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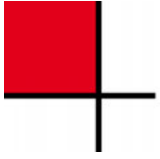
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# Managing international development: (Re)positioning critique in the post-2008 conjecture

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## abstract

Despite earlier neglect, International Development (ID) has begun to receive some attention from the Critical Management Studies (CMS) community over the last two decades. This paper reviews existing CMS work that engages with ID and outlines directions for future research. Building on extant research and scholarship that has focussed on linkages between managerialism and ID, we identify and discuss in some depth three emerging areas within ID – financialization, evaluation and projectification – that, we argue, merit further critical scrutiny from CMS scholars. We call for a programme of theoretical and grounded empirical research into these three areas in the hope of reinvigorating CMS's engagement with ID; a programme that would seek to expose the fallacy of the universalizing managerialism that increasingly informs ID projects and organizational practices. In operationalizing this research programme, we draw attention to problems of *positionality*, drawing on methodological and epistemological debates in Anthropology to inform our argument. We thus highlight the need for grounding CMS research practices in reflective trans-disciplinarity.

## Introduction

Given the centrality of International Development (ID) to the global economy, trade and international relations in the post-World War II period, it is not surprising that ID has attracted some attention from Critical Management Studies (CMS). Among others, Cooke (2004), Dar and Cooke (2008), and Murphy (2008) have provided an outline for interrogating the management of ID, or development management, from a range of historical, theoretical and

geographical positions. This critical scholarship builds significantly on previously existing critique of ID from Anthropology and Development Studies, particularly Post-development Studies (Escobar, 1995, 1996). We want to move this engagement forward, arguing that since the 2008 global financial crisis profound changes in ID warrant renewed attention from CMS.

We begin with a comprehensive review of CMS's engagement with ID, a key domain of contemporary management practice. Our review highlights, first, the global and sectoral mobility of managerial concepts. Second, it reveals that development management has been central in the evolution of specific logics and techniques—including 'de-politicization', 'participation' and 'universalism' – that are foundational to contemporary ID. In this discussion, we analyse in depth a number of changes within ID and development management that have emerged since the 2008 global financial crisis. We find that political responses to the crisis have brought forward a rhetorical turn away from globalisation and neo-liberalism toward a complex mix of nationalist, protectionist and populist discourses, both in the 'Global North' and the 'Global South'. However, despite these political shifts, we show that the movement of ID and development management in the direction of universalizing tendencies has accelerated significantly.

The core of our paper is a call for renewed consideration of areas where CMS scholarship can engage critically to analyse this new conjuncture. We identify financialization, evaluation and projectification as three new and/or rapidly transforming empirical phenomena in ID practice in the post-2008 period. On *financialization* of ID, we are currently witnessing a shift away from traditional approaches, i.e., bilateral and multilateral aid, and direct lending. While continuing to be a central development resource and tool, contemporary finance now manifests itself in more complicated ways, e.g., through micro-finance, social investment bonds, remittances and consumer credit. This is unfolding in the context of the nation state reasserting itself as an authoritative agent, and claiming legitimacy via particularistic national outlooks including the internal/national control of development. Meanwhile, *evaluation*, particularly through the turn to randomized controlled trials (RCTs), is globally reconfiguring development management knowledge and practice. It has produced its own industry of professionals, practices and standards that ostensibly provide measurable parameters of success of ID. Not only does it reverse the successes of community-led and participatory approaches to ID (see Cooke and Kothari, 2001 for a critical discussion), but it has, we argue, changed the ways in which we conceive, organize and manage ID. Finally, *projectification* has altered the processes by which development interventions are organized, giving rise to its own managerial language. This reifying and de-politicized nomenclature is often

disassociated from any practical relation to what occurs on the ground in development projects. Yet despite its foundational limitations, it has, increasingly and disturbingly, become the *always already* available means of framing ID projects.

We argue that since the global financial crisis of 2008 these three areas of ID share a strong tendency toward abstraction that reproduce a universalizing ‘scientific’ gaze (Sanyal, 2007) which, based on specialized, and supposedly apolitical, knowledge principles, masks the exercise of power and the complexities of social relations in the field. That is, supposedly universal principles shape reality by guiding the ‘performativity’ of agents in ID towards the reproduction of the universalism that these principles prescribe (Callon, 2007). Broadly-speaking, the demystification of such hegemonic universalisms is the central aim of projects of future research we recommend for CMS’s engagement with ID. And we believe that this problem can be helpfully engaged methodologically through attention to the implications of *positionality* in research, which has been a central epistemological problem in Anthropology. Building also on previous work in CMS on ID (Kenny, 2008, 2012; Dar, 2014; Frenzel and Sullivan, 2009; Frenzel et al., 2011), we understand positionality as entailing refinement in research practices to encourage complex and in depth consideration of the interrelations of various subjects implicated in ID contexts, as well as reflection on one’s own position as a researcher; that is, the historico-political and personal conditions in play when preparing, conducting and representing research. This may at times entail notions such as ‘critical performativity’ in which research is understood as a political practice that shapes empirical realities towards alternatives to the status quo (Parker and Parker, 2017). Such reflexive considerations, we argue, enable the researcher to better engage with and appreciate the ramifications of differing subject positions and power relations, in this case, as they are inscribed by those involved directly in ID practices.

Our intention is not to develop a prescriptive research agenda but rather to advance and, we hope, inspire debate regarding CMS’s engagement with ID. That said, we believe that bearing in mind the methodological considerations addressed above in combination with the sophisticated approaches to organizational dynamics that those working in CMS pursue as a matter of course, CMS has the potential to contribute substantially to the advancement of the extant general critiques of ID and development management.

