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Knowledge for development? : reflections from consultants and advisors in Bolivia

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Identifying the problem and aims of the thesis

Knowledge is like light. Weightless and intangible, it can easily travel the world, enlightening the lives of people everywhere. Yet billions of people still live in the darkness of poverty—unnecessarily (World Bank, 1999:4).

We know how things are done around here, they come along and teach us how to think, they expect us to learn new knowledge in order to improve our welfare. Their knowledge doesn't work but their money does (ALVA farmer commenting on SOS-Faim training workshops, February, 2007).

The first passage is a categorical assertion made by the World Bank that makes a grand claim for the importance of knowledge in development. It also encapsulates the spirit of development assistance, which has historically been committed to help poor people through the provision of knowledge and financial support.

The second passage comes from an interview I conducted with a farmer who was attending a training session organised by a Belgian NGO. This quote appears to challenge the assumption that knowledge provided by development organisations is the ultimate answer for people who live in the darkness of poverty. The perspective illustrated by the second passage is, so far, not part of the current mainstream development discourse and yet it is one shared by some of the beneficiaries I observed and interviewed for this thesis.

Both quotes are indeed concerned with knowledge and its potential to help people to overcome poverty. However, there is a clear gulf between the role of knowledge as framed by dominant development discourses exemplified in the first quote, and the perception of beneficiaries who are the target of such knowledge, as exemplified in the second.

The thesis examines how consultants, advisors and beneficiaries reflect on knowledge for development and their knowledge engagements. In order to do so, I investigate the extent to which dominant development discourses and the supply driven nature of the development assistance field frame such engagements. This is followed by an analysis of whether shared and unshared national and professional backgrounds can potentially allow fruitful knowledge engagements

In this introductory chapter I will first provide further background to the problem by highlighting some of the important historical developments which have contributed to the framing of knowledge in dominant development discourses. Part of this history describes how development assistance has been historically concerned with the role and provision of knowledge through advisors and consultants. Secondly, the chapter will briefly explain my interest in the problem and my choice of Bolivia as a setting in which to undertake case study analysis. Finally the chapter will summarise the structure of the thesis and its findings.

1.2. Importance of knowledge in development

This section does not aim to address in detail the aspects of knowledge, power and discourse in development. This will be developed in chapter 2 by the analysis of these issues through reflections of key authors, principally Habermas and Foucault, who have examined knowledge, power and discourse more widely. The purpose of discussing knowledge here is to highlight how knowledge and its dissemination have come to be important in the development field and consequently demonstrate the importance of this research.

Almost 60 years ago development assistance was known as Technical Assistance (Owen, 1950; Wharton, 1958; Sady, 1960). During those years the transfer of knowledge to poor countries was a major endeavour undertaken by a handful of organisations such as the World Bank and UN. Perhaps one of the most emblematic highlights the genesis of development assistance starts with the assertion made by President Truman in 1949:

‘Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge’ (Truman quoted in Rist 2000:71)

The assumption that poor countries lacked scientific knowledge has been one of the major reasons behind development interventions. Since the 1950s, the assumption that poor countries have a deficit of knowledge has been a core subject in the debates about poverty eradication. This debate and others are examined in the work of Tarp (2000) and Degnbol-Martinussen et al. (2003) who compiled a historical analysis of foreign aid and development. However, little has been done to understand how consultants, advisors and beneficiaries perceive and reflect on knowledge for development. The current literature in development does not provided an in-depth analysis of these concerns. In spite of this, in the field of development assistance it is well understood that knowledge for development is a priority and the following quotes highlight its importance across some bilateral development agencies:

‘The knowledge and technical skills of the workforce determine whether or not a developing country can hold its own against global competitors. GTZ puts its faith in practice-oriented expertise’ (GTZ, 2006:10)

‘SNV is dedicated to a society where all people enjoy the freedom to pursue their own sustainable development. We contribute to this by strengthening the capacity of local organisations’ (SNV, 2007:7)

‘We will see knowledge as our most important resource, and capacity development as one of our most important tasks and strategic areas [...] We will be an equal opportunities development corporation and see our knowledge of equality in aid as a central part of our professionalism’ (SIDA, 2006:3)

