and nepotism, for their kin.

Due to the alien and 'artificial' roots of the state, its (internal) relatively independent economic base, and its independence from one dominant class, the state enjoys a degree of freedom vis-à-vis the fundamental classes. Alavi concludes that in order to maintain the state's relative autonomy, state authorities try to prevent the creation of effective representative political institutions through which these classes could mobilize and bring pressure to bear upon the state authorities. Even where they nominally exist, parliamentary and political parties atrophy and effective power gravitates into the hands of those who are at the head of the state apparatus, and the bureaucracy and the military rather than the political parties are their primary source of power. Thus, it is often the case that

the 'ruling party' is an empty shell, buttressed by the bureaucracy, which not only sees no need to mobilize mass support but fears it (Alavi H, 1983, pp 299-305).

Thus, and quite correctly, Valsan notes that "it is an irony of public affairs that the national governments which insist upon the principle of 'aid without strings attached' in their external relations, are not willing to follow the same principles in their relations internally" (Valsan EH, 1971, p 6).

State and Class in the Third World

The conventional marxist interpretation of the state is as the ruling class' instrument for defending the existing social order and the dominant mode of production. In the transitory Third World there is (by definition) no such unambiguous domination of a certain mode of production and classes are, though theoretically distinguishable, in general, not part of everyday conscience. Neither are there, in periods of transition, any given social order or stable value systems. These factors have far-reaching consequences for the functioning of the state.

While many attempts have been made to apply class analysis to the Third World (see for example Munck R, 1984; Stavenhagen R, 1972), and while class differences, generally, are easily observed, "class in itself is rarely of direct and immediate importance in the working of politics" (Clapham C, 1985, p 7). Instead it seems "conceivable to claim that the most feasible way to analyze the political system in many newly established 'new nations' would be to view them from an aspect of patron/client relationships which dominate political life" (Wertheim WF, 1972, p
208). As suggested in chapter two, the need to maintain patrimonial relations probably increases during early phases of transition. But, due to changing circumstances, clientalist networks partly take a non-traditional nature. Clapham therefore suggests that 'neo-patrimonialism' better explains the working of the Third World state. Neo-patrimonialism, he says, is

a form of organization in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines. Officials hold positions in bureaucratic organizations with powers which are formally defined, but exercise these powers, so far as they can, as a form not of public service but of private property. Relationships with others likewise fall into the patrimonial pattern of vassal and lord, rather than the rational-legal one of subordinate and superior, and behaviour is correspondingly devised to display a personal status, rather than to perform an official function (Clapham C, 1985, p 48).

Clientalism, nepotism and neo-patrimonial bonds within the over-developed and externally dependent Third World state severely affects bureaucratic efficiency, organization-building and development planning. The state apparatus thus resembles what Myrdal has called "soft states" with a low level of social discipline and widespread corruption (Myrdal G, 1968, 1978). Also at the highest level the preponderance of personalized rule is the norm and in many cases the head of state legitimates his position by personal charisma, and even personality cult, rather than by ideology or political programme (Griffiths IL, 1984; Bgoya W & Hydén G, 1987). While charismatic leaders are sometimes able to mobilize (temporary) mass support, charismatic leadership is extremely fragile and makes "a very unstable political system" (Naur M, 1986). This is one reason behind the "almost universal tendency on the part of regimes in peripheral capitalist societies to acquire an authoritarian character and proliferate military dictatorships" (Alavi H, 1983, p 301). Nevertheless, the "image of the [African] leader as being extremely powerful is mistaken" (Hydén G, 1983, p 45). The lack of a shared sense of values, the absence of organic unity between state and society as the state is not rooted in the productive system and therefore has no 'natural' instrumentalist role, these circumstances all combine to make the state comparatively fragile. Without structural roots in society and with no natural role, the state "hangs in the air" (Hydén G, 1983) as a goal in itself in what has been called a 'praetorian' struggle of rivaling groups and factions.

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9 Patron-client relations are found everywhere, not least in the administrative and political apparatuses of the contemporary Western nations (not to mention universities), and are not typical for Africa, or the Third World, per se. But, due to special circumstances, such networks tend to get a much heavier weight in bureaucracies of developing African states.
Praetorian societies are defined by their "lack of community and effective political institutions" (Huntington S, 1968), by their "absence of agreed procedures... the fragility of institutions... [and] the lack of widespread sentiment of their legitimacy" (Finer SE, quoted from Naur M, 1986, p 151). As explained by Roxborough, praetorian states emerge in a situation in which the state is open and exposed to political forces and in which no single class can impose its own developmental project on society. In this perspective, considering the State as an instrument of power to be wielded by whichever class [or other group] that gains control over its institutions, one sees immediately the problematic nature of the state-power in many of the societies of the Third World. Clearly, in a situation in which there is no single hegemonic class, but rather a series of contending rival forces...the state will be perceived by many social forces as a target, as the price of political struggle (Roxborough I, 1983, p 122).

Roxborough goes on to state that the outcome of such a situation may be "devolution of power to regional power apparatuses" which would mean fragmentation and disintegration of the 'nation'. It may also lead to "penetration of local or class-specific interests in the operation of the state in a system of corruption or clientalist politics", i.e. apprehension of the soft state's resources by its own servants. Finally, "the incumbents of the state apparatus may attempt to use their power to constitute themselves as a new class or as a distinct fraction of the dominant class" (ibid., p 123). The bureaucracy may thus turn into a bourgeoisie d'état which could be an embryo of a 'real' bourgeoisie. This the state's servants most conveniently do by allying themselves with the armed forces (Pearlmutter A, 1974) or, which tends to be more common, the army comes out as the most successful faction among the state's servants as it controls the instruments of force. However, "when the army goes into politics, so too does politics come into the army" (Clapham C, 1985, p 150). A military coup, therefore, although it may shift the principal arena, is seldom a solution to praetorian instability.

