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Chapter 3

Rendering Society Technical: Government through Community and the Ethnographic Turn at the World Bank in Indonesia

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This chapter is not an ethnography, insider or otherwise. Rather, it is a close examination of the documents produced by social development experts who use ethnography in order to devise and justify programmes of intervention. Programme documents, as Mosse (2004) has shown, routinely occlude the debates, doubts and dilemmas of development practitioners. Nevertheless, they are consequential: vast sums of money are spent and vast numbers of people are caught up in new ways of doing things, on the basis of the narratives experts construct to connect a specified problem to a proposed solution. These narratives are central to the practice Foucault termed ‘government’ – the attempt to act on actions, setting conditions to direct conduct along approved pathways. In the case of social development, the expert’s aim is to ‘get the social relations right’. This is an extraordinary ambition. Tracking how it has been translated into programmes of intervention focused on ‘community’ is my focus in this chapter.

Government requires a rationale that identifies problems and links them to solutions in a systematic manner. Central to government is the practice I call ‘rendering technical’, a shorthand for what is actually a set of practices concerned with representing ‘the domain to be governed as an intelligible field with specifiable limits and particular characteristics … defining boundaries, rendering that within them visible, assembling information about that which is included and devising techniques to mobilize the forces and entities thus revealed’ (Rose 1999: 33).

In the first part of this chapter I define ‘government through community’ and review some of the ways community has been rendered technical by development experts. The remainder of the chapter examines the operationalization of government through community by the social development team of the World Bank in Jakarta. Their work merits attention for several reasons. First, anthropologists are prominent among the experts in this team, and the team makes extensive use of ethnographic methods. They occupy the liminal scholar/
practitioner niche David Mosse describes in his introduction to this volume, with its associated vulnerabilities. Second, their programmes are vast in scale: their flagship Kecamatan (subdistrict) Development Programme (KDP) has absorbed more than a billion dollars in loan funds, and clones have appeared from Timor Leste to Afghanistan. They are also vast in ambition, setting out to rearrange social relations at an extraordinary level of detail in tens of thousands of Indonesian villages. Third, their work is a striking example of a neoliberal approach to government that focuses on setting conditions under which people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own improvement by engaging with markets, learning how to conduct themselves in a competitive arena and making appropriate choices. Under such a regime, according to social theorist Nikolas Rose, the task of experts is:

> not a matter of ‘freeing’ an existing set of market relations from their social shackles, but of organizing all features of one’s national policy to enable a market to exist, and to provide what it needs to function ... All aspects of social behaviour are now reconceptualized along economic lines – as calculative actions undertaken through the universal faculty of choice. Choice is to be seen as dependent upon a relative assessment of costs and benefits of ‘investment’ in the light of environmental contingencies ... And the paths chosen by rational and enterprising individuals can be shaped by acting upon the external contingencies that are factored into calculations. (1999: 141–42)

Finally, the work of the social development team highlights the persistent quality of development as an ‘antipolitics machine’ that works by ‘insistently reposing political questions of land, resources, jobs, or wages as technical “problems” responsive to the technical “development” intervention’ (Ferguson 1994: 270). I will refer to this feature in passing, but my main focus in this chapter is not on what the development apparatus fails to do, but rather on the kinds of expert intervention that a governmental approach to community opens up.

**Government through Community**

At the heart of government through community is a paradox. Rose puts it thus: ‘community is to be achieved, yet the achievement is nothing more than the birth-to-presence of a form of being which pre-exists’ (1999: 177). Communities have the secret to the good life (equitable, sustainable, authentic, democratic – however the good is being defined), yet experts must intervene to secure that goodness and enhance it. To contain the paradox, attempts to govern through community often elide the situation that currently exists with the improved versions of community that are being proposed. The result of this elision is to make it unclear whether expert discussions of community refer to present or future forms. To complicate matters further, experts often locate the model for the perfected community in an imagined past to be recovered, suggesting that intervention is merely intended to restore community to its natural state. Alternatively they argue that they are not introducing something new, but are merely optimizing what is naturally present. Even when the object of desire – the authentic, natural community – is found to be intact, experts on community argue that it is vulnerable to degeneration because it lacks the capacity to manage change. It is the paradox of community that makes it an exemplary site for governmental intervention: experts do not direct or dominate, yet they always have work to do.

Although the theme of loss of community and the need to remake it appeared repeatedly in both metropoles and colonies from the nineteenth century onwards, Rose cautions that ‘the community appealed to is different in different cases: differently spatialized and differently temporized’ (1999: 172). In the governmentalization of community under neoliberalism in Euro-America at the turn of the millennium, he argues, the community referred to is ‘not primarily a geographic space, a social space, a sociological space or a space of services, although it may attach itself to any or all such spatializations. It is a moral field binding persons into durable relations. It is a space of emotional relationships through which individual identities are constructed through their bonds to micro-cultures of values and meanings’ (1999: 172, emphasis in original). It emerged as neoliberal regimes moved away from the idea that they had the responsibility or the capacity to define the good life and shape the citizenry according to an overall plan (1999: 135). Instead, populations were reimagined as forming so many natural communities – ethnic, religious, linguistic, territorial, professional, ideological, gendered, aged, and lifestyle based. Such communities were assumed to regulate the behaviour of their members according to their own values. As such, the task of government shifted. Experts were no longer to plan but to enable, animate and facilitate. They should devise appropriate constitutional frameworks for recognizing diverse communities, then set them free to find their own destiny within a strategic field Rose describes as autonomization and responsibilization (1999: 174, 178). In the same period, development regimes in the global south shared the frustrations of the Euro-American regimes described by Rose: the perceived failure of state planning, social engineering and the comprehensive management of political and economic life. This conjuncture stimulated interest in community as a self-generating
formation capable of governing itself. Communities of various kinds were made up, autonomized and responsibilized.

