To be published in: Jessop, Bob and Knio, Karim (eds) *The Pedagogy of Economic Crises: Crisis Dynamics, Construals, and Lessons*, Abingdon: Routledge.

The Permanent Crisis of Development Aid

Wil Hout

Introduction

The thinking about development is permeated by notions of crisis, which derive from the awareness that there is an immense – and unacceptable – inequality in life chances between people born in different parts of the world (Selwyn 2014: 10-13). Many people in rich countries understand the development crisis in terms of a moral obligation to come to the assistance of fellow human beings living in poor countries. Development assistance has thus been an important component of the development project ever since the end of World War II (cf. McMichael 1996).

It is ironic that development assistance, which has been inspired by the perceived crisis in development, has itself shown signs of crisis during most of its existence. Despite spending several trillions of USD in aid, the United Nations (2016) estimated that the number of extremely poor people had risen to 836 million by 2015. Seven decades after World War II ended, the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals was deemed necessary to end global poverty, among other goals. Various observers have voiced scepticism not only about the achievements of aid in fighting global poverty, but also about its impact in other domains. Migration may serve as a useful example: in a review of research evidence accumulated over 45 years, Clemens (2014) showed that aid programmes and trade agreements have not curbed migration flows. Development assistance seems to have had almost the opposite effect from that intended because, by stimulating growth, aid practices may actually have stimulated migration.

The perceived failure of aid to make a difference in ending poverty has led to repeated crises of legitimacy. At various moments over the past 70 years, critical analyses emphasizing the perverse effects of aid became quite popular. Writing on aid since the 1960s, development economist P.T. Bauer was adamant in his criticism. He claimed:

> Foreign aid does not affect the major factors behind the material backwardness of underdeveloped countries; the continued poverty of the recipient countries is therefore not surprising. The policies of the recipient countries have on the whole served to retard or obstruct possible advance. (Bauer 1966: 58)

Contemporary aid critics emphasize that the crisis of development assistance is inherent to the very notion of aid itself. A staunch critic, Dambisa Moyo, suggests that aid is caught in a vicious cycle:

> With aid's help, corruption fosters corruption, nations quickly descend into a vicious cycle of aid… This is the … cycle that chokes off desperately needed investment, instils a culture of dependency, and facilitates rampant and systematic corruption, all with deleterious consequences for growth. The cycle that, in fact, perpetuates underdevelopment, and guarantees economic failure in the poorest aid-dependent countries. (Moyo 2009: 49)

Not only aid sceptics, but also supporters of aid, recognise that the giving aid carries inherent risks. Former Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, Bert Koenders, was very aware of such risks but emphasised that the legitimacy of development assistance should be enhanced by developing tools for risk management. In his policy note, *Our Common Concern*, Koenders suggested:

> Active involvement in fragile states certainly entails risks when it comes to achieving results and accounting for expenditure. However, neither the international community nor the Netherlands can afford to do nothing. The price is simply too high. This requires a flexible approach that allows considered risks to be taken. It is however important that risks be properly identified and managed as far as possible. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2007: 43)

This chapter reviews the permanent crisis of aid as a failure to learn *from* the crisis (Jessop 2015: 257). Instead of drawing lessons that question the legitimacy of aid, which would require a reflexive attitude and an analysis of deeper causes of the difficulty to address development problems, the aid industry usually responds to doubts regarding aid effectiveness by highlighting the *symptoms* of crisis and measures to remove them. Accounts about corruption in aid-receiving governments are normally approached with routinised crisis management techniques, aimed at curbing the practices of corrupt officials (cf. Jessop 2015: 247). Common responses include the temporary cessation of aid flows, the choice for different aid-delivery channels and/or the support to 'public integrity' agencies, but these generally fail to address the underlying problem.[1]

The aid industry typically responds to development crises with new schemes that are aimed at solving the previous crisis. As Mosse (2011: 4) has put it very aptly, policy making on development assistance has become characterised by 'a technicalization of policy and the centralization of expertise'. Based on their technical understandings of development issues, policy-makers focus on the symptoms of crisis, and typically adapt existing aid schemes to deal with emerging realities. Innovations, which reflect the attempt to learn *about* crises, remain within the parameters set by the dominant aid paradigm, and fail to address fundamental causes such as increasing global inequality. Accordingly, I now seek to interpret the major innovations introduced into the aid architecture since the rise of the Post-Washington Consensus in the mid-1990s (cf. Fine et al. 2003) as elements of the permanent crisis of aid. The innovations, embodied in projects on the Millennium and the Sustainable Development Goals, were responses to the legitimacy crisis that affected development assistance. The MDG and SDG projects can both be understood as responses by the aid community to the crisis construals regarding development assistance that had become influential in public debate.

