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**Uncovering the dynamics of interaction in
development cooperation: a review of the ‘new actors
in development’ research agenda**

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UNCOVERING THE DYNAMICS OF INTERACTION IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: A REVIEW OF THE 'NEW ACTORS IN DEVELOPMENT' RESEARCH AGENDA

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Abstract

The rising prominence of new state and non-state actors in international politics has stimulated extensive discussion in the social sciences over the last decade and development cooperation has been a central arena for conceptualising the encounter between old and new powers. This working paper critically reflects on the substantial body of scholarship that seeks to document the characteristics of new actors in international development and chart the consequences of their engagement for global development governance. This review underlines the importance of questioning the homogeneity of actor constellations, relationships and ideas. Specifically, it addresses the extent to which the commonly-used binary concepts of development cooperation provider groups adequately capture relevant distinctions among the actors and add analytical value to research on development cooperation. The paper advocates adopting more analytically and conceptually diverse approaches to study the interaction between heterogeneous development actors and homogenising forces in the field of development cooperation, recognising the complexity and (dis)continuities of stability and change in this arena.

Preface

This working paper serves in part as a conference report on an interdisciplinary workshop held at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) in the autumn of 2015 under the title 'Emerging and Traditional Development Organizations: Contested Hegemonies and Heterogeneous Agendas'. The workshop took place under the auspices of the Global Norms and Heterogeneous Donor Organizations (GLONO) research programme, anchored at DIIS and bringing together Danish and British academics to study the translation of gender norms in development cooperation. The aim of the workshop was, as the title suggests, to contribute to ongoing empirical and theoretical work on the encounter between new and traditional development actors. It brought together participants from South Africa, UK, Sweden, Germany, Mozambique, and Denmark, from across Political Science, Anthropology, International Relations, Sociology, and Organisational Studies. This working paper reflects on discussions and deliberations during workshop. Comments are welcome.

Introduction

The meeting between ‘new’ and ‘old’ actors, discourses and practices in development cooperation has stimulated an impressive amount of research and debate over the last decade. Now is a good time to pause and critically reflect on the key messages from this research agenda, and to consider how to advance this important avenue of research. This working paper reviews existing work in this line of research while also confronting core assumptions; in particular asking to what extent the binary concepts of new and old actors, ideas and relationships adequately enables us to analyse the nature of the current trends in development cooperation. As with any emerging field of research, there are numerous opportunities to improve and progress, and we argue that there is ample room in this research agenda to move beyond cataloguing the variety of new actors in development and to improve our empirical and theoretical understandings of what is novel about their engagement and what is not. This entails adopting more analytically and conceptually diverse approaches to study the interaction between heterogeneous development actors and homogenising forces, recognising the complexity and (dis)continuities of stability and change in the field of development cooperation.

Development assistance emerged in the 1950s as post-war economies began promoting economic development in poorer regions and countries, many of which were former colonies. Sporadic project-focused work soon evolved into structured aid agencies, policies and formalised partnerships. For the first many decades members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provided the main share of global Official Development Assistance (ODA) in hierarchical relationships with clear lines between benefactors and recipients. With the turn of the millennium however, improved macroeconomic conditions in several middle-income countries paved the way for more assertive efforts to extend their economic and political influence, altering stable perceptions of the development assistance field. Several new clusters of actors emerged or re-emerged onto the development cooperation scene by greatly increasing their financial contributions and activities, state and non-state actors alike.

The rising prominence of these actors has stimulated a large body of research in the social sciences. Many analyses of the changing actor landscape in development cooperation have identified their diversity as a challenge to established aid orthodoxies and hegemonies associated with the OECD–DAC agenda (Chin and Quadir, 2012; Richey and Ponte, 2014; Zimmermann and Smith, 2011; Kragelund, 2008; Gore, 2013). Each of these new actors brings with them particular histories and institutional set-ups in managing foreign affairs and development, and the differences in assumptions, organisational cultures, and patterns of interaction with other actors that go along with that; all specificities that reinforce the narrative that novel actors challenge the legitimacy and authority of a dominant North–South cooperation model. Nevertheless, many of these different organisations take part, or at the very least show an interest in, global agreements,

norms and principles that increasingly govern and homogenise practices and ideas in the field of development cooperation.

Since the late 1990s the normative frameworks associated with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have provided a sign of advancing homogenisation in international development cooperation. Given that these frameworks can be characterised as ‘soft law’ and lack strong enforcement mechanisms, even when actors share a common vision the rising prominence of actors with different norms of transparency or coordination poses a particular challenge in promoting adherence to the norms across levels of implementation (Paulo and Reisen, 2010). In seeking to maintain a common normative framework for development cooperation the OECD has, over time, adopted a more inclusive orientation toward states outside its membership, with the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation representing a key recent effort to create a broad normative agenda around which disparate actors can coalesce (Eyben, 2013).

At the core of the ‘new actors in development’ research agenda then, we find a confrontation between the perception of increasing heterogeneity among actors and attempts at introducing homogenising normative frameworks. To explore the research agenda and to suggest avenues for progression, the paper is structured as follows. The first part outlines the analytical cores of the different streams of literature that study the rise of new development actors and their encounter with traditional actors. The second and most substantial part of the paper discusses the limited usefulness of categorisations of ‘new’ and ‘old’ actor constellations, ideas and relationships. The third part draws up wider lines for future avenues of research, and the fourth provides some concluding remarks.