Government through community requires that community be rendered technical. It must be ‘investigated, mapped, classified, documented, interpreted’ (1999: 175). It takes expertise to reveal a community’s characteristics through specialized techniques. In the global north, favoured techniques in the 1990s were attitude surveys and focus groups, the latter used initially as a tool for market research. In the global south, beginning in the 1980s, the preferred technique for knowing ‘local’ communities and rendering them technical was participatory rural appraisal (PRA). This technique assumed, as it constructed, communities as bounded units. It invited ‘communities’ to reveal their geographies, histories, livelihood strategies and institutions in the form of maps, diagrams, charts and lists, using templates supplied by experts. The technique screened out the role of prices, laws and the repressive activities of military regimes. If these forces appeared at all, it was in the surreal and disembodied form of arrows pointing in from the edges of the village maps or diagrams taped to the walls of meeting halls after a participatory planning meeting. They could not take centrestage. Instead, PRA directed people to turn to ‘their own’ communities to solve their own problems, presumed to be preeminently local in origin. Its premise was that people who were stimulated to reflect on the (containerized, local) conditions of their lives would arrive at new understandings that ‘empower the poor as social actors to embark on locally managed change’ (Green 2000: 69, emphasis in original). Through the same exercise, officials, development consultants and other high status outsiders were expected ‘to gain satisfaction, fulfilment and even fun, from disempowering themselves and empowering others’ (Chambers 1998: xvi). In PRA the process of consultation was itself the principal intervention. It was designed to foster new desires, new ways of thinking and acting. It simultaneously created communities, responsibilized them and emphasized their autonomy.

Groups were another form of community in the global south rendered technical in the 1990s. The exchange between two people chatting informally about a water distribution problem as they walk home from the fields, approaching the topic indirectly and in a joking manner because they are kin and want to avoid a fight, may be critical to the management of water in their village. However, informal practices of this kind, embedded as they are in finally calibrated and intimate relationships, can barely be described, let alone improved. To construct an arena of intervention, experts had to identity or create groups that could hold meetings and prepare plans. Only then could social forces be enrolled and calculations applied. In this spirit, groups were made visible, formalized and improved where they already existed, crafted where they were absent or resuscitated where they were disappearing. They could then be funded, counted, evaluated, licensed, legitimated and replicated on an industrial scale.
In 2001 observers enthusiastically announced ‘remarkable advances in group formation’ resulting in ‘some 408,000 to 478,000 groups emerging with 8.2–14.3 million members in watershed, irrigation, microfinance, forest, and integrated pest management, and for farmers’ research’ (Pretty and Ward 2001: 209). They proposed a ‘new typology’ to describe the evolution of groups through three stages, and a scheme through which they could be evaluated and ranked according to their ‘degree of maturity’. The latter was defined ‘in terms of their potential for self-defining and self-sustaining activity’. This was a state to be brought about by combining the existing capacities of communities with ‘inputs from government and voluntary agencies’. Thus groups were envisaged as natural, but ‘institution building’, ‘local participation’ and the upgrading of ‘social capital’ were matters for experts to arrange.5

Not all communities that were the subject of expert attention in the 1990s were spatially contained. Networks also became technical. Development experts examined transnational networks linking NGOs north and south, social movements and donors. They dissected the components of these networks and investigated their effectiveness, communications, hierarchies and tensions. They worried over how networking could be instrumentalized, accountability increased and the ‘social learning’ engendered through networks captured and replicated (see Brown and Fox 1998).

Following the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989 and the demise of some of the military regimes in the global south that had been backed by the U.S. in Cold War mode, civil society at large became the community of concern. Although critics of this approach argued that ‘Successful civil societies develop their own systems and structures, norms and sanctions, over hundreds of years: by and large, they take care of their own strengthening’ (Hulme and Edwards 1997: 277) civil society strengthening became a domain of expertise. The deficit of civil society, its putative absence, distortion or immaturity, had to be rectified. Civil society became a thing to be designed and promoted, ‘grown from “the outside”’ (Howell and Pearce 2000: 78), a project to be accomplished by training and capacity building. As civil society was rendered technical, it was bounded and defined. Its components were listed and prioritized according to both moral criteria – what was be supported or rejected – and instrumental criteria – which components of civil society had the capacity to be effective in pursuit of specified ends (Biggs and Neame 1996: 49; Howell and Pearce 2000: 80–81). Experts devised techniques for improvement and set them out in detail, manual style, complete with diagrams, lists, classificatory schemes, alternate strategies and instructions.6

Donor programmes to improve civil society were extraordinarily ambitious. Their target was not just delinquent components of the population (farmers, women, the poor, for example) but ‘society’ imagined as a whole. Experts constructed a model of society made up of three sectors – the state, the market and civil society – and set about reforming each of these ‘sectors’ internally and brokering the relations between them (cf. Lewis, Chapter 9 this volume). They made plans to create enabling environments, devise appropriate laws and
regulations, facilitate dialogue and foster processes of consultation. They monitored the performance of the state apparatus and ‘civil society organizations’ to ensure they were accountable to their members, especially given the risk that donor funding would attract unscrupulous leaders (Bebbington and Riddell 1997: 110–11; Blair 1997; Edwards, Hulme, and Wallace 2000: 9). Yet in the attempt to optimize what naturally exists, the paradox of government through community re-emerged. There was a risk of governing too much – of creating something alien and inauthentic – a tension amply reflected in donor attempts to rebuild civil society in Indonesia after Suharto’s resignation in 1998.