There is much to support the assertion that "the crisis in Africa is a crisis of the state" (Bgoya W & Hydén G, 1987, p 6). Because of its instability, there is a risk that praetorian states will be the victims of an endless row of coups and countercoups. This has indeed been the case in Africa. Post-colonial Africa has witnessed fifty-nine coups d'états and fourteen states

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10 The Latin–Swedish dictionary refers the term "praetorian" to three distinct elements of political organization in classical Rome. In the Roman empire a praetor was: a: the oldest title of the highest state-official (Praetor Maximus), b: a governor in the conquered provinces (Pro-Praetor), and c: an official administering justice between foreigners, or between foreigners and Romans (Praetor Peregrinus). Praetorianism, thus, refers both to the position of the state as mediator between contending factions in a pluralistic society (C): to the hegemony to be wielded by whoever comes out as winner of the power struggle (a); and to the ruler's dependence on external support in local competition (b).
have had more than one (Griffiths IL, 1984). Twenty-six African states have been under military rule sometime after independence and, in the mid-1980s, 24 states were governed by the military\textsuperscript{11} (Linné Eriksen T et al, 1986).

While the underlying pattern generally remains one of instability and lack of purpose, stability is every leader's dream and praetorian clashes of social forces may be prevented by personalized leadership and patronage networks through which material benefits and political demands are mediated and factional leaders co-opted. The ruler may combine this with spectacular performance on the international political arena and a foreign policy that pays in the form of increased 'aid'. Nasser, for example, (for some time) was a master in balancing off the superpowers against each-other, thereby being able to draw maximum support from both sides. Whatever the pecuniary benefit of foreign policies, external recognition has a value as such, enabling the national leader to show daily in newspapers and television whom external governments deal with. Also, and often combined with those strategies, the ruler may resort to a populist appearance in order to play down internal cleavages, and to ride above the contending factions, aiming at establishing some sense of common interest.

\textit{Populism} is "a much debated concept... which tends to create confusion due to its very different connotations in different political contexts" (Hettne B, 1982, p 96). Nevertheless, (or maybe therefore) populism, as is also the case with praetorianism, has been seen as the generic mode of governance in the Third World. For example, while political leaders like Nasser, Nehru, Nkrumah and Peron usually have been called populists (see e.g. Roxborough I, a.a.), Huntington characterizes Nasser and Peron as praetorian rulers (Huntington S, 1968, a.a.). This is not a semantic matter. The two concepts neither overlap, nor contradict. Rather, while praetorianism emphasizes political organization, populism refers to political values and ideology. They are the two sides of one coin.

Roxborough argues that the defining feature of populism is that it is "a loose movement of a leader and his following" which are "not organized along class lines" or as political parties. Rather, populism represents

\textsuperscript{11}Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that political stability is not as unusual in Africa as is commonly supposed. 16 states have been spared military coups, although in some of them attempts have been made to overthrow the government. What is usually forgotten though, is that "the average life-in-office of leaders of independent African states is about seven years, compared with three years for British prime ministers, four years for American presidents and six years for Sovjet leaders in the same period" (Griffiths IL, 1984, p 66). However, these long periods in office often tend to be based on strong personal power of a charismatic leader (Houphouet-Boigny, Kaunda, Nasser, Nyerere) or ethnical dominance (Arabs in Sudan, Kikuyu in Kenya), rather than on underlying systematic stability.
"groups or sectors which in some sense are 'outside' modern class society, and represents a reaction against it" (Roxborough I, 1983, p 108). Further, he says, populism is caused by "the dependent nature of Third World countries" (ibid. p 111).

Laclau, on the other hand, stresses that "the emergence of populism is historically linked to a crisis in the dominant ideological discourse which is in turn part of a more general social crisis [being either]... the result of a fracture in the power-bloc, [or]... a crisis of transformism" (Laclau E, 1977, p 175, my emphasis). Important to note, he says, is that the 'causes' for populism are closely linked to the very process of change and "have little to do with a determinate stage of development". (Ibid.) But external dependencies may make populism a lasting feature.

Populism, it is generally held, has usually come to the fore during, or soon after, decolonization. It has been closely linked with nationalism. Thus is maintained that both feudalism and imperialism block development but that this could be battered by establishing a 'national front' including the national bourgeoisie. Therefore, populism tends to argue that, in decolonizing society, there is no need for multiple, political parties which, like classes, are seen as 'unnatural creations', the result of colonial powers' attempts to divide and rule. Populism thus emphasizes the homogeneity of society, and even if—or just because—there is little real ground for it, populism tries to establish "a vision of unity" (Wertheim WF, 1972, p 210).

For similar reasons, regional, ethnical or religious differences are generally overlooked or trifled. If they are recognized, they are usually seen as basically non-antagonistic and, in any case, irrelevant after national freedom has been won. Sometimes, however, populist leaders have used foreigners or minority groups as scape-goats onto which social frustration has been channelled, thereby strengthening nationalist sentiments and diverting attention from more immediate internal problems (e.g. Hitler's Germany, Ayatollah Khomeiny's Iran, Israel's 'Palestinian problem' and the 'Indian problem' in Uganda). But generally the 'antination' is concretely defined as a foreign power and/or its domestic servants.12 Charismatic leaders using populist slogans have often

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12 The Third World state is currently under heavy debate and Beckman is probably right when stating that "the most radical critics of the performance of the African state are found at the African end" (Beckman B, 1988, p 28). But while Western writers tend to concentrate on 'neo-patrimonialism' and corruption and treating them as causes rather than symptoms, African critics stress the state's role as servant of the "interest of foreign domination, [and]...call for all patriotic forces to unite and eject the compradors from the state. On the one side stands, in such descriptions, imperialism and its local lackeys; on the other, an entire people who have everything to gain from stopping the bleeding of the nation's resources" (ibid). I do not try to trifle the evils of neo-imperialism (compradors, the debt trap, foreign efforts to destabilize unwanted regimes) but singularly focussing on external evils and assuming such high degree of unity and common interest is not
managed "to stand 'above' the contending parties or interest groups, and to consolidate the state by playing off one group against the other" (Wolf R, 1971, p 284). However, as argued above, charismatic legitimacy is weak and populist leaders have often reverted to dictatorship once the state has been captured.

