In a village in the Nubian desert we visit Amna, the “dktor’s” daughter. Like her sisters she is a beautiful girl, careful to hide her beauty, and her naturally curly hair under a veil. The “dktor” is only the local dresser, but his mudbrick house is fancy compared with the rest of the village, and it has a generator that is run for a couple of hours each day. Amna’s brother is in Saudia, working. For four years the area has been ravaged by drought and starvation. The Beja have lost 85% of their livestock during this period. This is the hottest corner of Africa. Amna’s brother has sent her an electrical apparatus. She shows it to me because she does not know its purpose. I recognize the thing. Its price is in the range of a monthly salary for a Beja stevedore in the harbour of Port Sudan. It is an electrical hair-brush-cum-drier-and-curler. As I explain this, Mohamed, the interpreter, exclaims: “Ah! But this is really development!” Tired from the journey, I lose my face of detached anthropologists. It is certainly not. I cannot hide that I get upset. People are starving. There is no practical need for this thing here.

In retrospect, I feel embarrassed by this memory. It became imprinted in my memory because of its narrativity but also because the situation somehow really disturbed me. An ambition to a respectful attitude to the life of these people was put at loggerheads with my contempt for what I apparently saw as expressions of shallow mass-culture. Rather than trying to sort out exactly what was the meaning of the items as a sign in a context, I was blocked by my reaction. Was there any reference to...
identity in the situation? Perhaps, but not as obvious as the reference to
development as technology for its own sake, and I did not look for it. The
brother-sister bond is one of those traits in Beja culture that the Beja
themselves single out as constitutive of Bejaness. Men have a primary
responsibility for their sisters, more important than their relation to their
wives or lovers as the interpreter himself would have said: waiting as he
was for his five sisters to grow up and be married before he could indulge
in marrying himself. Sisters should be clad and fed. As a brother you are
at the mercy of your sister´s vanity and neverending demands as many
young men complain. But Amnas brother in acquiring a curler
hypothetically makes a statement about being a proper brother: Little
sister, when everybody else is starving, I am a good Beja brother not
only protecting you from starvation but also providing you with the best
luxuries a girl could ask for.

Now I also find the memory illuminating, not of shallow ideas of
development as such, but, in a more reflexive mood, of the problems in
thinking of and researching about consumption, and of the moralistic
overtones any discourse on consumption is bound to be loaded with.

Miller, one of the leading proponents of an anthropology of
consumption defines the term “consumer” in the following way(p 1)
“While in economics to be a consumer is to have choice, ...I use the term
consumer in opposition to the aesthetic ideal of a creative producer...to
be a consumer is to possess consciousness that one is living through
objects and images not of one`s own creation...symptomatic of what
some at least have seen as the core meaning of the term modernity”
(Habermas 1987:1-44).
The term “Consuming” as a metaphor evokes a large range of meanings. There is the economist’s image of the choicy consumer weighing different alternative options offered by the market. There is the image of the passive (or duped) consumer just taking whatever he is fed or falling in an uncritical way to all the traps and temptations of the market. There is the notion of the wasteful consumer feeding on the environmental base like a saphrophytic plant, living according to a slogan popular in Sweden in the 50’s “buy, wear, discard”. (Other possible images relate to “eating power” such as the Swahili political metaphor of a voracious powerholder feeding on and consuming his power base.) “Consumer culture” evokes the idea of mass-produced and mass-marketed goods, cheap and inauthentic stuff of little meaning or aesthetic value apart from being signs of that the owner has afforded them.

Miller criticizes a moralistic attitude that he found significant of most early scholarly writing on consumption, but which is of course also often part of popular and less reflected negative stereotypes of consumption and consumerism, not only when relating to consumption in the Third World, but also in relation to industrial societies. It might be instructive to look closer at the basis for this negative evaluation. Miller (2) using words such as denigration, superficiality and depthlessness relates contempt for contemporary Third world consumerism and anthropological lack of interest in the same to the “rootlessness” of a posteriori cultural differences. These are in his vocabulary differences not emanating from history and tradition but created by the varied reactions to institutions once assumed to be homogenizing.
The term “consumer” and “consumption”, typically, are not “experience near”. They belong more to the observer’s vocabulary than to the actors’. They fit in macro-analyses of society or in depreciating ways of talking about our neighbours conspicuous flashing of resources rather than in the way we describe our own habits. If I buy milk, or a curler, I would not naturally think of it myself as consuming. Also, experience-near considerations make the ambiguous time referent of the concepts evident: the milk is consumed when I finish it, but what is the moment of consuming the curler? The concept “consumption” suggests something different both from acquisition and from use, the destruction of the commodity and its replacement: a lack of durability, a superficiality of attachment.

One could also argue that it is the apparent neutrality of commodities that both allows for the varied investment of differentiated meanings and creates the basis for the onlooker’s contempt. I see the curler and think of overrating of technology and waste of money, not a brotherly recognition that yielding to the sister’s vanity is a sign of love.

The image of the Third World consumer that is presented by recent anthropological studies (summarized eg. by Miller 1995) is hardly the passive recipient of the homogenized Western consumer culture. It is an image created within the context of a new, in itself morally charged discourse on the purpose of anthropology as to assist in the reclaiming and recognition of agency to those who have been unfairly described, departing from a definition of social and human worth which has been summarized by Taylor (1985: 257)” to be a person in the full sense you have to be an agent with a sense of yourself as an agent, a being which can thus make plans for your life, one who also holds values in virtue of which different such plans seem
better or worse, and who is capable of choosing between them ". What is emphasized is the local appropriation and adaptation of commodities, the constructive recontextualization and investing of new meanings in commodities as signs. The form of marketed goods might be universally the same: the substance of meaning is different, it is up to free and creative choice the paradigm says.