Optimizing Social Capital or ‘Getting the Social Relations Right’
Post-Suharto, as donors initiated programmes to strengthen civil society, they stepped up their sponsorship of NGOs, renamed ‘civil society organizations’ (CSOs). Yet they soon became aware of the limitations of the ‘NGO sector’ as a vehicle for reform and diagnosed NGOs as unrepresentative and opportunistic – mere creatures of donor intervention. Further, New Order practices and perceptions also proved intransigent, as did New Order officials, many of whom still held key positions. To address the challenge of empowering the poor and creating a vibrant civil society, the World Bank’s social development team took a different approach. It would not focus on the state apparatus or on ‘civil society organizations’. Instead, it would focus on society at large, especially the rural poor in tens of thousands of villages. In so doing, it would link the reform agenda directly to the Bank’s declared mandates of poverty reduction and good governance.

Poverty, the Bank team argued, was ‘actively maintained by the difficult and almost non-existent access that communities have to higher level decision-making on development priorities and resources; the formal bottom up planning mechanism is ineffective and non-responsive to community needs; government gives neither incentives nor rewards for communities with good organizing performance’ (World Bank 1999: 41). Although the Bank’s social development team did not suggest that inadequate planning and failures of governance were the only source of poverty, they were the only sources taken up as the basis for the team’s very large and expensive anti-poverty programme. The exclusion of refractory relations – unequal relations of production and appropriation foremost among them – was intrinsic to the construction of communities as sites of intervention. Village welfare, the team declared, was linked to the ‘ability to influence investment decisions and set community priorities’ through ‘deliberative institutions – public discussion and exchange’ which enabled people to evaluate alternatives and make choices (World Bank 2002c: 13). One Bank study noted that villagers were relatively successful in solving problems of a social nature, especially those within their local arena, but ‘economic factors are largely beyond villagers’ control’ (World Bank 2002c: 3). Taking the lead, it would seem, from villagers, the Bank team put unsolvable economic problems to one side and focused on planning.
The social development team's intervention into the minutiae of Indonesian village life was initiated in 1996, when Indonesia was selected as one of several sites in which to study social capital and test its impact on development. Members of the team were involved in promoting the concept of social capital at the Bank throughout the 1990s. For them social capital was a means to engage the attention of Bank economists and open a space for researching the social dimensions of development thus far neglected – an aspect taken up in Chapter 4 by Mosse in this volume. Responding to the work of James Ferguson and other critics who had stressed development's closed discourse and structure of knowledge, they were concerned to show that development discourse could be changed by reformers working within development institutions. Furthermore, a change in discourse could produce new policies and projects with better, pro-poor outcomes (Bebbington et al. 2002). They argued that their position ‘in the belly of the beast’ allowed them to translate new concepts into project design in ways that were not possible for outsiders (Guggenheim 2004: 34). Most significant for the purpose of my argument in this chapter was the way in which the concept of social capital enabled social development experts to constitute community as a terrain of technical intervention.

Drawing upon Robert Putnam's definition of social capital as the ‘features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions’ (quoted in Wetterberg 2005: 3), Bank social experts used the concept to identify the social relations that animate communities – relations otherwise intangible and amorphous. These relations, they argued, could be measured according to various indices, correlated with desirable ends such as good governance and economic growth, and subject to econometric analysis. Social capital, in their version, had a feature consistent with the strategy of government through community I described earlier: it was naturally present, yet potentially deficient. Analysis of social capital thus enabled social development experts to identify a new task. They should create social capital where it was lacking, protect residual pockets of social capital from unwitting destruction, and experiment with deploying social capital to new ends.

In the early stage of World Bank thinking about social capital the emphasis was on quantity. Social capital became ‘yet another “thing” or “resource” that unsuccessful individuals, families, communities or neighbourhoods lack’ (Harriss 2002: 97). In later work, Bank social experts identified different kinds of social capital, tracked their distribution within and between social groups, and sought ways to promote the optimal balance. Social capital was parsed. It became linking, bonding and bridging capital. Some social groups were found to have too much of one and not enough of another. Too much bonding and not enough linking made social groups too tight – crime families, clans and ethnic enclaves were frequently cited examples. Bridging capital named the vertical links between poor people and the patrons, NGOs and officials who could help them (Woolcock 1998). The recognition that
social capital, in the wrong quantities and combinations, had ‘downsides’ opened up the terrain of social relations to ever-more refined analysis and intervention.

For Putnam, social capital promoted ‘the efficiency of society’. But efficient for what and for whom? Critics of the Bank approach to social capital argued that Bank experts defined efficiency primarily in relation to commerce. Improved social capital meant more trust and transparency, and better links between villagers and the markets from which they were purportedly disconnected.8 John Harriss, for example, argued that Bank deployment of social capital served as a ‘very convenient screen’ for neoliberal market agendas, appearing to address social issues while leaving power relations and inequality intact (2002: 110). I concur with Harriss that the Bank’s approach left fundamental power relations intact, yet I want to take this observation further to explore the terrain of governmental intervention social capital opened up. As I see it, the Bank’s social development experts in Jakarta were not conspirators, pursuing a covert but dogmatic and singular goal. By optimizing social capital or ‘getting the social relations right’, they thought they could supply village infrastructure more efficiently, alleviate poverty, promote economic growth, foster good governance and enhance local capacities for conflict management – diverse ends that, separately and in combination, they thought would benefit the nation overall and the poor in particular. Theirs was a multifaceted agenda that took them deep into the minutiae of village life. It required the Bank to become ethnographic.

The Ethnographic Turn
The Bank team’s empirical investigation of social capital in Indonesia proceeded through two studies, Local Level Institutions phase one (1996/97) and phase two (1998/99). The principal finding of these studies was that top down development under the New Order had caused a ‘lamentable loss of traditional mechanisms of social control’, especially at the village level (Guggenheim 2004: 37). However, the studies confirmed that autonomous local institutions continued to exist in Indonesian villages, and these institutions had the capacity to mobilize village resources for collective purposes. The strongest capacity was situated at hamlet level, where physical proximity, relative social homogeneity and kin ties created ‘natural’ communities. In contrast, capacities were weak at the village level, since the village was a standardized administrative unit that had been imposed under the New Order. Villages were often physically dispersed and socially fractured. Their administrators were oriented towards implementing top down policies and pleasing their superiors, New Order habits that continued to be intact in many rural areas in the period of reform (Evers 2000: 8).