‘Accelerating the development of countries and their people, by investing resources, transferring knowledge, creating opportunities, and advocating reforms’ (USAID’s Strategic Goal – USAID, 2004:72)

In each of these organisations the provision of knowledge is a central concern. In the most recent past the World Bank, one of the most powerful organisations in the world, has also declared its intentions to become a knowledge bank (Stone, 2000). The importance of knowledge for development, as perceived by developed countries, is also illustrated in the way developed countries have set up research institutions and the creation of degrees in ‘development studies’. In this respect, Harris (2005:22) points out that the first development degree in the UK was launched at the University of East Anglia in 1971, while institutions like Sussex University’s Institute for Development Studies have produced large masses of knowledge for development which in turn have been used by development organisations across the world.

Approaches to knowledge in development assistance have changed over time. In the 1950s development projects focused on transferring knowledge by experimenting with and using technology in poor countries (Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen, 2003; Tarp, 2000). Later, development projects emphasised knowledge transfer through the implementation of training schemes and advisory services. At present, knowledge for

development is made available through a number of other means, for example, online initiatives, development projects, advisory services, etc. The amount of knowledge being produced at the research level is vast and covers nearly every conceivable aspect of development.

There is no doubt that much of this knowledge is being produced by developed countries for developing countries. Despite the fact that development assistance endorses such a humanitarian purpose, it has been criticised and persistent questions have been raised about its effectiveness by practitioners and academic observers. In the 1960s, Mathiasen (1968:208) wrote: "There is a growing sense that knowledge and ideas cannot be quickly or usefully transferred across cultural and scientific boundaries". Powel (2006:1) argued that 'current understanding and use of knowledge within the development sector is generally poor, and that this fact represents a major barrier to the effectiveness of development interventions'. These statements are symptomatic of the field of development assistance in which consultants and advisors appear to be invisible individuals, whose perceptions and reflections are little explored by academics and development practitioners.

Some of the most pervasive criticisms of development suggest that development is no less than the projection of the western dream upon poor countries (Mehemet, 1999). In this line of criticism, post-development theories have denounced that development as professed by the west is an attempt to westernise the developing world. They also argue that development has not delivered and instead has worsened matters in developing countries. These claims have been widely examined in the works of Illich (1997), George (1997) and Sachs (2003). In any case and despite a historical record of documented failures, development assistance continues to 'supply' knowledge and other forms of aid to poor countries. On this point, Chataway and Wield (2000) argue that supplying knowledge is unlikely to solve the essential problems of absorption and learning. Clearly, one cannot escape a general malaise associated with unfulfilled expectations from the mountain of critical literature.

The critical literature on development is relatively extensive and has been mainly utilised by post-development theories, for example Esteva (1985), Escobar (1984, 1992, 1995, 1996) and Rahnama (1998), which are discussed in chapter 2. However, they have not addressed how knowledge is communicated through advisors and consultants or the role they have played in development assistance over the last 60 years. The reality is that development professionals have been part of development assistance since the 1940s and have played an important role in knowledge production processes across the developing world. Yet, little is known about how they perceive the role of international development organisations and more importantly, what do they think about knowledge for development being the answer to poverty?

1.3. Focus of the research: development professionals, consultants and advisors

Development professional is a label that describes the professional practice of a number of individuals involved in development assistance. However, in this thesis, I focus on two specific types: consultants and advisors. Both are professionals who provide knowledge for development services to agencies and beneficiaries in poor countries. This thesis is concerned with the role of advisors and consultants, and the way they enter into knowledge engagements with beneficiaries in Bolivia. I use the term 'knowledge engagement' to describe the process whereby knowledge is communicated, shared and exchanged between consultants, advisors, clients and beneficiaries. The ways knowledge engagements occur are through face to face interactions between individuals, and chapters 5 and 6 illustrate them in the context of case studies. This thesis does not attempt, however, to measure knowledge engagements nor evaluate people's knowledges – as stated, my focus is on the processes by which they occur.

