CHAPTER NINE

The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition

THE ARGUMENT

This chapter seeks to provide a new approach to the question: why does culture matter? Or let us revise the question and ask why culture matters for development and for the reduction of poverty. This both narrows and deepens the question. The answer is that it is in culture that ideas of the future, as much as of those about the past, are embedded and nurtured. Thus, in strengthening the capacity to aspire, conceived as a cultural capacity, especially among the poor, the future-oriented logic of development could find a natural ally, and the poor could find the resources required to contest and alter the conditions of their own poverty. This argument runs against the grain of many deep-seated images of the opposition of culture to economy. But it offers a new foundation on which policymakers can base answers to two basic questions: why is culture a capacity (worth building and strengthening), and what are the concrete ways in which it can be strengthened?

GETTING PAST DEFINITIONS

We do not need one more omnibus definition of culture any more than we need one of the market. In both cases, the textbooks have rung the changes over the long century in which anthropology and economics have taken formal shape as academic disciplines. And not only have the definition mongers had ample say, but there has been real refinement and academic progress on both sides. Today's definitions are both more modest and more helpful. Others are better equipped to tell the story of what we really ought to mean when we speak of markets. Here I address the cultural side of the equation.

General definitions of culture rightly cover a lot of ground, ranging from general ideas about human creativity and values, to matters of collective identity and social organization, matters of cultural integrity and property, and matters of heritage, monuments, and expressions. The intuition behind this capacious net is that what it gains in scope, it loses in edge. In this chapter, I do not deny the broad humanistic implications of cultural form, freedom, and expression. But I focus on just one dimension of culture—its orientation to the future—that is almost never explicitly discussed. Making this dimension explicit could have radical implications for poverty and development.

In taking this approach to culture, we run against some deeply held counter-conceptions. For more than a century, culture has been viewed as a matter of one or other kind of pastness—the keywords here are habit, custom, heritage, tradition. On the other hand, development is always seen in terms of the future—plans, hopes, goals, targets. This opposition is an artifact of our definitions and has been crippling. On the anthropological side, in spite of many important technical moves in the understanding of culture, the future remains a stranger to most anthropological models of culture. By default, and also for independent reasons, economics has become the science of the future, and when human beings are seen as having a future, the keywords such as wants, needs, expectations, calculations, have become hardwired into the discourse of economics. In a word, the cultural actor is a person of and from the past, and the economic actor a person of the future. Thus, from the start, culture is opposed to development, as tradition is opposed to newness, and habit to calculation. It is hardly a surprise that nine out of ten treatises on development treat culture as a worry or a drag on the forward momentum of planned economic change.

It is customary for anthropologists to pin the blame for this state of affairs on economists and their unwillingness to broaden their views of economic action and motivation and to take culture into account. And economics is hardly blameless, in its growing preoccupation with models of such abstraction and parsimony that they can hardly take most real-world economics on board, much less the matter of culture, which simply becomes the biggest tenant in the black box of aggregate rationality. But anthropologists need to do better by their own core concept. And this is where the question of the future comes in.

In fact, most approaches to culture do not ignore the future. But they smuggle it in indirectly, when they speak of norms, beliefs, and values as being central to cultures, conceived as specific and multiple designs for social life. But by not elaborating the implications of norms for futurity as a cultural capacity, these definitions tend to allow the sense of culture as pastness to dominate. Even the most interesting recent attempts, notably associated with the name of Pierre Bourdieu,[1] to bring practice, strategy, calculation, and a strong agonistic dimension to cultural action have been attacked for being too structuralist (that is, too formal and static) on the one hand, and too economistic on the other. And what is sometimes called "practice" theory in anthropology does not directly take up the matter of how collective horizons are shaped and of how they constitute the basis for collective aspirations that may be regarded as cultural.