Populist ideologies, like much cooperative ideology, commonly holds that the indigenous society is (or was) a 'natural Gemeinschaft', the moral order of which was distorted under colonialism and which today is threatened by the unnatural character of modernism and Gesellschaft. Populism's economic system, as it rejects class purpose, is a means for realizing a human society and not an end in itself. It can neither be described as 'left' or 'right'. It is a philosophy which tries to preserve traditional values which are threatened from outside and the basic conflict is not between classes but between societies. Populism is not hostile to development but seeks to avoid the Gesellschaft character of both capitalism and socialism, to preserve Gemeinschaft, but on a higher technological level (Hettne B, 1973:). It is quite natural then that in populist movements "cooperative forms of organizing the economy are strongly favoured (Worsley P, 1967, p 166; see also Worsley P, 1984).

Also socialism, with its vision of a harmonious, classless society, may be seen as a populist ideology. After independence, many new 'nations' defined themselves as African or Arab socialist states and they commonly saw cooperative organizations as essential ingredients of a socialist polity. However, the differences between socialist and other African regimes is not always very great and socialist programmes have generally denied the relevance of class struggle and materialism, instead emphasizing communality and moral virtues.13 Thereby 'socialism' gave only a vague direction for future development and, partly at least, obscured development problems. Cooperatives are far from the only 'popular' organizations that have been used as means for control and centralization in allegedly participatory and socialist countries. In a study of labour unions in four

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13President Nasser, for example, declared that the goal of the revolution was to create a "cooperative, democratic, socialist society", and in the 'National Charter', the objectives of the Arab struggle were defined as "freedom, socialism and unity" (Nasser GA, 1962). The Egyptian propaganda of the 1960s put society first. Society was the norm and measure of relations and conduct just as solidarity was a central value. Classes or class-struggle were not mentioned but the role of the state was. "Socialism was a doctrine of mutual socialism, of socialism and cooperation, very moralizing, carefully avoiding every revolutionary element and finally leaving the direction to Islam's dynamic mystique" (Carre O, 1971). Nasser's socialization was actually accomplished with thousands of known communists imprisoned and socialism actually strengthened the emerging middle class (Holmén H, 1989).
African states it was found that in 'socialist' states like Tanzania, Tunisia and Zambia labour unions were dominated by the single party and used to conceal conflict and to co-opt the leaders into the governments' machinery (Mattsson S & Mono R, 1977). The same has been the case in Egypt (Bianchi R, 1986). Likewise, in (previously) socialist Tunisia and in contemporary Ethiopia, rural cooperatives have been used by central authorities to co-opt peripheral groups or strata by way of giving them preferential treatment. In both countries, the co-opted minorities have been found to actively try to exclude others from joining the cooperatives in order to maintain their newfound privileges (Hopkins N, 1983; Ståhl M, 1989). In Ethiopia, the central government has even supplied these 'cooperative members' with firearms when rural conflicts have emerged (Ståhl M, 1989). If African and Arab socialism is thus best understood as a form of populism, non-socialist African states and right-wing regimes display similar features of cooptation, centralization and bureaucratic elephantiasis (see, for example, Crook RC, 1988 about Côte d'Ivoire, and Gyllstrom B, 1988 about Kenya). In a comparative study of (presently) capitalist Tunisia and socialist Algeria, Nellis found two highly regulated states with roughly similar economic performance and none could be deemed superior to the other as far as 'development' was concerned (Nellis JR, 1983b). Similarly, Zimbabwe, the latest African socialist state, officially assigning paramount importance to participation and cooperation, is described as an "example of how a 'Marxist-Leninist' party can be captured by the relative power of the anti-socialist, anti-collective interest groups" (Mumbengegwi C, 1986, p 10f).

As mentioned, populism is a somewhat confused concept, probably because so many have tried wrongly to place it on a left-right scale. Manfred Halpern thus states that "populism can be a mask for almost any program, or else a nostalgic emotionalism for no program but immediate satisfaction" (Halpern M, 1963, p 291). It has been declared that "populists are the rural reactionaries, in the countryside and in the cities" (Roxborough I, 1983, p 109). While populism has sometimes been used to hide the "aspiration for solidarity useful to the interests of post-colonial elites [and]... used consciously, it may... become a most conservative force, even a cynical cover for continuing privilege" (Arrighi G & Saul JS, 1973, p 175), it may also be used to challenge authority from a democratic perspective. Worsley, thus, asserts that "populism is essentially radical" (Worsley P, 1967, p 167). It needs to be stressed that just like praetorian rule may be either conservative, reformist or revolutionary (Huntington S, aa.), populism can be both reactionary and progressive and it can be fruitfully combined with development. Populism can "be used as part of a development strategy designed to maximize the chances of economic breakthrough in a poor country and, therefore, even be intended to work for the well-being of the masses themselves" (Arrighi G & Saul JS, 1973, p 175). Hettne, for example, finds it "instructive to view Maoism from a
The populist perspective (Hettne B, 1973, p 194). China's strategy of "controlled decentralization" (Jacoby E & Jacoby L, 1975), symbolized in "peoples' communes", being neither urban nor purely rural, is thus held to represent a viable alternative to the common conflicts between elite and masses as it reduces bureaucracy and spreads development, rather than concentrating it into already favoured groups, classes and regions.

**Cooperation and Decentralization**

We have found that the major obstacles to the use of cooperatives as development instruments emanate from excessive control of cooperatives and too deep external involvement in the local communities where cooperatives (are thought to) operate. Thus, lack of development, or cooperative success, in Africa is not to be explained by reference to 'peasant anomalies', but rather by anomalies of the state and of biased or misdirected Western development theory and 'aid'. The greatest contemporary obstacle to development in African countries is probably the parasitarian, unaccountable and highly centralized—but at the same time fragile—state, which is not likely to change as long as external support substitutes for the compulsion to promote productive forces and to develop structural links to the territory it 'governs'.