## Managing international development (ID): A review

The organization and management of ID has been the subject of considerable research, particularly in Anthropology and Development Studies. Beginning with Ferguson's (1990) seminal *The anti-politics machine*, Anthropology has provided a number of ethnographic accounts of the organization and practices of ID.<sup>1</sup> Related criticisms of development management have also begun to emerge from its practitioners, calling attention to the inherent tensions between its purported aims and its practices (Eyben, 2014). Building on such influential critiques, CMS scholarship on ID has been instrumental in pointing out the deep-rooted connections between development management and management more generally (see for example Cooke and Faria, 2013, for an outline of their mutual entanglements).

CMS has been at the forefront of critical interrogation of institutional and managerial practices in ID and the influential role of development managers. Having called attention to their colonial continuities, Cooke (2003, 2004, 2008), has taken an historical approach in pointing to the tyranny of contemporary participatory approaches in development management. Murphy (2005, 2008) has discussed not only the growing influence of large private corporations in ID, mainly via global governance led by the World Bank, but also the emergence of an elite, global, managerial class that has led to the 'de-ideologisation and technisation of decision-making' (Murphy, 2008: 150). Relatedly, others have drawn attention to the institutional extension in ID to non-governmental actors like NGOs (Srinivas, 2008) and INGOs (Murphy, 2005, 2008) and their inter-relationships (Contu and Girei, 2014).

Still others have researched *within* development organizations, exposing the sometimes insidious but always problematic role of managers and managerial control and dominance. Kerr (2008) follows a discursive approach in revealing the role of project-based technologies as part of the intensification of governing devices. Using an ethnographic approach, Kenny (2008, 2012) has described the inner-workings of power among professionals involved in ID. Meanwhile, Dar (2008b, 2014) has focussed on the role of quotidian managerial practices in ID, such as reporting which not only leads to the subjugation of the Other but that also re-inscribes global inequalities. In addition, Girei (2016), following Gramsci, implicates development management in the expansion of cultural and political hegemony.

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1 For example, see Escobar (1995) on professionalization and Mosse (2008, 2011). Also see Lewis and Mosse (2006) for a discussion on experts, professionals and managers; and Kothari (2005) and Hodge (2010) who offer a valuable historical discussion of development management.

Taken together, this influential – although still incipient – corpus of CMS work on development management challenges the singular and universal representations of management and organization of ID. It has called attention to the global power dynamics that inhere in organizing ID generally, and organizational life as part of ID, with accounts that foreground the fractured, multiple or hybrid nature of the organizational realities involved. In this work we see, and we agree with the move towards, a process of research that seeks to politicize ID against the imposition of putatively value neutral and objective managerial techniques. Revealing that development management serves specific ideological motivations and ends, including both neoliberalism and nationalism, CMS research on ID is linked to broader resistance movements against the politico-economic status quo (Dinerstein and Deneulin, 2012). Building on this emergent research trajectory, we aim to expand CMS’s agenda into areas with which, it has, thus far, not engaged closely and with a sufficiently critical eye.

### **Contemporary shifts in ID**

Arguably since the 2008 global financial crisis, the status of neoliberal globalisation as the dominant development framework (Brohman, 1995) has come under increasing criticism. Under conditions of austerity, rising right-wing, political forces in the Global North have been calling for restrictions on, or the rejection of ID as part of nation-states’ cost cutting. At the same time, governments in the Global South have been increasingly policing INGO and NGO interventions in the name of national security and/or sovereignty (Anheier, 2017).

As related briefly in our introduction, we see significant, on-going changes in the nature of financing of ID. Bilateral and multilateral aid, in which nation-states were the key donors and recipients – a form dominant in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – have been widely challenged. Aid has been increasingly taken over by new institutional actors, such as regional blocs and new South-South alliances (such as the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank), philanthrocapitalists, crowd-funding and peer-to-peer (P2P) lending, etc. (Bishop and Green, 2008). There has also been a proliferation of innovative experiments in development financing, such as Social Impact Bonds (Joy and Shields, 2013) and an increased role of banks operating as hedge funds for ID. Relatedly, new institutional actors have emerged alongside newer global alliances. These include social enterprises, operating on peer-to-peer funding models and a number of new philanthropic and solidarity-based ventures such as Kiva (Bishop and Green, 2008).

Much of the earlier CMS-inspired critique analysed ID-financing based on a structure with powerful states, multilateral aid agencies and INGO organizations, mostly located in the 'First World', on the one hand, with recipient, resource-constrained NGOs in the 'Third World', on the other. Based on the changes outlined above we contend that such binary distinctions between the 'First' and 'Third Worlds', donors and recipient organizations, 'North' and 'South', 'West' and 'the Rest', profit and non-profit, state and non-governmental have been replaced by a more complex field of ID organisation, finance and accountability. These changes require critical scrutiny from the CMS community.

In addition, just as new organizational forms that challenge the previous and long-standing taxonomy of non/profit, social/enterprise, and state/civil society have emerged, so have new forms of expertise. Following criticism of expert-led ID, its alternative, 'participatory development', has arguably become the orthodoxy itself (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Challenges to participatory development from a range of feminist and/or subaltern perspectives (Maguire, 1987; Sweetman, 1997; Agarwal, 1997), however, left an institutional void which has, we argue, resulted in the return of 'the expert': a feature of ID that needs to be interrogated further, e.g., by CMS.

