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## Beyond means and ends: learning, engagement and towards an emancipatory development management

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## **Beyond means and ends: learning, engagement and towards an emancipatory development management**

**Hazel Johnson, Richard Pinder and Gordon Wilson**

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### **Abstract**

Means and ends, and how they interact, need to be considered in the context of the complex and constantly emerging relationships between groups, organisations and movements aiming to promote and manage change. These relationships are continually negotiated, and both the tools of development management (the means) and the espoused goals of development (the ends) are caught up in this process. We argue that it is essential to recognise the role of power relations in development management, however social difference and contestation experienced in the negotiation of changing relationships can be important sources of learning for development managers and their organisations. A question is whether and how such learning can lead to more emancipatory means and ends of development management (that go beyond organisations), rather than consolidating existing social relations. In this paper, we examine these issues through the lens of practitioners and professionals who have undertaken postgraduate studies in development management. A particular question for educationalists is whether they can promote learning and engagement towards emancipatory approaches in a context of huge global economic and political change.

### **1. Introduction**

The growing literature on development management points to controversy about whether or not development management supports dominant conceptions of development, power relations and the creation of a world in the image of the West (or North) – in other words, an extension of the modernisation project. The alternative view is that development management can engage with the political and conceptualise its ends differently, leaning more to a vision of change. A question however is whether development management practices – or means – contradict such a perspective, because they may reinforce dominant power relations. At its most fundamental level, the controversy is about the legitimacy and desirability of intervention, by whom, for whom, on whose terms and in what ways. Can development management ends and means indeed be emancipatory?

The separation of means and ends is more a heuristic device than a way of conceptualising development management and its practice. Means and ends are closely inter-related. However this does not necessarily mean that the outcome is simply a reflection of existing power relations. It is important to pay close attention to the emergent processes of intervention and engagement and to identify the extent to which they create spaces for learning and action of a different kind. One method of doing this is to examine the experiences of development managers and their perspectives on their and their organisation's policies and actions. Behind this approach is a view that individual development managers (and their equivalents in other development partnerships, for example, North- South municipal partnerships) are often aware of – or become aware of - and sensitive to power relations and wider contextual issues (Johnson and Wilson, 2009b; Borda Rodriguez, 2008). However they may not always be able to exert influence or control over such relations and the means of promoting development. Development managers' insights into the contradictory politics of development management suggests that there is space for new thinking and new practice, even though it should not be assumed that new thinking and practice are necessarily or automatically emancipatory. This continually

shifting terrain needs thus needs ongoing analysis over time and in context to understand its implications and outcomes.

We first briefly, and selectively, summarise some of the recent debates below, and then examine experiences and perceptions of development managers who have participated in the Development Management programme at the Open University. We suggest that there are spaces of autonomy and possibility (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007) and spaces for action learning (Johnson, 2007). As well as using development management tools, techniques and skills in a reflexive rather than a managerial perspective, development managers also need to be able to analyse and act on the points of power and resistance in the development networks of which they are a part. One implication lies in the potential for building networks of practitioners through which new knowledge and practices can be produced and shared. Another lies in whether development managers and their organisations are able to make effective links to wider movements for social justice. A third implication involves examining how education and training institutions can provide curricula that support reflective practice, and a research and knowledge culture that enables development managers to engage critically with the wider contexts in which they work.

## **2. Some background debates**

For the sake of synthesis (and because these debates have also been discussed elsewhere, for example, in the 2010 *Public Administration and Development* special issue edited by McCourt and Gulrajani), we have grouped our selection of the literature into two broad currents. The first we have called the critical studies perspective, the second, the social dynamics perspective. We do not attempt to discuss all the nuances of this literature, and the thinking inevitably interacts and overlaps.