Currently, a mass of arguments are therefore presented, calling for decentralization of the Third World's political and economic systems as the fundamental prerequisite to get development 'off the ground'. Thus is advocated the strengthening of non-government organizations (NGOs), self-reliance on all levels, not only nationally but particularly on local and regional levels. However, the very fragility of the transitory state makes such shifts of policy-orientation extremely risky and, consequently, highly unlikely. It may therefore seem contradictory that not so few African governments currently officially advocate decentralization as the remedy to contemporary development challenges (Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea-

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14There is little doubt that NGOs can have a very significant role to play in micro-development in Africa. For a number of reasons, however, NGOs' comparative advantages (greater flexibility and responsiveness to local needs) are only potential advantages and seldom exploited. Far-reaching organizational changes have to be made when decisions are taken to move from relief to development (Fowler A, 1988), i.e. scale problems and the need for professional management may offset their initial attractiveness (see, for example, Holmén H, 1989b). NGOs' service delivery is seldom self-financing and to the extent that NGOs are supported by alternative non governmental aid organizations in the West, also such organizations are sometimes hampered by paternalistic attitudes from the supporting agencies (see, for example, van Hulten M, 1985). It is also so that external assistance to NGOs increasingly creates competition between NGOs and governments because the NGOs' finance is frequently taken from bilateral allocations and proportionally reduce government revenues (Fowler A, 1988).
Bissau, Tanzania, Tunisia). However, there is generally little consensus about the meaning of decentralization which may range from simply attempting to promote greater efficiency in central administration by relieving top decisionmakers of responsibility for routine matters to eliciting widespread participation in development policy-making by devolving functions to local governments or transferring them to the private sector (Cheema GS & Rondinelli DA, 1983, p 311).

Usually, no distinction is made between decentralization (transfer of authority to locally elected councils and private enterprises) and deconcentration (delegation of authority to local level officials of the central government, but with upward responsibility retained). This vagueness of language has enabled governments to concentrate power under the disguise of 'decentralization' policies. Political reforms, allegedly aiming at strengthening local administrative organs, therefore, do not necessarily entail any real transfer of decision-making power or increased local autonomy. While this is clearly so in contemporary efforts to promote local government in Egypt (Holmén H, forthcoming), illustrations of this dilemma are here taken from recent cooperative reforms.

In Tanzania the National Agricultural Cooperative Union was dissolved by government decree in 1976, due to political strife and widespread discontent with cooperative performance. In 1982 a new cooperative legislation caused many to believe that the reestablished cooperative movement would be less affected by blue-prints and red tape. Instead it came to mean strengthened Marketing Boards and tighter price controls (Mporogomyi KM, 1986; Nindi BC, 1986), thus establishing a "variant of para-statal farming rather than of producer cooperatives" (Raikes P, 1986, p 6).

President Sadat's much advertised 'open door economic policy' in Egypt, initiated in 1974, while providing new and lucrative opportunities to a small but influential class of urban technocrats and political leaders, actually brought with it intensified political control and a tighter grip over the agricultural cooperatives. Following conflicts within the ruling party and attempts by the chairman of the Central Agricultural Cooperative Union (CACU) to raise agricultural producer prices and to secure greater cooperative autonomy, the CACU was dissolved by presidential decree and its operations placed directly under the Ministry of Agriculture. Based on false accusations of fraud, the CACU board of directors were fired and the chairman placed in confinement (Holmén H, 1985, 1989).

Thus, while paying lip-service to 'decentralisation', it is not at all unusual that political reforms mainly result in delegation of residual tasks to lower level officials of central bureaucracies, while the central governments keep effective, albeit indirect, veto-rights over the daily decisions made by locally elected councils. It is often the case that
whereas politicians in most [Third World] countries speak loudly for democratic decentralization, in many instances, in practice, they themselves seem to be responsible for the delay in introducing reforms towards genuine devolution of power. On the one hand they are aware of the propaganda value of the slogan 'democratic decentralization'. At the same time, they foresee the danger [that] ...decentralization of decision making will deprive them of commissions and perquisites they are generally used to get from different groups of people in the localities (Valsan EH, 1971, p 5f).

For similar reasons the intermingled group of politicians, state-enterprise managers and top bureaucrats, making fortunes on bribery, on speculation in urban real estate, as 'consultants' and intermediaries between foreign companies and national markets, are seldom willing to facilitate the growth of free and productive enterprises in their 'own' countries. Fowler thus found "indications that the renewed decentralization efforts ...will in fact turn out to be decentralization within centralism, which is another way of saying that it will just bring 'top-down' micro-development closer to the people" (Fowler A, 1988, p 11). Thus is revealed

a kind of schizofrenia in developing countries about the desirability and feasibility of transferring powers and responsibilities from central ministries to other organizations. While local administrative organizations were given broad powers in some countries to perform development planning and management functions, adequate financial resources and qualified personnel to carry them out were often withheld (Cheerna GS & Rondinelli DA, 1983, p 297).

Also the behaviour of aid agencies is somewhat disassociated. Not only is it so that "donors' complex and distinct aid procedures and requirements... divert the recipient's scarce administrative skills—and policy analyses—from development management to aid management" (Lipton M, 1986). What is worse is that aid, in many cases, negatively affects indigenous savings and "often distorts the investment patterns in such a way that the productivity of investment falls" (Griffin K, 1986, p 43). One reason for this is that "the major motives of aid donors are not to increase efficiency and growth. Bilateral donors have made it clear that their primary motive is to promote the political, diplomatic, industrial and commercial interests of the country offering foreign assistance". (Ibid.) Aid-money's primary objective is thus to establish international goodwill for the donor. Not surprisingly, a recent study of the Swedish International Development Authority's (SIDA)effectivity noted that SIDA has "difficulties in learning from experiences". One reason is that its objectives are basically "political". Another that the agency is "obliged to spend money" (Widell L, 1988). Further, the great number of foreign aid agencies in any country not only adds to the administrative burden of the recipient country. "Faced with bottlenecks in the administrative system, donors seek ways to facilitate implementation by developing their own connections with key personnel in the system" (van Arkadie B, 1986, p 31). In
so doing, they may secure preferential treatment for 'their own' projects but at the same time they actually strengthen the tendency towards personalized and 'soft', rather than 'rational' bureaucratic behaviour.

A similar 'schizophrenia' is found in some recent writing on decentralization of Third World cooperative organizations. Savary, having noticed the shortcomings of supervised cooperation, makes inquiries for "a new theory of fast cooperative development" (Savary R, 1978, p 15). However, as exemplified below, (a new theory of) speedy cooperative expansion will most likely lead to renewed demands for large-scale public investments, for management and supervision from above—not to the (slow but steady?) growth of self-reliant activities.