The research focused on consultants and advisors in two organisations: Centro de Estudios y Proyectos¹ (CEP), a Bolivian based development consultancy company which provides knowledge for development services to a large array of development aid organisations; and the Dutch Development Agency (SNV) which provides knowledge for development through advisors. CEP consultants tend to undertake short term assignments from government to community levels, whereas SNV advisors are salaried personnel who tend to engage with meso-level beneficiaries, often within government, over relatively long periods of time. SNV is a non-profit driven organisation wholly funded by the Dutch Government, while CEP is a private profit driven company. Thus while they are different types of organisation, they both engage in knowledge processes in Bolivia.

1.4. My interests and Bolivia as an empirical setting

Bolivia can be regarded as an exemplar of how a poor country engages with the field of development assistance. The country has suffered from aid dependency to in-house political instability, it has been targeted by development organisations since the 1950s and yet it is one of the poorest in South America. I wanted to undertake this research in Bolivia because of my cultural affinity and my tacit knowledge of ‘how things are done’ – an assumption which eventually I found not to be as accurate as I thought. Such assumptions – for example, that being local grants consultants and advisors the wisdom to understand local culture – are explored later in the thesis. Another major reason lies in the fact that SNV and CEP displayed willingness to participate in a project of this kind. The reality is that there are very few development organisations willing to openly discuss and critically investigate how their professionals interact with poor people at the field level and more importantly what in turn the professionals think about their organisations.

Being Bolivian, and having worked in Bolivia in the field of development economics, I have come across a large number of individuals and associations that are often labelled as ‘development beneficiaries’ and ‘target groups’. These agents are the reason for which much of the field of development assistance exists. In fact, when I was working in Bolivia my job focused on the production of knowledge that would improve the lives of farmers and rural family enterprises in the South East region of the country. The knowledge that I had produced in the form of research papers should have allowed target groups such as these to do things in order to improve their welfare. In this sense, knowledge was the capacity for action. It is interesting to observe how other people like me were producing knowledge about poor people. Some of them worked at the field level while others were engaged in rhetorical endeavours and never left their offices. During those years I also wondered whether there were professionals doing research about us and about those who communicate knowledge to poor people.

1.5. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 explores some of the key literature on knowledge for development and provides the framework for my research questions. It also outlines the theoretical approach to knowledge and power of Jürgen Habermas and Michael Foucault. In each case, it explains the reasons as to why I have chosen these authors, furthermore, I discuss aspects of the theories of communicative action, background consensus and knowledge/power and their usefulness in analysing how knowledge engagements between consultants, advisors and beneficiaries. This chapter also looks critically at the contribution made by post-development theories from a Foucaultian approach. In the same manner, I outline how knowledge is addressed in the

¹ Translated: Centre for Studies and Projects

Habermasian tradition with the intention to shed some light on the cognitive interests that motivate individuals to generate knowledge.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology and methods I adopted in order to gather and analyse data. This thesis is a qualitative study and draws on interviews and personal observations in the collection of data. The chapter describes how I conducted fieldwork in Bolivia and how the Bolivian context had influenced my methodological approach. Next, the chapter points out the methodological issues and challenges I encountered while interacting with consultants, advisors and beneficiaries in the field. The following sections explain why a case study approach was adopted and how I gained access to these cases, involving consultants, advisors and beneficiaries. The chapter also explores how my cultural and educational background has played a role while interacting with beneficiaries and collecting data. Lastly, I explain how the data were analysed and I also describe the challenges of working in two different languages.

Chapter 4 provides historical background that illustrates the nature of the national and regional context of Bolivia. This chapter examines some of the main socio-economic reforms implemented in the last 25 years and how they have been developed and promoted by powerful organisations such as the World Bank and IMF. The second part of the chapter is an historical account that describes the role of development professionals in the 1950s when Bolivia just started to receive development aid. Overall, this chapter explores the changing context within which consultants and advisors engage in knowledge processes with beneficiaries.