### **2.1 Critical studies perspectives**

This perspective stems largely from critical management and critical development studies. Dar and Cooke (2008) have brought together a number of currents in this strand, which have continuities with postcolonial debates as well as studies such as that by Ferguson (1990/94) of development intervention in Lesotho<sup>1</sup>. Critical management studies is concerned with the exercise of power in purposive action and intervention, and in particular how the pervasiveness of managerialism supports the hegemony of particular actors and approaches. Srinivas, in the Dar and Cooke volume, defines managerialism (2008, p.74, following Parker [2002]) as a generalised ideology of management based on the idea that social progress requires greater control of the natural world, greater control of human beings, and organisation to order people and things to achieve collective goals. Part of the critical studies argument is that development management has been strongly influenced by this command and control perspective. Thus Murphy (2008, p.21) argues that the nature of social organisation is becoming global, in turn controlled by a global elite. This global elite does not have formal status but is 'nurtured within networked globalising institutions that collaborate together to extend globalisation's spatial and programmatic reach' (ibid). In the same volume, and following Habermas, Kerr (2008, p.109) characterises projects as 'instrumental reason', while Mowles (2010, pp.152-154) has argue that the application of systems thinking in development management

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<sup>1</sup> Ferguson's analysis aims to show how the unintended effects of development interventions can serve new purposes and forms of control 'while simultaneously exerting a powerful depoliticising effect' (ibid, p.21). He argues that we tend to dwell on the reasons for failure of interventions (or why they took a different direction) rather than examining who and what is served by failure and unintended outcomes (ibid, p. 254).

has imposed a particular model of development practice: one in which idealised models are used to align southern futures with northern visions of change.

Such a critical perspective on the management of development is complemented in Escobar's (2008) eyes by critical development studies, which questions the project of modernization and the nature of power relations in development intervention (ibid, p.198). The work by Kothari (2006), Cooke and Kothari (2001) and others, which examines continuities with colonial administration and questions discourses and practices around participation, falls into this arena. Foucauldian approaches are often used to uncover embedded power relations. However, Escobar (2008, p.199) argues, there are limits to these approaches, particularly with respect to acknowledging and understanding different types of agency in development (Lewis and Mosse, 2006; Long, 2004). Lewis and Mosse's (2006) volume thus considers actor networks and the technologies that connect them to reveal hierarchies and contradictions in how development agencies behave. One example is how non-governmental organisations can use research for action planning, workshops and reports to hide the realities of social relations within and with the subjects of development – whether consciously or unconsciously (Nauta, 2006). However Escobar (2008, p.200) notes that, as a result of these studies, everyone and everything is seen to have agency. For Escobar, this raises such questions as: How do we differentiate between different types of agency? Where is power located in actor-oriented analysis? What is the difference between different types of connectedness? If everything is context-dependent, how do we differentiate between different contexts? If history is crucial to our understanding, 'what happens to what is emergent, unpredictable?' and how do we connect 'theory and practice, knowledge and action' (ibid, p.20)?

This literature does however force us to think about, and analyse, power relations and how they are dispersed through organisations and institutions. Indeed the focus of development management on organisations and organisational performance in particular has itself become a source of critique, as it diverts our attention from the wider panorama of politics and power (Cooke and Dar, 2008, p.5). Cooke and Dar (ibid, p.3) acknowledge that their critique does not as yet have an 'instrumental value' (i.e. a use or practice value). On the prospects for a 'new development management', Cooke and Dar refer to the writings of Thomas (particularly 2000, 2007), to which we now turn.

