

A TYPOLOGY OF GPID MEMBERS

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October 1982

Thinking back of the GPID/UNU experience I am often struck by how extremely different the members of the team were. And I have, all the time, tried to understand how this affects such an undertaking. Basically this becomes a question of understanding the variables: which are the key variables that can be used to differentiate among scholars in a research project the goal of which is not only to come to grips, intellectually, with what happens in the world, but also to have some ideas about what to do, politically speaking. The distinction "goals vs. processes" cuts across this; there are both intellectual and political aspects of both goals and processes. However, by and large one may say that the intellectual mode of analysis is concerned with description/explanation, including description of goal-states for social processes whereas the political mode of analysis is normative/volitional. Temperament enters!

The key distinction now to be made, for both variables, is between conventional and innovative. By no means is there any implication to the effect that the conventional is more easy, in the academic sense, than the innovative. The point here is not that the author necessarily is that innovative, only that he is threading on relatively new paths. By "conventional" I simply mean "nothing much new" although the old that is being said again may be said in a very convincing manner, being backed up by better and more theory and data than before.

More particularly, the intellectually conventional expresses itself partly at the level of the paradigm, partly at the level of the intellectual craftsmanship. To me the most conventional would be to work from the books and articles by others, never with any direct contact with social reality, trusting what is written more than one's eyes and ears. Some of those

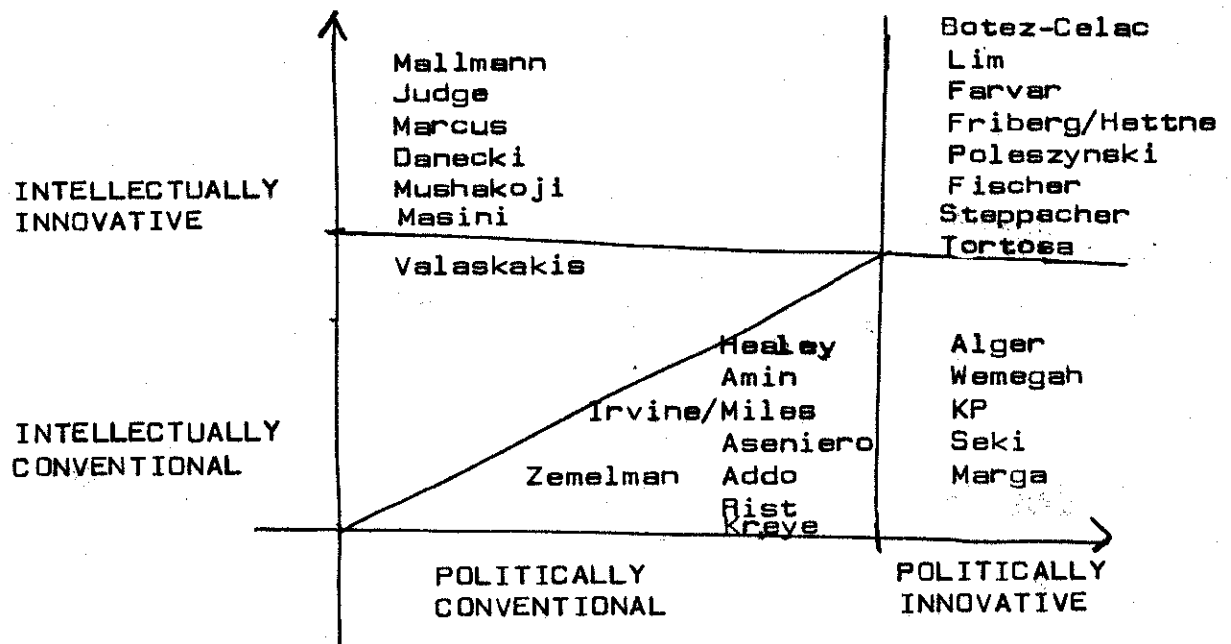
books and articles may, of course, contain statistical data and records, but the contact with direct, immediate social reality is nevertheless not there. The social experience is mediated; one sees through the eyes of other people.

In the intellectually innovative there would, at least, be a solid element of direct experience that is expressed in the intellectual product. This, of course, should go beyond the anecdotal and personal although such impressions should not be undervalued. There would be an element of direct data-collection, which would call for the skills of the sociologist and anthropologist and historian. The library recedes a little in the background as source of insight in social reality. If possible participatory observation substitutes for pure observation; there is an element of Erlebung [of the really experiential] in what is ultimately written. And added to this come experiments with new paradigms, new variables and dimensions and typologies, new ways of weaving the threads together.

In the politically conventional there would be a limited spectrum of political imagination. By and large it would move inside the very empirical even in the sense of the dominant: the blue market-societies, the red plan-societies and the pink in-between. Inside this conventionalism one may be "progressive" - but whether that word should be used for the pink/red part of the spectrum or for change [from blue to red or vice versa] is an open question. In any case political thinking does not go outside this one-dimensional spectrum.

The politically innovative would go outside; in my way of using the terms, towards the green and the yellow. There would be visions of the qualitatively different, new political paradigms, so to speak. Needless to say, just as for the intellectual dimension, innovation is no guarantee for quality.

My own classification of the GPID team is:



The classification of anything as complex as a concrete person can certainly be disputed. Even the classification of papers by people is a complex affair. But by and large this was my impression. And, since I would classify myself in the top left corner there is, of course, a value judgment involved: I think that is the best position. And one is grateful for whatever there is of the intellectually and politically innovative. However, I have often a feeling that they should, and also do, tend to go hand in hand. The politically innovative demands a new approach also intellectually; a new intellectual approach may easily lead to implications that are not merely intellectual. Above all, people tend to be innovative or conventional, and this does not come in watertight compartments. But there may be objective reasons why innovation in the intellectual sphere does not spill over into the political: life in a repressive society, lack of political experience, etc. And vice versa: the politically innovative may not be accompanied by the intellectually innovative for lack of training, exposure, motivation or what not.

From this table it can easily be seen that the

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GPID project, in a sense, was five different projects. There was the solid effort to do what has been done very often: a blue or red analysis, using all kinds of material and books and probably quite a lot of footnotes, of the world. The GPID having a leftist tilt the blue cell has only one member, from Canada, with what I used to call the OECD approach. The red cell has a number of members producing a more or less marxist analysis of the world, with a heavy emphasis on economic factors, sometimes trying to make it look as if the world is a relatively integrated system [which the term "world-system", the hyphen being the key symbol, connotes]. Then there is a group more interested in intellectual innovation, not in concrete political expression - in approaches, ways of looking at things, new dimensions, etc. It is META, and as such often at a high intellectual level. Then, bottom right, a group that wants to reorient society but using conventional intellectual approaches (possibly with the exception of Marga for dialogues, but then I am not so sure that these were dialogues). And finally there is a group trying to do both, more or less well. The group I personally would feel closest to. In this group risks are being taken, intellectually and politically, often making the product look less solid than what is produced in the first two groups. But that is a price worth paying.

Is a project that diverse at all possible?  
Certainly, for even if two axes have been made use of here the people concerned are not that different. The problem would be the conventional red cell because of the lack of interest in dialogue displayed by some of the members. That, however, may not be so important - the dialogue can be carried out by others. More important is the question "of what kind of working groups one should have. And here it may look as if, in retrospect, it would have been better to have had these five groups, or at least to have paid more attention to these two axes than to the micro-macro dimension. Tension between rather than withing and then dialogue!