New actors and the changing field of development cooperation

To move the research agenda on new actors in development forward we have to take stock and appreciate what is an already extensive literature. In it, the ‘new actor’ label is associated with different groups of state and non-state actors. States include new global powers (Chaturvedi et al., 2012; Mawdsley, 2010, 2012; Quadir, 2013; Reilly, 2012; Sidiropoulos et al., 2015; Tan-Mullins et al. 2010), industrialising countries (Tok et al., 2014; Momani and Ennis, 2013), and post-socialist states (Lightfoot, 2010; Szent-Ivanyi, 2012; Oprea, 2012), while non-state actors mainly refer to the like of private foundations (Fejerskov, 2015; McGoey, 2015; Moran, 2014), celebrity organisations (Richey and Ponte, 2008), religious organisations (Petersen 2015; Petersen and Jones, 2011), corporations and social enterprises, and novel forms of grass-roots or do-it-yourself development endeavours (Desai and Kharas, 2009; Elbers and Schulpen, 2015). In a common narrative, these actors can be considered entrants to the field of cooperation, either because they have recently established cooperation programmes or are ‘re-emerging’ as cooperation

providers. Analyses highlighting the novelty of the actors as such tend to focus on their cooperation profiles, including descriptive overviews of priorities, resource flows, and the evolving institutional set-up for cooperation (see Walz and Ramachandran, 2010; Udvari, 2014; Kragelund, 2008).

Beyond explorations that document the development cooperation role of diverse actors, the most common questions for the research agenda undoubtedly revolve around issues of change and stability. Do new actors enter into development cooperation with an interest in and ability to alter the field, or are they socialised according to already dominant norms and practices? Advocates of the first line of thought typically highlight the role of these actors as potential competitors or alternatives to established cooperation providers and modes of operation. It is a perspective that largely sees the architecture of development cooperation as being in a state of flux, even to the point of systemic fracturing (initially described as a silent revolution [Woods, 2008]). According to some, this silent revolution turned into a noisy process of evolution and change (de Renzio and Seifert, 2014) entailing a new paradigm of international development (Zimmermann and Smith, 2011; Sato et al. 2011) that is traceable as much to the discourse as to the modes of cooperation employed by new actors (Chin and Quadir, 2012; Walz and Ramachandran, 2010).

In this vein, numerous analyses present South–South Cooperation (SSC) as a distinctive model compared to OECD–DAC development cooperation approaches. SSC is largely defined in respect to principles of solidarity, (political) non-interference and equality between partners, and presented as a cooperation form that challenges the unequal power relations characterising North–South relations. In addition to these ideational components, SSC is also often associated with particular cooperation modalities, which are at times more aimed at enhancing economic growth than at multidimensional poverty reduction. These modalities include a broad range of exchange of knowledge, technology and human resources, as well as project funding directed at infrastructure or concessional lending, at times tied to the purchase of goods and services from providing partners (Manning, 2006). Triangular cooperation is an example of a new cooperation modality associated with SSC, often perceived as a valuable mechanism to potentially break away from the North–South dichotomy of traditional aid. More critical lines of thought argue instead that it represents a depoliticisation of development, presenting a ‘natural’ congruity between states across the Global South that are in fact very different (McEwan and Mawdsley, 2012).

Another perspective questions the taken-for-granted interest and capacity of the new actors to alter the field of development, with some asking whether the difference between new and old is actually as genuine as sometimes postulated (Richey and Ponte, 2014) and suggesting that both groups are exceptionally diverse. Even just among state actors, this diversity is somewhat overlooked (Mawdsley, 2010). The group of new actors thus remains too heterogeneous a group to pose a significant threat to the established aid architecture. Others

question the transformative potential of new actors because of their neglect of civil society (Banks and Hulme, 2014), or hold that resources are a key determining factor and that increases in aid provision are required for them to truly alter the field (Quadir, 2013).

Relatedly, the new actors may be highly dynamic and as likely to go through changes themselves as they are to initiate changes in the field. In this line of thought the homogenising effects of development cooperation are highlighted through arguments of how new actors socialise as they begin increasingly engaging with the field and are exposed to isomorphic pressures (see Fejerskov, 2015 for the example of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, or Chin and Frolic [2008] and Reilly [2012] for a Chinese perspective). Theoretically, this work follows institutional arguments about how organisations coming together will adopt similar traits over time and influence other organisations to do the same as they start entering the field, underlining the strong regulatory and normative processes of the field of development cooperation.

Lastly, a third perspective falls in between the above-described, by seeking to move away from descriptions of individual actors and the opposition of established and new cooperation provider groups, emphasising instead the processes of interaction among the varied actors and their contributions to reshaping the global institutional framework for development cooperation. Woods (2008) and Chin and Frolic (2008) emphasise how emerging donors generally have little interest in collaborative or multilateral frameworks, mainly because of their limited influence on these bodies. Brautigam (2009) also highlights, from the perspective of China, how such cooperation will be limited in the future and situated at a symbolic level, because of the inability of Chinese aid to meet ODA definitional requirements. India, South Africa and Brazil may increasingly engage in collaborative ventures such as the trilateral Indian, Brazilian, South Africa partnership IBSA, though Rowlands suggests that the larger group of BRICS countries 'will be slow to engage with the DAC architecture, though they are unlikely to mount a collective challenge to it' (2012).