Chapter 5 analyses the first case study of the thesis. It focuses on the Bolivian based development consultancy company (CEP) that provides knowledge for development services through consultants. Within this case study, I explore two assignments (mini-case studies). In the first, there was clearly no background consensus of shared meanings between the consultants and beneficiaries and the knowledge engagements did not appear effective. In the second such a background consensus could be identified and appeared to allow knowledge to be communicated between development consultants and beneficiaries. Next, the chapter explores how CEP's profit driven nature limits the extent to which development consultants can assume critical attitudes within development organisations. In addition, this chapter argues that individuals that have a shared background or what Habermas calls lifeworlds are likely to exchange and communicate knowledge more effectively than those who do not share a common background.

Chapter 6 focuses on a second case study. The chapter explores how the Dutch development agency, SNV, has changed and evolved over the last 40 years, and how SNV advisors have also changed their role over the same period. In the context of this case study, SNV advisors are salaried personnel who engage with beneficiaries for relatively long periods of time. This chapter also explores how perceptions and sometimes stereotypes can shape the terms of engagement between SNV advisors and beneficiaries. The chapter goes on to explain the factors and circumstances that undermine the knowledge engagements between advisors and beneficiaries, including issues raised by SNV's free of charge services. This chapter argues that reflexivity is a major problem within SNV as an organisation. Its advisors, however, are able to reflect, although constrained in being able to communicate their reflection higher up the organisation. They are also limited in that they are able to reflect on their clients' attitudes and behaviours but less so on themselves.

Chapter 7 brings together, and expands on the findings and case studies analysed in chapters 5 and 6. It explores how knowledge can be communicated and exchanged at the micro-level between development professionals and beneficiaries. It also analyses how such processes are constrained by the institutional norms and values that CEP and SNV embody. Subsequently, the chapter analyses how knowledge can be used as an incentive for development rather than an 'object'.

Finally, chapter 8 presents the conclusions of the overall thesis. It considers the implications of these findings in relation to the way consultants, advisors and beneficiaries could improve their knowledge engagements. It also analyses the limitations of the theory used (Habermas and Foucault) throughout the thesis. Overall the thesis finds that consultants and advisors and the beneficiaries of their work are enmeshed in a development assistance chain which constraints the kinds of knowledges they are able to produce. This constraining factor might at first sight appear overwhelming. However, there is potential to engage in fruitful knowledge processes if the actors are able to apply Habermas' four premises that everyone involved in communicating knowledge must try to secure.

CHAPTER 2

KNOWLEDGE FOR DEVELOPMENT? SOME CONCEPTUAL CHALLENGES

2.1 Introduction

Two themes recur throughout my thesis. The first one is the extent to which development knowledge is framed and its practitioners constrained by dominant regimes of truth. The second one is the extent to which there is potential at a micro-level of engagement between actors for fruitful knowledge exchange and production, despite the constraining influence of dominant regimes of truth. Therefore, this chapter is largely an elaboration of these themes through a selective examination of key concepts and thinkers that have addressed and explored notions such as knowledge, development, power, discourse and knowledge for development.

Section 2.2 examines different dimensions of knowledge and development. Since the literature on knowledge and development is vast, I do not make the impossible claim of comprehensively covering the entire field. Instead, I show why I have used some notions of knowledge over others. Therefore the literature concerning development, for example, is cited with the aim of drawing out the sense in which I refer to the term throughout the thesis. Similarly, the large literature on knowledge for development in section 2.2.3 is used selectively to draw out key themes concerning the ubiquity of the notion, its critique, and attempts to improve its practice and its communications between individuals. This section also outlines the notion of habitus developed by Pierre Bourdieu. It notes, however, that, while the notion appears to be a way into the analysis of knowledge processes, it is less appropriate for my purposes as a theoretical tool than thinkers such as Foucault and Habermas and their key concepts.

Section 2.3 explores the post-development theorists and Michel Foucault's notions of knowledge, power, and regimes of truth. Section 2.4 analyses aspects of Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action and how it can be used to analyse the way consultants, advisors and beneficiaries/clients² engage in knowledge processes. By way of conclusion, in section 2.5, I explain how I use both Foucaultian and Habermasian approaches to knowledge, power, discourse and communication. Then I draw on my analysis of previous sections to identify the underlying questions for my empirical research.