According to the studies, the main groups active at the hamlet level were formed for religious purposes, social service or credit. Within their customary fields of operation, these groups ‘set up special committees to plan out and implement projects and events, and often make regular work plans with their respective groups. They also raise funds, mobilize labour,
carry out collaborations and mediate conflicts’ (World Bank 1999: 15). These natural communities already undertook ‘nearly the same range and scope of projects that government and development agencies’ pursued. Furthermore, these communities had ‘mechanisms that would allow members to challenge leaders and to call for reflective “breaks” should disputes remain unsettled’ (Guggenheim 2004: 21). Thus, Indonesia’s communities already had – or could have, with appropriate facilitation and incentives – everything good governance and village development required. The studies proposed that to rectify deficiencies, best practices already present in some villages could serve as models or guides for authentic, endogenous improvement.

The studies paid significant attention to the relationship between villagers and the state apparatus. They found this relationship troubled. They diagnosed that local capacity was undermined by distrust, by a disconnect between community and the state, and by the limited space for civil society involvement in the provision of services (World Bank 1999: 41). In particular, the routine procedures for vetting annual applications for village development funds were inept and unresponsive. Yet the studies discovered positive examples, confirming that ‘effective groups could take advantage of project schemes that provided them with funds, clear accountability rules and the space to implement their own projects without interference’. Strong groups had strong leaders and they formed alliances with civil society groups operating at the district level. They were assisted by officials, the best of whom already played ‘roles of conflict mediation, coordination, facilitation, and problem solving together with community leaders and village-based extension workers’ (Guggenheim 2004: 22). That is, this improved model already existed. All the experts had to do was to document it, replicate it and make some adjustments.

The Bank’s Local Level Institution studies should be read in relation to the discursive formation of which they were a part. They were part of a development discourse, that is, as James Ferguson pointed out, *sui generis*. Their purpose was not to increase the stock of scholarly knowledge, it was to diagnose deficiencies and delineate a technical field. The findings had a project telos. They were simultaneously the product of empirical research and blueprints for the KDP. Indeed, the first phase of the KDP was well into the planning stage before the findings of the first study were compiled, so the writing was in part a retrospective justification for interventions already underway. The problems identified were those for which the social development team had (or was attempting to devise) technical solutions. More specifically, as noted earlier, the governmental strategy that works through community requires that authentic, capable communities still exist or can be restored. It is this feature that enables experts to position themselves as midwives, assisting in the birth-to-presence of natural communities, rather than as ethnocentric outsiders imposing their views about how Indonesian villagers should live. For this reason the studies had to confirm the presence of actually existing community capacity. This finding, from the team’s perspective, also set their
initiative apart from standard rural development projects that failed to respect village ways (Guggenheim 2004: 22–23).

The tight relation between what the studies researched and the kinds of solutions they anticipated yielded the conclusion that the way for villagers to improve their condition was by reforming local level governance, beginning with improved planning and control of projects and resources close to home. The fact that villagers were indeed dissatisfied with the existing project planning system was confirmed through focus group discussions (World Bank 2002c: 63–64). The policy argument embedded in the KDP, which was neoliberal through and through, was that improved wellbeing was within the grasp of responsible communities that made appropriate choices.

The KDP

The design for the KDP responded to the problems identified by, and indeed already implicit in, the Local Level Institution studies. Its objective was not only to alleviate poverty but to inculcate habits of transparency, accountability, efficiency and the rule of law. These were the habits that empowered rural communities should adopt to govern themselves and should also demand of officials at supralocal levels. Yet popular demand for accountability, the team recognized, had to be created. Their ethnographic studies showed that too many rural Indonesians passively maintained New Order routines. They opted for stability, loyalty and customary standards of acceptable behaviour, including the diversion of a share of project resources to officials (Evers 2000: 47, 53). Their resistance to the abuse of power was indirect. It took the form of avoiding contact with official programmes and refusing to hold village offices or pay village fees (2000: 57). Yet, according to the team’s studies, villagers behaved differently when they had contributed their own labour and resources to hamlet based collective endeavours or when they were given clear control over funds and had the right to decide on their own priorities (Evers 2000: 49; World Bank 1999: 51). The desire for accountability, the experts concluded, could be stimulated by project design and clear ‘rules of the game’, a central feature of the KDP (Evers 2000: 60).

The template for the KDP was simple. It provided block grants of U.S. $60,000 to U.S. $110,000 to subdistricts, where a committee adjudicated between competing proposals for infrastructure projects (local roads, water, irrigation) or for small enterprise credit proposed by groups of villagers. A quota of the projects had to come from groups of women. Poorer subdistricts were given priority on principle and because the relative neglect of these subdistricts meant that modest infrastructure investments would yield high returns. The team considered the emphasis on common facilities to be pro-poor, because the poor would capture benefits in improved transportation, time savings and water quality. They would also benefit from millions of days of paid labour in construction projects, especially significant at a time of economic crisis. The evaluation of the KDP in phase one showed that it exceeded its material...
targets: 31,000 rural construction projects selected and managed by villagers were completed, at costs up to 23 per cent below the average for state-managed projects, and 25 million work days were generated (World Bank 2001: 6; World Bank 2002b: 6–8, 20–21). Targeting credit programmes to the poorest proved more problematic, because the KDP, following the practice of other microcredit programmes, insisted on lending only to viable enterprises with limited credit risk, who could pay market interest rates. Repayment of loans was also low (45 per cent) (World Bank 2002b: 8, 24).