To a modern anthropologist, thinking of meaning in terms of its situational and contextual nature is nothing strange, nor is the idea that commodities may acquire different meanings during different stages in their “biography”. (Kopytoff ) and that the sender of a sign or a message may imply something different than somebody who later reads it or interprets it. However, to get back to non-academic contexts, it might be difficult for laymen to accept that the meaning of a commodity may be different or more profound to somebody else than it is to oneself, just as it was difficult for my self as pre-post-modernist anthropologist when confronted with what I saw as a totally redundant electrical curler among curly people in the hot desert. Everyday thinking about mundane things has to assume that not all meaning is negotiable: otherwise life would be unbearable.. As laymen we are stuck in our own cultural frameworks of defining taste and distinction: the negative load of the concept of “consumers” is also a statement of where goods cheaply available on a mass scale fit in our own ranking systems for art or material culture. Miller suggests that contempt relates to that third world people appear to loose their original assumed cultural specificity by getting involved in consuming, but to that should be added that they also are assumed to approach mass consumption in a non critical way which does not allow for recognition of quality, taste or distinctions implied by our ranking of commodities. I will come back to this issue of non-anthropological
reactions to consumerism below, because I think they are of importance to the possible reception of anthropological images of consumption in the sphere of development.

Can development work build on the motivations that govern consumption? What would the implications of thinking of aid recipients in terms of consumers be? These were the questions given to me as I was asked to talk about development, identity and consumption. These three terms are all words which have the ambiguity of being used within particular traditions of anthropological and sociological analysis and at the same time broadly circulated both in public debate and in the field of development work. As I understand the context of the present conference, it is one where we expect internal anthropological debate to contribute also to the practice of development, that is, to planned efforts to improve social and economic conditions in the Third World, summarized by the term development. If the anthropological reappraisal of consuming rejects the moralizing angle of earlier studies and of popular attitudes to the mass-consumption by others, in a general ambition to give credit to the Other’s agency and creativity, is this a message that will be useful for development practice and can it be conveyed? It is necessary in this context to consider the complex relation between the categories we use in social science, and those which are activated in the bureaucratic practice of development organizations, and the problems of communication that they give rise to. Development discourse, is here taken to define a space in which only certain things can be said and only in certain ways by certain people, a set of mutually reinforcing linguistic forms, propositions and assumptions which make it difficult to see or depict the world in alternative ways. This discourse is intermediately placed in the field between public debate and popular
ideologies and development theories in the social and behavioural sciences. Thus we must ask what shapes the interaction takes between science and the textual practices of policy formulation, planning and legitimisation take? How is it affected by the fact that bureaucratic structures themselves are placed in fields of tension generated by public discourse in the media and kept vital by the development of various “new social movements”?

To work in the development sphere, at least in the country I come from, Sweden, implies working within a framework where key ideological concepts are continuously activated in order to legitimise bureaucratic action and to motivate to the taxpayers expenditures without obvious returns. Catchy slogans follow each other in the organisational texts as the years pass by. Consultant reports from applied scientists tend to change more according to such fads than according to scientific progress..

Theory development in anthropology has always been about finding out about our own biased categories and learning to transcend them and their in-built ideological biases. Many of the terms used are highly specific to anthropology and yet others are identical to terms used in political discourse. There is a limit to the extent to which we can form new abstract terms which do not match the language in which people in their everyday life talk about society and culture, and still make ourselves understood. The problem is however not only one of a highly technical jargon, which the anthropologist could translate into simpler language for the benefit of the layman, but also that the very use of language differs between the scientific, political and bureaucratic sphere. When I myself
have interacted with staff at SIDA (i.e. the Swedish agency for international aid) or attended SIDAsponsored conferences I have noted in myself a certain impatience with their abstract way of expressing themselves. SIDA staff in turn tend to find academic discourse overly abstract. But there are abstractions and abstractions. SIDA discourse like any bureaucratic discourse depends on the use of broad generalizing categories. It aims at simplifying decisions by making simple categories of action and clients,. Yet at the same time it works with relating its terminology to the political idiom in order to mobilise legitimacy, and therefore also characterised by a number of value prescriptive catchwords, which tend to change over time with political exigencies. These are abstract, as all political rhetoric, in the sense of capable of extended interpretation and with multilayered references based on the need for enrolling large support by linking specific issues to encompassing programmes (Callon 1986, Latour 1986) They are words such as "people’s participation" "sustainable development", "integrated rural development", "democracy" and most recently "civil society" and "institutions". Political language uses such terms as abstract slogans which are aimed to be inclusive, to cover by the same term as wide and ambiguous phenomena as possible. Some of them emanate from the idiom of public and medial discourse, other from the international development lingo, others from the applied sub-branches of varying disciplines. Scientific language in contrast strives to precision, draws boundaries, selects certain aspects as more or less significant for the analysis and analyses and structures the content of terms like "development" or "culture" in order to make them sharper tools for dissecting reality.
As argued above, the relation between the discourse that the anthropologist as a scientist produces, and political and bureaucratic discourses is complex. Inspired by Foucault, a number of social scientists such as Smith (1990) or Callon and Latour (1983) have written on the discourse power of scientists. This refers to the influence that scientists have in formulating the discourse which political and administrative powers use, providing for them arguments that can be used to prop up policy and give legitimacy to practical action, and names with which to categorise reality. Callon and Latour make a point of how social scientist help in macro-structuring society by creating handy labels. Among those who have specifically dealt with development organisations in this way are Escobar (1995) and Fergusson (1990).