Mabogunje (1980) argues for the necessity of a "big push" to transform African economies and establish new social relations. The 'modernization paradigm' in development theory of the 1960s used to argue for a 'big push', but then it was generally associated with 'big' urban investment and industrialization (see, for example, Rosenstein-Rodan PN, 1970). Today, Mabogunje argues, the push is instead associated with decentralized rural development. The push, he says, aims to alter peasants' perceptions of their physical and cultural environment as these perceptions are believed to hold development back. The push, therefore, must be swift and dramatic, making sure "that there can be no turning back" (p 121). The problem with Mabogunje's argument is that, while he advocates participation and development from below, and while he believes that cooperatives are the proper instruments for accomplishing the push forwards, he also states that "such massive rural transformation and growth of production ...depends, among other things, on how detailed the planning of the transformation is, and how well the various relevant programmes are co-ordinated" (Mabogunje A, 1980, p 147, my emphasis). Mabogunje further says that geography's major contribution to development is to provide information about appropriate sizes for organizing rural people in formal, non-traditional associations (Mabogunje A, 1981, pp 84ff). Similarly, Friedmann and Weaver, while arguing for decentralization and territorially based development, suggest that rural populations should be organized in spatial units which "range in population size from 20 000 to 100 000" (Friedman J & Weaver C, 1979, p 197). Organized by whom? In spite of the participatory rhetoric, we thus again find that the push is to be administered and supervised from above and outside.

Laidlaw, while arguing for increased local cooperative self-reliance, also underlines that

in many situations of great need, nothing much is going to happen without government initiative and intervention. The whole argument here is against massive government interference and State control over internal policies and management (Laidlaw AF, 1978, p 78; my emphasis).
However, the question of decentralization seems not primarily to concern "to what degree government intervention, even when apparently benign, should be accepted" (CERES, No.2, 1987, p 16). The question rather is whether such intervention should be accepted at all. Partial or gradual cooperative deofficialization is (the nature of the transitory, unaccountable state considered) not very likely to occur as long as availability of external resources substitutes for the development of internal capabilities.

For a number or reasons, the nearest to realizing decentralization many governments come is deconcentration. The fear among many governments to 'let go' of development and control is understandable, although counterproductive. But it is amazing how difficult it sometimes is for 'experts' on development and cooperation to appreciate the consequences of their own arguing.
4. Summary and Concluding Remarks on the Possibilities for Cooperation and Development

Geographical Implications of Organization-Building

Development is not only a complex and contradictory process. It is also a highly political matter. So is also organization-building aiming at development. As geographers we are interested in the spatial aspects of development—of the spatial distribution of power, the spatial consequences of investments and decision-making, and the long-term implications of spatial organization and reorganization. So far, the discussions have largely been concerned with hierarchial structures and vertical patterns of control and organization. Space, however, although it has so far been implicit in the analysis, is a key concept in (rural) development.

Looking, first, at the macro level spatial distribution of 'modernization' in Africa, we note that Africa is the least urbanized continent. Nevertheless, the urban-rural dichotomy is significant. On average, the rate of rural population in sub-Saharan Africa is 75% (compared to 50% in North Africa and 25% in Western market economies (World Development Report, 1987). Still, Africa is over-urbanized in the sense that urban population far exceeds the rate of urban trades or occupations in any country. Primate-city patterns dominate and although the average level of urbanization is low, an average 32% of urban population in sub-Saharan Africa and 34% in North Africa is concentrated to the largest city in the country. (Ibid.) However, urban growth has not been caused/accompanied by a simultaneous growth of manufacture and productive enterprise (only 9% of the labour force in sub-Saharan Africa is employed in industry (ibid.), but by a large influx of rural emigrants and rapid enlargement of tertiary employment. The small industrial sector is often capital intensive and labour saving why people tend to find employment in a fast growing bazaar economy, in petty trade or casual street employment.

To a high degree, the small modern economic sector of most African countries is concentrated to spatially limited enclaves. Generally, in the Third World, the labour and capitalmarkets of such urban enclaves tend to "decline rather steeply with distance from the centre, so that only a few miles out of town urban impacts may become virtually unmeasurable" (Friedmann J & Weaver C, 1979, p 175). Foreign or joint-venture com-
panies, located in these enclaves, are usually protected by licenses and patents. But, "since most patent-licenses given are in effect import-permits; since the majority of patents are unexploited in developing countries; and since patents are a block to technology transfer and foreign investment, patents are a means for limiting or restricting the flow of technology from the industrialized to developing nations" (Cooper et al. 1973, p 83). Not surprisingly, these 'semi-modern', externally dependent enclaves, the centres for national planning and public employment, are by many characterized as "parasitic" rather than progressive. They "make very little wealth-creating contributions to the economy, being centres of the non-productive bureaucracy, the inflated consumption patterns of the elite, and the teeming underemployed masses engaged in non-productive services" (Barke M & O'Hare G, 1984, p 228). But primate cities are not only concentrations of people, they are also centres of political and administrative power, the nature of which has been found to be both authoritarian, fragile and soft. For historical and structural reasons, most African governments have limited capacities to effectively promote development. Basically this is an effect of their lack of purpose and the common alienation from their constituencies."Governments which lack confidence in their ability to cope with the political and administrative consequences of an organized and mobilized peasantry cannot serve their poor rural majority and consequently cannot achieve real rural development" (Mabogunje A, 1981, p 85).

Paradoxically, the underdeveloped, agrarian countries of Africa are not only, generally, spatially polarized with the increasingly crowded and impoverished countryside systematically deprived of most incentives to develop. In most cases they are also overurbanized. The African economies (or at least their currencies) are generally overvalued and, more often than not, their state apparatuses are overdeveloped and repressive. To solve Africa's present development problems, all these distortions must be overcome.

Behind the visible spatial patterns of development and societal organization (distribution of population, production, investments) and underneath the visible manifestations of human activity (land-use patterns, ecological effects, communication networks) is found a variety of actors and an intricate web of interests, world-views, relations, (lack of) opportunities, understandings and misunderstandings. These factors all combine (sometimes reinforcing eachother and sometimes repealing eachother in patterns that change over time) to shape any arena, and sometimes they have very lasting effects on determining future development options.