As the social development team stressed, the innovations of the KDP lay not in its activities, rural infrastructure and credit, which were conventional, but in the mechanisms of project planning and delivery. Indeed, one observer who studied the project in 2002 concluded that the objective to raise rural incomes had actually been dropped, due to the difficulty of measurement and ‘the primacy of the overarching objective – creating participatory institutions and processes’ (Edstrom 2002: 2). Every technical feature of the KDP was designed for a transformative purpose. Project funds were to serve as leverage. In order to access these funds, villagers had to subscribe to a very detailed set of rules that obliged them to form committees, hold consultations and interact with each other in new forums and new ways (World Bank 2001: 3). The rules were elaborated in manuals, checklists, information sheets and other documents. They were also presented verbally and reiterated constantly by the army of consultants and facilitators (over four thousand) hired by the project to work at the village or subdistrict level, and by selected residents – a man and a woman from each village who received training and stipends for their work on project implementation (Guggenheim et al. 2004: 9; Woodhouse 2005: 3; World Bank 2001: 13).

The Project Rules
There was a rather obvious tension between the KDP’s claim to be building on the social capital naturally present in Indonesian communities and the detailed specification of nationally standardized KDP rules. As Guggenheim observed, ‘KDP could not function without its operational manual, disbursement system, poverty targeting criteria, and innumerable “coordination teams” … KDP villages twenty kilometres from Jakarta use the same formats, planning cycle, and facilitator structure that villages in the jungles of Papua do’ (Guggenheim 2004: 38). How then did the KDP support ‘local forms of organizing’ and ‘local adaptation and ownership’ (Guggenheim 2004: 39, 40)? The claim came down to the way in which the KDP granted villagers responsibility and choice within the project framework.

The KDP’s structures were designed to direct conduct. Neither the ends they sought to achieve nor the means were up for debate. The social development team argued that the KDP’s detailed rules and constant monitoring were necessary because of the complexity of the social terrain they aimed to transform. Their ethnographic studies showed that villages had the potential ‘to become self-managing actors in development programmes’, but warned against
overly romantic assessments. ‘Most villages are not egalitarian, harmonious units, but
conflictive and highly stratified entities with internal problems of exclusion, corruption, and
conflict of their own.’ In view of the high risk of elite capture, procedures must be designed to
prevent it. The KDP set out to correct the deficiencies of past projects that ‘simply “gave”
resources to villages with no planning structure for negotiating through these problems’ and
watched ‘their funds slip through village fingers with little return for the investment’ (World

The routing of funds was key to the KDP’s reversal of New Order-style business-as-
usual development. The block grant funds were sent directly to a bank account in the
subdistrict, cutting out the many layers of bureaucracy through which ‘leakage’ normally
occurred. Villagers were informed about the exact funds potentially available to them and
were encouraged to select projects from a menu of options. This procedure gave them
autonomy, responsibility and choice (World Bank 2002b: 15). Each village that elected to apply
for project funds had to present its proposal in the appropriate format and explain how it met
the KDP criteria of being pro-poor. The subdistrict committee that adjudicated between
competing proposals was comprised of villagers, facilitators and officials. Its task was to select
the best proposals, those with the best plan, thereby rewarding ‘performance’.

Once a proposal was accepted, villagers had to monitor to ensure that contracts for
construction were awarded competitively and that materials met quality specifications.
Transparency rules required project implementers at the village level to hold open public
meetings to account for how the money was spent and to answer questions (World Bank
2002b: 54). There was a complaints procedure to handle breaches of the project rules.
Independent NGOs and journalists were contracted to monitor the project and publicize its
successes and failures. Their job was to draw attention to cases of corruption and to the efforts
of villagers to get corrupt individuals convicted (Guggenheim 2004: 7). Sanctions were built
into the project cycle, were well publicized and were followed through. Corrupt facilitators
were fired, some officials went to jail, and ‘non-performing’ subdistricts were cut from the
programme (Woodhouse 2005: 18). Through micropractices such as these the KDP set out to
‘chip away at the fortresses of monopoly power and impunity’ (World Bank 2002b: 54).

The anti-corruption strategy of the KDP was not an add-on – it was integral to the
objective of the project (Woodhouse 2005: 1). Every step in the project process was designed to
prevent corruption within the project and to establish new habits that would carry over into
other arenas. The anti-corruption strategy occupied a seven page appendix in the KDP phase
two project appraisal document (World Bank 2001). Corruption was also the subject of special
ethnographic studies, case reports and experiments. It too was rendered technical and was
parsed into components for remedial intervention.

Two approaches to corruption can be discerned in the KDP. One approach treated
corruption as a problem of culture. The Bank’s ethnographic studies showed that corruption
was accepted as normal. Funds were routinely siphoned as a reward for public office (Evers 2001: 15–16; World Bank 2004). Villagers were driven to complain only when they deemed the balance inappropriate – when too much money was extracted from a project budget and not enough was shared with other claimants. This cultural norm, the experts argued, emerged historically in the distorted context of the New Order, when development assistance was understood as a gift. Villagers were told they should be grateful for gifts, however small, and not ask too many questions (World Bank 2002b: 52). When corrupt parties were confronted, KDP studies showed that villagers were mainly interested in having the money returned so the project could be completed. They were not interested in prosecution or other forms of punishment (Evers 2001: 14).

To the Bank’s social development team, the finding that corruption was accepted by villagers highlighted a problem in need of correction. They proposed that KDP village facilitators should attempt to change defective cultural precepts through moral argument, explaining to villagers why corruption should not be tolerated. They should discuss corruption openly and consistently and ‘shine a bright light’ wherever it occurred (World Bank 2002b: 53). Nikolas Rose describes this strategy as ‘throwing a web of visibilities, or public codes and private embarrassments over personal conduct’, adding ‘we might term this government through the calculated administration of shame’ (Rose 1999: 73, emphasis in original).