At the same time, in the name of austerity, states and INGOs, mostly located in the 'Global North' have been calling for conditional aid, i.e., aid linked directly to measurable and verifiable impacts. The UK's Department for International Development (DfID), for example, adopted a Results Framework in 2014 which not only emphasized measuring its direct role in development outcomes but also its organizational efficiency. Such managerial practices were expected to lead to a focus on 'best value poverty reduction programmes', thus 'achieving value for money for every pound of taxpayers' money' spent on development (DfID, 2014: 1f). Within this, there has been a shift in evaluation practices as well as projectification, which has become the organizational framework for facilitating the mobilization of financialization.

In what follows we turn to the three empirical areas, namely financialization, evaluation and projectification, each of which expose both continuities and discontinuities from prior forms of ID.

## **Engaging critically: CMS and International Development**

### *Financialization*

The emergence of 'financialization' as a topic for critical research has taken place in the context of debates over changes to the dominant regulatory regimes of

capitalism (Harvey, 1989). The turn to financialization since the 1970s has affected developing countries and ID in a number of ways. Aitkin (2013: 474) understands financialization ‘as the increasing role of international capital and finance in the provision and organization of overseas development assistance’, which started with the turn towards post-Fordism. Limited return on capital in the ‘First World’ and the liberalisation of capital flows globally, following the end of Bretton Woods, saw capital seeking new frontiers in the developing world. A period of reckless lending by a newly formed international financial sector led directly to the debt crises of the 1980s, which crippled many developing countries’ economies (Caffentzis, 2010). Ostensibly to rescue these indebted countries, international finance organisations such as the IMF and World Bank imposed austerity under the neo-liberal economic policies of the ‘Washington Consensus’ (Escobar, 1995), otherwise known as structural adjustment programmes. ‘Conditionality’, in this way, has become a key instrument of power in implementing specific ideas of development. In the post-colonial Cold War period, these were often linked to political alliances with, and de facto patronage of donor countries. The end of the Cold War, meanwhile, marked a reduction of transfers when the earlier ideological motivation to align developing countries to Cold War-era blocs diminished. Since the 2008 global financial crisis, development aid from wealthier nation states has experienced a further decline. This has meant that sources of international aid have transformed considerably (Garcia-Arias, 2015).

The search for alternate institutional mechanisms for ID financing has led to a number of proposals. The Monterrey and Doha resolutions (UN, 2013), for instance, include proposals for new global tax regimes, such as the ‘Tobin Tax’ on financial transactions, but they also list new instruments and vehicles for leveraging and expanding foreign direct investment and official development assistance. The latter instruments are highly complex and are administered by finance managers who are subject to limited democratic oversight. Although often introduced as ‘innovative thinking’ by the wider ID community, they also serve the interests of financial institutions in their search for new markets (UN, 2013).

To illustrate our analysis of the transformation of conditionality, we discuss two examples from very different empirical ends of the spectrum: microfinance, and macro-level funding from the Commonwealth Development Corporation Group. Microfinance has developed in the last four decades in the name of ‘democratisation of finance’, which claims to have stimulated wealth creation in the ‘Third World’. Conceived as a finance facility to empower women entrepreneurs in developing countries, microfinance has, according to its critics, increasingly subjected the world’s poor to [t]he most dubious risks associated



with global finance: speculative instability, over-extended (and oversold) credit, unpredictable chains of financial fragility at both micro and macro levels' (Aiktin, 2013: 493). While some scholars have defended microfinance as a potentially empowering tool of ID (Hermes, 2014), Mader (2014) offers overwhelming evidence that microfinance does not alleviate poverty.<sup>2</sup> Instead, he claims its main functions lie in the creation of market relations between the poor and the non-poor, with the purpose of making the social reproduction of the poor productive for what he calls the 'global rentier class'. In his work, Mader (2014) employs what we commonly understand as social studies of finance<sup>3</sup> to identify ways in which civil society actors function as crucial mediators between finance and the poor. This institutional change is reflected in a number of new organizations formed to facilitate microfinance. We believe that CMS can contribute meaningfully to much needed analyses of this institutional change.

Relatedly, institutional changes are also taking place at the macro-level of ID finance. The transformation of national development banks to publicly-owned hedge funds is a key example. In the UK, the Commonwealth Development Corporation Group (CDC), in operation since the 1948, provided finance for ID based on government subsidies. However, since 2004, CDC has operated as a publicly-owned hedge fund, which focusses on highly profitable investments in developing countries. According to the CDC's own data, it made returns on investment in the range of 30% from 2000-2012, exceeding average performances of indexed funds in developed countries by a large margin. Such figures are indicative of the CDC's priority in seeking lucrative investment opportunities over benefits that pertain to public goods or the pursuit of socially and politically valuable aims of ID such as empowerment or environmental protection.

Another less sanguine motivation for high returns on investment came to light in 2010 when NGOs published the huge bonuses of CDC fund managers (Cornerhouse, 2010). Clearly the new hedge-fund shaped CDC is built on the debunked but persistent assumption that overall economic growth will trickle down to the poorest. Despite such problematic conduct, there has been little

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2 See also Sinclair (2012).