The Evolution of Development Aid

The evolution of development aid can be interpreted in terms of the *thinking about* and *practices in* development policies. Although these two elements are closely interconnected, it makes sense to distinguish them for analytical purposes.

Thinking about development

The history of development thinking has often been narrated as a sequence of 'paradigms' or schools of thought. Starting at the end of the 1940s, with the advent of decolonisation, 'development' became the central feature of the policies adopted by international organisations and Western governments. Inspired by the success of the Marshall plan for the reconstruction of Europe, development aid was provided to the governments of countries in the global South. The identification of 'gaps' between the existing and desired situation in the developing world became a hallmark of development thinking. Early scholars, such as Rosenstein-Rodan (1943), emphasised industrial investment in countries with a large agricultural surplus workforce as the key element of a 'big push' to industrialisation. This idea was later generalised into the persistent notion of the financing gap between required investment and available resources, which development assistance could help to fill and thereby contribute to economic growth (cf. Easterly 1999). Other scholars offered their own disciplinary explanations. Modernisation theorists identified an institutional gap created by the difference between social mobilisation and participation (cf. Sangmpam 2007); education economists highlighted the human capital deficit (cf. Hanushek 2013); and scholars of science and technology noted the existence of a knowledge and technology gap (cf. Cherlet 2014). An 'interventionist paradigm' (Reusse 2002: 6-7), which interpreted the task of development agencies as gap-filling, became dominant in the thinking about development and aid.

The most recent incarnation of the thinking about development aid has been shaped by the World Bank, which was the driving force behind the so-called Washington Consensus and Post-Washington Consensus. Both emphasised the role of the market in development. While the Washington Consensus was aimed at eliminating the state in the development process through liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation, the Post-Washington Consensus stressed the building of institutions for markets under the guidance of a regulatory state (Williamson 1993, World Bank 2001).

Practices in development[2]

Development professionals are the day-to-day shapers and implementers of policies that are devised against the background of the paradigmatic divide between strands of development thinking. Interpretations of aid practices have stressed that development practitioners operate as an 'epistemic community', a 'network of professionals with recognized experience and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area' (Haas 1992: 3). Their world is one of 'travelling rationalities' (Mosse 2011: 3) or even 'travelling orthodoxies', where 'development policy remains resolutely optimistic about the power of its favoured approaches and institutional solutions, overplaying the impact and blurring the distinction between normative representations and actual outcomes' (Mosse 2011: 7).

Development professionals are generally motivated to improve the lives of people in poorer countries, and wish to contribute to poverty reduction or eradication. They share a set of understandings of and values about development, acquired as part of their (academic) training. Yet, they work in agencies that are subjected to a principal-agent logic (Killick 1997, Gibson et al. 2005: 43-44). The agencies, who are the 'agents' of policy implementation, may have preferences that differ from those of their 'principals' (ministers or senior civil servants at the helm of a department). Typically, development agencies are interested in maintaining their budget, while their principals may be more concerned about the efficient implementation of aid programmes or the avoidance of risks.

Development agencies are operating in complex and risk-prone environments, where development outcomes depend on many different factors beyond their control. The agencies have great difficulty in measuring their organisational outputs and the performance of their staff. For this reason, staff assessments rely on the success in disbursing allocated aid funds (the practice of 'moving money' as described by Easterly 2002: 228), the quality of project and programme management, and the production of reports and memorandums (Carlsson et al. 1994: 5, Gibson et al. 2005: 134-35, 154-56). Evaluations are common features of the cycle of aid projects and programmes, but they take much time in preparing and their conclusions tend to get published long after the end of the evaluated activities so that their contribution to learning is quite limited (Gibson et al. 2005: 151-54).

The fact that development agencies assess staff mainly based on observable outputs has generated a technical outlook on development, where bureaucratic measurements take precedence over engagement with the local situation in the aid-recipient countries (cf. Eyben 2011: 153-56). Although staff of the aid agencies realise that the political realities in target countries have an important influence on the impact of their programmes, the 'institutional ethos' of their organisation leads them to focus on narrow development targets rather than broader social transformation (Unsworth 2009:890).