1 P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, R. Nice, trans., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

There have been a few key developments in the anthropological debate over culture, which are vital building blocks for the central concern of this chapter. The first is the insight, incubated in structural linguistics as early as Saussure, that cultural coherence is not a matter of individual items but of their relationships, and the related insight that these relations are systematic and generative. Even those anthropologists who are deeply unsympathetic to Lévi-Strauss and anything that smacks of linguistic analogy in the study of culture now assume that the elements of a cultural system make sense only in relation to one another, and that these systematic relations are somehow similar to those which make languages miraculously orderly and productive. The second important development in cultural theory is the idea that dissensus of some sort is part and parcel of culture and that a shared culture is no more a guarantee of complete consensus than a shared platform in the democratic convention. Earlier in the history of the discipline, this incomplete sharing was studied as the central issue in studies of children and of socialization (in anthropology, of "enculturation"), and was based on the obvious fact everywhere that children become culture bearers through specific forms of education and discipline. This insight became deepened and extended through work on gender, politics, and resistance over the last three decades, notably through the work of scholars such as John and Jean Comaroff, James Scott, Sherry Ortner, and a host of others, now so numerous as to be invisible.[2] The third important development in anthropological understandings of culture is the recognition that the boundaries of cultural systems are leaky, and that traffic and osmosis are the norm, not the exception. This strand of thought now underwrites the work of some of the key theorists of the cultural dimensions of globalization,[3] who foreground mixture, heterogeneity, diversity, heterogeneity, and plurality as critical features of culture in the era of globalization. Their work reminds us that no culture, past or present, is an island unto itself, except in the imagination of the observer. Cultures are and always have been interactive to some degree.

Of course, each of these developments in anthropology is accompanied by a host of footnotes, debates, and ongoing litigations (as must be the case in any serious academic discipline). Still, no serious contemporary understanding of culture can ignore these three key dimensions: relationality (between norms,

2 J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991; J. C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990; S. B. Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1995, 37(1), 173–93.

3 U. Beck, *What is Globalization?* London: Blackwell, 2000; U. Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992; *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, London: Routledge, 1996; A. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony: Studies on the History of Society and Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001; S. Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents*, New York: New Press, 1998; *Guests and Aliens*, New York: New Press, 1999.

values, beliefs, etc.); dissensus within some framework of consensus (especially in regard to the marginal, the poor, gender relations, and power relations more generally); and weak boundaries (perennially visible in processes of migration, trade, and warfare now writ large in globalizing cultural traffic).

This chapter builds on and returns to these important developments. They are of direct relevance to the recovery of the future as a cultural capacity. In making this recovery, we will also need to recall some of these wider developments within anthropology. But my main concern here is with the implications of these moves for current debates about development and poverty reduction.

BRINGING THE FUTURE BACK IN

The effort to recover, highlight, and foreground the place of the future in our understandings of culture is not a matter where anthropology has to invent the wheel. Allies for this effort can be found in a variety of fields and disciplines, ranging from political theory and moral philosophy to welfare economics and human rights debates. My own thinking on this project builds on and is in dialogue with three important sets of ideas that come from outside anthropology, and others from within it. These ideas inform the argument about the capacity to aspire in this chapter and also those of the last part of this book, especially of its final chapter, and are an important inspiration of the title of this book.

Outside anthropology, the effort to strengthen the idea of aspiration as a cultural capacity can build on Charles Taylor's path-breaking concept of "recognition," his key contribution to the debate on the ethical foundations of multiculturalism.[4] In this work, Taylor showed that there is such a thing as a "politics of recognition," in virtue of which there was an ethical obligation to extend a sort of moral cognizance to persons who shared worldviews deeply different from our own. This was an important move, which gives the idea of tolerance some political teeth, makes intercultural understanding an obligation, not an option, and recognizes the independent value of dignity in cross-cultural transactions apart from issues of redistribution. The challenge today, as many scholars have noted, is how to bring the politics of dignity and the politics of poverty into a single framework. Put another way, the issue is whether cultural recognition can be extended so as to enhance redistribution.[5]

I also take inspiration from Albert Hirschman's now classic work[6] on the

4 C. Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition: An Essay*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

5 See especially N. Fraser and A. Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, 2003; N. Fraser, *Redistribution, Recognition and Participation: Toward an Integrated Conception of Justice*, World Culture Report 2, Paris: UNESCO Publications, 2001.