3 Here techniques and practices of financialization are examined in a variety of practical contexts, ranging from the general operations of financial institutions to the influence of such institutions in policy arena, such as Wall Street's interference with regulatory regimes. These studies also encompass research on housing, consumer and student finance, and the development of new forms of accounting. The thrust of these critical arguments point to increasing quantities of 'hot money': free-floating capital that seeks to find rent income from social production across the world (Gaulard, 2012).

attention from CMS scholars on the institutional transformation of national development banks, which are posited in the understanding that operating funds are under some form of political control of the nation states involved. This has implications, *inter alia*, on regimes of accountability, indicating that the abstract principle of rate of return on investment becomes the crucial indicator for successful ID interventions. While this clearly marks an extension of developments analysed by Sanyal (2007), e.g., with regard to the diminishing role of national institutions and their forms of accountability towards more abstract, universalist principles, a critique of such re-configured financial institutions has, to date, been the sole province of a handful of NGOs and journalists.<sup>4</sup>

CDC is but one example of the broad field of newly emerging development finance organizations and funds, an area largely under- or self-regulated. Socially responsible investment (SRI) opportunities have exploded in recent years, but need more scrutiny from CMS scholars, possibly building on the critical accounting literature that analyses claims made with respect to social responsibility (Sikka, 2011) or critical work on social investment bonds (Joy and Shields, 2013). Social investment bonds are limited to national level policy interventions today; however, parallel initiatives in ID that attempt to harness private finance for development goals are certainly conceivable. As Mader (2013) has shown in the area of microfinance, financialization aims to broaden the ability of capital holders to earn returns on investments. The institutional implications for ID, be it in the marketization of basic social reproduction of the poorest, or the role of NGOs in becoming agents of marketization, are manifold and require a new, concerted effort by CMS scholars to expose the deleterious social logics at work in this domain.

#### *Evaluation and measurement*

Recently there has been increasing emphasis on identifying and measuring the effectiveness of ID aid (Eyben et al., 2015). In 2013, the UK's Department for International Development (DfID, 2013a) outlined a new policy on aid effectiveness, focussing on ensuring that only the *right* people and organizations receive aid. DfID began handing out new aid once results had become visible and existing aid was thus accounted for. Known as 'Payment by results' (DfID, 2013b), outcomes of ID interventions are subject to robust verification. These shifts, DfID (2013a) argues, were a result of the governmental response to the global financial crises in 2008 and the subsequent state-led pursuit of austerity.

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4 The satirical magazine *Private eye* first exposed the 2010 CDC scandal.  
[<http://taxjustice.blogspot.co.uk/2010/09/private-eye-new-cdc-scandal.html>]

As anyone familiar with contemporary changes in the field of ID will know, questions of aid effectiveness, its measurement, and associated practices of aid distribution are not peculiar to the UK, but have become far more pervasive, globally, since 2008.<sup>5</sup> Integral to such evaluation is the need to identify and measure the benefits of aid, and channel future aid into areas (both thematically and geographically) where it ostensibly yields the greatest benefits; or, from a critical perspective, where it can be most easily or conveniently measured. This emphasis has given rise to new organizational practices of evaluation which focus primarily on: (a) establishing causal links between multifarious social conditions and under-development; and (b) assessing development interventions and their impact, numerically. Such approaches to evaluation and its measurement are built around the conception of quantification as science, informed mainly by econometric approaches to development, and have replaced previously-favoured participatory approaches.<sup>6</sup>

In the following section we focus on the growing popularity of randomized control trials (RCTs) as the ‘gold standard’ of gathering scientific evidence for development evaluation.

Pioneered by the Jamal Abdul Lateef Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) at MIT in 2003, RCTs involve, briefly, the identification of randomly organized test and control (also called ‘counterfactual’) groups, comparison of the impact of an intervention (‘treatment’) on the groups, assessing its statistical significance, and measuring the scale of impact. RCTs are, its proponents suggest, the ‘most rigorous’ form of evaluation, ‘produc[ing] the most accurate (i.e. unbiased) results’ (PAL, nd). Central to the use of RCTs, and its rapid diffusion across the globe, are the associated practices of training and certification of professionals proficient in their use, and the diffusion of RCTs and their adoption by development organizations, mostly in the Global South, as part of development management.

RCTs have been subject to some criticism, particularly within Development Studies, on the basis of a number of serious shortfalls in their scientific methodology. These include: (a) the dominance of method over research questions (Shaffer, 2011); (b) difficulties in correctly predicting development trajectories to identify appropriate counterfactuals, and associated problems in

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5 See, for example, USAID (2011), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (nd) and the European Union (2013).

6 See, for example, Chambers (2007), Mukherjee (2004) on Participatory Rural Appraisal; and Chambers (2010), Gonsalves (2004) and Gonsalves et al. (2005) on Participatory Action Research.

the field (Woolcock, 2009); as well as (c) inherent philosophical limitations relating to causality within RCTs (Cartwright, 2012).

CMS, we argue, has much to offer by way of critical engagement with practices and expertise involved in development evaluation. CMS can interrogate the processes by which scientific evidence and knowledge are produced through RCTs and how they have come to be so powerful. CMS has made substantive critiques of evidence-based social practice (Learmonth, 2006, 2008; Learmonth and Harding, 2006), following which, RCTs can be understood as serving particular kinds of interests, namely, those of donors in the ‘Global North’. Further, drawing on discursive analysis of the polemics of evidence-based management (Morrell, 2008), we can interrogate the narrative devices employed in the popularization and legitimation of RCTs in ID.

In addition, given the rise of new forms of experts and professionals involved in RCTs, CMS could mobilize extant and extensive scholarship on professionalization. We have in mind studies that consider professions through the lens of institutionalized forms of control (Johnson, 1972), disciplinary mechanisms (Fournier, 1999), responsabilization (Grey, 1997), and performativity (Hodgson, 2005). Such a critical interrogation would, we argue, reveal the functioning of power within ID but, more importantly, also build on earlier critiques of professionalization in development found most notably, for example, in Escobar’s (1995) seminal anthropological work.