Questioning the homogeneity of actor constellations, relationships and ideas

Cooperation models, discourses and the practices that extend from them are enmeshed in a complex web of similarity and diversity, essentially rendering taken-for-granted categories of 'old' and 'new' obsolete. By a timely discarding of these labels, we can improve our understanding of how heterogeneous actors enter, shape and leave the field of development cooperation, irrespective of 'new' or 'old'. Over the next three sections, we discuss the limited analytical usefulness of categorisations of 'new' and 'old' actors, ideas and relationships.

The heterogeneity of ‘old’ and ‘new’ actor groups

The diversity of actors within the OECD–DAC community has been acknowledged in numerous academic and policy analyses. A voluminous literature has explored heterogeneity with respect to OECD–DAC countries’ aid allocation motives, for example. Many allocation studies have adopted a donor interest versus recipient need dichotomy to assess varied donor preferences in using aid to support security and commercial interests or promote poverty reduction objectives. From the 1990s onward researchers increasingly drew attention to human rights records, corruption levels, and regime types or policy environments in recipient countries as factors influencing aid decisions, and highlighted differences among DAC donors in their responsiveness to these recipient characteristics when allocating aid (Neumayer 2003). While measures of aid motives have been refined over time, allocation studies point to persistent donor differences, with poverty reduction representing a clearer motive for the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom to provide aid in comparison to France or the United States, for example (Clist, 2011). Evaluations of OECD–DAC implementation of aid effectiveness commitments provide another indication of variations in donor practice. As examples, Austria’s low level of country programmable aid or Japan’s limited internalisation of aid harmonisation commitments demonstrate continuing inconsistencies in translating the DAC’s normative agenda into action (Wood et al., 2011).

Beyond these differences in activities or performance, the varied internal organisational settings for the formulation and implementation of development cooperation policy provide another indication of an existing heterogeneity of approaches within the OECD–DAC donor community. Some DAC donors have subsumed development cooperation within their foreign policy structures in their institutional set-up (Denmark, Norway), while others (Germany, United Kingdom) have retained independent development ministries to oversee the bulk of development cooperation (OECD, 2009). Many donors have adjusted their institutional arrangements for aid management over time to reflect domestic political changes and altered priorities, with the merger of development, trade, and foreign affairs portfolios in Australia, Canada and New Zealand in recent years offering key examples of the evolution of development cooperation structures.

Other distinctions that are relevant to understanding the different approaches that cooperation providers have adopted include variations in support for different implementation channels such as multilateral instruments, allocation through national institutions, or support for non-governmental organisations. This points to a broad actor landscape connected to the national programmes of DAC cooperation providers that, when broken down, can yield still further distinctions—between norm-setting or operational UN development agencies, between development finance institutions or technical assistance agencies, and between public–private partnerships and NGOs. The multiplicity of purposes of

aid and channels for implementation has been a consistent feature of OECD–DAC aid for several decades (Wood 1986).

As aid providers beyond the OECD–DAC community have gained prominence, scholars have extended aid allocation analyses to investigate the variations between the established and the new aid providers. In a study of allocation trends among 16 non-DAC donors, several of which have since joined the body, Dreher et al. (2011) find that aid decisions from new donors are less sensitive to variables reflecting recipient needs and the democratic character of the regime compared to DAC actors, though they also acknowledge variations among DAC donors in allocation by regime type. These authors note that aid from new donors tends to be more geographically concentrated than aid from DAC donors, a point confirmed by Szent-Iványi's (2012) analysis of Central and Eastern European assistance. Fuchs and Vadlamannati (2013) similarly underline the strong regional focus in Indian aid, while emphasising that political and commercial considerations are especially important in explaining Indian aid decisions. Like analyses of OECD–DAC aid allocation, these studies point to the mixture of motives for cooperation and suggest that there are both variations among the new actors and also similarities with DAC aid providers. Given the heterogeneity of preferences, institutional settings and aid allocation mechanisms both within and among established and emerging donors then, 'binary concepts of "emerging donors" and "traditional donors" may conceal more than they reveal' (Rowlands, 2012). To further strengthen the argument that such categorisation is of limited use, the paper next examines the often taken-for-granted assumption of ideational novelty of new actors.

Limits to the ideational novelty of new actors in development

Ideas are a central driver of institutional stability and change as they move within and between individuals and organisations, distorting or reproducing taken-for-granted meanings and understandings. The key concern in relation to the literature on new actors in development is the double-sided notion of what ideas new actors bring to development and how they respond to existing ideas. To what extent do new ideas support, challenge, or contradict existing ideas, and to what extent are they novel at all, and not only embodying the fashion or life cycle of ideas that continuously fade away and re-emerge over time? Ideas, of course, do not travel within a vacuum. As they enter organisations they confront a range of established rules, informal and formal practices, and other concerns, pressures and priorities that make up modern bureaucracies (Scott, 2014). Institutional cultures and practices can support but also can, at times, undermine and constrain the movement of ideas within and between organisations which also affects the possibility of new ideas spreading among distinct actors (Schein, 2010).