The sense of a continuing crisis in the development project, epitomised by the persistence of poverty despite the spending of billions on aid, has led the donor community to embrace the notion of 'aid effectiveness'. With the accompanying trend of 'managing for results', which is an important component of New Public Management, the adoption of the aid effectiveness agenda has induced aid agencies to specify what results they are achieving with the national aid budget (cf. Cooke and Dar 2008, Gulrajani 2011). A prime example of this trend has been the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), which specifies its objectives in the so-called Single Departmental Plan (Department for International Development 2015). DFID's report to Parliament 2015-2016 provided a quantitative estimate of how many people were supported by DFID's assistance across eight sectors: wealth creation; poverty, vulnerability, nutrition and hunger; education; health; water, sanitation and hygiene; governance and security; humanitarian assistance; and climate change (Department for International Development 2016: 5).

The technocratic outlook in the epistemic community of aid practitioners leads them to focus on how immediate problems with aid delivery can be remedied (learning *about* crisis) rather than reflect on what are the more fundamental causes of the legitimacy crisis of development aid (learning *from* crisis). Over the past decades, learning about the crisis of aid has resulted in two responses: expansion and connection. The first response has led to attempts to *expand* the agenda beyond a narrow understanding of aid, by getting away from projects targeting concrete development outcomes. The second element has been to *connect* the goals of development policy to other policy priorities, in order to make aid more palatable to popular constituencies.

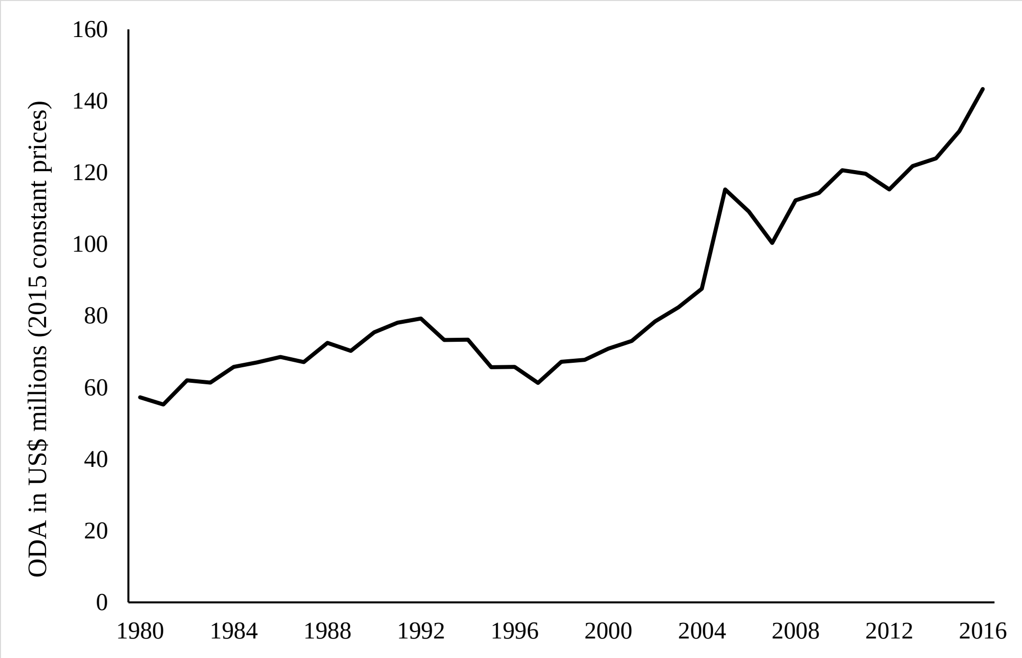
Expansion and Connection of the Aid Agenda

Learning from the crisis of the 1990s

The mid-1990s were, in many respects, a high point in the permanent legitimacy crisis of development aid. As a first sign of this crisis, spending on development assistance by donor countries and multilateral agencies experienced a decrease in real terms as of 1992, and reached the 1990 level again only in 2003 (see figure 1). Next to this, the World Bank, which had been at the vanguard of the Western development project since the end of World War II, came under increasing attack because it had become obvious that its development precepts, rolled out over the developing world since the oil crisis of the late 1970s, had not worked. On the contrary, a decade and a half of structural adjustment policies, implemented as part of the Washington Consensus, had resulted in increased poverty in many countries across the global South. The most obvious challenge to the World Bank was the '50 Years is Enough' campaign, which was a protest movement of a great number of international NGOs against the policies of the Bretton Woods institutions. Targeting the annual meeting of the Boards of Governors of the World Bank and IMF in Madrid in 1994, the campaign questioned the legitimacy of the policies implemented by the two international financial institutions, and resulted in a clear sense of crisis at these institutions (Fox and Brown 1998: 7-9).