Looking at both the types and numbers of actors involved in laying the foundations for future development, it should be noted that
...the ability of organizational and institutional actors, located in geographical space, to mobilize and allocate resources in geographical space (manpower, capital and information) and intentionally to structure the decision field of others (i.e. to constrain the decisions of others by policies, rules and commands). ...Both kinds of power (governmental and private economic) ...have the capacity to influence the location decisions of firms and households, the quantity, location and application of resources and the flow of innovations (Friedman J, 1973, p 12).

The spatial aspect of development is often overlooked or dealt with implicitly only. This is especially evident in literature on cooperation and development where technology, 'rationality', 'tradition' and 'class' are common subjects of discussion. Cooperatives have sometimes been denounced as 'capitalist' institutions, sometimes they have been seen as ingredients in the class struggle. Cooperatives have been used to conceal class (and other) conflicts. Hydén (1970) argues that class relations are necessary preconditions for cooperatives to evolve, and Harvey et al. (1979) suggest that cooperatives are only suitable for a an emerging commercial peasant class. However, as some of our examples have shown, classes or class consciousness are neither necessary for establishing cooperative societies, nor for operating them. What is more important is territorial self-determination. We have seen that this was one reason for creating cooperatives in the West in the 19th century. The fear of remote control and the inability to influence distant decisionmaking made many early cooperators oppose not only large-scale private enterprise but also state ownership of the means of production. Tonnies' Gemeinschaft is per definition local. As pointed out by Mabogunje, "the territorial basis of [cooperative] organization is critical because many of the benefits required from group effort are location-specific and, for farmers with their restricted range of mobility, 'perceptible interdependence' involves a high degree of spatial propinquity" (Mabogunje A, 1981, p 83).

Bearing the complicated and incomprehensive nature of development in mind, it is clear that both social and spatial concentration of adaptive and decision-making powers greatly reduces the opportunities to solve the present crisis. The centralized, transitory, African state is generally not strong or stable enough to lead or speed-up development. Often, however, it is able to impede or restrict development when it seems to occur outside its direct sphere of influence. Partly, as we have seen, this is a direct consequence of competition for power. Partly, it also has to do with how people assimilate information, how they structure and communicate their understanding of the world.

Everything that happens takes place in space. To solve occurring problems, to find appropriate solutions to local challenges, one must often have a kind of composite knowledge that is generally not possible from afar. Tornquist has pointed out that peoples' private worldviews, their daily life and local communities tend to be dominated by a 'natural' arena perspective. This allows them to take consideration of (invisible)
circumstances that can not be known, let alone imagined, from afar. The world of arenas, he further says, is "characterized by regional multiplicity and variation, by autonomy, self-reliance, closure and various forms of protectionism" (Tornquist G, 1981, p 218). The world of systems, on the other hand, i.e. the world of enterprise, of planners, politicians and development experts, is characterized by technical-economic rationality (ibid.) and by the splintering of knowledge into systematized, specialized, and thereby limited, fields and subfields. The 'systems perspective' is the perspective of foreign aid organizations and the urbanized, westernized and highly centralized African elite.

It goes without saying that when this centralized and systematized perspective is superimposed to govern the development of local and regional arenas—even when the planning authority is benign—the absence of a 'common language' (let alone the common scarcity of relevant, systematized data) adds to the conflicts caused by unequal relations, differing interests and needs. In a situation where power is concentrated both functionally and spatially, this leads to a waste of resources and lost opportunities.

Decentralization of power—spatial dissemination of initiative and responsibility—would thus, temporarily at least, multiply the opportunities to resolve the problems of underdevelopment, stagnation, and the threat of apathy that follows on repression and centralization. The cooperative form of organization thus constitutes, not only a resource saving institution, but also an ideal form of combining the perspectives of systems and arenas, of modernization and tradition, and to offer a bridge where culture would not be lost in the process of transition.

Cooperation Revisited

Having applied a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to the study of cooperatives and development, this study has tried to go beyond the particularistic interests and narrow perspectives that often tend to limit the questions asked and, hence, obscure our understanding of complex processes and phenomena.

As initially noted, cooperatives are economic enterprises owned by their members. Based on the principles of voluntariness and democratic control, the objective of cooperatives is to pursue activities for the benefit of their members.

Simplistic as this may sound, we have also found that expectations on the roles and possibilities of cooperatives in development have been far-reaching and exaggerated, to say the least. This has been particularly so when cooperatives (which is usually the case) have been used for purposes other than promotion of member interests, or where control and supervision has been from afar. The common use of cooperatives as
'delivery systems' in large-scale, centralized development programmes, based on long-term comprehensive planning, has not been successful. We have also found a common habit among cooperative theorists and ideologists to pursue 'higher' goals than the trivial running of daily affairs. In the end they often envisage some kind of utopian co-operative society populated by industrious and unselfish 'Homo Cooperativus'. One recent example is the ICA-president Lars Marcus' definition of the 'basic cooperative values'. These, he says, are "devotion, democracy, honesty and care" (Marcus L, 1988, p 21). While these are dignified values, and while we probably all need utopies as personal lode-stars, a more down to earth definition of the purpose and essence of cooperation would benefit cooperation and development more.

No wonder, criticism of cooperation has been extensive and sometimes it has been questioned whether cooperatives at all contribute to development. But also much of this criticism has been exaggerated and beside the point, reflecting the above mentioned common misunderstanding of the role of cooperatives in development. The latest decade's debate about cooperatives and the actors and factors influencing cooperative performance has led to a currently common notion that the major obstacle to cooperative progress in Africa is undue control and interference in the daily running of business. Legal restrictions on business activities, paternalistic management attitudes and neglected extension services in combination with (actual or factual) compulsory membership, and the use of cooperatives for tax-colling purposes, all stack the cards against rural development through cooperative means. The common use of cooperatives by central governments as instruments to coopt certain rural groups and strata in order to establish political support and relative central control over the countryside further mitigates the progressive use of cooperatives as rural change agents. Most contemporary writers on cooperation, rural administration and development use to stop their analysis there, concluding that what is needed is deofficialization of cooperative organizations within a general policy of decentralization.

While their argument is right, to stop at this point is to stop half-way. Development and far-reaching central policy changes are not brought forward by (good) argument but by necessity. This study has therefore tried to look behind the state that is recommended to decentralize, with the purpose to reveal:

a) the structural determinants of state function and behaviour in a changing world, and

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15 It also reflects a common desire to present sweeping generalizations which do not account for the variety of cooperative records in different regional and functional settings.
b) the conditions for and likelihood of decentralization which would allow cooperatives to operate as genuine self-help organizations in a local setting.

