WORKING PAPER I

Brokering in International Development
A Consideration of Analytical Issues

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New Norms and Forms of Development

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INTRODUCTION

The disjuncture between the promises of foreign aid and its 'poor outcomes' has been a major concern for social scientists and policy makers globally. It has come under critical scrutiny from a number of scholars and public intellectuals. As a result, the issue of foreign aid and, more generally, international development, has seen contentious debates and polarising ideological arguments. These range from 'aid reformists' positions that view foreign aid and international development as a magic bullet to address the world's poverty through global consensus approaches such as the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) whose proponents continue to push for aid effectiveness and efficiency (Sachs 2005) to 'aid radicals' who blame foreign aid-funded projects for fuelling dependency and corruption (Moyo 2010; Easterly 2007) and view it as a source of power, hegemony and governmentality (Ferguson 1994; Escobar 2011). So intense has this debate between the aid radicals and aid reformists been that it has even been labelled 'the Great Aid Debate' (Gulrajani 2011).

While very important in its own terms and attracting considerable attention, this debate is not only loaded with ideological arguments but also tends to overlook institutional processes and the role of actors, i.e., how delivery of aid and global development policies are mediated through a number of actors, institutions and arrangements. It is this 'space in between' that has been overlooked by 'the Great Aid Debate'. The 'aid reformers' believe that aid can deliver if managed well and call for effective and efficient management of aid through new managerial logics such as result-based frameworks, value for money, and new institutional set-ups to reduce transactional costs, among others.

Commenting on the dynamic framework of aid, Mosse (2005: 1) writes:

> Western agencies such as the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and their policy advisers direct huge energy to re-framing development, discarding the signs of a colonial past or present-day commercial self-interest (i.e. tied aid), finding new focus and political legitimacy in the international goal of reducing global poverty, in the language of partnership and participation, citizens' rights and democracy.

Alongside these new foci and priorities, over the last decade or so, there has been a major shift in the field of international development and its modus operandi with approaches such as evidence-based development, result framework and outcomes shaping the institutional framework, working modalities and the practices on the ground. Banerjee and Duflo (2011), for instance, argue that development policies should be not be driven by politics but by robust evidence. Although very influential in the policy practice of foreign aid in recent years, this refocusing fails to critically scrutinise development aid and its practice as a part of politics, be it ideological or institutional.

The more critical perspectives of 'aid radicals', on the other hand, while theoretically engaging and politically informed, fail to look at the intricacies of institutional processes and diversity of interests and agency of different stakeholders (Mosse 2005). They overemphasise the role of ideology in over-determining the outcomes of development.

Largely ignored in this 'Great Aid Debate' are the unintended consequences as well as various

institutional processes, political dynamics and interests of actors that shape the world of foreign aid and development. Despite the designs and continuous institutional reforms, international development practice has to contend with the everyday working of its staff and their interactions with development subjects, the bureaucracy, and brokers on the ground. In short, those who engage with foreign aid critically have rarely approached it as a 'category of practice' (Mosse 2013).

Development aid not only provides new streams of income, exercise of power and patronage but also offers new cosmopolitan discourses, generate different understandings on the ground (Pigg 1992), and introduce vocabularies of promises, new management logics, awareness and ideologies. Development aid is a part of transnational networks that are not only geographically extensive and tie global institutions, ideas, discourses and professionals to national and local places but also institutional in that they link various international, national, local, governmental, non-governmental, for-profit and non-profit institutions, disciplines, technologies frameworks, knowledge systems and professionals.

Drafted as part of an ESRC/DFID-funded research project entitled 'New Norms and Forms of Development', this paper argues that the concept of brokers and brokerage offers a useful lens to understand the field of international development, and, through their practices, helps unpack complex networks and relationships of organisations, professionals, actors and their interests, ideologies, disciplines, technologies and aspirations. Conceptually, brokers are located in the 'in-between spaces' and they play a role in mediating relationships. Brokers trade in the gap in social structure and they help the flow of resources, services, opportunities and knowledge across that gap (Stoval and Shaw 2012). Brokers are actors that

play a role in getting things done. Herein lies the dual role of brokers. On the one hand, brokerage has the potential to ease social, economic and political relationships and interactions while, on the other, it can produce exploitation through rent-seeking, corruption and accumulation of political, economic, social and cultural capital, and further worsen inequalities (Stoval and Shaw 2012). Although there is long-standing interest in the social sciences on those who get things done, those who trade in gaps, and those who mediate relationships, resources and knowledge (although rarely are they known as brokers, except stockbrokers, labour brokers or knowledge brokers), it has not developed as a defined field of study.