The flow of scientific results, arguments and idioms into the world of practical administration is by no means unproblematic. On one hand, the discursive agendas of the politician or the bureaucrat, through the "market mechanisms" of funding and job descriptions, constrain the anthropologist. On the other hand, the authority of science implies that a certain number of catchy terms make their way from academia to the worlds and words of policy-makers, enhancing the aura of legitimacy by an assumed scientific base. Scientific results or modes of expression spill over into the bureaucratic discourse through various linkages - the activity of scientists within the bureaucratic structure, the formal channels of education, mass-medial representations, the knowledge seeking activities of administrators.

Between social scientists and administrators language similarities are not only to the advantage. The vocabulary of sociology has a familiar ring to
the administrator (cf Wilensky) a phenomenon which is both increased by the usurpation of everyday terms into the scientific jargons of i.e. sociology and anthropology, and by the fact that more special scientific terms seem to be lent into administrative discourse in order to create legitimacy. The administrative actors have an interest in presenting themselves as closer to science than they are, for a scientific base is a main source of legitimation for administrative action. At the same time the diffusion of purportedly scientifical arguments undermines the scientists claims to have an exclusive access to understanding and the acceptance of what they offer. Taking this into consideration, I would hold it likely that as ´consumption´ becomes a popular trope in social science, it will also swamp development discourse, but with less strict boundaries maintained towards the more mundane connotations of the concept. The creative consumer of anthropology may in the process take back his shape of uncritical victim to mass marketing.

What has over time been the link between development thinking and consumerism?

Ufford and Schoeffeleers (1988:13) explain the breakthrough of the concept of development after World War II with that it to begin with was an "open" concept, which did not necessitate any particular political programme or any particular process of change. It seemed to give legitimacy to the already developed states to evaluate the potentialities in the third world and formulate new plans to put them into reality. It appeared to offer a common platform for all political directions, and a promise of a better future for newly autonomous states.. An efficient political and ideological slogan is the one that can be interpreted in
many ways and thereby join contradictory standpoints on subissues around a common, strongly emotional value. When we talk about development it has usually been assumed that the concept means the same to all people - that it can summarise a number of complex, desirable processes in one ideal, united and morally correct direction of history. Among the different aspects which are included are values such as raised productivity especially in terms of market production, increased rationality and control over the environment, economic growth, subsistence security, egalitarian integration in larger economic and political systems, increased literacy, enhanced formal opportunities, preparedness and capacity to take part in democratic decisionmaking, more equal distribution of resources, gender equality, better health and so on. All these aspects were joined in the internationally widely spread ideology that dominated the scene of development aid from the fifties up well into the eighties.

Explicit formulations of consumption-related issues do not abound in the texts expressive of this ideology, despite its emphasis on production for the market. (Note: This is perhaps reflected in the fact that Escobar in his otherwise illuminating volume only touches upon the issue of consumption passingly.) In development practice, market arrangements for selling goods have been more of a concern than ensuring that there is a secure inflow of commodities. Being able to consume whatever one sees necessary is generally implicitly assumed to follow from market integration leading to such values as e.g. better health. The pastoral communities in NorthEastern Africa where I have worked have certainly born witness to that willingness to market animals does not necessarily give enough purchasing power to secure a continuous inflow even of
simple commodities such as sugar or maize or more sophisticated items in demand, such as syringes.

Production-oriented development in the Third World - even if it is ultimately related to the need for commodities in more wealthy regions of the world - has also the practical aspect of being translatable into feasible, localized projects. If contrasting a consumer-oriented approach with a production oriented one, as is done in the programme text for the workshop, we should remember though, that while the present anthropological interest in consumption relates to meaning and identity, aspects of production that relate to the same concepts have also rarely been taken into consideration in development work. Neither production, investment or consumption can be understood from an entirely materialist point of view: performative production may be as varied in its meaning as performative consumption. Life quality may be related to satisfactory tasks, but has not regularly been problematized in that way by mainstream development discourse, where work and output tend to be measured by the generalized and standardized values set by the idiom of the market economy. In governmental aid organizations in the West, the World Bank still rules as the ideological center. To the extent that development aid as a matter of governmental assistance has a future, it is not very likely that the general economistic and growth-oriented ideology in which it is inscribed will change.

In the sense of an emulation of western consumer goods international development activity has thus probably contributed to consumerism in Africa less by its ideational message, and more by the fact that while
developmentalism has offered a legitimating ideology for the post-colonial elite, consumerism has given the same elite a tool for symbolically expressing their distinction. In many of the African countries, civil servants and state employees have formed the basis of national and local level elites. The state is an important structure of economic opportunities, providing key to vital economic assets as well as to political power. When institutions such as Western-model government structures, project-oriented organizations or firms are replicated in Third World countries, the ideology, with its emphasis on rationality still serves well as a source of legitimation for the superiority of the scientist, planner and entrepreneur, which appears to crosscut ideological and ethnical divisions.

Boesen and Raikes (1976:65) have in the Tanzanian context discussed the legitimizing functions of a modernization ideology that demands the active involvement of bureaucrats, experts and planners in terms of how it strengthens the dominance of the latter and ties together the interests of individual bureaucrats and the class in general. The core of such an ideology, they write, is the belief that modernization has to be brought about by the educated minority, leaders in administration, party and parastatal organizations, not only by actually expressing their power, but also by illustrating the advantages of development by a higher standard of living and a "modern lifestyle". In his book on elite cultures in Liberia ( ), Cohen emphasizes that performance in "elite" culture has a double audience. A shared culture is important for spatially dispersed elites to be able to interact efficiently within themselves: but the elite must also distinguish themselves from the rest, and legitimate their separation in cultural terms. As already Fallers (1966a:148) noted, at least in many
African cultures, there is no natural candidate for a local culture to build any elite or national culture on, leaving a vacuum where modernization ideology fits in well. But while the legitimating ideology projects development and modernization as goals necessarily beneficial to the society at large, the need for distinction demands that the same dimensions also become a basis for ranking and inequality between social categories and individuals.

