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**Some observations on Hirschman's production line on projects and programs**

As Hirschman put it, his cognitive style – and his “talent” - was “not just to come up with an interesting observation; it is more a question of going to the bottom of such an observation and then generalize to much broader categories”. While the starting observation was also combined with “disagreement with prevailing doctrines”, this did not mean entering into structured debates. In fact, when he was dealing with a topic that was the object of a controversy, Hirschman did not opt for one side vs. the other, nor tried to make them converge, but contributed laterally, presenting his own take, that was usually derived from some of his more general concerns.

This presentation will follow Hirschman's dealing with development interventions, in the form of projects and programs. It will illustrate how he moved from an original observation to the bottom of it in subsequent works, in some cases even to self-subversion.

In the first part, it will acknowledge Hirschman's own take on debated topics such as: projects vs. programs, qualitative vs. quantitative research. He thought that working on the small, beyond helping discovering unforeseen alternatives, allowed to “catch up anything general”.

In the second part, it will analyze how working on the small as he did in Development Projects Observed(DPO) and Getting Ahead Collectively (GAC) has helped going to the bottom of, and generalizing, ideas worked out, respectively, in The Strategy of Economic Development and Shifting Involvements.

In fact, from the principle of the Hiding Hand to the various instances of “incertitude”, to the “centrality of side effects”, all main topics in DPO are further elaborations, based on field work and on the knowledge and rationality of local people, of more general observations that had made the bulk of his theories on linkages, latitude for poor performance, inducement mechanisms.

Similarly, with the principle of the “conservation and mutation of social energy”, that he worked out in GAC, he went to the bottom of the idea of the oscillation between private and public concerns elaborated in Shifting Involvements.