There is a great deal of empirical evidence about the type of activity that can reasonably be called brokerage, and this makes it difficult to come up with a defined theoretical framework (Stoval and Shaw 2012: 153). Development studies has an emerging field of study on brokers and brokerage led by Bierschenk and others (2002), and followed up and expanded by Lewis and Mosse (2006). Thus, a study of brokers and brokerage in the transnational field of international development that contrasts lofty development objectives such as MDGs with the reality of poverty, ill health and suffering in low-income countries offers a useful conceptual framework through which one could approach how they help (dis)connect, translate, add or detract values that are part and parcel of the flow of this sector. The mediation of relationship between providers of funds (the providers), managers of such funds (the managers), designers and managers of projects and programmes (the designers, coordinators and programme managers), and implementers on the ground (implementers) offers useful insights on the politics, and practices and outcomes of development.

NEW MANAGERIALISM AND SUBCONTRACTING

The failures of foreign aid to meet planned expectations have led 'aid reformers' to borrow from neo-liberal ideas that focus on efficiency, high performance, audit culture, and value for money. Compassion or charitable interest is no longer considered sufficient for driving foreign aid. Commonly known as 'new managerialism', principles of management are deployed in NGOs and foreign aid-funded projects in low-income countries (Desai and Imrie 1998). Mosse (2005: 3) makes an observation that this new managerialism is driven by two trends, namely, narrowing of the ends of development to international development targets such as MDGs, and the broadening of the means to achieve these such as policies on good governance, public sector reform, civil society engagement and social capital. Neo-liberal policies pushed in the 1980s by the contemporaneous British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and American President Ronald Reagan, who viewed government not as a part of the solution but more as a part of the problem, were instrumental in pushing this agenda through global financial systems and the Structural Adjustment Programmes (Harvey 2005).

This shift is based on the belief that there are inherent inadequacies in traditional aid bureaucracies and, hence, advocates the insertion of new management and policy logics into public affairs. One such major organised move was the global consensus in 2005 when the main donors signed the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which emphasised national ownership, harmonisation, alignment, results and mutual accountability. In signing the Declaration, the donors implicitly collectively admitted that since their modality of giving aid had been highly inefficient, they wanted to reform the system. A number of improvements in line with the above-mentioned principles were proposed that included better coordination with each other and the

recipient, enhancing country ownership, fostering partnerships, and aligning their work with the recipient country's policies (Gulrajani 2011).

Neo-liberal governance, as a way to downsize the sluggish and inflexible administrative system of the state, was instrumental in introducing managerialism in the field of external assistance. This was primarily felt by the least developed countries through the World Bank/International Monetary Fund-promoted Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) that demanded austerity measures through mainly cutting public expenditure. One major aspect of this shift has been the subcontracting to non-profit and for-profit outfits to carry out service delivery activities. A key rationale for this shift is the uncritical assumption that NGOs and the private sector have a comparative advantage given that they can provide services more effectively and efficiently than overgrown public services (Watkins, Swidler and Hannan 2012). Subcontracting is part of the change in the larger political-economic environment in the last three to four decades that has transformed the state into more of an 'enabler' whereby the funding has been administratively separated from the production of services. While public responsibility has been retained for policy and planning, financing, regulating, monitoring and audit, non-governmental providers, both non-profit and commercial organisations, are increasingly used to deliver a growing number of services (Kramer 1994: 34). This has meant that the non-state sector has become an important part of the aid management and delivery system. As a consequence, both non-profit and, increasingly, for-profit international development contractors have begun to occupy a more important place in international development, and it continues to be sustained and legitimised (Nagraj 2015). The growth globally of NGOs, INGOs and

international development private contractors is partly a reflection of this trend.

Dominant assessments continue to see the growth of I/NGOs as an expansion of the global civil society that rest upon shared liberal norms and values that motivate these organisations to take action and explain their supposedly benign influence globally. As we shall discuss later, this view does not adequately reflect the political economy and messy everyday practices relating to competition, material pressures, and insecurities that characterise the transnational field of international development. Although contractors and subcontractors in international development work for the humanitarian and development objectives, they are more likely to be shaped by their own political and economic considerations.