Different sets of ideas and logics have increasingly come to the forefront of development cooperation, driven by emerging actors. This especially regards, on the one hand, the core ideas of South–South Cooperation (SSC) on solidarity, non-

interference and equality of partnerships, and on the other hand, logics of impact effectiveness, evidence and managerialism, inspired in great part by the private sector and the increasing involvement of private foundations. SSC providers constitute as diverse and heterogeneous a group of actors as do the DAC donors, but they are thought to be held together by a set of distinct (although abstract) ideas around solidarity and mutual benefit, non-interference and respect of sovereignty, and rejection of political hierarchies, potentially combined with a rejection of core OECD–DAC principles and norms. The concept of SSC itself has a long heritage: it dates to the Bandung Conference in 1955 and was institutionalised in the UN in 1978 with the opening of the special unit for SSC. One key property of SSC is the idea that SSC providers regard themselves as being in a mutually beneficial relationship and, hence, reject the notion that some countries are donors and others recipients (Gore 2013). Another key property is the notion of conditionality or lack thereof, within which traditional policy conditionality is widely considered a ‘neoliberal’ core feature of politically unequal North–South relations, violating the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states present in SSC discourses. These ideational aspects of SSC represent an attempt to break away from the frequent perception that traditional donor conditionality packages are imposed on developing countries. Furthermore, discourses around SSC are heavily shaped by ideas of a common identity based on a shared colonial experience (Robledo, 2015) and vulnerability to neoliberal globalisation (Mawdsley, 2012).

Despite the apparent ideological novelty of SSC discourses focusing on equality and mutuality, whether SSC is in practice mutually beneficial and less exploitative than North–South development cooperation remains an open question. This can be attributed to the dearth of research comparing experiences of North–South and South–South Cooperation alongside each other (for an exception focusing on democracy promotion, see Hackenesch, 2015). Even at the conceptual level, there are commonalities in the approaches of DAC and non-DAC aid providers, with the DAC emphasis on the importance of recipient ownership and the relevance of a ‘beyond aid’ agenda providing key examples of this overlap (Tortora, 2011). Furthermore, some new actors, while seeking to promote self-interest, may introduce new power imbalances at the expense of the poorest countries and citizens, emphasising high levels of difference and inequality both between and within the countries engaged in SSC (Nilaus Tarp and Cold-Ravnkilde, 2015). Finally, given the rapid growth in the volume of SSC, it is only a matter of time until countries engaged in SSC will have to prove the claims about mutual benefits and comparative advantages of SSC (Stuenkel, 2013). Whether the norms and principles can be formulated in ways that are distinctively different from those of the OECD–DAC remains to be seen.

As SSC has increased, scholars have examined how traditional donors have responded to these changes from the Global South by adopting new discursive regimes or ways of legitimising development and specific organisational and political changes to it. These legitimising discourses largely revolve around win-

win situations in development and mutual interests, but also geo-economic ones. Increasing competition from the economically and politically rising South offers an explanation for why DAC donors are becoming more comfortable about articulating their geopolitical self-interest given the equally strong idea of mutual interests in the SSC discourse, but it does not represent an unprecedented line of argumentation to legitimise or guide aid spending. Domestic political and economic concerns strongly influenced the aid decisions of DAC donors in their first decades of development cooperation engagement. The widespread practice of tying aid to ensure a return of spending to the aid provider provides a clear indication of this. The shared goal of promoting self-interests perhaps emphasises that for diverse state actors, development assistance serves as an instrument of foreign policy, which could potentially increase the heterogeneity of interests.

Another set of ideas and logics revolving around managerialism and cost-effectiveness has been brought into development by increased private sector and private foundation involvement. Private foundations have been involved in international endeavours for more than a hundred years, but they have risen to prominence in the last decade, not least because of the immense rise of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Lundsgaarde et. al., 2012; Fejerskov, 2015; Moran, 2014). Notions of managerialism and private sector logic are strong in these foundations, and those created over the last decades in particular, emphasise development as technical and neutral problem solving. Such thinking goes hand in hand with rational planning in which an end-state is said to be achieved insofar as the correct approach and tools for monitoring are applied. This marks a shift in the practices and discourses of development cooperation towards 'ideas emanating out of business schools' (Moran, 2014) that Desai and Kharas (2009) refer to as the 'California consensus', in which logics such as the necessity of innovation, efficiency and evaluation, results-orientation, quantitative impact-measurement etc. are transferred to practices and discourses in development cooperation (see also Blowfield and Dolan, 2014).

One stream of analysis of private foundations typically considers their rise from the perspective that the institutional logics transferred from the business world by these organisations renders them more successful, and that these actors are more innovative, effective and results-oriented than traditional donor organisations (Hudson Institute, 2012; Bishop and Green, 2010; Adelman, 2009). Similar to the superficiality of the argument that SSC providers necessarily only work from a more horizontal, low-cost and politically neutral point of departure, this perspective on private foundations also fails to thoughtfully compare the approaches of such bodies to alternative modes of cooperation. An alternative and more critical perspective holds that the transfer of entrepreneurial business skills into the world of relief and development cooperation can be problematic, and that the supposed superiority of business approaches inherent in the commercial rhetoric of managerialism in particular, conflicts with mainstream international development discourses (Edwards, 2008; McGoey, 2015).