Both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank demonstrated their ability to learn *from* the crisis of development aid experienced in the 1990s (Jessop 2015: 257) by contributing to a paradigmatic change in development assistance policy. The new mantra that was introduced by the two organisations emphasised *poverty reduction* and *aid effectiveness*. The attention to poverty reduction took the place of economic growth, as it was recognised that 'the complexity and diversity of growth experiences are not amenable to simplistic policy prescriptions' (World Bank 2005: xiii). In his first year as President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn called for 'a broader, more integrated approach to development – a new paradigm, if you will'. To this he added that '[p]overty reduction remains at the heart of everything we do' (Wolfensohn 2005: 51). The emphasis on aid effectiveness was an attempt to offer an alternative for the output-oriented focus that had characterised much of the aid agenda since the adoption of the 0.7 per cent target for official development assistance by the United Nations General Assembly in 1970. Thus, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) started to stress the need for a results orientation in development assistance (Development Assistance Committee 1996: 2-3).

Figure 1: Official development assistance from OECD to developing countries, 1980-2016



Source: (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2017b)

The two elements of the revised approach to aid were expressed in two key policy initiatives: the DAC Ministers' statement on Development Partnerships in the New Global Context (Development Assistance Committee 1996: 19-20) and the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework (Wolfensohn 1999). The DAC Ministers adopted the report *Shaping the 21st Century,* which had a set of international development targets at its core that were to become the basis for the Millennium Development Goals. In doing so, the DAC Ministers chose to expand the development agenda to include explicitly agendas on social protection and sustainable development, which would go beyond traditional development targets. The report formulated the following targets for development assistance policies that would need to be reached by 2015 (Development Assistance Committee 1996: 9-11):

- Reduce extreme poverty by one-half;
- Achieve universal primary education and gender equality (by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education), improve basic health care (to reduce infant, child and maternal mortality) and create universal access to reproductive health services; and
- Implement national policies for sustainable development.

The tools for achieving the new international development targets also demonstrate the expansion of the development assistance agenda beyond traditional donor-recipient interactions. *Shaping the 21st Century* introduced 'ownership' as a key principle for aid delivery: development programmes should henceforth be based on 'agreement and commitment from developing country partners, through their own national goals and locally-owned strategies' (Development Assistance Committee 1996: 9). Further, the DAC Ministers argued that the broader context of aid would require that 'development co-operation and other policies must work together' and that external development partners must coordinate their activities among each other (Development Assistance Committee 1996: 14-15).

The Comprehensive Development Framework, which the World Bank adopted during Wolfensohn's term as President, contributed to the expansion of the aid agenda. As Wolfensohn put it in a speech to the World Bank's Board of Governors in 1998, 'While focusing on the macroeconomic numbers or on major reforms like privatization, we have ignored the basic institutional infrastructure, without which a market economy simply cannot function. … Too often we have focused too much on the economics, without a sufficient understanding of the social, the political, the environmental, and the cultural aspects of development' (Wolfensohn 2005: 115). The framework that Wolfensohn (2005: 116) advocated is illustrative of the expansion of the development assistance agenda. It included a focus on five distinctive elements: a 'good governance' agenda, targeting transparency, voice, anti-corruption and government effectiveness; the regulatory framework of a market economy, including property rights, competition law and legal protection; social policies focused on inclusion in sectors such as health and education; public services and infrastructure; and policies for environmental sustainability.