## 2.2 A 'social dynamics' perspective

A focus on power, difference and the challenges of managerialism also informs what we have called a 'social dynamics' perspective. We have used this descriptor as, within this group of writers, there is greater concern for the 'instrumental value' of development management as well as power relations. Reflecting closely on what development managers do (or could or should do) is an integral part of Thomas's thinking (1999, 2000, 2007). Thomas distinguishes managing *in* a context of development as a process of historical change; managing *of* interventions in development – that is, managing tasks in 'deliberate efforts at progress' (2007, p.384); and managing *for* development – managing as an orientation towards progressive change, in which values are a key dimension. In the 2007 article, Thomas also engages with Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff's (2005) characterisation of development management (as values, process, tools, and means to realising institutional agendas), but questions how values inform what development managers do. He underlines the tension between 'doing things right' and 'doing the right thing' (Thomas, 2007, p.385)<sup>2</sup>. Thomas also poses questions (ibid, pp.385-386): Who has authority to promote change? What kinds of accountability are needed – do they

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<sup>2</sup> This point has also been made by Abbott et al, 2007.

necessarily involve the measurement of performance? How can we understand the place of promoting change in the wider and changing context – what kinds of learning are needed? How are values validated? The papers he brings together in a Policy Arena of the *Journal of International Development* (2007, 19[3]) broadly conclude that ‘partnerships and values have one thing in common, namely that they cannot be directed or imposed’ (ibid, p.387).

This last point leaves us still with the challenge posed by the critical studies group: what is the nature of power relations in development management and between the power ‘brokers and translators’ and those they work with (Lewis and Mosse, 2006)? In this respect, the Brinkerhoffs’ (2008, 2010) study of how security concerns in the United States are influencing aid, aid organisation, management and practice comment that it is difficult to apply learning from practice because of these wider institutional agendas. From this, the Brinkerhoffs conclude that influencing institutional agendas is thus part of the way forward, for which development managers need political skills.

These reflections lead to the special issue of *Public Administration and Development* edited by Gulrajani and McCourt (2010) (in which Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2010, was published). McCourt and Gulrajani (2010, p.84, p.86) argue that development management must ‘embrace politics’ which is ‘both the fundamental reality from which policies emerge and...a factor in how they are implemented’. Quoting Cortina (2007, p.11), the role of development managers is to establish ‘the *conditions of justice which enable people to make use of their freedom*’, and ‘engage with locally determined development purposes, so that our expertise in management helps to achieve those purposes’ (McCourt and Gulrajani, 2010, p.86). The question is how, at what level and with what effect?

Some pointers are provided. For example, Gulrajani (2010, p.143-144) uses Enlightenment and Romantic thinking as a heuristic to distinguish how development management can distance itself from managerialism. Borrowing from the Romantic tradition, she suggests three new requirements for development management: being ‘anchored in experiential realities of all those involved in the planning relation’; developing ‘improvised, flexible, contingent, intuitive and sensitive practice...an act of improvised political steering rather than planned social engineering’; and ‘professional reflexivity...[where processes are] continually revisited, revised and re-examined in a constant interaction between experience and strategy’. Gulrajani (ibid, p.145) urges the use of ‘experimentation and productive creativity’ in addressing tensions, conflict and disjunctures, in academic debate and development practice. Complementing this view is Mowles’ (2010, pp.154-156) analysis in which he argues that change comes about through the interaction of many actors and organisations and that it is these interactions to which we must pay attention, ‘inquiring into the meaning of the doing’ (p.157) as well as having ‘fluency with politics’ (ibid).

As with the dialogue between critical management and critical development studies, it is useful to refer to recent thinking about how change occurs. For example, recent research on citizenship by Cornwall and Coelho (2007, eds) provides an analysis of participation in democratic politics in both North and South with implications for how ‘spaces for change’ can be enhanced (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007). Above all, citizens need to be able to ‘recognise themselves’, not simply be clients (ibid, p.8). Such spaces for change can however be limited and controlled by those who create them (encapsulated, in Cornwall’s [2002] concept of ‘invited spaces’). They can also be ‘spaces of possibility’, in which power takes a more productive and positive form: for example, in enabling citizens to assert their rights and contest forms of ‘governmentality’ (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007, p.11). In addition, as underlined by Cornwall (2002), spaces may not always lead to the intended outcomes, while on the other hand, they still provide ‘spaces of autonomy’ and may lead to positive, if

unintended, outcomes for the poor and disadvantaged (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007, p.14).