For the strategy to work, it is necessary to create the conditions in which a perpetrator does in fact experience shame. Such conditions, the Bank experts thought, might already exist in embryonic form. They tasked ethnographic researchers to identify ‘key opinion makers, channels of information, and the forums where communities discuss among themselves local forms of anti-corruption action’ (Guggenheim 2002: 4). Once these makers, channels and forums were identified, they could be optimized to achieve the results – transparency, empowerment – desired not only by outsiders, in this case the Bank, but also by communities already engaged in ‘anti-corruption action’ of their own. Ethnographic ‘thick description’ of corruption cases could also be used to reveal how social norms entered into incentive structures (Woodhouse 2005: 6).

In addition to researching the norms and practices already present, the Bank’s corruption experts recommended teaching villagers techniques to reformat their local knowledge as a tool of surveillance. The KDP’s village facilitators should be trained to map local power structures, record the names of key players such as village office holders and elite families, and list their kinship and other links. In this way, the practice of tracking power and making networks explicit – a standard research tool of anthropologists – would be devolved. Responsible villagers would learn to reveal to themselves how power works in their own communities and devise preemptive measures finely tuned to local circumstances. They should also forward information to subdistrict level facilitators, who could use it to reduce opportunities for elite manipulation and capture (Woodhouse 2005: 42).
The second approach to corruption in the KDP treated it as a problem of rational choice. From this perspective, corruption is not a personal failing. It is a rational response to a given structure of incentives and disincentives (Woodhouse 2005: 4–5). It occurs wherever the benefits of corruption outweigh the costs or, from the victim’s perspective, the costs of protest outweigh the benefits. In this spirit, a Bank social research expert analysed the cost-benefit equations for each step of the project process for the different parties involved. Based on the findings, the consultant proposed adjustments to the reward structure to close loopholes, increase the risks and reduce the benefits from corrupt behaviour to the point where such behaviour would no longer be rational (Woodhouse 2005: 35–39).

Bank experts also worked on changing the cost-benefit equation from the perspective of the victims. Their studies showed that the victims of corruption often had quite complete knowledge about how, when and by whom project resources were stolen, but the costs of protest were too high for them to use the information. Costs included harassment or intimidation by the perpetrators or by police and other officials; being accused of giving the village a bad name, reducing prospects of receiving development funds in future; the cost of transportation to make repeated visits to the city to present information to the police and prosecutors; and time and energy spent in a legal process that few believed would produce any result. To change this equation, the Bank team experimented with the use of informal or customary settlement procedures, which they thought might be more effective and less costly for the complainant, both socially and financially (Evers 2001; Woodhouse 2005). Researchers also documented cases where ‘poor people have been able to use the justice system successfully to defend their interests and rights’. From this analysis they identified the enabling conditions for successful village action and devised schemes to replicate them (World Bank 2002a: 4; World Bank 2004).

A few years into the KDP, and spurred by their success in devising schemes to intervene in community dynamics, the social development team turned their attention to an even more ambitious project: the management of the violent conflicts besetting the Indonesian countryside in the turbulent period after Suharto’s resignation.

Conflict Management
For diplomatic reasons related to what Mosse calls the ‘etiquette of the aid business,’ it is difficult for donors to acknowledge violent conflict in which a ruling regime is implicated. I want to focus on a second problem: donors can only intervene in an arena they can effectively frame in technical terms and for which they can identify deficits they are equipped to fill. Officials, military men, militia bosses and gangsters operating as knowledgeable agents but seeking unacceptable goals such as plunder and domination are difficult to position as deficient subjects in need of guidance. Furthermore, changing the conditions that enable them to operate in these ways would require political interventions donors are not equipped to
make. In contrast, villagers experiencing the confusion of rapid change can be positioned as deficient subjects, making rural communities a prime site for donor attention. In post-Suharto Indonesia, it was the social development team of the World Bank that led the field in rendering conflict technical and identifying points of interventions.

‘Conflict’, the Bank’s social experts declared, is ‘a necessary catalyst to, and an inevitable by-product of, development’, especially where ‘poverty and lack of opportunity underscore the need for change, and where, conversely, otherwise desirable periods of economic growth themselves become a force for realigning class structures and (potentially) re-imagining the basis for group identity.’ Their task, as they understood it, was not to eliminate the source of conflict – economic growth that realigns class structures – but to devise techniques to manage conflict ‘in constructive ways’ (Barron, Smith and Woolcock 2004: 1). Since they viewed conflict as a normal social process, they focused their attention on social relations, especially the everyday social relations connecting and dividing groups of villagers. Their goal was to set conditions under which rational actors would be encouraged to channel collective energies into development activities and eschew violent mobilizations that undermined both security and economic progress. To this end, they sponsored a new set of ethnographic studies.

The team’s ethnographies of conflict set out to examine the problem in a new way. Rather than focus only on the large scale violence in places such as Kalimantan, Maluku and Sulawesi, where thousands died and tens of thousands were displaced in 1998–2002, they highlighted the situation in the so-called ‘non-conflict’ or low intensity conflict areas. In Lampung, southern Sumatra, the studies found that conflict was pervasive, taking the form of vigilantism, banditry, lynching, extortion by armed militias and cycles of vengeance. They found that the outcome of violence in both the high intensity and low intensity cases was similar: conflict deepened ethno-religious segregation, caused the withdrawal of police, government services and development programmes, and created no-go zones in which there was no investment or economic growth. Unemployed youths, their studies showed, were prime candidates for recruitment into gangs and militias. A vicious cycle linked violence to economic stagnation. They also found that the triggers and pathways of violence were essentially the same in the low and high intensity provinces. Only the specifics of the conjunctures and levels of escalation varied. For the team, this finding pointed away from a focus on the unique causes of exceptionally serious violence towards a focus on endemic problems within rural society, problems of a kind that experts in social development could diagnose and resolve.