More recently, Rowlands (1987:37) has elaborated on similar issues and described how the Cameroonian elite, through their consumption patterns consolidate a sharedness, linked to the present in the international, linear, measurable time and opposed to various incompatible times and identities based on diverging origins and traditions.

One of the interesting aspects of the ideology of development in its traditional form is that it makes it possible to link the temporalitites of individual careers and that of the developmental status of the larger collective. In "modern" society, the two most important ways to link oneself up with progressive change is by signs of education and by acquiring 'modern' consumer goods (however these are locally defined at that particular moment). Both can in themselves be objectifications of change at an individual level. As in the case described by Rabo, writing on Syria and Jordania, education is seen as both instrumental to development, a symptom of development, and legitimating rewards in the form of shares in the profits of development. Ultimately the individual's
duty is to get educated, and the state's duty is to reward the individual as well as to develop the country at large.

In an early attempt at the anthropology of consumption, Fallers (1966b:403) commented on the societal "trickle-down" of fashions in the US and other parts of the West in the early fifties, suggesting that "The individual who is rewarded for his striving by the trickling-down of status-symbolic consumption goods has the illusion, and not the fact, of status mobility among his fellows. But in terms of his life history he nevertheless has been rewarded with things that are valued and to this degree his striving is quite "realistic". Similarly, whether presented as a life-style model by a local socio-economic or political elite, or just conveyed from international or national elites" through mass-media, modern consumer goods become important in defining a life career. This is well illustrated in Fuglesang’s monograph on teenage girls in the ancient town off the Kenyan coast, where "fashion", defined by Western, Arab and Indian popular culture communicated through videos and cinema, represents a continuous emphasis on innovation as part of "modern" Lamu lifestyle.

In a situation of change perceived in terms of progress, individual careers may take form of a double distinction: the person distinguishes himself from his former self as well as from those who are considered to be left at a lower stage of civilization, modernity or development. Self-development becomes not only the growth from child to adult, but from backward to civilized, from "savage" to "savant", from animal to human. People's general interpretation of the direction of societal change, and
their place in this change, may also shape the way they conceive of their own biographies. As Berger noted, not only did the human life course provide a metaphor for societal development, but the "biography of the individual, with its particular hopes and expectations, derives meaning from the societal purpose - the individual's own life is perceived as having the right to an 'upward and forward' direction..." In this progress, the individual believing in societal development could expect to be inscribed both in an individual career and experiencing societal improvement.

Individual action then takes place in a space defined by what the individual conceives of as signifying development and modernity, by the situational advantages of emphasizing or deemphasizing this value, and the available repertoire of behavioural signs and material symbols of modernness.

There is yet another angle to the postwar western linking of consumerism and the idea of development, another aspect of temporality which may however have changed more recently and altered the degree to which the developmentalist image of a history of unidirectional technological and economic progress resonates with public conceptions. “Modernity” as a sociological term usually denotes the opportunity to choose between alternative values seen as relative and situational, the increased importance of acquired rather than ascribed roles etc. Such a concept does not necessarily imply any particular temporal ranking of the alternatives, and it obscures certain aspects of how “modernity” is popularly conceived. “Modernity” as a post-war western folk concept had definite temporal aspects. Firstly, rather than emphasizing free
choice it contains a reference to the pressure of time-specific collective opinions on individual option. Secondly, fashions were not just seen as forever changing. Like technological improvements they were placed along a continuum of improvement and progress. Not only by acquiring types of goods from which one had been barred before, but also by swapping them for newer versions, one was also supposedly constantly consuming something which was better. Fashion would not revert to that which had passed. The ideology of consumption was thus homologous to that of development.

To the extent that “development” was ever accepted as an expected reality by wide sectors of African population, the idea of a continuous progress has nowadays been questioned by the realities of war, structural adaptation and disease. The narrative of unidirectional change has also been seriously changed by post-modern intellectual debates in the West, and present day consumerism in the west appears to be more geared to an image of momentary determined fashions where retro-styling is common and recycling a theme. Whether a similar loss of directionality of consumption ideology has occurred in Africa is perhaps a matter that should be investigated empirically. The message propelled by international aid has certainly become more diversified, partly in response to changes of popular ideologies in the West which relate both to global solidarity and to consumer attitudes. Political changes in the 1980's and 90's, and in particular environmentalism, has put some of the basic assumptions of dominant Western development ideology under question, even if it has not really threatened its hegemonic position. A contributing factor has been the growing belief in development projects
managed by Non Governmental Organizations, which in themselves often form part of what has been called “New Social Movements”.

“New social movements” are movements such as movements in support of women’s rights, black consciousness, environmentalism, New Age spiritism, animal rights, Fourth World solidarity etc. They represent economic interests less than ambitions to enable the members to realize their own identities, often supposedly denied, diminished or suppressed aspects of their identity, challenging the dominant social political and economic system. These movements have been seen as symptomatic of modernity (in the sociological sense) and consumerism in that they depart from a view of life-styles as optional, working as it were on the market of identities. Often however, their ideologies also involve elements of reshaping consumption patterns, as part of an ambition to personal transformation as well as to a new way of relating to some global issue. They involve “arenas of daily life: what we eat, wear and enjoy...” (Johnston, Larrana and Gusfield (8). They also mediate a demand for new types material symbols standing for the rejection of consumer ideology, naturalness or authenticity in contrast with what is presented as the constructed needs prevailing in a frustrating society.