If, as Gulrajani argues, development managers' role is 'improvised political steering', and, as Cortina (2007, p.11) is quoted as saying, that development managers should direct themselves to 'the conditions of justice which enable people to make use of their freedom', how do or should they do it? Is it through negotiation and brokering (see Abbott et al [2007], discussed below) or through good facilitation skills and innovative practices for citizenship participation (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007)? What about the everyday, instrumental challenges that development managers face? Brett (2009, p.304) challenges the capacity of development (and by implication, development management) to deliver: 'Democratization and liberalization make it harder for elites to suppress demands from the poor by strengthening their potential ability to exercise exit and voice, but too little has been done to strengthen their substantive ability to build autonomous organisations, despite participatory and capacity-building projects of many kinds'. Not only does best practice depend on making the best use of existing human and social capital, Brett argues, but a 'credible theory of political agency and practice is also required' (ibid, p.306). For development managers, we might add that a credible theory of practice for complex political terrains is also needed.

### **3. Reflexive learning and action?**

As argued by Thomas (1996), development management is a multi-layered field in which development managers occupy many positions and roles - from field officer to director of a large organisation. It is thus important to take into account the different domains of thinking and practice, and the different ways that power might be contested as well as upheld. Otherwise it would be too easy to construct idealised scenarios for the ends of development management and how to achieve them. More particularly, we might ask what the experiences and practices of development managers can contribute to these debates. In earlier research (synthesized in Johnson and Wilson, 2009), in reflecting how truths are produced (Gordon, 1980) and contested in development intervention, we aimed to see whether different types of rationality (instrumental and communicative) conceptualised by Habermas (1990) help understand development practice, and used social theories of learning to assess the potential for engagement and action that had transformational outcomes. We draw to some extent on this background below while also referring to the debate above.

The data we examine are from two main sources. The first is from an analysis of 62 masters' research projects that were completed during alternate 6-monthly course study periods between 1998 and 2006 for an MSc in Development Management at The Open University (OU) (and already published by researchers, Abbott et al, 2007). The students who had completed the projects were part-time, worked mainly for NGOs, most with links to the North. They had a range of responsibilities from project managers, project staff, activists and volunteers, and across fields such as education and training, health, agriculture, water, forestry, finance, housing and refugees. The projects were subject to a thematic analysis by a small team of researchers. An initial pilot analysis of 10 projects was carried out to establish common understanding of categories, through which the 62 were then examined in depth (ibid). Below we summarise key points from this study.

Our second source is from (2011) interviews carried out with recent graduates (2010) from the same Development Management programme. Students were selected randomly but with equal numbers of men and women by the Open University's statistical office. The database used here is as yet confined to 6 interviews (or cases) and is ongoing work, aiming to inform future changes to our own education and

training programme. A set of 16 guide questions was used, and the interviews involved a probing approach to each question. Five of the informants worked for northern development organisations and one worked for a regional organisation that was part of a northern network. Five interviews were done by telephone and one by email, with three informants being nationals of and based in sub-Saharan Africa, and 3 being nationals of and/or based in Europe. These interviews were subject to thematic analysis informed by the development management debates outlined above and other common themes that emerged from the interviews. We examine the findings in Section 3.2.

### **3.1 Managing agendas, tools and techniques**

The OU MSc projects provide an opportunity for development practitioners to research and critically appraise a particular problem of interest to them or to their organisations. The analysis of the projects revealed the tensions facing development managers. Abbott et al (2007, p.199) note that the work that the practitioners do 'is guided by foreign agendas and trends on what development ought to be'. Development managers try to make sense of these agendas within the specific contexts of their work by adapting tools and techniques and aiming to engage horizontally with stakeholders. They are therefore struggling on two fronts simultaneously. Not only might their own or their organisation's values and ethics be in conflict with the development agendas they are asked to address (and for which they gain funding), but they are also trying to use tools and techniques in the best ways possible to achieve the 'right' outcomes, both for funders as well as for the stakeholders or subjects of intervention. Abbott et al argue (ibid, p.200) that the practitioners 'took the opportunity to shift from what Giddens (1984) calls a 'practical consciousness' of routinised day-to-day activity to 'discursive consciousness' where they can engage in critical analysis of their task'.