In her ethnography of expatriates, Hindman documents a demographic shift in the type of professionals entering the aid world who are hired on short-term contracts (Hindman 2011). She found that the subcontractors were getting paid much more to do the same work than long-term aid worker. This shift meant that those employed by aid agencies were either retiring or seeking to turn themselves into subcontractors to access the higher rates of pay. Further, they were devoting attention to the expansion of their own networks of professional contacts to secure subcontract and secure higher rates of pay.

The new managerialism has spawned institutions that produce reports and guidelines on how to make aid more effective, involving and sustaining the livelihoods of government officials, civil society organisations, academics and consultants alike (Gulrajani 2011). At a broader level, initiatives such as the 2005 Paris Declaration have taken on a specific and dominant form where prescriptions for better delivery and management of foreign aid are separated from political dynamics and relations that shape the practices of aid delivery (Gulrajani 2011: 209). The principles of ownership, alignment,

harmonisation, result-based management and accountability are presented as technical and managerial processes wherein aid relations between donors and recipients, donor and intermediaries, or donor and governments are shaped by geographies of inequalities. An inquiry into the institutions of foreign aid and international development, thus, will need to look into the politics that shape these unequal relationships and transactions.

The expansion of evidence-based development (Banerjee and Duflo 2011), results-based framework and monitoring, and evaluation of professionals in aid agencies illustrate the widespread belief these new ideas would automatically lead to enhanced results (Smith, Mackintosh et al 2012). Momentous goals such as the MDGs were based on targets and the use of global development (governance/human rights) indicators, use of log-frames, and crafting of theories of change and various monitoring and evaluation frameworks and instruments are a part of this shift. UN agencies, multilateral donors such as the World Bank, bilateral donors such as DFID and USAID, and large INGOs such as Save the Children, Oxfam and World Vision are important actors contributing to this process. This new framework combines evidence and management as a way to reform aid bureaucracy and increase accountability. Although conceptualised as technical processes, these practices have important political effects on both the modality of development aid delivery and power dynamics amongst institutions and professionals. With simplification, quantification and de-contextualisation of results and processes becoming the norm, commitment, compassion and embedded forms of knowledge are less of a priority for the professional managerial class that have come to dominate the field (Gulrajani 2011). These new norms and institutional forms of international development thus have important implications for development outcomes and, hence, that need ethnographic scrutiny to unpack the politics, processes as well as the actual working

of these institutional modalities. It is by going behind the technical and managerial structures we begin to explore how actual practice shapes the politics of aid.

TOWARDS STUDYING THE 'SPACE IN BETWEEN': EXPLORING THE INSTITUTIONAL FIELD

Away from the ideological debates, a number of scholars have called for a move 'beyond the critique' and the need to re-engage with ethnographic meanings of development as a 'category of practice' rather than a category of analysis (Mosse 2013: 229-230). This is a call for engagement with the practice of development aid so as to uncover its processes, negotiations, actors and their interests, institutional modalities, technologies and tools, perceptions, languages, and its socio-cultural and political effects. This is an attempt to go beyond the once-dominant discourse that saw development as dominance, rule or imposition. Instead, this approach calls for the uncovering of collaboration, negotiation and compromise that characterise the everyday practices of development. It is an attempt to challenge and question homogenising images and stereotypes of donors, recipient states, beneficiaries and development agencies such as INGOs or NGOs. As Mosse (2005: 8) puts it, the ethnographic question is not whether but how development projects work; not whether a project succeeds, but how 'success' is produced.

Scholars have examined this 'space in between' from a number of perspectives.
Judith Justice's ethnography of health and development bureaucracy in Nepal, Policies, Plans and People: Culture and Health Development in Nepal, was one of the earliest attempts to explore the 'space in between' development policies/plans and the target population. She asked: 'How can the gap between the people on the receiving end

of planning and the well-intentioned designs of planners often far removed from the recipients best be bridged, so that imagination and resources may achieve the most beneficial result?' (Justice 1989: 1). Justice set out a task to understand what information planners were basing plans and policies on, and why they were not using available socio-cultural information to inform their work. Her finding was revealing: 'The planners and administrators I interviewed in Nepal and in the headquarters of donor agencies often decried social and cultural information as "soft" data, saying that it was too descriptive, too wordy and confusing, and too difficult to evaluate (Justice 1989: 135).'