6 A. O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.

relations between different forms of collective identification and satisfaction, which enabled us to see the general applicability of the ideas of "loyalty," "exit," and "voice," terms that Hirschman used to cover a wide range of possible responses that human beings have to decline in firms, organizations, and states. In Hirschman's terms, I would suggest that we have tended to see cultural affiliations almost entirely in terms of loyalty (total attachment) but have paid little attention to exit and voice. Voice is a critical matter for my purposes since it engages the question of dissensus. Even more than the idea of exit, voice is vital to any engagement with the poor (and thus with poverty), since one of their gravest lacks is the lack of resources with which to give "voice," that is, to express their views and get results directed at their own welfare in the political debates that surround wealth and welfare in all societies. So, a way to put my central question in Hirschman's terms would be: how can we strengthen the capability of the poor to have and to cultivate "voice," since exit is not a desirable solution for the world's poor and loyalty is clearly no longer generally clear-cut?

My approach also responds to Amartya Sen, who has placed us all in his debt through a series of efforts to argue for the place of values in economic analysis and in the politics of welfare and well-being. Through his earlier work on social values and development,[7] to his more recent work on social welfare (loosely characterized as the "capabilities" approach)[8] and on freedom,[9] Sen has made major and overlapping arguments for placing matters of freedom, dignity, and moral well-being at the heart of welfare and its economics. This approach has many implications and applications, but for my purposes, it highlights the need for a parallel internal opening up in how to understand culture, so that Sen's radical expansion of the idea of welfare can find its strongest cultural counterpoint. In this chapter, I am partly concerned to bring aspiration in as a strong feature of cultural capacity, as a step in creating a more robust dialogue between "capacity" and "capability," the latter in Sen's terms. In more general terms, Sen's work is a major invitation to anthropology to widen its conceptions of how human beings engage their own futures.

Within anthropology, in addition to the basic developments I addressed already, I regard this chapter as being in a dialogue with two key scholars. The first, Mary Douglas, in her work on cosmology,[10] and later on commodities and budgets, and later still on risk and nature,[11] has repeatedly argued for seeing ordinary people as operating through cultural designs for anticipation and risk

7 A. K. Sen, *Resources, Values and Development*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1984.

8 A. K. Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities*, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1985.

9 A. K. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York: Knopf, 1999.

10 M. Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1970.

11 M. Douglas and A. B. Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technical and Environmental Dangers*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

reduction. This is a line of thought that helps us to investigate the broader problem of aspiration in a systematic way, with due attention to the internal relations of cosmology and calculation among poorer people, such as those members of the English working classes studied by Douglas in some of her best work on consumption.[12]

Finally, James Fernandez has had a long-term interest in the problem of how cultural consensus is produced. In this exercise, he has reminded us that even in the most apparently "traditional" cultures, such as the Fang of West Africa, about whom Fernandez has written extensively, we cannot take consensus for granted. His second major contribution is in showing that through the specific operations of various forms of verbal and material ritual, through "performances" and metaphors arranged and enacted in specific ways, real groups actually produce the kinds of consensus on first principles that they may appear to take simply for granted.[13] This work opens the ground for me, in my own examinations of activism among the poor in India and elsewhere, to note that certain uses of words and arrangements of action that we may call cultural may be especially strategic sites for the production of consensus. This is a critical matter for anyone concerned with helping the poor to help themselves, or in our current jargon, to "empower" the poor. With Fernandez, we can ask how the poor may be helped to produce those forms of cultural consensus that may best advance their own collective long-term interests in matters of wealth, equality, and dignity.

I turn now to asking why such a revitalized tool kit is called for to make real progress on the relationship between culture, poverty, and development. What exactly is the problem?

THE CAPACITY TO ASPIRE

Poverty is many things, all of them bad. It is material deprivation and desperation. It is lack of security and dignity. It is exposure to risk and high costs for thin comforts. It is inequality materialized. It diminishes its victims. It is also the situation of far too many people in the world, even if the relative number of those who are escaping the worst forms of poverty is also increasing. The number of the world's poor, their destitution, and their desperation now seem overwhelming by most measures.