Johnston et al ( ) summarize the postmodern morphological social changes that NSM researchers such as Melucci have presented as driving behind the formation of NSM: “material affluence, a overload of information, confusion over the wide range of cultural alternatives available, and system inadequacies in providing institutionally based an and culturally normative alternatives for self-identification”. Obviously,
these are not all problems that are evenly distributed over the world between rich and poor, even if the existential problems of shaky access to “institutionally based and culturally normative alternatives for self-identification” may be a prevalent predicament also for example in many African societies shaken by AIDS, drought or structural adjustment measures. However, the sociologists’ etic interpretations of the causes behind the proliferation of NSM are not directly matched by the movement’s own emic raisons-d’etre. Many new social movements have a claim to globality by their preoccupation with apparently global and universal problems, such as the environment or gender issues, and extend their solidarity to people in the Third World, who thereby do not only become partners to the movement but also living symbols of the movement’s globality. They are made to stand for the negation of prevalent structures with all their artificiality and instrumentality, and often embody in a more drastic way what is perceived as problems shared by the movement’s followers.

To turn to the exotic in order to find alternative utopias and models or scare images to be used in discussions of the society of ones own is common. In the environmental context you turn to other cultures to find people who do not only maintain a "holistic" attitude to nature but also live according to such a pattern: the women´s movement find in the Third World alternatively sisters suffering from universal oppression or proof that there are societies where women are strong: New Age adherents find in “traditional societies” people still keep the contact with spiritual aspects that we have lost, etc. To a considerable degree, these images represent turning the value load of earlier stereotypes on the head: what has in other periods been used as the basis for denigration, such as for
example “naturalness” is inverted as a weapon in a charge against the ills of civilization.

These aspects affect our attitudes to how people in such areas live, and also the self-image that they themselves get reflected to them through mass media and through the activities of authorities, NGOs and aid organizations. International opinion creates an opportunity for local populations and powerholders to integrate the environmental argument into the rhetorics of power and resistance.

Anthropologists have long analyzed the role of Christian mission in preparing ground for colonialism. Reforms of personal morality, body discipline and time handling were part of Western expansionism. That the morality of the client is still a relevant issue to donors of international aid is easily concealed by the fact that bureaucratic culture defines itself as value neutral. With the increased importance of NGOs in international aid, there is also a widened scope for explicitly normative frameworks of interaction. To qualify as good receivers, recipients may have to adapt to moralized schemes involving demonstrations of e.g. self-restraint, humble behavior, time consciousness, "developmindedness", eco-awareness or freedom from sexism.

Moral tensions may exist both abstractly at the macro-scale, between the ultimate receivers of aid and the taxpayers and be actualized by the everyday social relations of aid itself. Staff embodying the interface between international bureaucracy and local norms are classic carriers of moral dilemmas. Moralized interpersonal conflicts evolve between staff and local receivers or mediators, around differing concepts of the nature of the exchange and of the involved roles. Is the aid worker a solidaric friend, a protective patron or a bureaucrat with disinterested integrity? Are people "givers-receivers" or "equal partners"? Do the recipients claim human rights or the status of a deserving case for alms? Or are they seen as co-fighters in the same struggle?

Morality can be seen both as a disposition (habitus, or hexis Oakeshott 1962 qu. by Connerton 1989, Holm 1994) and as the reflective observance of moral rules or
application of the same. But morality is also a basis for interpreting the world, and for creating legitimating narratives. When we talk about the moral encounters at the practical level of development project work, conflicts may take place in terms of individual rights and obligations or standards of behaviour, but the master narratives of development discourse as well as more popular versions of an orientalizing cultural heritage are always there as a potential backdrop. Images of differences in moral qualities are important explanatory assumptions in the interpretations these ideologies offer for the patterns of history. There are both similarities and differences between missionary discourse on e.g. Africa and secular development discourse: but as Karp notes, these differences mainly relate to how explicit the moral coloration is (199:7). For example, "discipline" in colonial rhetorics has its correspondence in the idea of "social training" (to create trust, trustworthiness, social commitment etc) as a necessary part of development work. With the expanded role for Non Governmental Organizations as mediators of aid, the distinction between missionary/religious activities and "secular aid" is not all that clear.

In Karp's analysis, development discourse ties up with orientalist and colonialist thinking by the way it defines the other in terms of agency, morality and personhood. Yet, he argues it has a particular twist by doing so by implications and assumptions, and also by not simply exoticizing the "others" but by defining them as exceptions to the universal rules that govern human history. "Development discourse...can not explicitly exclude or marginalize the very agents whom it addresses and strives to transform. Instead it defines the subjects of development as exceptions whose very exceptional nature is the problem that development theory seeks to understand and development practices seek to transform". (Ref to KAMAP).

Other moral issues arise from the very structure of the relation between aid giver and aid receiver, whether they are seen individuals operating in a given local situation, or as representatives of structural positions and macro-categories. One of the fundaments of the anthropological insight is that there are two essential ways of interpreting human cooperation. One is transactional and based on reciprocity and exchange between two autonomous and distinct units or carriers of agency, be they individuals
or social groups. The other form of cooperation is based on solidaric sharing between people defined as belonging together on the basis of some form of spiritual or material conessentiality, or if you wish, identity. (Gudeman, in a forthcoming book, wants to launch a reconstruction of the term “commons” for the material expression of the shared essence). This basic form ranges from, at the most concrete level, the relation between a mother and her children, to ideological claims for universal human solidarity at its most abstract level.

Simmel who uses the term "organic solidarity" for this type of conessentiality juxtaposes such organic solidarity - which he claims to give more secure rights to the poor - to help that is given with "suitability" or an instrumental purpose in mind, even if the instrumental purpose is to achieve an abstract religious value (Simmel 1971: 153 See Johansson: 185). Divine blessing enters as a force outside the particular link between the giver and the receiver, it has nothing to do with reciprocity as a relation.