The superficial similarities with instrumental and communicative rationalities are apparent. However Abbott et al conclude that while practitioners report particular successes in what they do, they are less confident about the overall trajectory. In this, Abbott et al suggest (ibid, p.201), development management's distinctiveness is that it enables practitioners 'to reflect on and deconstruct deeper meanings of values, ethics, power and culture' and also presents the possibility of thinking more widely about a collective rather than an individual agency and 'driver for change' involving 'learning and knowledge building across organisations' (ibid).

This conclusion raises a tension about the relationship between individuals, organisations and wider development agendas and their proponents and sources of power and control. On one hand, from these data and reflections, we can see that agendas, power and control are not monolithic and are continually contested, even in small ways, by individuals as much as by organisations. However it cannot be assumed that reflective practice is evenly dispersed within organisations and that power relations within organisations are not acting as obstacles to change. Thus tools that help to 'open up' organisations may be an important element of development management means as well as those that are directed to external social goals. In doing this, however, organisations should not be treated in isolation from the development agendas and wider institutional terrain of which they are a part (and which they might contest or support).

On the other hand, we can also see that the general direction of change is hard to challenge, and certainly to steer, by individual development managers as well as by their organisations. Indeed, Abbott et al note (ibid): 'that this is a field that demands careful steering, strategically and ultimately in relation to power dynamics between the actors, is limiting... development management as steering becomes synonymous with the management of these relations (Robinson et al, 2000)...where negotiation

and brokering is the most important skill a manager can possess'. Abbott et al thus call for the creation of communities of practice across organisations. The idea of learning and knowledge building across organisations does of course take us into a different type of social space – that of global networks and social movements. At a lesser scale, 'practitioner networks' can also serve as informal spaces for learning and action.

### 3.2 Spaces of autonomy and action learning?

Our recent interviews with development management graduates throw additional light on the possibilities for, and limits on, reflective practice. These interviews were conducted with two purposes in mind: eliciting data that could inform this paper as well as changes to development management curriculum. We do not pretend to arrive at generalisations from these interviews – more appropriately reached by the substantial study carried out by Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2010) - but they provide pointers for further thinking and research on the prospect of an emancipatory development management.

The organisational and value-based settings of the interviewees are outlined in Table 1. Although, this table paints a partial picture, it demonstrates some common characteristics such as complex inter-organisational arenas and different types of 'working with'. Indeed, for these interviewees, there is a constant tightrope on which they have to balance: sources of funding; government agendas and controls; the roles of development managers and their organisations as advocates and lobbyists of policies and policy changes; and how development managers' and their organisations' knowledge and expertise are valued as compared with the knowledge and expertise of development 'partners'.

**Table 1 Selected characteristics from interviews (2011)**

Interviewee	Main focus of organisation	Inter-organisational arena	Some core values and/or concerns
DM1	Safe and effective mine clearance	Communities, governments, international donors	Getting the job done by the best means possible; working with local experts across cultural divides
DM2	Volunteer placement to promote change and end poverty	Local partner organisations, national and international funders	People and knowledge are the best agents of change; partnership; thinking globally
DM3	Fair trade certification and livelihood development	Farmers, communities, commercial companies, international associations and donors	Win-win options; professionalization of producers; corporate social responsibility
DM4	Water, sanitation, health and hygiene	Communities, local authorities, government ministries, universities, donors	Being accountable; transparent approaches; credible options; being self-critical; being a learning organisation