The field of international development has undergone major shifts since Justice conducted her research over two decades ago. There are new institutional modalities (such as results framework) and expertise (monitoring and evaluation frameworks, including the use of Randomised Control Trials in development) in place that emphasise the value of socio-cultural data and active engagement with local partners, prioritise working with NGOs, civil society and private contractors, and focus on participation, results and accountability. More recently, the modality of foreign aid and development has focused on pilots and experiments, scaling up, importance of evidence, complete with managerial vocabulary such as results, outcomes and impacts (Crewe and Axelby 2013).

Scholars working within the framework of 'actor-

oriented approaches' have argued for development policies and practices to be studied from the perspective of actors and stakeholders (Long and Long 1992; Lewis and Mosse 2006). They have argued how the processes of development can have different implications for the actors involved beyond the imagination of its architecture (Long and Long 1992). There are important differences reflecting the interests between the public discourses of development officials in Northern countries and the private conversations of experts in the field who are often aware of the complexity of real-life situations (de Sardan 2005:4). This approach allows for an interrogation of the disjuncture between the formal objectives and strategies and the informal processes and the outcomes that emerge through the practices and interests of different stakeholders in different institutional contexts (Lewis et al 2003). Beyond the role of development actors, as indicated above, the field of international development is also characterised by complex transnational institutional arrangements involving institutions, frameworks and knowledge systems that shape the process, politics and outcomes.

Conceptually, transnational institutional forms shaped by aid can be approached as 'aid chain and network approaches' (Bebbington and Kothari 2006; Mosse 2005; Wallace, Bornstein and Chapman 2007; Watkins, Swidler and Hannan 2012); 'assemblages' (Mosse 2005; Bebbington and Kothari 2006); or 'political economy' (Cooley and Ron 2002). Although scholarship has evolved in three distinct routes, these approaches are not mutually exclusive and there are important overlaps among the three.

Social networks, a study of institutional relationships and communication, have become a major theme in social science that has attracted considerable attention with the entry of the actor-network theory in studies of science and transnationalism (Bebbington and Kothari 2006). Likewise, the study of globalisation and global

social change has produced a conceptualisation of flow of commodities, people, power, money, knowledge, information, discourses, materials and resources (Appadurai 1994). Global flows and networks often go together given that flows are channelled through complex webs that are in turn sustained and modified by these flows (Bebbington and Kothari 2006).

One of the defining features of foreign aid is that it is transnational in nature. Donors, who are usually located in the Global North, must go through a chain of actors—international organisations, national organisations and professionals as well as individual professionals and consultants within this chain—to reach their intended beneficiaries in the Global South (Bebbington 2004, Wallace, Bornstein and Chapman 2007). A variety of organisations receive aid, increasingly through competitive bidding, and then form partnerships with other organisations to implement projects and programmes after retaining a percentage of the aid for their overheads, management and technical costs. These NGOs or private contractors subcontract the projects and programmes in the aid chain further before it reaches the intended beneficiaries often through local fieldworkers and volunteers. No doubt, the distance between a donor based in London or Geneva or Washington DC and the project beneficiaries can be quite long and complex, involving a variety of horizontal and vertical relationships in the transnational field. Funding, frameworks, guidelines and technical assistance move downwards while reporting, data and results move upwards.

The aid chain can also be understood both as relationships among organisations (e.g., Northern Ministries of Development Cooperation, Northern NGOs, Southern NGOs and rural people's organisations), and also as relationships among individuals working within and through these organisations (Bebbington 2004). Although these actors, institutions and relationships are embedded in the political economy of uneven geographies of

development (Bebbington 2004; Crewe and Axelby 2013), they are linked to one another and depend on each other to perform their respective roles. Development practice is a product of this complex transnational apparatus with an assortment of interests, expertise, technologies and disciplines, and flows of people, ideas and resources. This arrangement is not by design but must be produced and constructed through the everyday practices and discourses of development work.

The meaning and effects of these networks depend on the institutional forms they take. Thus, the flow of aid, professionals, policies and frameworks in this transnational space increasingly depends on the rules of the game of intergovernmental and multilateral institutions of global governance. Foreign aid-funded development programmes and projects operate through networks which channel uneven flows of resources. Some of these networks involve governmental and multilateral institutions, whereas in others nongovernmental organisations are more prominent. Within such networks, ideas and normative arguments about development are debated and translated into intentional forms of intervention; resources are negotiated and distributed; and orthodoxies about 'best practice' are formed and challenged (Bebbington and Kothari 2006: 851).