The power of ideas in development cooperation to drive policy agendas, distribute resources and shape power relations is immense. Understanding the inherent properties and influence of certain ideas, as well as how they diffuse among actors engaged in development, represents a fundamental avenue of research. Very little is gained conceptually and analytically, however, from considering 'new' and 'old' actors as necessarily operating within radically different normative or ideational frameworks, nor in considering the ideas of 'new' actors as inherently new, and those of 'old' actors as conservative. The reality is a messy picture in which there are, most likely, more similarities across these two groups than there are within each of them. Private foundations share very few ideational or normative traits with some of the growing middle-income countries, just as established OECD–DAC donors have diverse rationales for providing aid.

When considering ideas and their power in development cooperation it is good to remember that in fact many ideas are limited in their novelty. The lifecycle of ideas leads to their re-emergence over time, perhaps repackaged in slightly different forms, but often with fairly static inherent properties. The tied aid traits of Chinese aid may thus differ little in substance from the DAC approaches of the 1970s and 1980s. In an established field such as development cooperation that has gone through changing discourses and practices for more than half a century, ideational fashions often have historical baggage. Some ideas, of course, have disruptive and discontinuous characteristics, perhaps because their influence has been supported by forms of exogenous shock, but generally change in established fields is incremental. In the next part we discuss further whether such continuities are also reflected in the changing or unchanging nature of development cooperation.

The (un)changing nature of development relationships

As new actors emerge and begin scaling up their activities and funding of development-related activities, they are increasingly confronted with and enter into the field of development cooperation. The field basically connotes the organisations that together are involved in some form of development-related activity, who share between them normative frameworks and similar conceptions of legitimate action, and who are subject to common regulatory processes. This creates a basic tension between the diversification of actors and actor types, and increasing attempts at homogenisation through norms and principles aiming to define legitimate action and thought, directing our attention to how the tension that occurs as new actors encounter the field can be resolved.

Different perspectives in the literature shed light on the processes that follow. Most work focuses attention on these actors' potential to change the existing status quo by challenging the authority of established or dominant modes of operation, priorities and thinking on development. But new actors are just as likely to go through significant intra- and inter-organisational changes themselves, as they are

confronted with dominant normative frameworks and conceptions of legitimate action. What happens as new actors enter into the established or mature field of development cooperation, then, is a process of multidirectional response and change. New actors respond, both intentionally and unintentionally, to established ways of thinking and doing development (present norms and principles), perhaps with organisational change as a result. For the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as an example, increasing interaction with the field of development cooperation up through the 2000s entailed exposure to different normative ideals and organisational cultures than those dominant in the foundation. Gradually, technology and cost-effectiveness logics were challenged by concerns from development cooperation about, for example, gender equality. Meanwhile, staff trained in fields other than the natural sciences were also brought in, challenging the organisational culture. The result has been significant internal organisational changes in the logic and mode of operation that drives the foundation and its relations with partners (see Fejerskov, 2015).

Established actors in turn, also respond to these new actors and the reconfigurations of the field they imply. Responses, in this sense, are both ideational and material, unintentional and intentional: they involve the intake of new ideas and practices but also shape resource flows to different types of projects and beneficiaries. This discussion raises the question of whether there is an 'outside the field', i.e. whether participation in principle-setting or recognition of participation in development cooperation as a common enterprise is at all an organisational or individual choice, or instead something that is given in light of the type and form of the activities that actors are engaged in? Formal adherence (signing up) to principles and regulatory frameworks, of course, remains an intentional choice, but no organisation can avoid being exposed to the informal institutions or norms prevalent in the field. Brazil, for example, often rejects the very idea that they can be considered an 'emerging donor' (Hochstetler, 2012).

The entrance of novel actors into the field of development reinvigorates discussions about cooperation, fragmentation and coordination of activities. The vast majority of these actors have entered the field with a genuine scepticism of established systems of coordination and harmonisation such as those promoted by the OECD. Coordination is typically perceived to constrain the work of these actors because coordination measures limit the room for action and manoeuvrability of organisations setting up mechanisms that require substantial human/bureaucratic and financial expenditure, undermining spontaneity and flexibility in designing and implementing interventions. For DAC donors, arguments for promoting coordination measures extend from fairly practical experiences: far too many development and humanitarian large-scale efforts have been poorly coordinated and resulted in ineffective duplication of efforts (entailing overuse of aid in some areas and neglect of others) at best, and erosion of others' work at worst (including competition between aid agencies). Recent illustrations of the consequences of poor coordination include borderline unproductive humanitarian responses to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and the

Haiti earthquake of 2010. From an alternative perspective, coordination efforts have also been argued to function as a mechanism for maximising donor bargaining power at the expense of recipient countries, potentially undermining aid effectiveness (Chandy and Kharas, 2011).