A second key finding of the Bank ethnographies was that structural factors alone did not account for violent outbreaks. Ethnic diversity and economic inequality were present everywhere in Indonesia, the Bank researchers argued, but they did not always result in violence. Some conflicts escalated while others did not, for reasons that should be explored. Furthermore, they proposed, explanations of violence that focused on structural factors such
as ethnicity were out of touch with contemporary social theories that treated identities as constructed and dynamic. Through careful examination of the perceptions of parties involved in violent conflict as victims, perpetrators or potential mediators, they tracked how group boundaries were realigned as a conflict escalated. It was a finding that suggested a point of intervention: if escalation could be prevented, so could the hardening of boundaries.

Third, the Bank studies described violent incidents in ways that helped to pinpoint when and how intervention to prevent the escalation of conflict might be effective. As they explored violent incidents through case studies, they parsed their elements and framed them in technical terms. There were contexts, components, triggers, sequences and pathways. There were matters of leadership and recruitment. There were alternate outcomes – resolution, stalemate, escalation. This template of factors, derived inductively from case studies, was used to test variables and correlations through econometric analysis (Barron, Smith and Woolcock 2004: 7).

Finally, the Bank conflict studies built on the earlier research on Local Level Institutions and the experience of the KDP. They identified existing social capital and local mechanisms for dispute resolution that could be supported, enhanced and replicated. They studied innovative practices that villagers had devised for themselves. The research was intimately linked to the proposed governmental strategy which was to work through community. Once again, the approach seems counterintuitive: if communities already held the secrets to overcoming violence (or poverty, for that matter), why did they need Bank assistance? Yet community, as I pointed out earlier, has uniquely inviting qualities as a governmental terrain. Its virtues are inherent, but are located in a past to be recovered or a future to be accomplished through expert intervention.

To explain why communities were both capable and deficient, the studies introduced a temporal before New Order/after New Order distinction. They argued that communities were previously less prone to conflict, because customary norms were agreed, rules were enforced and there were respected leaders capable of mediation. These conditions no longer existed due to the mixture of populations and attenuation of custom brought about by migration, and by the New Order’s deliberate displacement of customary institutions in favour of standardized, national institutions. Yet the New Order’s standardized national institutions had not taken hold. There was no functioning, impartial justice system (police, courts) to which aggrieved parties could turn. The result, the studies found, was confusion. There were formal and informal rule systems that overlapped and conflicted. Rules were differently interpreted, poorly enforced and easily manipulated. For the Bank experts, confusion emerged as a significant cause of conflict and a point of intervention: the solution was to craft coherent rules to restore what was naturally present and supply something new to meet the needs of the time.

Crafting Interventions
Inevitably, since the World Bank is in the business of lending funds, there was a project telos to Bank sponsored research on conflict. The research was intended to provide ‘a concrete platform from which to identify a range of possible entry points for crafting more effective local level conflict resolution mechanisms’ (Barron, Smith and Woolcock 2004: 10). The strategy, drawing implicitly on game theory and what Mosse calls the ‘new institutionalism’, was to establish conditions and provide incentives to encourage individuals to make peace their choice. More explicitly than in the studies for the KDP five years earlier, the language of the Bank ethnographies of conflict anticipated a strategy of this kind. They explored the ‘rules of the game’ – the laws and norms of engagement between individuals and groups; the ‘dynamics of difference’ – how ethnic and other differences were constructed, mobilized and strategically deployed; and the ‘efficacy of intermediaries’ – their capacity to resolve conflicts, make decisions and enforce rules.

As research moved into project-design mode, the claim to be merely assisting in the birth-to-presence of that which already existed was revealed, once again, to be contradictory. Local knowledge and practice should be nurtured, the experts argued, but also adjusted through the ‘application of general democratic principles of conduct’ (Smith 2005: 99). ‘Outside technocrats’ should not be the ones to determine new rules or resolve disputes. Instead, ‘spaces, incentives, and resources need to be created and sustained by a range of actors that make it possible for disputants to craft resolutions that all sides can own, uphold and enforce’ (Barron, Smith and Woolcock 2004: 33). The role of the Bank would be to supply the ‘mediating institutions’ and the ‘meta-rules’, or at least the ‘minimum standards’ for meta-rules that villagers would craft within the space the Bank’s programme would provide (Barron et al. 2004: 27). The initiative to alter patterns of conduct, the experts stressed, must come from below. Where opposing sides desired to settle their differences, they needed ‘the resources – human, financial, and administrative – to seek a resolution’. The human resources might already exist within communities or there might be a need for outside facilitators of high moral and professional repute, fully trained in the latest conflict mediation methods (Barron et al. 2004: 24–25). Mediators must earn legitimacy by ‘demonstrated evidence of incrementally more significant accomplishments’. All parties must uphold agreements and be accountable for their actions (Barron, Smith and Woolcock 2004: 29, 30). In social life as in the marketplace, the experts insisted, only good performance should reap rewards. Bank-supplied incentives in the form of KDP-style block grants would be used to add weight to the protagonists’ own cost-benefit analysis. Rational actors would stop fighting when the costs of conflict outweighed the benefits (see Tajima 2004: 26, 39). At that point, all that was needed was the appropriate mechanism.