The principles of rightful sharing vs exchange are also the ones we have to depart from when we consider the moral overtures of international assistance, or social work within modern society. In the context, we cannot see these forms of cooperation as exclusive and absolute categories but rather as paradigms of interpretation, between which the various ideological readings of assistance may be swerving, offering alternative arguments to the involved partners. Their limits are not clearcut. In particular, the distinction between conessential sharing and reciprocity is additionally blurred by the fact that the acceptance of a gift in itself involves inferiority, loss of power (Mauss, 1990:74 van Gennep, 1960:29, Blau 1964:28) and of agency. Read with inverse signs, there is in accepting a gift a transfer of hierarchical status, gratitude and prestige which may be seen as reciprocal compensation.

Exchange, as stated above, presupposes the idea of different agents. The need to stress that something is an expression of conessential sharing is on the other hand not seldom associated with a notion of different degrees of agency. It is the lack of agency on the receiving part which precludes reciprocity: yet conessentiality motivates assistance. Yet not all those who seem to lack agency are equally worthy recipients. The will and competence to act is strongly morally loaded. To be worthy of assistance, however, you either have to be less than a person in this sense, or at least a person
who does not wilfully refrain from using his agency. Thus, when lack of agency is implied, its nature becomes a subject of discourse and debate. It can be related to three different levels (at least). First, it is a matter of personal assets, such as health, skill and competence. Secondly, the morality and willingness to act is made relevant. And thirdly, various external structural and situational constraints may be recognized to act upon the individual. This is not just limited to Western contexts: for example, such considerations are explicitly made in local clan deliberations over stock redistribution to the empowered by the Borana at Waso in Kenya. Anybody who belongs to the clan, even if he comes from Ethiopia, has a right to a basic breeding core of stock: but he must prove that he did not lose his former herd by negligence or wastefulness, but through factors outside his own control.

Development discourse, and the problems met in international development aid, have many parallels in social work in the North. Historically, too, the "othering" processes structured by class relations and those structured by colonial relations have had much in common (See e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff (1992:215-233, Herbert 1991) They have tended to draw on the same basic metaphors of control vs chaos, rationality vs irrationality, adulthood vs childishness, masculinity vs femininity, humanity vs beastliness. In the Northern European debate about social benefits, the issue of the worthy client is a well-known problem (Howe 1985). One important criterion is the prospective clients assumed preparedness to deal with their own problems by own initiatives.

Georges Midre (1990) analyzes the considerations that through Norwegian history have governed the delimitation of socially acceptable begging as well as the definition of groups worthy to receive alms and social security benefit. He notes that public interference which is not based on universal rights presuppose delimiting rules, and that these tend to have three dimensions (Gunnarsson 1993:63) The first, moral in nature, relates to the desire of the aided individual to support him or herself, to work for himself. The second and third relate to the personal assets and resources the beneficiary have for supporting him/herself, and to the market for his participation in production. Lack of health, a handicap, old age and the modern period, lack of education, are seen as forms of resource deficits that make assistance morally acceptable. Although these three dimensions, all related to a strong working ethic, are
always there, their importance has varied. Emphasis is often on one dimension in particular: the moral dimension dominated in the 19th century and at the turn of the century, while the 20th century has been dominated by resource- and market perspectives. The market dimension had a breakthrough in the seventies in the context of leftist arguments about the duty of society to look after the weak, expanding the category of worthy clients to include not only the one who is incapable of working (such as for a prototypical example, the old, sick woman) to also include those who are willing to work but jobless (Gunnarsson 1993:158, Wallentin 1988). Yet what has constant throughout seems to be that one way of questioning somebody's right to get assistance is to question that person's own willingness to act. Gunnarsson (1993:87) remarks, in a manner parallel to that of Karp on development discourse, that the trend in the discourse about social work on the surface has de-emphasized morality, but that this does not mean that morality has disappeared, only that it has to be looked for in a more indirect way.

There are obviously direct convergences between this history of thought in social work and the history of the master narratives that have governed development thinking, from the moralizing, racist discourses of colonialism, via the "personally incapable-culturally-backward" terminology of modernization theory and the consecutive reactions of structural dependency and neoliberal market theorizing.

Ideas similar to those on the unworthy social aid client - who does take on responsibility for his or her own social emancipation- can still be discerned in in the debate on aid dependance. Aid dependency can be seen as a structural problem, or be related to the strategic use of aid as a resource by the leadership of a country, but there is also often a slip-of-thought from the structural level to the level of the psychological preparedness of individual aid recipients. At a high level of policy formulation, much of the recent international discourse on how structural adjustment programmes need to be pushed on to African governments such as Tanzania is phrased in such terms, and obviously it is likely to occur at the practical local project level as well. Questioning the client's preparedness to act on one's own, again seems to be one of the main rhetorical tools that can be used to put an awkward obligation to assist in doubt.
Johansson, in his analysis of the Swedish Pentecostal Mission to Bolivia, leans heavily on Simmel. Simmel claims that the responsibility for the poor tends to be transmitted to the largest available active community - i.e. the largest "conessentiality", and that, when this is possible, the obligations of smaller communities seem to break down. Thus, Simmel appears to depart from the assumption that when it comes to care for the poor, there is no natural ethics or embodied moral habitus that guarantees that they are looked after: instead responsibility is handed upwards. The recipient, however, appears to Simmel to have a tendency to get used to the assistance and to see it as his right, for which process Simmel 1923:356 uses the phrase "moral induction", since it involves extending from the special case to the rule. Johansson quotes him in in the context of such expressions as "hospitalization", "welfare mentality" etc. (1992:186). But Simmel of course, was more concerned with explaining such processes as objective phenomena than as analyzing them as ascriptions to the poor made by potential benefactors questioning whether they should be helped at all. One could of course argue that from the recipients point of view, the assistance is preferably seen as a right tied to a position in a wider conessentiality than as an expression of situationally bound considerations by a superior agent, which might suggest a case for claims of reciprocity.