Prior social and institutional networks shape these activities (Bebbington and Kothari 2006). Given such intersections of relationships, ideas, and institutions, Collier and Ong (2005) suggest that it is more helpful to think of such transnational and global phenomena, and of the forms they take in localities, as 'assemblages', 'ensembles of heterogeneous elements' of global forms 'articulated in specific situations' (Collier and Ong 2005: 4-5). Forms such as rationalities of calculation, techno-science, and systems of administration and governance are as much implicated in transnational development networks as are the actors. The concept of assemblage allows us to consider development as a category

of practice to capture the social and reflective processes of development. Assemblage is the flexible, contingent, and continuous work of pulling different parts together as well as a continuous work of 'ordering'.

Mosse (2005) draws on the concept of actor-network theory from Latour (1996) to argue that the material and conceptual coherence of a development programme is performed through political acts of 'composition' by heterogeneous actors—the causal relations of the material world as well as intentional human actions (Mosse 2005). It focuses on tracing the policies, project designs, or technologies back to the human/object relationships ('the gatherings') from which they come—not to deconstruct them but optimistically to 'strengthen their claim to reality'. Development is the working of the interpretation, and development projects need interpretive communities to make it legible. Mosse (2005: 8) writes: 'Donor advisers, consultants and project managers are able to exert influence only because the ideas or instructions they purvey can be translated into other people's own intentions, goals and ambitions.'

Accordingly, in his quest for a more nuanced understanding beyond the post-structuralist criticism of Ferguson (1994), Mosse (2005) argues for the study of institutional practices that constitute development policy. Ferguson's critique, while successfully highlighting the dimension of power and governmentality, reduces the development machine into an 'anonymous automaticity' because it obscures the 'complexity of policy as an institutional practice' and disregards the diversity of interests behind policy models and the perspectives of the actors themselves and from the 'diversity of interests behind policy models' (Mosse 2005: 6). From this perspective, the space between the developer and the population to be developed, occupied by policies, actors, interests, practices and institutional arrangements, offers a very useful vantage for the interrogation of these arrangements for the development and delivery

of development policies and practices. Studying development and foreign aid through institutional practice can provide intricate insights into its operations and effectiveness as a complex set of local, national, and cross-cultural interactions involving different actors such as the state, civil society, activists, NGOs, international institutions, policies and professionals (Lewis and Mosse 2006).

Approaching the debate from the perspective of political economy, Cooley and Ron (2002) argue that the liberal conceptualisation of transnational actors as global civil society does not capture the institutional, organisational, competitive and fiscal pressures informed increasingly by new managerial logics that shape the field. They argue that the scrutiny of the behaviour of transnational actors such as NGOs and other organisational forms needs a political economic approach that can be explained by materialist analysis and an examination of the incentives and constraints produced by the transnational sector's institutional environment. They contend that marketisation of transnational actors activities—particularly the use of competitive tenders and renewable short-term contracting—generates incentives that produce dysfunctional outcomes. INGOs compete to raise money and secure contracts. These contracts are often performance based, renewable, and short term, creating counterproductive incentives and acute principal-agent problems. They show that non-profit INGOs respond to contractual incentives and organisational pressures much as private firms do in markets.

INTERMEDIARIES, BROKERS AND BROKERAGE OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The approaches discussed above have opened up a space for studying intermediaries and brokers operating at the interface between different worldviews and knowledge systems (Lewis and Mosse 2006). Actors such as scientists, managers, professionals, researchers, para-professionals, local leaders and volunteers; institutions such as NGOs, private firms, research and teaching institutions, advocacy groups, missionary organisations and local associations; and arrangements such as projects, programmes and alliances; all with their global and local linkages assume a key role in linking big ideas and the policies of development with the intended beneficiaries and populations. 'Transnational development networks are geographically extensive, linking, for example, London, The Hague, Nairobi, and Kenyan villages; they are also institutional in that they connect, for instance, governments, non-profitmaking organizations, sports clubs, student movements, political parties, religious orders, and village governance structures.' (Bebbington and Kothari 2006: 849)

Commenting on the centrality of intermediaries in development in the African context, de Sardan (2005), who been working to theorise the concept of development brokers based on his empirical work in Africa, writes, 'Interactions between the developmentalist configuration and African populations do not occur as dramatic global confrontations. They develop via discreet passageways, relays, extended or restricted networks of transmission, interfaces' (p. 166). It is through these intermediaries that the global world of international development and foreign aid gets connected to the local populations in different parts of the world.