In theory coordination and harmonisation efforts increase effectiveness, limit fragmentation and reduce transaction costs for recipients, but they do have operational consequences and have proven difficult to implement in practice. One relevant dimension of the analysis of new actors is whether they should be actively persuaded or coerced into participating in coordination and harmonisation efforts, or if their sometimes novel and unique *modi operandi* is a reason to allow them to float outside the bureaucratic straitjacket of such efforts? Aid fragmentation can be a serious problem, but this challenge has not yet been resolved by measures pursued by DAC donors. There are obvious trade-offs inherent in allowing new actors to be involved in coordination structures from the outside

Formally, efforts towards achieving increased coordination and harmonisation are mainly advanced in the institutional contexts of the OECD, with the High Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness (Paris in 2005, Accra in 2008, and Busan in 2011), and in EU joint programming efforts, providing impetus for greater coherence. Actual progress remains fairly limited according to some of the existing evidence (OECD, 2009), and both the OECD and EU work continues to be in a preliminary phase with a focus on piloting and a few positive examples from collective programming etc. Although the 2011 evaluation of the Paris Declaration points to the conclusion that a larger proportion of missions are carried out jointly between donors, efforts are yet to reach a level at which it will reduce the number of uncoordinated missions conducted. Partner countries have, in several instances, complained that the resources required to engage with multi-donor coordination mechanisms easily equal the workload of handling individual relations on a bilateral scale. Likewise for the EU, the agenda of joint programming is witnessing occasional sparks of momentum, but with concrete progress still being at a fairly superficial level, and with sporadic support across countries.

Needless to say, including several new groups of actors into such efforts that are already facing great challenges just among the traditional actors is not a simple nor is it a technical task. The large group of emerging actors have different opinions about whether to engage in the established institutional frameworks or not. Some, including South Korea, Mexico and Turkey, seem to gladly become involved in the OECD–DAC, and others increase their cooperation but are still very slow in scaling up their aid, not least because of domestic pressure not to, such as post-socialist states including Poland and the Czech Republic.

In many cases, however, emerging actors of the South are fundamentally sceptical of coordination. However, the very small (in membership) BRICS club highlights the difference of opinion on coordination among emerging actors. Brazil, for instance, was reluctant to accept the Paris Declaration principles as they perceived them as being imposed by Western donors (John de Sousa, 2010). Russia

is situated closer to the West than any of the BRICS in political terms, not unfamiliar with OECD–ODA accounting rules and even with a candidacy for the OECD, though it increasingly uses its BRICS and G20 memberships as a counterweight to its waning relations with the West. The rest of the BRICS are strong supporters of SSC and are almost unanimously critical of the established institutional order. This critique has sometimes been seen as indicative of weak institutional capacity, producing insecurity and unwillingness (Stuenkel, 2011). The BRICS, however, still largely subscribe to processes of homogeneity, such as the newly-ratified SDGs that serve a purpose of guiding development efforts towards 2030. There seem to be other differences among BRICS members as well, with the regional powers of Brazil and South Africa more concerned with the wider debate between North and South and the context of collective African renewal and development than with global struggles over power. At times, both South Africa's (Chaturvedi et al. 2012) and Brazil's engagements in SSC and building stronger ties with developing countries have been interpreted as efforts to gain support for obtaining a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and changing global governance institutions that they see as dominated by Western interests.

Private foundations have, like the BRICS, shown some opposition to processes of streamlining development in the OECD and UN, such as those of the MDGs and SDGs. Most foundations essentially consider these agendas to be strictly governmental ones, adherence to which would be fundamentally constraining to their work. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is somewhat of an anomaly here, as it has increased its cooperation with established institutions over the last years, even beginning to report aid spending to the OECD–DAC. For many emerging actors, then, there is dissatisfaction with current institutional frameworks governing intergovernmental relations. International financial institutions such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, or organisations like the OECD, are seen as fundamentally discriminatory against the South, and as still furthering a hegemonic agenda of concentrating power in the North. Their unequal distribution of political power manifested in, for example, voting power, reflects a bygone state of affairs that the world has not been in for decades, the most notable argument runs. The international development and financial institutions (IDIs and IFIs) such as the World Bank, the IMF and the OECD, have been subject to pronounced critique in the last decade. Their legitimacy has continuously been questioned as they are thought to still represent the balance of power valid at their time of establishment many decades ago in a Western-centric world order (Dreher et. al., 2011; Kragelund, 2011).

The OECD Development Assistance Committee has been criticised for its apparent imbalanced composition that sees only a limited number of developing countries and NGOs included in decision making, while its consequences have implications for the development community at large (Verschaeve and Orbie, 2015). It is facing a crisis of legitimacy that not only sees criticism and disapproval from recipients, but just as much from the emerging donors, challenging its very

nature as the pre-eminent donor forum. The response from the OECD–DAC has largely been one of granting some emerging powers observer status, while several have refused to participate in any form, along with the launch of a reform of the governance rules and principles concerning Official Development Assistance intended to increasingly include new donors in the work of the committee. Unfortunately, from the perspective of the DAC’s legitimacy, this process has in itself been unequal in terms of participation from developing countries, with these latter being invited to do little more than submit their views and suggestions on the reform, with minor if any formal participation in the decision-making process. Some of the DAC’s structures have been reformed to give space to non-members, but the ODA system remains a closed shop, largely devoid of equal representation and participation, transparency and accountability.