### *Encountering Development.*

Finally, the adoption of any new practice of evaluation, we argue, reconfigures everyday practices of organizing and managing within development organizations working in the field, particularly NGOs. Accordingly, we would like to call particular attention in the CMS community to the need to interrogate emerging managerial and organizational practices in the sphere of ID as a result of this concerning turn toward scientific evaluation. We note that at present, there has been little research into the effects of evaluation and its associated practices—planning, reporting, accounting – within development organizations.<sup>7</sup> Given that RCTs involve the production of numerical, ‘scientific’ data, it gives rise to new kinds of experts and expertise, and new forms of organizational practice in project planning, monitoring, reporting, accountability, etc., which are likely to become sites for further managerial innovation. There is an opportunity, we suggest, to build on Dar and Cooke’s (2008) signal work on development

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7 Notable exceptions are Dar (2008b, 2014) and Kenny (2008, 2011).

management by identifying and problematizing incipient forms of organization, discipline and managerialism in ID.

Overall, we contend that the kind of scientific evaluation represented by RCTs should be understood within the wider cultural authority of science and the growing ‘trust in numbers’ (Porter, 1996). It is this deeper authorization of science, research, and the cult of experts within modernity that has led to the emergence and popularity of new kinds of knowledge organizations, such as J-PAL. A critical question that suggests itself is: in what ways do such knowledge organizations, and experts employed by them, reconfigure social relations within the aid industry, and without?

### *Projectification*

Perhaps more than the other two empirical areas of investigation, projectification shows strong continuities in the post-2008 ID practice from earlier incarnations. And CMS’s critique of project management is, of course, an already well-established subfield of study (Cicmil and Hodgson, 2006; Hodgson, 2005) while the critical project management theme has also been explicitly explored within the development context (Dar, 2008a; Ika and Saint-Macary, 2012). However, CMS’s critique of projectification in ID remains relatively underdeveloped and thus constitutes a fertile area for further theoretical and empirical research. We argue that the projectification of ID, in an important sense, re-packages financialization and evaluation into what purport to be coherent managerialist programmes. It serves as a putatively unchallengeable application of value-free scientific methods of organizing and managing development projects. Therefore its relevance has increased with the above described intensification of financialization and evaluation since 2008.

Projectification of ID should be placed within a broader context of the generic projectification of society insofar as it marks an internationally expansionist effort to export ideologies and managerial methods. As noted in our opening literature review, Cooke’s (2003, 2004) elegant historical analysis reveals a genealogy of development management that tracks its origins in colonial administration. On the basis of Cooke’s work, one might argue that certain aspects of projectification derive from the historical effort to subjugate and control colonized populations. That said, the ideological roots of ‘the project’ lie within bureaucratic modes of modern organizing which, as Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) contend, have morphed into a kind of contemporary obsession – projectification – that has become one of the defining characteristics of social organization in what they term the post-1968 ‘new spirit of capitalism’.

The social logic of projectification within ID contexts is succinctly captured by Dar when she observes:

[D]evelopment is instilled with an overbearing sense of design. Development must be planned in order for it to be successful... In this way western traditions of managerialism are grafted on ideas of development; planning, bureaucracy, and systemization all become processes that share logics delineating from development and managerialism... Through an emphasis on design and control, development has become synonymous with linear-economic ways for steering such progress. (2008a: 99)

The means by which ID is organized entails the systematic disbursement and bureaucratic management of resources *assumed* by Western agencies/donors to be necessary for development to be accomplished. According to Fforde (2017), these resources take two forms: capital and technical assistance. Capital primarily consists of monetary investments needed for *material* inputs into the process (hospitals, schools, roads, irrigation systems, dams, agricultural machinery, etc.) while technical assistance refers to intangible *knowledge* needed to deploy and utilize these inputs. Like capital, as discussed in the financialization section above, technical assistance is a means by which Western assumptions and ideas are privileged over those of indigenous *subjects* of development. In this way, technical assistance becomes a conduit for the establishment and practice of power-knowledge (Foucault, 1980). It is the vehicle that enables agencies and donors—through the bureaucratization of knowledge—to generate what Escobar refers to as ‘the institutional production of social reality’ (Escobar, 1995: 108). As Dar contends, ‘[t]his textual and tangible form of expert knowledge undermines local forms of knowledge (that can be non-textual, non-standardized, and more culturally embedded) and therefore presents the expert or professional as the key agent who can ensure social and economic improvement’ (Dar, 2008a: 97).

International aid agencies and donors require projects to specify a cause-effect logic, on the assumption that these can be known *a priori*, that is, *before* a particular set of development interventions have taken place. In order to justify allocation and expenditure of taxpayers’ funds, INGOs and NGOs, university research teams or other would-be mediators of ID aid must complete detailed plans that stipulate in advance the aims, objectives and expected ‘impacts’ (socio-economic, health, wellbeing, ecological, scientific, capacity building, etc.) of a given project. A typical method by which these cause-effect pronouncements and predictions are articulated is the so-called Logical Frame Approach (LFA) or ‘logframe’, for short. This methodology is driven by a boldly performative and utilitarian ideology that, once again, links financialization and evaluation closely to projectification. This social logic is well illustrated, for example, in the recent statement of purpose in relation to aid interventions by the Australian

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: ‘The fundamental principle underpinning the new performance framework is strengthening the link between performance and funding’ (Australian Government, 2014: 16).