A very important addition, and in many senses a catalyst in terms of agenda-setting, was the work done on aid effectiveness at the World Bank's Development Research Group, led by staff such as David Dollar and Lant Pritchett (see World Bank 1998). The World Bank's Chief Economist at the time, Joseph E. Stiglitz, was very clear about the intention of the Bank's key publication on the issue:

> Foreign aid is as much about knowledge as it is about money. Helping countries and communities generate the knowledge that they need for development is a prime role of assistance. And aid itself is a learning business that continually evolves as lessons of success and failure become clear. *Assessing Aid* is a contribution to this ongoing learning process. It aims to contribute to a larger 'rethinking of aid' that the international community is engaged in – a rethinking in two senses. First, with the end of the cold war, there is a group that is 'rethinking aid' in the sense of questioning its very existence in a world of integrated capital markets. In response to this trend, we show that there remains a role for financial transfers from rich countries to poor ones. Second, developing and developed nations alike are reconceptualizing the role of assistance in light of a new development paradigm. *Effective aid supports institutional development and policy reforms that are at the heart of successful development*. (World Bank 1998: ix, italics added)

The ‘powerful narrative’ that resulted from the World Bank’s Development Research Group (Court and Maxwell 2005: 721) was summarised in the conclusion that ‘aid works’ (World Bank 1998: 2). This conclusion was taken up very quickly in the epistemic community of professionals working on development assistance (cf. the examples mentioned in Hout 2007). According to a former Director General at the UK’s Department for International Development, it was crucial that ‘the story line was presented simply and clearly: move to the poverty efficient aid allocation model by supporting countries where people were poorer and where good policies ensured better returns on the aid dollar’ (Ahmed 2005: 767). Apart from pointing out the World Bank’s success in promoting the lessons on aid selectivity drawn from the research by Dollar and his team, Ahmed (2005: 767) argued that the researchers were highly motivated to get their lessons across within the donor community: ‘it was clear that their objective was not simply to add to the stock of human knowledge about aid effectiveness, it was to change the way aid was allocated in practice’. The success of the new narrative that ‘aid that works’ implied that the aid agenda had been connected effectively to the neo-institutionalist agenda of the Post-Washington Consensus, whose main protagonist was Joseph Stiglitz (see Stiglitz 1998).

The DAC and World Bank’s initiatives coalesced ultimately into the main initiative of the global development community, the Millennium Development Goals, which were contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration of September 2000 (United Nations General Assembly 2000), and took on board notions of governance-based aid selectivity. The Millennium Declaration expanded the development assistance agenda by specifying a series of broad-based objectives across seven elements: peace, security and disarmament; development and poverty eradication; protecting our common environment; human rights, democracy and good governance; protecting the vulnerable; meeting the special needs of Africa; and strengthening the United Nations. The MDG agenda revolved around eight operational targets, to be achieved by 2015, in most cases taking the situation in 1990 as a benchmark (United Nations 2017):

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (halve the proportion of people in extreme poverty; achieve full employment and decent work; and halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger);
2. Achieve universal primary education;
3. Promote gender equality and empower women (by eliminating gender disparity in education);
4. Reduce child mortality;
5. Improve maternal health (reduce maternal mortality by three quarters; and achieve universal access to reproductive health);

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS; achieve universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment; and halt and reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases);
7. Ensure environmental sustainability (integrate principles of sustainable development into country policies and reverse the loss of environmental resources; reduce biodiversity loss; halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation; and improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers); and
8. Develop a global partnership for development (develop and open and non-discriminatory trading and financial system; address the needs of least developed and landlocked countries and small island developing states; deal with the debt problems of developing countries; provide access to affordable drugs in developing countries; and make available benefits of new technologies).

Learning from the MDG experience

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals seems to have served the purpose of the international development aid community to get development higher on the political agenda. As is evident from Figure 1, the overall level of official development assistance from OECD member countries more than doubled in real terms between 2000 and 2016. The MDGs also seem to have instilled new dynamism among politicians and leading civil servants, witness the attention given to a series of high-level meetings following the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005). The Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (2011) were agreed as follow-up to the Paris Declaration and, since the meeting in Busan, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) has served as a platform for discussions among representatives from governments, business, private foundations and civil society. Since 2011, the GPEDC has held high-level meetings in Mexico (2014) and Nairobi (2017).