The poor are not just the human bearers of the condition of poverty. They are a social group, partly defined by official measures but also conscious of themselves as a group, in the real languages of many societies. Just as ordinary human beings have learned to think of themselves as "people" and even as "the people" in most human societies, in the wake of the democratic revolution of the last three centuries, poor people increasingly see themselves as a group, in their own societies and also across these societies. There may not be anything that can usefully be called a "culture of poverty" (anthropologists have rightly ceased to use this conceptualization), but the poor certainly have understandings of themselves and the world that have cultural dimensions and expressions. These may not be easy to identify, since they are not neatly nested with shared national or regional cultures, and often cross local and national lines. Also, they may be differently articulated by men and women, the poorest and the merely poor, the employed and the unemployed, the disabled and the able-bodied, the more politically conscious and the less mobilized. But it is never hard to identify threads and themes in the worldviews of the poor. These are strikingly concrete and local in expression but also impressively general in their reach. The multivolume World Bank–sponsored study of the "Voices of the Poor" is a major archive of these threads and themes.[14]

This archive and other close observations of poor populations in different parts of the world reveal a number of important things about culture and poverty. The first is that poor people have a deeply ambivalent relationship to the dominant norms of the societies in which they live. Even when they are not obviously hostile to these norms, they often show forms of irony, distance, and cynicism about these norms. This sense of irony, which allows the poor to maintain some dignity in the worst conditions of oppression and inequality, is one side of their involvement in the dominant cultural norms. The other side is compliance, not mere surface compliance but fairly deep moral attachment to norms and beliefs that directly support their own degradation. Thus, many untouchables in India comply with the degrading exclusionary rules and practices of caste because they subscribe in some way to the larger order of norms and metaphysical propositions which dictate their compliance: these include ideas about fate, rebirth, caste duty, and sacred social hierarchies. Thus the poor are neither simple dupes nor secret revolutionaries. They are survivors. And what they often seek strategically (even without a theory to dress it up) is to optimize the terms of trade between recognition and redistribution in their immediate local lives. Their ideas about such optimization may not be perfect, but do we have better optima to offer to them?

I refer to this ambivalence among the poor (and by extension the excluded, the disadvantaged, and the marginal groups in society more generally) about

12 M. Douglas and B. Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*, New York: Basic, 1979.

13 J. Fernandez, "Symbolic Consensus in a Fang Reformative Cult." *American Anthropologist*, 1965, 67(4), 902–27; *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

14 D. Narayan, R. Chambers, M. K. Shah, and P. Petesch, *Voices of the Poor: Crying Out for Change*, New York: Published for the World Bank by Oxford University Press, 2001; D. Narayan, R. Patel, K. Schafft, A. Rademacher, and S. Koch-Schulte, *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?* New York: Published for the World Bank by Oxford University Press, 2001.

the cultural worlds in which they exist in terms of the idea of the terms of recognition (building on Taylor's ideas). In speaking about the terms of recognition (by analogy with the terms of trade, or the terms of engagement), I mean to highlight the conditions and constraints under which the poor negotiate with the very norms that frame their social lives. I propose that poverty is partly a matter of operating with extremely weak resources where the terms of recognition are concerned. More concretely, the poor are frequently in a position where they are encouraged to subscribe to norms whose social effect is to further diminish their dignity, exacerbate their inequality, and deepen their lack of access to material goods and services. In the Indian case, these norms take a variety of forms: some have to do with fate, luck, and rebirth; others have to do with the glorification of asceticism and other forms of material deprivation; yet others connect social deference to deference to divinity; yet others reduce major metaphysical assumptions to simple and rigid rules of etiquette that promise freedom from reprisal. When I refer to operating under adverse terms of recognition, I mean that in recognizing those who are wealthy, the poor permit the existing and corrupt standing of local and national elites to be further bolstered and reproduced. But when they are recognized (in the cultural sense), it is usually as an abstract political category, divorced of real persons (Indira Gandhi's famous slogan *garibi hatao*—remove poverty—and many other populist slogans have this quality). Or their poverty is perversely recognized as a sign of some sort of worldly disorder that promises, by inversion, its own long-term rectification. The poor are recognized, but in ways that ensure minimum change in the terms of redistribution. So, to the extent that poverty is indexed by weak terms of recognition for the poor, intervention to positively affect these terms is a crucial priority.