A major argument here is that liberalization will be necessary to make efficient use of scarce resources, to break the present trend of rapid social and spatial polarization and quasi-modernization, and to spread development—or rather allowing it to evolve—in a spatially dispersed pattern, reflecting the different regional and human realities of any country. But there is a very marked reluctance on most governments' behalf to let go of 'control over development'. A further notion is that while the national leaders and the ruling cliques may appear as strong and omnipotent, the transitory African state is basically both fragile and 'soft' and consequently with little capacity to direct development. The state is not (yet) the outcome of class struggle but rather both the target in, and place for, factional conflict. It lacks a structural imperative. This explains much of its ambivalence towards realizing genuine liberalization of political and economic life even when that is its official policy.

Cooperation and Development Reconsidered

Development, like nation building, is a slow and arduous process which, due to its very complexity, can hardly be governed, planned, or even predicted. Nevertheless, planning, control and strengthening of the central authority have so far been virtually the only strategies adopted. However, this has been made too early and only at a later 'stage' of development is it likely that comprehensive planning and coordinated 'development' will be effective.

While national rulers have been preoccupied with nation building and consolidation of power, often at the expense of development, foreign super powers have had their own dubious reasons to interfere in the 'development' of poor nations and to buy influence wherever possible. That such 'aid' has been politically motivated and that it has not had much with Africa to do is well known.

But also smaller and less powerful Western nations have been very much oriented towards development promotion in Africa. Generally, also these states have tried (perhaps unavoidably) to establish political and economic systems mirroring their own in Africa. Aid has been given with the aim to build 'benign' welfare states in pre-industrial African societies as welfare policies brought these governments to power in their own countries. It seems reasonable to state that the planning and development theories at the time of decolonization, which assigned such a prominent role for the state, had more to do with the role of the state in Western democracies of the time than with African realities. Assuming that the
Transitory African state apparatus could fill the same functions as the enlarged Western state apparatus was a fatal misconception. The remark is thus correct that governments and aid organizations from the First and Second Worlds have treated Africa as "a place where they can experiment with their political philosophies and ideas of new international, social, and economic systems (Borgin K & Corbett K, 1982, p 28). It is not true, however, that "the humanitarian element of international aid is ...of little importance". (Ibid.) This experimentation has generally not (as is sometimes claimed by dependency theorists) been the result of a conspiracy by the wealthy nations in a neocolonial scramble for Africa. On the contrary, aid has largely been given in response to African demands. It has not been forced upon Africa. Likewise, in all Western nations, there are articulate groups pressuring for extended aid for purely humanitarian reasons and quite often such groups do advocate non-government initiatives.

Nevertheless, as it would be (conceived as) disrespectful if former colonial powers refused to channel aid through the newly independent African governments, donors have indirectly come to strengthen repressive apparatuses and, in fact, delayed development. The result is a deepening crisis, manifested on the one hand by worsening poverty, declining agricultural output per capita, rural exodus, extreme spatial polarization, urbanization without modernization and, on the other hand, by a prolonged life for the soft and parasitic state, into which virtually all financial transfers have been poored. The conclusion must be that if Africa shall be able to recover, it must be left alone. It can not unscrupulously replicate, or be squeezed into, prefabricated models, organizational patterns and/or political and economic systems emanating from the rich, industrialized nations in the contemporary world. It must find its own way. Likewise, if Africa shall be able to recover, national decentralization, permission of local initiatives and facilitation of territorially based local and regional self-help organizations seem inevitable.

Although expectations about the role of cooperatives in development have often been exaggerated, misdirected and based on false assumptions, and while peasants too often have been prematurely deemed 'irrational', cooperatives can still play important roles in African development. That is, if they are allowed to function as cooperatives should do—as autonomous, voluntary, downwards accountable, self-help organizations, reflecting the needs and aspirations of the local population. Cooperatives do not easily fit into grandios, comprehensive, development schemes which need large amounts of coordination, administration and close monitoring. As a matter of fact, development is not of plans, models or theories but of something--of land, its people and their culture.
Each culture has its own specific, intrinsic values. These are positive resources, which are worth safeguarding, independent of the number of present-day conformists within the cultures, and worthy of survival through the evolution and changes which all cultures are bound to undergo (Haraldsson S, 1983, p 290).

But if Western or Eastern value-systems and modes of organization are no direct solutions to Africa, lessons can still be drawn from the history of the West, especially from the periods of nation-building and early industrialization. Europe had to endure centuries of wars, civil wars, and coups, and an enormous concentration of power, wealth and privileges before the transition into industrialization and capitalism could commence. Initially, the new system was characterized by spatially dispersed, small enterprises and simple technology, depending on local resources and (mostly) serving local and regional markets. Spatial and economic concentration, complex work processes, division of labour, alienation, narrowing economic freedom and the deepening of capitalism's nature artificielle came gradually as the system matured. It seems often to be forgotten that the west's development started with a great variety of small steps in a manifold of locations. We may ask with van Hulten: 'Why should it be different in Africa?' (van Hulten M, 1981, p 4).

But this transformation could not have been accomplished without a preceding period of liberalization. In the 18th and 19th centuries liberals like John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer and Adam Smith attacked the evils of royal letters of privilege and monopolies for guilds, merchants and manufacturers, arguing that reduced control over economic life would increase wealth. Laissez-faire meant not only 'survival of the fittest' or free trade for the rich. It also meant freedom of speech and organization. Liberalism, it was argued, would enable people to take charge of their own lives, socially and economically. However, "as soon as the bourgeois society had been established, liberalism had fulfilled its immediate mission" (Liedman SE, 1975, p 228). The state regained its role as guarantor of the system's stability and the interests of a new dominant class. A similar liberal interlude will be a necessary precondition for development to 'take off' in contemporary Africa as well.