Grafting conflict resolution onto the KDP had risks, as Bank experts acknowledged. Competition between groups over scarce resources was the source of many conflicts, yet they proposed to use more competition – well crafted, managed and ‘facilitated’ competition – as
the solution. Nevertheless, the chain of reasoning linking diagnosis to remedy was persuasive enough for the Bank to approve the Support for Poor and Disadvantaged Areas Project (SPADA) running from 2005 to 2010 with a loan of U.S.$104 million. Confirming the boundaries it drew around its technical domain, the SPADA appraisal document observed that there was no ‘revolutionary solidarity’ in the Indonesian countryside – hence, presumably, there was no point in thinking about revolution. Instead, it observed that ‘conflicting loyalties divide local groups into violently opposed factions, thus creating fertile ground for the resumption of conflict at what often appears to be minor provocation’ (World Bank 2005: 7). For the design team, the important triggers of violence and the ways to forestall it were located inside rural society. While recognizing that feelings of social injustice were widespread, they had no proposal to transform the material roots of those feelings. Rather, the proposal was that the SPADA would transform the feelings themselves, replacing them with feelings of trust, cooperation, (healthy) competition and empowerment. Monitoring in the SPADA would also be technical: ‘tracer methodologies’ would be used to track the effects of training interventions on ‘changes in knowledge, attitude, and performance at periodic intervals’. Household surveys would evaluate impacts on social capital and attitudes towards conflict and violence, together with economic and other indicators (World Bank 2005: 31).

Conclusion
In this chapter I have explored the practices through which social experts set out to govern through community, devising interventions to reconfigure social relations in calculated ways. The Bank’s social development team in Jakarta had very specific objectives in mind. Through their programmes they would build civil society, alleviate poverty, manage conflict and transform a corrupt and ineffective state apparatus by pressure from below. Their proposed transformation was simultaneously the return to authentic Indonesian ways and the realization of expert design. Natural communities required expert attention to make them complete. Improvement required that communities were rendered technical, the processes running through them were parsed and dissected, and points of intervention were identified. Furthermore, the experts argued that they must be bounded to set aside refractory political economic processes too difficult to render technical and rearrange. The Bank social development experts were fully aware of the limitations presented by their positioning on the ‘practitioner’ side of the scholar/practitioner divide. They acknowledged that their interventions did not ‘replace in any way the need for a more fundamental restructuring of state-society relationships in Indonesia’ (Guggenheim 2004: 33). Yet they proposed no strategies to accomplish that ‘more fundamental restructuring’. Instead, they focused on the conduct of villagers and their capacities to plan and demand better ‘development’.

The processes excluded from the KDP’s field of intervention were evident in the documents – in the diagnosis of problems and solutions – and also from what was not in the
documents. The voluminous documentation of the KDP included no discussion of how empowered rural subjects might come to demand not only better infrastructure projects or better governance, but access to land, fair prices and fair wages. Despite its promising title, the KDP study entitled *Village Justice in Indonesia* did not discuss how the poor might change the structures of inequality that surround them. In true liberal mode, it focused on procedural matters such as villagers’ access to ‘the justice system’ and, more specifically, the measures needed to help poor people prevent corrupt officials from stealing project funds (World Bank 2004). Justice became a matter of distinguishing the legal from the illegal, the accountable from the corrupt, the plan that was ‘pro-poor’ from a plan that would benefit the rich, the deserving poor from those whose failure to perform made them ineligible for assistance. The exclusions of ‘social development’ also shaped the team’s approach to conflict management. To point this out is not to suggest that there was a hidden agenda for which the programme’s rationale was merely a mask. The Bank’s social development team was very explicit about its aims and I take the team at its word. The limits of the programme stemmed not from deficits in their research capacity or understanding, but rather from the requirements of their institutional location: to render problems such as poverty and violence technical and manageable, and act on them by means of expert prescription.

My main focus in this chapter has been to highlight the extraordinary scope, scale and intensity of the field of intervention opened up by the approach I have labelled "government through community." Under various rubrics – community driven development, the enhancement of social capital, the restoration of authentic local traditions and the promotion of choice – experts have constructed a technical field in which they are licensed and enabled to intervene in the minutiae of peoples’ lives. Neoliberalism does not mean less intervention: it means intervention thought about and constructed along different, more subtle lines. For the anthropologist-as-expert it is a heady moment in which their success at constituting an arena of intervention is mixed with the anxiety of knowing full well the limits of expert schemes. How they handle this predicament personally and professionally is a problem taken up in several chapters of this volume.

Notes
1 This chapter is based on a close reading of documents prepared by the social development team at the World Bank in Jakarta in the period 1996–2004. For an ‘insider’ account by the anthropologist who was a key architect of this programme, see Guggenheim 2004. For updates on the project, which has continued to grow and evolve, see the World Bank website in Jakarta. I offer further reflections on the World Bank programme and my own position both inside and outside the development apparatus in Li 2009 and 2010. Thanks to Duke University Press for permission to use extended excerpts from *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (2007, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press). Funds to support
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2 This expression appeared in Woolcock 1998: 187.
3 Rose calls this formation advanced liberal.
4 Green provides a useful critical analysis of empowerment and participation in theory and practice.
5 For these authors, the neoliberal agenda to promote entrepreneurship through group formation was explicit. They argued that the purpose of support was to make groups independent, because 'creating dependent citizens rather than entrepreneurial citizens reduces the capacity of citizens to produce capital' (Pretty and Ward 2001: 220).
6 For a striking example see Blair 1997.
7 See also (Evers 2000: 11, 15; World Bank 2002c: 36).
9 Block grants had been used before, under the New Order and during the 1997–98 crisis, but without such tight control (Guggenheim 2004).
10 Guggenheim et al. (2004: 6) still listed poverty alleviation as the KDP's prime objective.
11 See also Barron and Madden 2002; Madden and Barron 2004; Smith 2005; Tajima 2004; and Welsh 2003.
12 Smith (2005) describes past customary regimes in Kalimantan in these terms. Madden and Barron (2004: 67) describe the attenuated mediation skills of villagers.
13 On methodological individualism in Bank social science, see Harriss 2002; on the crafting of institutions, see Agrawal 2001.

References