Despite more or less being in a Security Council deadlock prompting the accusation that the UN faces a proper political crisis, the UN is conceived by the emerging actors as the most legitimate of all international institutions. The response from new actors has partly been a call to elevate the formal status of many UN organs and committees and to move numerous inter-governmental processes to these fora, and partly been a more aggressive political endeavour to form new institutional structures that challenge head-on the primacy and hegemony of those existing. This has led to the formation of, among others, the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). Established in 2007 as an explicit counterpart to the DAC (with a similar mandate), the DCF has been heralded as more equal in participation and decision-making, but it is yet to make a genuine impact and, according to some, does not yet represent a true challenge or alternative to the DAC (Verschaeve and Orbie, 2015). Attempts to find common ground between new and old actors are also widely conceptualised under the auspices of the UN. One such example takes the form of triangular or trilateral projects in which an established and an emerging donor together pool resources (from the established donor) and experience (from the new donor) to support development interventions in poorer countries (see Farais (2015) and McEwan and Mawdsley (2012)).

Given the multiple responses to the entrance of new actors into the field of development, we can certainly observe a range of changes in the relationship between development actors. Responses have been institutional in terms of attempts to change existing, or to create new, frameworks to meet the substantial critique of unequal power relations within existing bodies. At the international level, we see a gradual opening up of some institutions to reflect the changing balance of power, especially so in the UN, and not least reflected in the increasing influence of the Global South in negotiations on the framework (see Fejerskov et al., 2016). Even the OECD–DAC has increasingly taken steps towards including emerging states in its deliberations (Verschaeve and Orbie 2015). Generally speaking, however, and especially with the limited nature of the reforms on decision-making and voting power in the IMF and the World Bank in mind, it seems reasonable to conclude that we are still not witnessing a dramatic shift in

the international institutional framework for development cooperation.

While these fora govern some of the relations between North and South, we have to equally consider bilateral engagements in order to understand the (un)changing nature of development relations. Here, SSC has been hailed as the materialisation of changing relationships of development cooperation. Increasing horizontal cooperation between state and non-state actors from the global South certainly represents an advance, but these relationships should be subject to scrutiny, just as North–South ones have been. Relatedly, some hold that SSC sees no economic and power asymmetries in cooperation, or dependencies potentially created by way of partnerships (De la Fontaine and Seifert, 2010). In our view, these conceptualised elements of SSC are problematic, both with respect to how they describe the character of relations among SSC partners—China and South Sudan are clearly not equal partners—and with respect to their assumption of distinctiveness of SSC principles from OECD–DAC approaches, given that national ownership of development processes represents a cornerstone of the normative aid effectiveness framework. While the SSC discourse clearly breaks with distorted hegemonic practices dominating North–South relations, we have yet to be convinced that the practiced mode of cooperation does in fact do the same (see Mawdsley, 2012).

The future of research on ‘new’ and ‘old’ actors

The research on new actors in development that we have explored in this paper displays an astounding diversity by cutting across a multiplicity of units and levels of analysis, disciplines, and theoretical approaches. But as with any emerging field of research, there are numerous opportunities to improve and progress as the current state of the art is investigated. To begin with, there is ample room for researchers to expand the scope of actors studied. Perhaps it is time to get out of the territorial trap that sees the majority of research concentrated on states, often studied at the level of political discourses, and that too mostly to do with the BRICS. New actors and SSC extend far beyond the BRICS and state interests, but research is yet to truly reflect this by embracing the full diversity of interesting actors. Non-state actors – from the big set of private sector players to the micro-foundations of small DIY aid endeavours – provide different perspectives on the state-centric outlook. But even beyond this we should continuously ask whether there are other actors or lenses that we are neglecting that could bring insight? Turning things around, we should not only explore Chinese engagement in Mozambique but also Mozambican engagement in China. Nor should we restrain ourselves to only exploring those actors with a clearly designated door and a sign on the wall, i.e. organisations. Importantly, we should not take widespread categorisations of ‘new’ and ‘old’ for granted, but instead aim to break down these prisons of perception and explore how similarities are as

much to be found between distinct actors across these two, as are differences within these large groupings.

A further argument emanating from this exploration of the literature is that it is necessary to embrace the multidirectional quality of change associated with the increasing prominence of new actors in development. To appreciate changes in the field of development cooperation, we need to examine both how the strong homogenising effects of the field stimulate changes among the new actors and how the heterogeneity of these actors influences changes to the field. This is essentially a call for increasing the attention paid to the actors that enter into development, and the processes of change they do or do not go through.

For most actors engaged in development, both new and old, public statements of solidarity all too often mask the presence of hierarchies of power and different motivations, the complexities of which we should always be aware of. Instead of merely adding new actors to the list, which may, each of them in their own way of course, bring new perspectives to the field, we suggest looking beyond the categories of emerging and traditional donors to see how the entrance of actors into the field may change, strengthen or undermine existing relationships and practices in the field, by pursuing questions such as: i) How do new and traditional development organisations respond to, participate in, or even undermine, systems of authority, interaction and accountability in the field of development cooperation? ii.) How do ideas and practices spread across development organisations influencing policy, practice and all aspects of internal organisational life? iii.) How do we study bureaucratized and often highly hierarchical development organisations? and iv.) How can we compare different organisations and organisational types across a variety of historical contexts, formal and informal practices, and assumptions?

In examining these questions, it is valuable to move beyond the blackboxing that sometimes characterises work on new actors. The overall profiles of many of the most powerful actors, both materially and ideationally (such as China or the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), have been well described, but studies that delve deeply into their internal dynamics are fewer in number. The difficulties of access to the inner halls of many of these actors (an issue attributable to the actors themselves), and their often questionable accountability, may lead to oversimplification of the ambitions of their intentions and work, thence blackboxing. Below the surface of presumably unitary actors, we find individuals, groups, and organisations coming together from different backgrounds and with different missions and purposes, who contest ideas, meanings or material resources, engaging in intra-organisational processes. These actors should therefore not be treated as streamlined machines.