In other terms, returning to Hirschman, we need to strengthen the capacity of the poor to exercise "voice," to debate, contest, and oppose vital directions for collective social life as they wish, and not only because this is virtually a definition of inclusion and participation in any democracy. There is a stronger reason for strengthening the capacity for voice among the poor: it is the only way in which the poor might find locally plausible ways to alter what I am calling the terms of recognition in any particular cultural regime. Here I treat voice as a cultural capacity, not just as a generalized and universal democratic virtue, because for voice to take effect, it must engage social, political, and economic issues in terms of ideologies, doctrines, and norms that are widely shared and credible, even by the rich and powerful. Furthermore, voice must be expressed in terms of actions and performances that have local cultural force. Here, Gandhi's life, his fasting, his abstinence, his bodily comportment, his ascetical style, his crypto-Hindu use of non-violence and of peaceful resistance, were all tremendously successful because they mobilized a local palette of performances and precursors. Likewise, as the poor seek to strengthen their voices as a cultural capacity, they will need to find those levers of metaphor, rhetoric, organization, and public performance that will work best in their cultural worlds. And when they do work, as we have seen with various movements in the past, they change the terms of recognition, indeed the cultural framework itself. So, there is no shortcut to empowerment. It has to take some local cultural form to have resonance, mobilize adherents, and capture the public space of debate. And this is true in the efforts that the poor make to mobilize themselves (internally) and in their efforts to change the dynamics of consensus in their larger social worlds.

The complex relationship of the poor and the marginalized to the cultural regimes within which they function is clearer still when we consider a specific cultural capacity, the capacity to aspire. I have already indicated that this is a weak feature of most approaches to cultural processes and frequently remains obscure. This obscurity has been especially costly for the poor, and in regard to development more generally.

Aspirations certainly have something to do with wants, preferences, choices, and calculations. And because these factors have been assigned to the discipline of economics, to the domain of the market, and to the level of the individual actor (all approximate characterizations), they have been largely invisible in the study of culture.

To repatriate them into the domain of the culture, we need to begin by noting that aspirations form parts of wider ethical and metaphysical ideas that derive from larger cultural norms. Aspirations are never simply individual (as the language of wants and choices inclines us to think). They are always formed in interaction and in the thick of social life. As far back as Émile Durkheim and George Herbert Mead, we have learned that there is no self outside a social frame, setting, and mirror. Could it be otherwise for aspirations? And aspirations about the good life, about health and happiness, exist in all societies. Yet a Buddhist picture of the good life lies at some distance from an Islamic one. Equally, a poor Tamil peasant woman's view of the good life may be as distant from that of a cosmopolitan woman from Delhi, as from that of an equally poor woman from Tanzania. But in every case, aspirations to the good life are part of some sort of system of ideas (remember relationality as an aspect of cultural worlds) that locates them in a larger map of local ideas and beliefs about: life and death, the nature of worldly possessions, the significance of material assets over social relations, the relative illusion of social permanence for a society, the value of peace or warfare. At the same time, aspirations to the good life tend to quickly dissolve into more densely local ideas about marriage, work, leisure, convenience, respectability, friendship, health, and virtue. More narrowly still, these intermediate norms often stay beneath the surface and emerge only as specific wants and choices: for this piece of land or that, for that marriage connection or another one, for this job in the bureaucracy as opposed to that

job overseas, for this pair of shoes over that pair of trousers. This last, most immediate and visible inventory of wants has often led students of consumption and of poverty to lose sight of the intermediate and higher-order normative contexts within which these wants are gestated and brought into view. And thus decontextualized, they are usually downloaded to the individual and offloaded to the science of calculation and market economics.