Within the fields of Development Studies and Development Economics, Fforde (2009, 2013) has been one of the most strident critics of LFA. Mirroring Escobar’s (1995) critique, Fforde maintains that the logframe approach amounts to an ethnocentric assault on the diverse social epistemologies of indigenous populations subjected to development. At best it lacks cultural sensitivity and, at worst, emulsifies cultural difference while crassly prioritizing mono-cultural, Western-based, utilitarian means-ends assumptions. According to Fforde, the modern episteme that informs LFA – with its uncompromising insistence on predictive planning, close reporting and resource control – can have highly damaging effects on the welfare of the poor toward whom the aid is directed. It can also result in manifest inequities, as disproportionate amounts of funds go to maintaining aid agency bureaucracies and salaries for ‘international experts’ over in-country disbursements and on-the-ground spending. There is no little irony, therefore, in the following culturalist statement on the part of the Australian Government in relation to assessment of aid programmes when it asserts a desire, ‘to *drive a culture that is sharply focused on results, achieving better value-for-money, and getting the best development returns on each aid dollar spent*’ (Australian Government, 2014: 16, added emphases). Our point is that it is the very culture and ideology of inflexible performativity that lies at the root of desultory performance and outcomes of ID, whether viewed from the perspective of either the donor (in this case the Australian Government) or the intended indigenous recipient.

Empirical evidence of the failure of project management, such as the LFA, is offered by Ika and Saint-Macary (2012), whose studies show that planning and monitoring logics entail sacrificing ‘effectiveness’ in the name of putative ‘efficiency’. They point to the fact that project management privileges procedural implementation over the intended *purpose* of development intervention; something they liken to ‘a doctor performing a surgery that is deemed a technical “success” even if the patient dies’ (Ika and Saint-Macary, 2012: 428). Project management in ID, they conclude, ‘is the art of not violating procedures’ (2012: 429). Their critique of projectification focusses on the governmental and legal aspects of employing Western social logics in the setting up and running of aid and development interventions.

In practical terms, projectification leads to an unhealthy degree of short-termism and dependency on the part of governments who receive aid. Project envelopes are typically one-to-three years in duration, during which time managers of aid or

development investment strive to ‘get results on the ground’. All too often, however, the constraints of logframe’s cause-effect approaches mean that short-term outcomes or impacts are given higher priority than longer-term capacity building. At the end of the project, the capital resources and international expertise are withdrawn and the host country is to manage on its own or, as is perhaps more often the case, until the next project appears, bringing with it yet another set of short-term objectives and intended impacts.

If both the research evidence and experience of development workers speaks repeatedly to the impoverishment of ‘the project’ as a *modus operandi*, it invites the question as to why it has been – and remains – such an enduring form of organizing ID (Fforde, 2017). This is thus an area ripe for CMS critique. Critical research might range from macro-level studies of LFA and ‘project’ discourses more generally, through to close empirical examination of the practices (often dysfunctional and disingenuous) that projectification gives rise to in relation to ID.

### **Positionality in critical research on ID: Some reflections on methodology**

Financialization, evaluation and projectification involve claims to knowledge premised in universal managerial abstractions that obscure the political dynamics of those engaged in ID, from its practitioners to its affected communities. Rooted in detailed, on-the-ground fieldwork, we contend that empirical research examining how contemporary and incipient managerialism works in these contexts could productively disrupt ID’s deeply problematic universalist claims, which to some extent, as outlined in our discussions above, have evolved in the post-2008 period toward new techniques and practices.

This programme would place a premium on refining our research practices to include both at depth consideration of positionality among the various subjects implicated in ID contexts, and our own positionality in the politics of research. In order to scrutinize what is at stake in any particular research project we suggest close attention, then, to: (a) how the researcher *gains access* to the field and other information bases; (b) the power dynamics between researcher and informants and/or various information bases *while field research is being conducted*; and (c) the intended audience(s) for, and the stylistic quality of ‘texts’ *representing the research*. While we argue that one’s positionality as a researcher always deserves close and explicit scrutiny, we note, in particular, the rich analytical and, indeed, political seam that might be tapped among current or former ‘development insiders’, should they be inclined to cast a bold eye on their own work. Below we will discuss how intimate proximity and deep personal involvement with projects



afforded to ID professionals – consultants, experts, advisors, etc. – might hinder their ability to produce balanced analyses. Nonetheless, we applaud the opportunity that some ID professionals have taken in increasingly interrogating their own ‘locations’ and so turn their own experience into the basis for substantive critique of the contemporary world of development.<sup>8</sup>

To date, in a *de facto* trans-disciplinary effort, a few CMS scholars have drawn on Socio-cultural Anthropology, Subaltern Studies and Participatory Action Research (PAR) to operationalize *reflective positionality*. Relying on Geertz (1973), Kenny’s (2008) participant-observation within a UK-based aid organisation allows her to question her role as a ‘neutral observer’, a finding that assists in analytically problematizing the ‘western-centric’, ‘power-laden’ positionality of her research subjects. Meanwhile, building on Banerjee and Linstead (2004), Dar (2014) suggests that ethnographic engagements complicate and resist uniform and clear accounts of knowledge. Based on four months of fieldwork, conducted with UK donor-endorsed authority at an NGO working with Indian tribal groups, Dar (2014: 137) describes her own multiple positionality – as ‘a western academic, a Hindu-Brahmin, a woman, a native English speaker and a Hindi speaker’ – as ‘fragments of myself’. This discovery, arising from her ethnographic method, is in turn extended to deliver ‘new knowledge...[that is] unequal, representing partial understandings of [each] participant, rather than any kind of rationalized truth’ (Dar, 2014: 137). Elsewhere, Gilmore and Kenny (2015) seek to avoid the excessive reflexivity that often appears in such self-conscious research processes, through recourse to feminist anthropological perspectives that may encourage shared reflection between researchers and research participants, and, so, highlight the analytic power of colliding worlds: in this case of ID practice and research. Meanwhile, inspired by critique of ‘action research’ as it was originally conceived (Cooke, 2008), for Frenzel and Sullivan (2009) and Frenzel et al. (2011), *co-research* is employed as a safeguard for avoiding complicity in the perpetuation of power-knowledge regimes. Here, in order to ensure autonomy and control over research, PAR participants define the purpose of research and commission the researcher to support them.