Capitalism is still sometimes presented (as was common during the 'cold war') as the only solution to Africa's development problems. Hydén thus advocates decentralization and liberalization as a necessary precondition for promoting capitalism in Africa (Hydén G, 1983). Liberalization, however, neither means that today's underdeveloped countries must replicate the process the West went through 100-200 years ago, nor that capitalism is an unavoidable 'natural' outcome of a contemporary African liberalization. There is a difference of time and place. The international relations are different, the cultural background differs greatly and there is available today cheap and simple technologies that allows entirely different solutions.
Developing countries can learn from the capitalist nations' mistakes and from the present crisis in the industrialized world. Also the socio-economic systems of the First and Second Worlds currently seem to have reached their limits and the industrialized countries must find new solutions to environmental deterioration and economic organization. This coincidence in time may be to the advantage of the less developed countries as the examples set by the West and the East become less attractive both to export and to copy.

Arguments have been presented that what Africa needs is recipes for fast development and a "big push" from which it can not return. But the push has already been given. Cynically as it may sound, while 'aid' has not been very beneficial in raising food production per capita or in developing Africa's productive capacity, its effectiveness in curbing infant mortality and combating lethal diseases has caused the African population to grow at an unprecedented pace. Food shortages and lack of employment opportunities are common all over the continent. The crisis of Africa is real and, as argued above, the preconditions for development are thereby present. So far, however, Africa has been impeded to react on this challenge and

practically all the difficulties Africa is encountering stems from the fact that the Africans have been forced into a development that is not of their own choice... Left to themselves, they will pass through one crisis after the other, but they will survive—at a price. If, however, Europe and the U.S. continue in their efforts to change Africa into an image of their own world, insist upon interfering, and are adamant about further increased aid, the Africans will pay a much higher price — indeed, so high that a genuine, lasting survival is in doubt (Borgin K & Corbett K, 1982, pp 179 and 182).

We may conclude with Griffin that "the time may have come to abandon [development aid], to set ourselves the goal... of reducing it gradually... to the minimum necessary to meet humanitarian calls for emergency assistance" (Griffin K, 1986, p 44). With these conclusions one can only agree. A decade ago, Ul-Haq suggested that the countries in the Third World, in order to minimize dependence on and domination by the rich industrial nations, should take collective refuge behind a protective "poverty curtain" (Ul-Haq M, 1976). More precisely, this curtain would consist of joint dramatic devaluation of currencies, which would reduce expensive imports of unnecessary luxury items and high-technology, promote utilization of local resources, productive investments and exports, primarily between the countries of the Third World. This, however, is, generally, neither within the capacity, nor in the interest of Africa's political elites. It is probably an impossible task for Africa's rural poor. Such initiatives, if they at all occur, must therefore come from the industrialized world itself.
Conclusion

In the discussion about cooperatives, the argument was presented that local self-help actions will only be taken as a last resort, when there is no hope for outside assistance. The same reasoning seems to apply to the international level, at least as long as African states remain 'soft' and unintegrated. Termination of development aid and of external support to praetorian states might seem cruel in the short perspective. In the longer run, however, it would most likely force governments to reduce (albeit reluctantly) their direct interference in local and regional economic life. It would weaken governments, or rather, expose their weak societal base. At the same time, transitory state apparatuses, deprived of 'artificial' resources would become less attractive as targets in internal praetorian struggles. This would:

a) Turn the ambitions of many (able and rational) politicians and technocrats away from improductive public service careers towards private productive entrepreneuring in different parts of their countries.

b) In order to legitimize itself, the government would probably be forced to concentrate on guaranteeing minimal justice, provision of public goods and basic infrastructure.

c) The often weak agricultural extension services would most likely be rendered more effective if extension officers were directly employed by, and accountable to, local private and/or cooperative organizations. That would, most probably, lead to increased agricultural production.

d) A weakened central government would be less able to suppress political freedom, the freedom of speech, of association, and the dissemination of ideas. In the short perspective, the outcome is likely to be violence, wars, disintegration of countries and the drawing of new borders. In the longer perspective, however, it would allow true nations to be built and it would probably benefit development more. As underlined by others, the purpose of decentralization and the emphasis on territoriality is "not intended to sublimate conflicts into a greater harmony; it is to provide a legitimate forum for articulating conflicts and searching for appropriate means of resolution" (Friedmann J & Weaver C, 1979, p 204).

We can not tell where development from within and below may lead Africa. But we do know that the result of planned and expert-led development has not come up to expectations. The point to be made is that something will come out of the present crisis. It may be capitalism reborn, it may even be a cooperative society, or it may be something we can not
yet imagine. Hydkn is probably right when stating that it is not likely to be socialism, at least not directly, since socialism, compared to capitalism, represents a culture plus artificielle, demanding even more planning, coordination and detailed information (Hydkn G, 1983). Whatever the outcome of undisturbed African development might be, it is bound to end the present "synergy of pre-capitalism and market relations" which, in any case, is worse than no change at all (Gyllström B, 1985).

No matter where indigenous development may lead Africa, selfreliant cooperatives can save resources, spread opportunities among people and regions and ease the development burden both for the state and for certain less wealthy groups. But cooperatives will not be able to solve all development problems. Nor are they, generally, likely to be the proper tools for safeguarding the interests of people without means to contribute. The poor and the destitute are likely to benefit more from other measures. But viable local cooperatives may, if their profits remain in the territory or community, have spread effects and create demand for local goods and services, thereby providing work and income opportunities also outside the cooperative societies.

Although not necessarily utopian, it is less likely, however, that cooperatives will lead the way to a future Gemeinschaft on a higher technological level. But cooperatives do have important roles to play in local and regional development, at least until they again become 'degenerated' by the imperatives of a new mode of production. We should not expect more.
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Cooperatives often feature as formulae for the solution to the problems of finding the most efficient and humane way of organizing agricultural production in Africa—and elsewhere.

In this study Hans Holmén discusses the twin pair cooperatives and development, looking both at constraints and possibilities. It is a theoretical study, but firmly anchored in a variety of empirical works, on the basis of which the author build the discussion.

One of the conclusions of the study is that many perceived failures of cooperatives are the result of expectations that utopian goals will be fulfilled through the cooperatives. The author argues for a more down-to-earth definition of the goals of cooperatives. Basically, cooperatives are economic enterprises owned by their members. At the same time cooperatives do have a role to play in local and regional development, but it must be expected that they 'degenerate' after some time.

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