DM5	Social justice for the poor  Livelihood development	Communities, local NGOs and faith-based organisations, donors	Christian values and teaching; solidarity; human dignity; partnership; poverty understood as social and political as well as economic
DM6	Protecting children’s rights and meeting basic needs  Equal rights for women and children  Enabling voices to be heard	Governments, civil society organisations, corporations, donors, families	Bridging between people and organisations; integrity; inclusion; diversity; equality; tolerance; treating all equally

***Means and ends***

One of the concerns of the critiques of development management is how the discourses and methods used reinforce power relations. However, the interviews showed a complex interaction of procedures and well-charted processes combined with an understanding of contextual social dynamics. On one hand, organisations instigated rules and codes of conduct with partners (e.g. DM3, DM4, DM6), used particular procedures of project assessment (e.g. DM2, DM5) including participatory approaches (DM3) and, in some cases, aimed to change values and cultures of partners and target groups (e.g. DM3, DM6). On the other, all the interviewees underlined the importance of informal approaches as well as development management methodologies and methods. In particular, they mentioned the importance of establishing personal relationships, working face to face with people, showing respect and cultural sensitivity, establishing trust, and understanding difference (including where this may lead to conflicts of interests and behaviours). Being impartial and non-judgmental were also seen as essential values to working with others in different settings (e.g. DM1). Another key dimension was having credibility – expertise, knowledge and skills that helped to meet needs and resolve problems (e.g. DM4).

Some of these responses could be mapped on to the ‘modernization project’, but these elements also intersected with different currents of thinking. The interviewees saw themselves as bridging between organisations, enabling greater coordination, providing different visions and understandings of development and opening doors to new possibilities. Engaging with globalisation and modernization was filtered through an engagement with collective organisation, environmental issues, gender inequalities and social justice (DM3, DM5).

***Inter- and intra-organisational power relations***

It would be wrong to suggest that the interviewees and their organisations were not subject to, and to some extent part of, the power relations governing development and development aid. By the latter, we mean both the relationships between key organisations and institutions and their role in funding, and the discourses which frame policy and action. However it would be equally wrong to assume that interviewees (and their organisations) are not aware of the power relations that they are trying to manage, negotiate, broker and possibly contest.

One important dimension is how development organisations and their projects are resourced. The circuits or flows of money between development organisations, and how these flows mediate what development organisations do, is a research topic in itself. For these interviewees and organisations, government-based bilateral funding was crucial to operations in five of the six cases, while one relied substantially on church funding. Some of the funding might have been mediated through other international organisations (e.g. DM3), and for DM6, government funding was an essential but not sufficient part of the resourcing of activities. While all interviewees claimed autonomy in policy from governments, at the same time they had to take the interests of governments into account, a point we return to. Receipt of such funding also involves particular types of reporting and accountability. Thus while DM1 provided quarterly reports on activity directly to funders, other organisations were funding development partners in turn, which can result in different kinds of pressure on those partners. For example, DM4 mentioned that the need to engage with the project cycle meant that plans and decisions might be rushed through to achieve the necessary outputs while a slower but more considered pace might not satisfy the donor. Equally, DM2 noted that accountability to donors often put partners under pressure and that accountability in general was a key source of tension between organisations.

Some 'spaces of possibility' were apparent, although not without considerable challenges. Thus DM3 explained that the international network that his organisation is part of (with a Northern European base and funded by a national government), does not necessarily understand all the contextual meanings within which he works. DM3's organisation therefore has to try and map its activities on to the funding organisation's agenda. In spite of this, the account of the organisation's activities and the ideas for change that are being pursued exhibit considerable embedding in local contextual dynamics, a narrative that we return to below. By contrast, DM4 noted the tensions between simultaneously receiving funding from and lobbying the same donor. A careful line has to be drawn between meeting the funders' requirements and aiming to change funder policy. Such issues also arise in gaining agreement to work with national governments while also trying to promoting policy changes. DM6 provided another example of where discourse engagement intersects with funding. In this case, part of the work is to gain the support of corporate businesses as partners in child rights and obtain funding from them. This process involves engaging companies in dialogue over child rights, and communicating narratives and stories that have meaning to the corporate world, possibly changing perspectives and values within the companies. However, where the company and the development organisation do not see eye to eye, child rights take precedence over funding.