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8 Trained as an anthropologist, Mosse worked for many years on projects in India for the UK’s Department for International Development (DfID). He later asked and received permission from his former DfID colleagues (and *erstwhile* friends) to use information from projects they had worked on together for his academic work. However, when he moved to publish, his former colleagues objected stridently to his depictions of the *de facto* politics of development projects and what they perceived as Mosse’s critique of their own roles, as professionals, in development work. Indeed, they tried, unsuccessfully, to have Mosse’s work suppressed (See Mosse, 2005, 2011; Mosse and Lewis, 2005, 2006). Other work by development practitioners *cum* academics, and academics *cum* development practitioners, includes Eyben (2014), and Case, et al. (2017).

As suggested in several of the examples above, positionality has been closely addressed within Socio-cultural Anthropology: indeed, it effectively drives the discipline's epistemological concerns. Therefore, to better appreciate why intimately engaging with positionality is relevant to CMS scholarship – and in order to encourage trans-disciplinarity – below we consider problems of positionality as they have developed within Anthropology: a discipline where the core rationale of 'encountering the other' relates so closely to the forms of empirical research and the unmasking of 'expert-led' practices that we have in mind for CMS's engagement with ID.

When first established formally in Western academia in the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Anthropology explicitly pursued comparisons between anthropologists' own (Western/Christian/'developed'/'complex'/'civilized') societies and radically-different people's variously described as 'savage', 'simple', 'tribal' or 'traditional' (Stocking, 1987). Notably these peoples are, for the most part, the core targets of current ID interventions, if now called 'Southern', 'excluded', 'less developed' or 'developing'. In this context, early Anthropology, directly aligned as it was with colonialism, soon drew anthropologists' attentions to the unfortunate *political* positionality of their work (Boas, 1887a, 1887b; Stocking, 1974), a concern that has continued (Rosaldo, 1989).

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, engaging positionality as a source of *knowledge production* has been grounded methodologically in the direct empirical experience of anthropologists with their subjects (Malinowski, 1922). 'Participant-observation' within a subject/host community is meant to be long term: generally at least a year, or a complete annual cycle. While adjusted according to the particular circumstances of fieldwork, this methodological regime remains the 'ideal type' today. Therefore, and consistent with the early tradition, attention to 'difference' and, so, at least implicitly, *comparison* has remained Anthropology's key source for generating analysis and theory. However, unlike the largely 'armchair' anthropology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, comparative knowledge was now to be accumulated through personal experience, i.e., 'participant-observation', with anthropologists sharing community directly with their subjects: dependent upon them for their research needs and, very often, their practical and emotional wellbeing. Making use of such methods, detailed fieldwork studies from around the world generated an explosion of information about, and appreciation of, the extraordinary diversity of human communities. With returning anthropologists often finding their home societies, usually Western, hardly superior, their 'cultural relativism' (Boas, 1887a, 1887b; Stocking, 1974) was deeply felt.

Historically, overarching unequal geopolitical relations between nation states allowed (usually-Western-based) anthropologists non-reciprocal access to communities in the 'Global South', as it still does. However, as outlined above, due to fieldwork experience and methodology, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropological *analysis* split off from colonialism's universalist vantage point (Stocking, 1974). Rather, '...anthropology...stood for the refusal to accept th[e] conventional perception of homogenization toward a dominant Western model' (Marcus and Fischer, 1986: 1). In this, Anthropology's intellectual trajectory stands in radical contrast to development management which, as we have seen in our outline of CMS's critique, traces an unbroken line across time from its precursors in colonial administration to the present (Cooke, 2003, 2004).

As a result of the lengthy historical and methodological trajectory outlined above, in Anthropology today problems of 'political' and 'interpersonal' positionality have come together into one epistemological package, both intellectually and emotionally. This includes a sustained effort from the 1980s - the so-called 'crisis of representation' (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986) - to irrigate the wound of structural dominance, commonly articulated as 'colonial guilt' (Rosaldo, 1989), in the context of the general phenomenological critique of social science as 'science'. Meanwhile the Anthropology community, as elsewhere in academia, has become increasingly diverse in terms of gender and national origin: women and non-Western/Subaltern scholars are major intellectual figures. Thus, engaging fully with overarching structural politics and multiply-positioned personal and emotional relations between themselves and their subjects, anthropologists now keenly interrogate: (a) the power relations allowing their projects to go forward, e.g., access and funding; (b) how power affects their relations with informants in the field; as well as (c) the politics of the 'textual' representations of their work for the academy, and elsewhere.