When judged on its own merits, as documented in the UN's final report on the implementation of the MDGs, the MDG project seems to have achieved good results.[3] Yet, the report concluded:

> Despite enormous progress, even today, about 800 million people still live in extreme poverty and suffer from hunger. Over 160 million children under age five have inadequate height for their age due to insufficient food. Currently, 57 million children of primary school age are not in school. Almost half of global workers are still working in vulnerable conditions, rarely enjoying the benefits associated with decent work. About 16,000 children die each day before celebrating their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable causes. The maternal mortality ratio in the developing regions is 14 times higher than in the developed regions. Just half of

> pregnant women in the developing regions receive the recommended minimum of four antenatal care visits. Only an estimated 36 per cent of the 31.5 million people living with HIV in the developing regions were receiving ART in 2013. In 2015, one in three people (2.4 billion) still use unimproved sanitation facilities, including 946 million people who still practise open defecation. Today over 880 million people are estimated to be living in slum-like conditions in the developing world's cities. (United Nations 2015: 8-9)

The UN's MDG report can be interpreted as a political attempt to provide a discursively selective reinterpretation (see Jessop 2015: 257) of the gains made between 2000 and 2015. The return to the crisis rhetoric seems to have been useful in legitimising the search for a follow-up to the MDG project, as a way of stressing that the MDGs were unfinished business, and a new phase was necessary to continue addressing the development crisis.

Already in 2011, four years before the end date of the MDG project, UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon established the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. In its report, the task team pointed to several trends that characterise the persistent development crisis: the growth of global inequalities in income, wealth and knowledge; the continuing pressure on food, land, health and education systems as a consequence of continuing population growth; environmental degradation and natural disasters; conflict and insecurity; and deficits of governance and accountability (UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda 2012: 12-19). The task team's conclusion was that, 'Going forward, greater interdependence among countries and the global challenges ahead will require a truly global agenda for development, with shared responsibilities by all countries' (UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda 2012: 19). This approach is clearly in line with the type of learning that was described above: the task team attempted to expand the agenda to include issues apart from aid, and connect the development agenda to issues of sustainability, conflict and governance.

The outcome of the discussion on the post-2015 agenda was the embrace of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as successors to the MDGs. The SDGs comprise 17 broad goals and 169 targets. Next to focusing on the objectives that were already included in the MDGs, such as those related to poverty, hunger, decent work, education, health and sustainable development, the SDGs also concern access to energy, the reduction of inequalities, use of the oceans and seas, as well as peace, justice and strong institutions (United Nations 2016). The preamble of the General Assembly's resolution on the so-called 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development illustrates the expansive nature of the SDGs, as well as the attempt to connect development goals to objectives in other domains. In the first place, the preamble indicates that the SDGs are meant to be global and universal: 'All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan.' Next, the preamble connects ‘sustainable development’ across many policy domains, by specifying that the SDGs ‘are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development; the economic, social and environmental’ (United Nations General Assembly 2015).

The response embodied in the adoption of the SDGs has expanded the development agenda almost beyond recognition. As the quote from the preamble to Agenda 2030 makes clear, the responsibility for implementation of the agenda has been spread over ‘all countries and all stakeholders’. Making ‘all’ responsible for action may amount to making no one clearly accountable. Diffusing responsibilities may easily give rise to collective action problems. The risk of making ‘all’ responsible is that the inevitably political nature of decision making on which countries and groups should contribute most to realising the SDGs has been obscured. Further, the ‘solution’ of connecting the development goals to the fundamental transformation of the economic, social and environmental system, has made the SDG agenda so broad that it is difficult to see how specific responsibilities towards developing countries should be implemented.

Conclusions

This chapter discussed some changes in the international development agenda that were introduced since the mid-1990s. It argued that development aid has been permeated by a sense of crisis, which is the consequence of the very nature of the project’s agenda. The main objectives of the project, which are understood in terms of improvements in the quality of life of the world’s poor and disadvantage, are not easily achievable, and often appear to be receding as real achievements are being reported.

The awareness of the crisis of development assistance has led to a dual approach. On the one hand, the aid agenda has been expanded to practices and approaches that go beyond the narrow understanding of development assistance. On the other hand, the response to the feelings of crisis resulted in connecting development objectives to policy priorities in other domains.

Over time, the development industry has shown clear practices of learning about the legitimacy crisis affecting aid. This form of learning has focused on the symptoms rather than the deeper causes of the legitimacy crisis. One domain-specific response to the sense of crisis is manifested in the search for new and successful narratives. Over the past two decades, the narratives have tended to focus on seemingly ‘new’ development goals. Thus, the rediscovery of poverty in the mid-1990s led to the focus of the MDGs on objectives related to social protection. The awareness of increasing problems of environmental sustainability and biodiversity resulted in the addition of a wide range of objectives as part of the SDG agenda. The expansion of the development agenda and its connection to other policy priorities seems to have produced a narrative that was successful in the short run, witness for instance the Make Poverty History campaign that mobilised millions of people in 2005 (cf. Harrison 2010). While this way of learning about crisis may solve immediate issues related to the perceived legitimacy of aid, it does not address more fundamental causes related to the persistence of global poverty, which are related to the power differences characterising international political and economic relations.