Evident from the interviews was the important role of governments: in providing access, in agreeing funding in some cases, and in giving permission to work in the country. Such gate-keeping and resourcing are linked to national political as well as development concerns, which have implications for how development managers operate. In the case of DM5, it was important to use known contacts to gain the trust national and local government and to get their support, without which it would have been impossible to establish partnerships and projects with local organisations. DM4 observed that it was not possible to discuss human rights agendas in the same national context. Emergencies were an important area of work in the case of DM6, however the organisation would only enter an emergency with governments' permission or if mandated internationally. DM1 explained that spending time with embassy staff and developing good relations was essential for their work but at the same time it could make them subject to particular national interests in prioritising areas for mine clearance.

Thus far, we can probably add political and inter-personal skills and deep knowledge of particular cultural settings to the essential repertoire for development managers, along with Abbott et al's (2007, p.201) skills of negotiation and brokering. However the question remains whether and how such essential skills can be used for an emancipatory development management.

This question is answered in different ways from the interviews, particularly in focusing on how development managers and their organisations work with 'beneficiary' partners. For example, DM1, whose (demining) organisation was function-based, outlined mechanisms that reflect a cross-cultural and culturally-sensitive pragmatism rather than a development management toolbox of participatory approaches. The aim was to recognise, respect and work with national and local expertise. To get mines out of the ground safely and cost-effectively included identifying and surveying areas to be cleared, establishing access to and good relations with acknowledged leaders and through people who had ethnic ties, and then working with members of the community to remove the mines (the deminers receiving huge respect in return). Working with the communities meant accepting them as they were and involved a high level of cultural sensitivity as well as not undermining relationships (for example, by promising things that could not be delivered). By contrast, DM4 was acutely aware that beneficiary partners sometimes saw the organisation as a donor rather than a working partner, particularly if partners were small and resource-dependent. A key issue was therefore how to work differently. For DM4, the process involved demonstrating that the organisation did excellent background research, had clear evidence for proposing particular courses of action, and that the collaboration would bring added value. In aiming not to put too much pressure on reporting requirements, they would also carry out a pilot funding relationship for a year. However at government level, the organisation could sometimes be seen both as the spokesperson for national NGOs and the embodiment of 'northern' expertise, that is, privileging northern rather than southern voices. In addition, valuing of 'scientific' over experiential knowledges can be a serious challenge to emancipatory development (see Wilson and Johnson, 2007).

Development managers also have to 'manage' power relations within their own organisations. Some of the interviewees mentioned that internal hierarchies could be restrictive (DM1) or, by contrast, inspire and motivate staff (DM6), while others noted that it could be challenging to get one's voice heard (DM4) or have one's knowledge and expertise valued (DM1). In addition, tensions between functions within organisations – for example, between fund-raising (which requires getting funders on side) and campaigns and programmes (which may involve critical debate with funders) – were also mentioned. Being part of an extended faith-based network with particular teachings and beliefs could also be constraining on actions such as providing condoms in HIV-AIDS work (DM5).

### ***Action learning***

The above suggests that development managers are frequently seeking to create spaces that can enable a degree of autonomy of action, or that open possibilities, as well as meeting the requirements of funders and other more powerful stakeholders. To act in this way requires learning by development managers and their organisations. In other research, we have identified points of learning – or action learning spaces – in which social difference and contestation have led to new knowledge and forms of action (Wilson and Johnson, 2007; Johnson and Wilson, 2006, 2009a+b; Wilson, 2007). However it cannot be assumed that such learning necessarily leads to communicative action and/or emancipatory outcomes, rather than instrumental or strategic goals. A question is thus whether such actions have the potential to promote 'transformatory' change in the longer term.