While coping seriously with positionality, Anthropology has of course moved with the times and in relation to the expansion of new areas of interest, including ID itself. Of particular relevance here, starting in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the radical surge in communications technology has precipitated new global forms of exchange and the dispersal of persons, objects, information, organizations and space itself in ways entirely unfamiliar. These issues are foundational to understanding ID or, more precisely, the structure and politics of the institutions driving ID and, in turn, the day to day conditions of those impacted by it. While not yet applied at depth in Anthropology to ID, with varying degrees of success 'multi-sited' fieldwork (Marcus, 1995) as well as following 'the social life of things' (Appadurai, 1986) - and ideas, for that matter - have arisen as methodological and conceptual responses to global connectivity in the context of physical dispersal. Others have argued that these emergent, technologically-

implicated phenomena are most effectively engaged via traditional, participant-observer, ethnographic field methods, especially if assisted by theory of sufficient sophistication – for example, a focus on ‘networks’ of actors<sup>9</sup> – to allow for consideration of a community’s varied connections across time and space (Sedgwick, 2007).<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, how the intimacies of fieldwork should inform analytic work remains dynamic and controversial in Anthropology (Sedgwick, 2017). ‘Auto-ethnography’ treats researchers’ life experiences as the core object of study (Rabinow, 1977; Ryang, 2008). ‘Para-ethnography’ dignifies *informants’* intuitive, informal, interpersonally-based knowledge – claimed, rather pompously, as typical of anthropologists’ insights – as a source of analysis (Holmes and Marcus, 2006); while elsewhere, para-ethnography encourages the co-production of ‘complicit’ knowledge about the *outside world* via informants’ substantive interactions with anthropologists themselves (Marcus, 1997). Conceptually, such ‘collaborative’ interactions with subjects may seem attractive to researchers of ID, and in the opening of this section we outlined efforts by current or former development practitioners to undertake academic research. However, explicit examination of the analytical implications of the positionalities entailed in those relations would be critical here, for the power of engaging substantively with ‘difference’, Anthropology’s core strength, is often collapsed. Indeed, such studies often generate the lightweight analysis that troubles ‘anthropology-at-home’. Development practitioners need to be aware of the pitfalls of auto-ethnographic work.

We feel that in all stages of their research projects, CMS scholars taking on ID from whatever angle would do well to self-consciously integrate the problems of methodology and epistemology that we have outlined: reflecting on the vicissitudes of political and personal engagement through self-awareness and

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9 Our discussion of Evaluation specifically comments on the potential of CMS in engaging ID through the techniques of Science and Technology Studies, including actor-network theory.

10 Expanding on CMS’s potential embrace of ID through methodological engagement with positionality, it is worthwhile noting that in Development Studies itself there is a stimulating and instructive tension between those who ‘study’ development, as a subject of research, and those training themselves for careers as development ‘practitioners’. Across the board, the latter have the very best of intentions and are aware (and critical) of the neo-colonial taint of ‘aid’ and ‘assistance’. Indeed, and especially in the context of anthropological training in development, there has been a rich convergence of interests driven by Anthropology’s long-term ideological, i.e., (neo-) colonial, concerns with the moral conundrums of doing and accounting for fieldwork. An instructive example is Mosse’s extended engagement with development both as a practitioner and anthropological analyst, discussed above.

explicit discussion of the problems of positionality. Such a disposition would significantly enhance the critical demystification of the scientific social logics and, specifically in relation to the areas we feel need particular exposure, the 'expert' fetishism of financialization, evaluation and projectification. It would serve to assist with theoretical, methodological and empirical de-naturalization of implicit organizational assumptions and practices in the ID domain.

## Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented what we think are three crucial areas for critical research in ID. They have certain continuities with prior forms of modernization, with which the CMS community has already engaged, but also mark acceleration and/or profound shifts which merit further scrutiny from the CMS community. In light of the increasing financialization of ID, we argue that a new institutional landscape is emerging that needs the attention of critical scholars. In the area of ID evaluation, we have outlined three areas that CMS could engage substantively: the rise of professionals and professionalization, the production of scientific knowledge in ID through RCTs, and incipient forms of organizing and managerialism that result from scientific evaluation practices. Likewise, in the area of projectification, we have highlighted the potential of CMS to examine macro-level studies of 'project' discourses as well as the close empirical exposure of the questionable practices that projectification gives rise to in relation to ID; the point being to question the forcing, in the name of efficiency and rationality, of complex social processes into specific project-based designs. Projectification thus complements financialization and evaluation in inscribing such notions as 'value for money', 'generalizability' and 'reliability' into performative managerial practices and knowledge regimes.

As bases for critique, financialization, evaluation and projectification are interrelated and can be applied to variegated forms of managerialist expansion. Packaged together, they constitute an *organizational* triumvirate which assists in explaining and understanding how the principles of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007) are implemented in development contexts. In other words, they constitute the managerial and organizational *rules of play* that apply in multiple international settings in which modernization plans and marketization are being pursued in the name of development. There has been, we would argue, an intensification in each of these areas following the global financial crisis in 2008; and a corresponding reconfiguration of ID that warrants critical attention.

We believe that, today, a significant form of the Global North's *de facto* dominance over the Global South is crystalized in ID's universalist

managerialism, while such forms are also mirrored in internal, domestic inequalities within nations in both the South and the North. Driven by a methodology of reflective positionality, the intent of our effort is to expose both the social logics and on-the-ground conditions of the work of ID as unfolding in varied, historically-determined and culturally specific contexts. We believe that revealing the tensions between real world cases of such work as it actually intersects with performative financialization, evaluation and projectification will expose these forms of managerialist universalism as an ideological sham; a mystification that disguises the harsh work of power relations in a problematically unequal world.

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