The technocratic orientation of the epistemic community of development professionals has limited its reflexive potential. The focus on short-term solutions (expressed in the learning *about* crisis) seems to stand in the way of more fundamental reflection, which would be the prerequisite to systemic learning *from* crisis. The introduction of new global development narratives – embedded in the MDGs for the 2000-2015 period, and the SDGs for 2015-2030 – may have been a proper response to the scepticism about aid at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Given the limited attention to the structural barriers to reform of the international trade and financial system, it is unlikely that such initiatives may offer a long-run solution for the legitimacy crisis of aid.

Endnotes

[1] A well-documented case was the corruption scandal involving the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda in 2012. Budget support was suspended in response to allegations about the misuse of funds that were allocated to support post-war reconstruction of Northern Uganda (*The Guardian*, 16 November 2012). Compared to previous years, the total of official development assistance provided to Uganda was somewhat lower in 2012 and 2013, but returned to its previous level in 2014 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2017a).

[2] Parts of this section draw on Hutchison et al. (2014: chapter 3).

[3] The analysis of the effects of globalisation by Milanovic (2016: 11) have shown, however, that there are huge global inequalities in gains in real per capita income since the late 1980s. Moreover, the analysis of Fukuda-Parr et al. (2014: 5) of the ‘power of numbers’ of the MDGs show that, although the MDG project appears to have generated much attention to certain development issues, the framing of the goals has had unintended consequences of simplification and support for technocratic strategies, which meant a reversion in development thinking away from more human-development oriented approaches.

References

Ahmed, M. (2005) Bridging research and policy. *Journal of International Development* 17(6): 765-73.

Bauer, P.T. (1966) Foreign aid: An instrument for progress?', in B. Ward and P.T. Bauer, *Two Views on Aid to Developing Countries* (pp. 31-58). Occasional Paper, No. 9. London: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Carlsson, J., G. Köhlin and A. Ekbom (1994) *The Political Economy of Evaluation: International Aid Agencies and the Effectiveness of Aid.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Cherlet, J. (2014) Epistemic and technological determinism in development aid,, *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 39(6): 773-94.

Clemens, M.A. (2014) Does development reduce migration? in R.E.B. Lucas (ed.) *International Handbook on Migration and Economic Development* (pp. 152-85). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Cooke, B. and S. Dar (2008) Introduction: The new development management, in S. Dar and B. Cooke (eds) *The New Development Management: Critiquing the Dual Modernization* (pp. 1-17). London: Zed.

Court, J. and S. Maxwell (2005) Policy entrepreneurship for poverty reduction: Bridging research and policy in international development, *Journal of International Development* 17(6): 713-25.

Department for International Development (2015) Single Departmental Plan: 2015 to 2020, http://bit.ly/2ua70lj (accessed 25 September 2017).

Department for International Development (2016) Annual Report and Accounts, 2015-16, No. HC329. London: Department for International Development.

Development Assistance Committee (1996) 'Shaping the 21st century: The contribution of development co-operation. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Easterly, W. (1999) The ghost of financing gap: Testing the growth model used in the international financial institutions. *Journal of Development Economics* 60(2): 423-38.

Easterly, W. (2002) The cartel of good intentions: The problem of bureaucracy in foreign aid. *Journal of Policy Reform* 5(4): 223-50.

Eyben, R. (2011) The sociality of international aid and policy convergence', in D. Mosse (ed.) *Adventures in Aidland: The Anthropology of Professionals in International Development* (pp. 139-60). New York: Berghahn.

Fine, B., C. Lapavitsas and J. Pincus (eds) (2003) *Development Policy in the Twenty-First Century: Beyond the Post-Washington Consensus.* London: Routledge.

Fox, J.A. and L.D. Brown (1998) Introduction, in J.A. Fox and L.D. Brown (eds) *The Struggle for Accountability: The World Bank, NGOs, and Grassroots Movements* (pp. 1-48). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Fukuda-Parr, S., A.E. Yamin and J. Greenstein (2014) The power of numbers: A critical review of Millennium Development Goal targets for human development and human rights. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 15(2-3): 105-17.