Being inactive for the wrong reason is as I have argued one of the most commonly quoted criticisms against individual clients or categories of clients. The best client is the client incapacitated by his or her innate limitations, or structural constraints: this situation corresponds to a common NGO structure of narrating the meaning of their interventions. But being described as incapacitated may or may not be an acceptable position, and there are also conflicts which concern the clients refusal to let their lives be governed by a certain bureaucratic definition or incapacitating labelling, like those Thomas Zitelman has described in a paper on refugee camps in Somalia, where the inhabitants were supposed to be innocent and passive victims rather than entrepreneurial exchangers of famine rations or establishing small local cafes for drinking and gambling. Clearly, the refugees claimed their right to be both active and creative consumers. By demonstrating agency, albeit in an unapproved way and in a context which he or she probably regards as irrelevant to the assistance given, the client inadvertently fundamentally questions the patron's narrative of why he is there.
and what he is doing. Being attracted to the consumption of consumer goods and mass media may not be conducive to being regarded as innocent and helpless, however creative the reconceptualization of such goods is. For this reason alone, it is unlikely that the scientific image of the client who is a creative consumer is likely to have a market by those who want to continue with traditional development assistance.

“Alternative Development” is motivated by a counterdiscourse, which questions that thinking of development work in terms of aid from those who have to the needy, from patrons to clients, is the only way of conceptualizing it. There is a wish to reestablish a less condescending way of talking about the traditional "other" and to create more egalitarian relations. The debate between whether we are talking about "aid" or "assistance" or "solidarity work" reflects the possible ambiguities of interpreting international development activities. "Solidarity" at least in its Swedish form, is supposed to suggest a more egalitarian approach. But "Solidarity" movements are not necessarily free from their own particular kind of moralism. You join not in order to uplift the morally lowly, but to join them as soldiers in the same battle for Goodness and if they need assistance, it is again because their agency has been lost to structural constraints. Conessentiality here lies in the struggle for a common goal, which motivates the helper’s presence and structures how he defines and labels the recipients. But idealizing is not necessarily better than denigrating, and creates space for new types of moralized conflicts. Heroizing labelling does not necessarily carry less moralistic overtunes than does discourse formulated around the "worthy client", but may provide fertile soil for disappointment when the complexities of people's own narratives of who they are or what their problems are like clash with the label. Given that the original mobilization in the NGO activities is based on some kind of moral cause and on the construction of solidarity of transcultural identities it is not unreasonable to expect a demand that the recipient as a person should stand for the values which ideologically motivate the assistance.

The way labels, names and typifications contribute to the generation of social order, by acting as “goads to actions” and mechanisms of “disciplining daily life” (Duncan 1968:3, Berger and Luckman 1966:32, Foucault) has since long been of interest to sociologists. In the
context of developmental discourse the perspective has been emphasized by among others Wood (Wood 1985, 349) and Escobar (109ff). According to the latter labelling “is people making history by making rules for themselves and others to follow. So the issue is not whether we label people, but which labels are chosen and whose labels prevail to define a whole situation or policy, under what conditions and with what effects?” The dominant approach in such contexts is generally a Foucaultian critique of power. However, there is reason to see labelling equally much as a general strategy mobilized by the weak in contests over power, an important way of expanding social influence by translating personal issues to more collective concerns. In his theory of translation, Callon (1986) describes the technique of the power of knowledge as consisting of four stages. The first is concerned with problematising, through which an actor seeking to further his own interest tries to define the problems of other actors, a phase which is critical, since it contains the key to cognitive power, the social construction of the categories whereby the problem is described. The second two phases consist of finding and interrelating roles for the other actors within the own project. The fourth and final is “enrolement”, whereby the dominating actor tries to find relations between the roles so described. And finally, there is ´mobilisation´ whereby the main actor borrows the force of enroled actors and talks at their behalf in order to strengthen his own interest.

bruce K draws parallels between bureaucratic labelling and anthropological analyses departing from the concept of identity...

Finding out a new category fitting new narratives of your own situation, finding objects that fit your demand for impersonal solidarity

Kapferer p 69 “Discourses surrounding identity”...”concretise what they construct “...”create communities in fact whose social and political reality is forged through the imagination and style of the discourse” -
links up with a traditional metaphor of development ideology both in its mainstream and its alternative forms, that of consciousness-raising: progress by becoming more aware of some reality that was before invisible to them but which structured their reality, touches on essentialism: lack of knowledge keeps people back.

With obvious inspiration from Weber and Foucault, Kapferer argues that it is part of bureaucratic discourse-in-practice to break down the individual into to classified parts, made redundant or relevant depending upon the bureaucratic task at hand, achieving “the subordination of the person or the individuals to the rules of the category, the distancing or alienation of human beings from the continuous and fluid totalities of their lived experience through the operation of categorical imperatives”.

Kapferer’s original twist to this, is to see anthropology’s concern with identity as carrying on a tradition of thinking of identity actually generated by the birth of bureaucratic rationalism and sharing much of the problems of the same. He concludes that the use of the Aborigines as “a category against which to measure the progress of dominant realities, to express resistance and criticism of them and to demonstrate theories in practice” actually may be reimprisoning the Aborigines in the “tyranny of the category”. This is close to the point I want to make here. When development activities are governed by the quest to raise consciousness about ethnic, racial or gender identity, local people are offered new narrative tools that may offer them important ways of


Gunnarsson, Evy 1993 I Välfärdsstatens Utmarker: Om socialbidrag och försörjning bland ensamstående kvinnor utan barn. Rapport i Socialt arbete no 64 Stockholms Universitet, Socialhögskolan


Karp, Ivan Development and Personhood. ms.