A significant proportion of development aid is

now mediated through intermediary networks that are separate and apart from the classic administrative and political apparatus (Lewis and Mosse 2006). As discussed earlier in the paper, processes of economic liberalisation and political decentralisation since the 1980s have impacted the modality of aid delivery with the entry of ideas and practices increasingly related to decentralisation, participation, civil society and partnership. Such a trend has diversified sources of power and influence through a number of organisations, arrangements and networks beyond the centralised political apparatus of the past. Over the last two decades, health sector reforms imposed on states in South Asia and Africa, which are associated with the new modalities of decentralised and neoliberal aid, have opened up a field of action for a great number of intermediary organisations (Robinson 1997). These intermediary relationships are linked to the reform agenda in order to secure value for money, enhance aid efficiency and achieve the most impact with limited resources (Weisbrod, 1998). Thus, donors and international organisations involved in dispersing foreign aid now routinely employ intermediaries to carry out the function of national and international health service development and delivery (Berrios 2000; Harford and Klein 2005). These intermediaries include non-profits, private contractors, management consultancies, advocacy groups, research organisations, 'think tanks' and educational institutions, among others. They employ tens of thousands of expert professionals, operating within the state apparatus or as outside technical support. They advise, consult and serve in various official capacities and contribute to development and to the delivery of projects. They occupy and link the space between the funders and beneficiaries/target groups, translating the meanings and processes of development at both ends (Bierschenk et al 2002; Lewis and Mosse 2006). Their image has oscillated between catalysts and parasites. Some argue that this has resulted in the giving away of aid to these contractors (Berrios 2000), while others suggest they add new layers, without replacing pre-existing,

patronage networks and local centres of power (Bierschenk et al 2002).

The world of international development and foreign aid operate between global policies and ideas on the one hand, and local realities on the other. As a global enterprise, it mobilises universalising tools, instruments, expertise and professionals that cut across different political and cultural contexts while also responding to local socio-cultural and political specificities. To manage this, foreign aid and international development operates through intermediaries of different types, through subcontracting relationship or partnership arrangements with NGOs, educational institutions and private contractors. While these intermediaries need to show their affinity to the local and national cultures they have to comply with international and global standards, norms and values. In that vein, de Sardan (2005) writes that 'a development broker assumes double function: he or she is the spokesperson on behalf of technical-scientific knowledge and the mediator between technical-scientific knowledge and popular knowledge…On one hand, the development agent must promote technical-scientific knowledge and must present this as superior to popular knowledge; on the other hand, he is supposed to create a balance between both types of knowledge' (de Sardan 2005: 169).

Yet, development workers continue to be considered the spokespeople of technical-scientific knowledge, and trained with this aim in mind. Thus, even as these intermediaries can be seen as representative of the people and communities where they work, and whose voices they understand and represent, besides being located in a particular socio-cultural field, which in the context of Nepal can be found in informal institutions such as aafno manche (nepotism) or caste/ethnicity-based affiliations (Bista 1990, Ramirez 2000), they can be also seen as contractors and subcontractors who implement policies and programmes on behalf of donors who want to carry out development and humanitarian work from afar (Watkins, Swidler and Hannan 2012).

Donors cannot reach their intended beneficiaries directly, but rather have to work through 'aid chain' of other organisations (Watkins, Swidler and Hannan 2012). Thus, donors distribute billions of dollars to various intermediaries, globally and nationally, who again subcontract to implementing organisations nationally or locally. In this chain of relationships and networks, organisations not only deduct their overheads, administrative and management costs, they play different roles and add values in this line of relationships. The chain in these global projects can be quite long and complex and is not necessarily limited to a linear relationship between donors, organisations and beneficiary populations. Borrowing on the work of Latour (1996), Mosse and Lewis (2006) have called for integrating the concept of 'translation and networks' in the study of development brokers. This helps challenge the sociological certainty implied in the study of development brokers where they are assumed to have particular careers, strategies and competencies (Mosse and Lewis 2006). Instead, brokers, as translators, produce and protect the fields of development to make them appear coherent and logical.