Gibson, C.C., K. Anderson, E. Ostrom and S. Shivakumar (2005) *The Samaritan's dilemma: The political economy of development aid.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gulrajani, N. (2011) Transcending the great foreign aid debate: Managerialism, radicalism and the search for aid effectiveness. *Third World Quarterly* 32(2): 199-216.

Haas, P.M. (1992) Introduction: Epistemic communities and international policy coordination. *International Organization* 46(1): 1-35.

Hanushek, E.A. (2013) Economic growth in developing countries: The role of human capital. *Economics of Education Review* 37: 204-12.

Harrison, G. (2010) The Africanization of poverty: A retrospective on 'Make Poverty History'. *African Affairs* 109(436): 391-408.

Hout, W. (2007) *The Politics of Aid Selectivity: Good Governance Criteria in US, World Bank and Dutch Foreign Assistance.* London: Routledge.

Hutchison, J., W. Hout, C. Hughes and R. Robison (2014) *Political Economy and the Aid Industry in Asia.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jessop, B. (2015) 'The symptomatology of crises, reading crises and learning from them: Some critical realist reflections. *Journal of Critical Realism* 14(3): 238-71.

Killick, T. (1997) Principals, agents and the failings of conditionality. *Journal of International Development* 9(4): 483-95.

McMichael, P. (1996) *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective.* Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.

Milanovic, B. (2016) *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2007) Our Common Concern: Investing in Development in a Changing World, Policy Note Dutch Development Cooperation 2007-2011, http://bit.ly/2rTWTNH (accessed 25 September 2017).

Mosse, D. (2011) Introduction: The anthropology of expertise and professionals in international development, in D. Mosse (ed.) *Adventures in Aidland: The Anthropology of Professionals in International Development* (pp. 1-31). Oxford: Berghahn.

Moyo, D. (2009) *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and how there is another Way for Africa.* London: Allen Lane.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2017a) Aid (ODA) Disbursements to Countries and Regions (DAC2a), http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=TABLE2A (accessed 25 September 2017).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2017b) Disbursements of ODA in constant prices of 2015, http://stats.oecd.org/qwids (accessed 25 September 2017)

Reusse, E. (2002) *The Ills of Aid: An Analysis of Third World Development Policies.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rosenstein-Rodan, P.N. (1943) Problems of industrialization of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. *Economic Journal* 53(210/211): 202-11.

Sangmpam, S.N. (2007) Politics rules: The false primacy of institutions in developing countries. *Political Studies* 55(1): 201-24.

Selwyn, B. (2014) *The Global Development Crisis.* Cambridge: Polity.

Stiglitz, J.E. (1998) *More Instruments and Broader Goals: Moving Toward the Post-Washington Consensus.* Helsinki: UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research.

The Guardian (16 November 2012) UK suspends aid to Uganda as concern grows over misuse of funds, http://bit.ly/2wbfZTf (accessed 25 September 2017).

United Nations (2015) The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015. New York: United Nations.

United Nations (2016) Sustainable development goals, http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals (accessed 25 September 2017).

United Nations (2017) 'We can end poverty: Millennium Development Goals and beyond 2015', http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals (accessed 25 September 2017).

United Nations General Assembly (2000) United Nations Millennium Declaration (Resolution A/RES/55/2).

United Nations General Assembly (2015) Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1).

Unsworth, S. (2009) What's politics got to do with it? Why donors find it so hard to come to terms with politics, and why this matters. *Journal of International Development* 21(6): 883-94.

UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda (2012) Realizing the future we want for all: Report to the Secretary-General. New York: United Nations.

Williamson, J. (1993) Democracy and the 'Washington Consensus'. *World Development* 21(8): 1329-36.

Wolfensohn, J.D. (1999) A proposal for a comprehensive development framework (A discussion draft), http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01013/WEB/0__CO-87.HTM (accessed 25 September 2017).

Wolfensohn, J.D. (2005) *Voice for the World's Poor: Selected Speeches of the World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn, 1995-2005.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank (1998) *Assessing Aid: What Works, what Doesn't, and Why.* New York: Oxford University Press.

World Bank (2001) *World Development Report 2002: Building Institutions for Markets.* Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

World Bank (2005) *Economic Growth in the 1990s: Learning from a Decade of Reform.* Washington, DC: World Bank.