Midre, Georges 1990 Bot, bedring eller bröd? Oslo: Universitetsforlaget
Oakeshott, M 1962 Rationalism in Politics London


van Gennep, Arnold 1960 (1909) The Rites of Passage. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Zitelmann, Thomas


Anteckningar:

Moral Midre, Georges 1990 Bot, bedring eller bröd? Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

GUnnarsson 1993:63 Universitet, Socialhögskolan

Salonen, Tapio 1993 Välfärdens marginalet. En studie av socialbidragets moderna funktion. Socialhögskolan Lund, avhandlingsmanus

Siim, Birte 1988 Towards a Feminist Rethinking of the Welfare State. I Jones K and
Jonasdottir A (eds) The political Interests of Gender. L0ndon: Sage Publications


"Utvecklingen under 1900talet har gått från att betona moral och resurser till att betona marknad och resurser. Det betyder inte att moralen har försvunnit men får sökas mer indirekt."


Börjeson-mether (red.) Det goda mötet. Insitutionen för socialt arbete i
"The Slovenian social theorist Slavoj Zizek (1994:B3) writes that the citizens of liberal democracies are willing to be sympathetic to "those who are Outside (from homeless persons to starving Africans and Asians)" only when the latter can be seen as innocent and helpless victims. Ideally he writes, these victims are children and women. If people step out of their victim role, we feel threatened (Palmers övers från svenskan: Palmer, Brian SVENSK 35 Palmer, Brian 1994 The Symbolic Production of Trust: Sharing Humanity in a Skeptical Sweden "

"...the Other human being is understood to an ever greater degree as a potential threat as an encroachment upon the sphere that I have staked out for my identity (when the other smokes, laughs altogether too loudly casts covetous glances at me...)..." "It is not difficult to determine what this attitude desperately tries to get away from; desire in itself that is of course always the other’s desire. The Other constitutes a threat insofar as the Other radiates an impenetrable desire that seems to encroach upon the fragile equilibrium of my "lifestyle", my "way of living" 

Zizek, Slavoj 1994 Sorgsna sånger ersätter handling (Sorrowful songs replace action) Dgens Nyheter 1 jun p B3,

Within the networks of development practice


INNERLIGHET, ÄKTHET, AUTENTICITET

När jag har handlett anslagsansökningar, tittat på mitt eget material om magdansare, funderat över avhandlingskapitel etc. har ett tema kommit upp flera gånger. Det gäller föreställningar och representationer som länkar olika former av tillskrivet autenticitetsvärde.

- ursprunglighet
- etnisk essentialism
- känslomässig innerlighet och brist på förkonstling speciellt i expressiv performance
- människans (el. genusets) sanna natur
- kedjor av (förment) obrutna traditioner
- naturlighet i allmänhet

Vi skulle kunna ha ett längre seminarium eller en temadag kring detta i maj. Jag hör av mig till er om detta nu för att ni är de som jag direkt associerar till som berörda, men tänker förstås annonsera ut det i
utskicket senare. Om ni tycker att det verkar intressant och vill reservera 1/2 timme (eller mer, eller mindre) för egen del i programmet så hör av er genast.

Jag bifogar de referenser till autenticitet som jag hittar utan att leta så noga. När det gäller det innerliga uttrycket, behövs kanske mer bakgrundsläsning. (Förslag?)

Bahnassi, Afif 1979 Authenticity in art: Exposition, definition, methodology Cultures, 6: 65-82


Handler, Richard 1986 Authenticity. Anthropology Today 2(1) 2-4 (Guggs arkiv: METOD 05)
Handler, R and Linnekin 1984 Tradition, genuine or Spurious. Journal of American Folklore vol 97 no 385


Citat och notiser
"It is thus in a kind of simulacrum of a 'nature' that the modern sign discovers its value. The problematic of the 'natural,' the metaphysics of appearance and reality, becomes the characteristic theme of the bourgeoisie since the Renaissance, the mirror of the bourgeois sign, the mirror of the classical sign. Even today, nostalgia for natural reference survives, in spite of numerous revolutions aimed at smashing this configuration, such as the revolution of production, in which signs ceased to refer to nature, but only to the law of exchange, under the commodity law of value. . . ."  "It was thus with the Renaissance that the false was born with the natural . . . ' [ellipsis points are Baudrillard's here] (taken from "Symbolic Exchange and Death," 1976, in _Jean Baudrillard Selected Writings_, Mark Poster, ed., Stanford University Press, 1988, pp. 135-137)

As has been demonstrated by writers such as Baudrillard 1976 Handler 1986, Handler and Saxton 1988, Trilling 1971 and Spooner 1986, ... modernity is associated with a quest for authenticity, which has become a central value both in social movements and consumer preference..

Handler, quoting Lears 1981, argues that both the concept of individual and ethnic identity represent "possessive individualism", the notion that identity depends upon having something which is both original and exclusive to oneself (Mc Phersson, CB 1962: The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke. Oxford). This quest for authenticity not necessarily in terms of any particular ethnic origin but rather in terms of stereotyped expectations at a higher level and in terms of assumed lack of Western artificiality. In relation to foodstuff or music
this Western quest for authenticity may create a competitive market for ethnic markers out of cultural characteristics that were presumably previously shared over traditional ethnic boundaries. The result may be either attempts to monopolize - in the way various Mongolian localities have tried to claim throat-singing as particularly theirs - or the usurpation of e.g. of models of handicraft originally associated with a particular group, as when East African curio dealers sell wooden masks to please the tourist demand in spite of their absence from local tradition.

on one hand a quest for individuation, identitymaking, on the other the search for authenticity and allies, on the third labelling as an organizational logic, specialization as move in marketing, the consumption here of identities...the production there of identities...