Whilst the interviewees seized opportunities to transcend current norms (through different forms of informal engagement, acts of independence from funders, or by challenging preconceptions about development), there were also instances in which they aimed to use new knowledge to change power dynamics. One example is provided by DM4 whose organisation learnt about innovative models of citizenship promotion in Uganda. The organisation documented an initiative to promote citizen dialogue that used radio and report cards, and facilitated the replication of this model in Ghana. Another example lies in DM3's work to develop platforms for certified, socially and environmentally responsible cocoa production and trade in the context of community development. This process involves multiple organisations and processes and is linked to international campaigns around child labour and the environment. There are thus considerable coordination (and agenda) challenges, one aspect of which involves a tension between the commercial goals of the buying companies and value-based NGOs. DM3 has thus created platforms through which training on the community development dimension is provided to the companies while at the same time establishing clear rules and procedures for upgrading and certification amongst farmers ('not business as usual but creating local structures in which they can do things differently'). In addition, DM3 has established resource persons amongst farmer groups to enable a peer learning and monitoring process. On one hand, there are considerable debates about standards and power relations in value chains, and this could be considered simply as compliance. On the other, it can also be seen as an opportunity for farmers and communities to develop different livelihood models that go beyond certified cocoa. The platforms and mechanisms for coordination are a creative opportunity to enable buyers to situate commercial activities within a moral landscape, and for farmers to strengthen their bargaining positions by being collectively organised and learning new skills.

#### **4. Conclusions and implications**

Our work so far suggests we have to remain agnostic about the possibility of an emancipatory development management, whilst believing in the value of striving to establish and practise it. The current critical literature is convincing with respect to the need to locate development action, intervention and management the context of power relations, global and local. However, it is important not to be paralysed by assuming that development management does only and can only support the agendas of powerful elites. The heterogeneity of development managers, and the diverse forms taken by means and ends in the context of continuously emerging relationships and values, can give rise to action learning that leads to different and more challenging outcomes. Moreover, to the extent that development action involves engagement with different actors, values and interests, as well as routine practices and tasks, there is an opportunity for establishing trust and action that approaches the communicative as well as the instrumental.

In our view, this has important implications for learning, in both research and teaching. In research, we first need to know much more about the 'spaces of autonomy and possibility', the experiences of action learning, and the potential for communicative action. Second, we need to understand better how instrumental and communicative rationalities can be combined in an emancipatory development practice. Third, research into development management needs to explore the ways in which, and the extent to which, development managers have played, or can play, a role in social movements and organisations of the poor. Fourth, research is needed to examine how changes in the world economy and shifts in global power relations are re-fashioning the nature of development policy and changing the role and agendas of development management? The Brinkerhoffs' (2008, 2010) study is a relevant example here, although it is increasingly important to understand the global changes resulting from the rising powers and emerging economies..

In teaching, universities and other educational organisations need to engage more creatively and critically with development managers and their organisations. As noted above, development managers have to apply instrumental as well as communicative rationalities and to know the limits and potential of both. So educationalists need to ask themselves: What are we reinforcing? What kinds of change are we promoting? How do we encourage learners – students and practitioners – to explore and take on the skills required to identify the desirability of intervention and to establish its legitimacy? How do we encourage learners to ask and find answers to the central questions of intervention by whom, for whom, on whose terms and in what ways?

Thomas (1996) explored some of these questions, and in seeking answers to them, drew up a list of skills and qualities of development management. One starting point might be to review this list and its justification in the light of the recent debates outlined in this paper, and to reflect on the extent to which the questions and critics of the means and ends of development management can be answered by revising them or by thinking anew. As with the methodology of this paper, ways forward need to include engagement with the critical reflections of practitioners as well as the academics of development management.

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