The poor, no less than any other group in a society, do express horizons in choices made and choices voiced, often in terms of specific goods and outcomes, often material and proximate, like doctors for their children, markets for their grain, husbands for their daughters, and tin roofs for their homes. But these lists, apparently just bundles of individual and idiosyncratic wants, are inevitably tied up with more general norms, presumptions, and axioms about the good life, and life more generally.

But here is the twist with the capacity to aspire: it is not evenly distributed in any society. It is a sort of meta-capacity, and the relatively rich and powerful invariably have a more fully developed capacity to aspire. What does this mean? It means that the better off you are (in terms of power, dignity, and material resources), the more likely you are to be conscious of the links between the more and less immediate objects of aspiration. Because the better off, by definition, have a more complex experience of the relation between a wide range of ends and means, because they have a bigger stock of available experiences of the relationship of aspirations and outcomes, because they are in a better position to explore and harvest diverse experiences of exploration and trial, because of their many opportunities to link material goods and immediate opportunities to more general and generic possibilities and options. They too may express their aspirations in concrete, individual wishes and wants. But they are more able to produce justifications, narratives, metaphors, and pathways through which bundles of goods and services are actually tied to wider social scenes and contexts, and to still more abstract norms and beliefs. This resource, unequally tilted in favor of the wealthier people in any society, is also subject to the truism that "the rich get richer," since the archive of concrete experiments with the good life gives nuance and texture to more general norms and axioms; conversely, experience with articulating these norms and axioms makes the more privileged members of any society more supple in navigating the complex steps between these norms and specific wants and wishes.

The capacity to aspire is thus a navigational capacity. The more privileged in any society simply have used the map of its norms to explore the future more frequently and more realistically, and to share this knowledge with one another more routinely than their poorer and weaker neighbors. The poorer members, precisely because of their lack of opportunities to practice the use of this navigational capacity (in turn because their situations permit fewer experiments

and less easy archiving of alternative futures), have a more brittle horizon of aspirations.

This difference should not be misunderstood. I am not saying that the poor cannot wish, want, need, plan, or aspire. But part of poverty is a diminishing of the circumstances in which these practices occur. If the map of aspirations (continuing the navigational metaphor) is seen to consist of a dense combination of nodes and pathways, relative poverty means a smaller number of aspirational nodes and a thinner, weaker sense of the pathways from concrete wants to intermediate contexts to general norms and back again. Where these pathways do exist for the poor, they are likely to be more rigid, less supple, and less strategically valuable, not because of any cognitive deficit on the part of the poor but because the capacity to aspire, like any complex cultural capacity, thrives and survives on practice, repetition, exploration, conjecture, and refutation. Where the opportunities for such conjecture and refutation in regard to the future are limited (and this may well be one way to define poverty), it follows that the capacity itself remains relatively less developed.

This capacity to aspire—conceived as a navigational capacity that is nurtured by the possibility of real-world conjectures and refutations—compounds the ambivalent compliance of many subaltern populations with the cultural regimes that surround them. This is because the experiential limitations in subaltern populations, on the capacity to aspire, tend to create a binary relationship to core cultural values, negative and skeptical at one pole, over-attached at the other. Returning to Hirschman's typology, this may be part of the reason that the less privileged, and especially the very poor, in any society, tend to oscillate between "loyalty" and "exit" (whether the latter takes the form of violent protest or total apathy). Of course, the objective is to increase the capacity for the third posture, the posture of "voice," the capacity to debate, contest, inquire, and participate critically.

The faculty of "voice" in Hirschman's terms, and what I am calling the capacity to aspire, a cultural capacity, are reciprocally linked. Each accelerates the nurture of the other. And the poor in every society are caught in a situation where triggers to this positive acceleration are few and hard to access. Here empowerment has an obvious translation: increase the capacity to aspire, especially for the poor. This is by definition an approach to culture, since capacities form parts of sets, and are always part of a local design of means and ends, values and strategies, experiences and tested insights. Such a map is always a highly specific way of connecting what Clifford Geertz long ago called the "experience-near" and the "experience-distant" aspects of life and may thus rightly be called cultural or, less felicitiously, a "culture."[15] This is the map that needs to be made more real, available, and powerful for the poor.

15 C. Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," in C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, 1973.