

RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Joint conference of exceed (Excellence Centers for Exchange and Development) and
DIE (German Development Institute)

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Almost seven decades after the program of ‘developing the underdeveloped regions’ was launched, its results are ambivalent. While some point to successes of development cooperation and recently the Millennium Development Goals in reducing poverty in the global South, others attribute these successes mainly to China and to modifications of the international poverty line (Hickel 2016). Even the entire paradigm – helping countries become like the global North - has been criticized as eurocentric. In a situation where still thousands die each day due to lack of food, medicine and clean water and where power inequalities often continue to underlie cooperation, it is paramount to reflect how development cooperation could be improved or even rethought in the light of previous experiences and of current conditions and dynamics.

One important area of consideration is how new instruments of development cooperation (e.g. budget support), rising powers, new donors and South-South cooperation (Quadir 2013) might change the framing, effectiveness and fairness of cooperation, how they fare in these respects so far and why. Since 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals are heralded as the new way forward, also re-framing development as well as cooperation and likewise leaving behind the dichotomy of ‘developed’ vs. ‘developing’ countries.

However, if the apparatus of development cooperation – be it of old or new donors – functions as an ‘anti-politics-machine’ (Ferguson 1994) that conceals the political dimension of power and conflicts in its operations, cooperation must also be reconsidered on a different level. Organized interventions in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement (Nederveen Pieterse 2010: 3) have always benefitted some groups more than (or at the expense of) others. It is time to acknowledge this fact more and to rethink how development cooperation can overcome this.

One way to avoid ineffectiveness, paternalism or harm in interventions – above all in the area of involuntary resettlement, which has displaced millions all over the world (de Wet 2006) – are accountability mechanisms that allow project-affected persons to complain or to file claims against such projects, thus making donors, governments and implementers accountable to the supposed beneficiaries of development. More generally, the issue is how interventions may be put more into ownership of beneficiaries, parliaments and the public.

Yet can effective poverty reduction and transformation for sustainability be confined to development cooperation or does it have to go ‘beyond aid’ (Browne 1999)? Suggesting that global economic governance is far more significant than the comparatively small flows of official development assistance, some critics have long since demanded a focus on global structural policy, a new international economic order or global public goods. The future role of development cooperation in this is an open question.

Other critics, under the banner of Post-Development (Escobar 2012), have challenged the paradigm of ‘development’ altogether. Rejecting the idea that the West provides a model worth aspiring to, they focus on local knowledge, cultural difference, and ‘alternatives to development’ – or at least on hybridizations of traditional and modern values and practices. These alternative movements are gaining momentum in the Global South as well as the Global North. Nevertheless, questions remain regarding the viability, desirability and feasibility of these alternatives.

The organizers of the conference “Rethinking development cooperation” – the Excellence Centers for Exchange and Development (exceed) and the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) therefore invite contributions on the following topics:

- Successes and failures of development cooperation
- New donors and South-South cooperation
- The SDGs and the future of development studies
- Power, politics, and the political economy of development cooperation
- Accountability in development policy
- Beyond aid: global structural policy and global public goods
- Post-Development, local knowledge, and alternatives to ‘development’
- Reflection on cooperation among Universities in North and South

Within these topics, we welcome proposals for conference papers and for discussion panels:

- **Conference papers** will be presented and discussed in parallel sessions of 3 - 4 papers. The exact focus of these panels depends on papers successfully submitted and grouped together. Proposals for papers should not be longer than 300 words. Papers should usually have between 4000 and 8000 words and should be presented in 15 min.
- **Discussion panels** offer a platform to discuss in a structured way specific issues within the above framework. A proposal for such a panel should include a key question to be explored, a brief description of the background and main intention of the panel, as well as names of other panel participants and, ideally, of a moderator. In total, there should not be more than four persons on the panel, to leave enough space for inclusion of the audience. Diversity of panel participants is most welcome. Proposals should not be longer than 300 words.

For more information and submission, please visit:

www.uni-kassel.de/go/exceed-die-conference2018

IMPORTANT DATES

Deadline of abstract submission **31 March 2018**

Notification for acceptance **31 May 2018**

Deadline for final full paper submission **15 September 2018**

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