The interdisciplinary nature of how contemporary development cooperation is studied means that those of us engaged in it are required to continuously look for novel inspiration as we attempt to strengthen its analytical capacity and extend its theoretical foundations. This entails a need to uphold theoretical pluralism (breaking down paradigmatic boundaries), combining various fundamental logics

that govern the production of new knowledge, and blending theoretical constructs from different literatures to create new perspectives on the empirical phenomena of development cooperation we try to explain. Studying the diversifying actor landscape in development cooperation at the same time requires an ever-growing conceptual tool box, and continues to provide fertile areas for empirical analysis and theoretical development beyond traditional development-related fields. The entrance of new actors into an established field is an ideal case for Institutional Theory's concern with such matters; the multidirectional relationship between international organisations and emerging both state and non-state actors is in line with key concerns within the International Relations and international organisations literatures. Public administration research provides insights into how to study the development of foreign affairs and development bureaucracies of diverse aid providers and their response to, or mimicry of, other bureaucratic types, be they from the North or the South.

Conclusion

In this working paper we have reviewed work central to the research agenda on a broad array of new actors in international development, examining core assumptions and lines of inquiry that recur in this area. A conclusion of this review is that it is relevant to question the homogeneity of actor constellations, relationships and ideas as we currently see them conceptualised, with a view to elaborating on how the research agenda can and should progress.

The literature on what transpires as new actors increasingly enter into development cooperation has at the very least two main strands. The first strand, highlighting new actors' cooperation profiles (identity), focuses on change and the role of new actors as potential alternatives to established development cooperation. This view is particularly dominant in the narratives around SSC as a distinctive model, potentially challenging existing OECD–DAC development cooperation approaches. The second strand focuses more on the dynamic character and potential changing nature of new actors themselves as they increasingly encounter the strong homogenising forces of development cooperation. This strand of literature follows rudimentary institutionalist arguments that the strong homogenising dynamics of the field will likely result in organisational isomorphism. While useful in emphasising the strong normative forces at play in the field, this line of enquiry is less helpful in explaining factors that may affect variation between the actors and why some organisations are more likely to adhere to the regulatory processes of the field than others.

In taking the research agenda forward we argue for a situated understanding somewhat in between the two, emphasising interaction between heterogeneous actors and their contributions to the global institutional frameworks for development cooperation. Adopting such an appreciation of the multiplicity of change means embracing complexity and accepting that what appears new may soon turn 'old', while the traditional may reconstruct itself in an appearance of novelty. We encourage more research along these lines and particularly on how new modes of cooperation emerge intentionally or unintentionally from the encounters between heterogeneous actors in the field, and across restrictive conceptualisations of 'new' and 'old' actors.

The paper has emphasised how heterogeneity of actors likewise tends to cut across established categories of new and old. Various allocation studies have pointed to the heterogeneity of established donors in terms of preferences, institutional settings and donor allocation mechanisms. New actors' institutional set-ups likewise differ according to domestic political agendas, organisational histories and cultures. Furthermore, existing relationships with development partner countries may shape the various levels of interaction between development partners (see Sidiropoulos et. al., 2015). The institutional structures of new actors may often resemble those of established development partners more so than those of their Southern peers: Brazil's ABC shows some similarities to agencies such as Denmark's Danida while the more fragmented structures of

South Africa's development cooperation, which is based on exchange between departments, may resemble that of the US development cooperation system (including USAID).

The division of development actors into different analytical categories is ultimately most useful if it contributes to providing a basis for comparison that can increase the knowledge base on what forms of cooperation are more effective in generating positive development outcomes. Viewed in this way, the clear differentiation and assessment of the performance of North–South or South–South cooperation is relevant to the extent that it is possible to distinguish the elements of the approaches that contribute to different outcomes. As the distinctiveness of cooperation models at a broad level has often been assumed rather than explained, the leverage of studies of broad categories of actor types to improve development practice may be limited. Relevant distinctions in cooperation approaches may have more to do with their scope, sector of activity, function, investment channel, or implementation context than the label of the funding source. Thus, lower-level factors may prove more compelling in providing a basis for comparison on the utility of diverse cooperation approaches.

To take this research agenda further we must move beyond documenting the arrival of new actors in development and improve our empirical and theoretical understandings of what it is we are witnessing. There is a dire need to embrace a multiplicity of units and levels of analysis that will allow us to study the interaction between heterogeneous development actors and homogenising forces at both macro and micro levels of engagement. It is also important to move beyond the discursive façade of inter-governmental dialogue to study what actually happens on the ground as Southern partners engage in SSC, and to move beyond the state by examining how non-state actors (from businesses to civil society and social movements) interpret SSC. SSC is an interesting object of research when it is studied at the micro-sociological foundations of organisational relations, or within arenas such as UN negotiations where new and old actors encounter one another. In examining changing actor constellations in development cooperation, it is as important to study how the new actors themselves react as they are increasingly confronted with the field's dominant normative framework as it is to study the responses of traditional actors and of the field to the entrance of the new actors.

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