The field of organisations in this chain is often heterogeneous with the involvement of INGOs, private contractors, membership-based organisations, universities, training institutions, missionary organisations and hybrid set-ups such as Public Private Partnerships (PPP), who despite their own interests, are unified in the same chain of relationships under the heading of a project or a programme. The complexity of the organisational field as well as the chain of relationships and networks throws management challenges to donors and management entities, who rely on various management instruments and tools in their struggle to produce outcomes and results. With the growing focus on evidence, donors and organisations involved in the aid chain do not just spend time implementing programmes and spending resources, but are also required to adhere to compliance, monitoring progress and demonstrating results. A series of complex transactions, financial, numerical, technical and linguistic, amongst others, take place in this process. It is precisely here that brokers play a critical role in the 'in between space' to 'make things happen'. This involves transaction of resources and translation of concepts and knowledge systems. The brokers must not just acquire, manage and distribute resources but also play a role in producing coherence in the highly transactional field of development.

TO CONCLUDE

Social and political organisation of foreign aid and international development is complex. It involves multilaterals donors, bilateral donor governments, aid-receiving governments, private-sector organisations, civil society, NGOs and social movements, policy makers, professionals and volunteers, academics, consultants and activists and beneficiaries and various other stakeholders. Institutions and individuals involved in this assemblage are unequal and reflect uneven geographies of development. Financial and technical assistance flow not only through these actors but are also shaped by knowledge systems and different frameworks and instruments. Institutions, individuals, frameworks, policies, guidelines and knowledge systems remain important in shaping and mediating foreign aid and development policies and in shaping the everyday practice of development. Taking brokerage seriously changes the way we think about the process and outcomes of international development and foreign aid.

The recent shift in institutional forms of international development to subcontracting, value for money, use of evidence, result framework, and involvement of private-sector contractors shows that the field is going through changes in the way it is organised. Behind the lofty objectives of saving people's lives, these are projects to be managed, experts to be recruited, bids to be won, and careers to be secured. As funders increasingly rely on larger contracts to get work done, it is the larger players, often based in the global capitals and with reserve funding, global presence, network of expertise, access to science, and an understanding of donor language and compliance, who are likely to be management entities for global development projects. These players then subcontract projects to other national and local organisations. Major global private contractors such as Research Triangle International, John Snow Inc, JHPIEGO1, Abt Associates, Options Pvt Ltd, Coffey International, Oxford Policy Management, Chemonics, Dexis Consulting Group and QED Consulting, or INGOs with a global presence such as Save the Children, Oxfam, Action Aid, Family Health International, World Vision and Population Services International can be found in many developing country capitals and provinces where they have become key players in managing and implementing development programmes, often in partnership with local NGOs and subcontractors. As funders continue to pour resources through NGOs, INGOs and private contractors that set up parallel institutions to deliver projects and short-term outputs rather than channelling funds through the government system, such arrangements are likely to have significant implications for the capacity of the recipient state and its image or morale.

A large part of development aid is spent through what is called 'off budget' modality (i.e., where the resources do not flow through the government's public financing systems) in technical assistance

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1   It was initially called the Johns Hopkins Program for International Education in Gynecology and Obstetrics.

or direct project support. Not only do these arrangements create 'coordination' challenges for the central government or the ministries in the capital of aid-receiving countries, they may promote internal brain drain, aid patronage, and competition among the agencies involved. These projects demoralise government staff who are paid significantly lower or have access to poorer facilities compared to NGO or project employees. Hence, government employees are often directly or indirectly incentivised to spend a considerable time to support the discreet activities of the aid-funded projects at the expense of their own regular responsibilities.

A key question is: how does one study the social and political organisation of foreign aid and international development? A useful starting point is to map and follow the structure of organisations and their institutional forms in the transnational space. Further, it is important to unpack the space that exists between policy and practice, i.e., to document the everyday role of policy-makers, consultants, aid workers, professionals, activists and volunteers. Beyond the study of policy documents, monitoring and evaluation frameworks and planning and project documents, it is the ethnographic scrutiny of the everyday practices combined with interaction with various stakeholders at different levels of the aid chain that can provide much-needed insights on the working of the aid infrastructure. However, carrying out ethnographic fieldwork is easier said than done. An ethnographer can only observe and participate in the practices that can be observed and seen. What if the negotiations and practices of development are not only carried out in the formal arena but in various informal spaces? How does one capture the unspoken communication and forms of patronage that are difficult to comprehend unless the ethnographer is a part of the everyday practice of aid? The challenge for researchers is how to engage with the informal interactions, relationships and negotiations in order to delve into the practices of foreign aid and international development.

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