2.2 Knowledge, development, and knowledge for development

This section explores the basic concepts of the thesis, it starts by contextualising knowledge from various perspectives, development and the privileged role that knowledge for development continues to play in development assistance. The section ends by highlighting some key issues in knowledge for development which are taken up in sections 2.3 and 2.4.

2.2.1 Knowledge

I start with the assertion by Lawson and Appignanesi (1989) that knowledge constitutes credible 'stories about the world'. Therefore, each story constitutes a particular group's knowledge with different implications in the ways to perceive reality. Whatever the process of perceiving and conceptualising is, producing a specific story about the world involves a

² The term beneficiaries/clients stems from the fact that the CEP consultants (chapter 5) refer to their work with 'beneficiaries', whereas the SNV advisors (chapter 6) refer to their work with 'clients'

process of interaction and negotiation between individuals, between organisations, and between individuals and organisations. In the development assistance field³, some ‘stories about the world’ are more predominant than others. Knowledge does not only constitute understanding and skills as in dictionary definitions, nor is it only a way of depicting something, but it is also as Stehr and Meja, (2005:305) argue *capacity for action*. Knowledge, I shall argue, comes into being through agents’ practices which are continuously transformed:

‘knowing the game that is played out between agents, involves a knowledge of the various rules (written and unwritten) discourses, values and imperatives which inform and determine agents’ practices which are continuously being transformed by those agents and their practices. This knowledge allows agents to make sense of what is happening around them, and to make strategic decisions as to which practices are appropriate in certain circumstances’ (Webb et al., 2002:50)

In this thesis I analyse how consultants’, advisors’ and beneficiaries’ practices allow and limit knowledge to be communicated and also how dominant discourses play a role in the way they engage in knowledge processes. In what follows I explore how knowledge has been addressed and constructed by a number of key academics.

So, for example, when Arce and Long (1992) explore the nature of local knowledge (see below), they emphasise its social and provisional features, arguing that knowledge is recurrently and continuously constructed and destroyed. That is, knowledge is constituted by the ways in which people categorise, code, process and impute meaning to their experiences. This applies to scientific and non-scientific forms of knowledge. Knowledge is something that everybody possesses and comes to existence when it is exercised. One could assert that ‘knowledge is constructive in the sense that it is the result of a great number of decisions and selective incorporations of previous ideas, beliefs and images, but at the same time destructive of other possible frames of conceptualisation and understandings’ (Arce and Long 1992: 211).

Much literature about knowledge focuses on knowledge types (see Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995:61; Grant, 2005:174). Sometimes, dualisms are created as a heuristic to help clarify this slippery concept, while other authors explore a single type of knowledge in some depth. Below, I introduce some of the knowledge types/dualisms that I have found useful for my research. The last two situated knowledge and colonial knowledge are not presented in the form of dualisms. They are explored more in relation to the main themes of my thesis.

Explicit (codified)/ tacit knowledge

Much is made of this distinction in recognition that most of what we know is not derived formally from books or teachers. Explicit knowledge (also referred to as codified in that it can be written down in for example books and manuals) is, as Honderich (1998:447-448) points out, ‘self-conscious in that the knower is aware of the relevant state of knowledge, whereas tacit knowledge is implicit and hidden from self-consciousness’. However, notwithstanding the contexts in which both tacit and explicit knowledge are produced, they are mutually constituted – they should not be viewed as separate types of knowledge. Explicit knowledge is always grounded in a tacit component (Nonaka, and Takeuchi, 1995:8-9).

Within development assistance, there is a concern with respect to different ways of processing and capturing tacit knowledge. Authors like Ramalingam (2005) have produced a detailed synthesis of the existing research on knowledge and learning in the development sector. Like

³ The term ‘field’ refers to the setting in which agents and their social positions are located. The position of each particular agent in the field is a result of interaction between the specific rules of the field. In chapter 3, 4, 6 and 7 explore the ‘rules’ of development assistance.

other authors, Ramalingam is driven by the interest of exploring new strategies that could allow development agencies to achieve greater impact in poor countries. To a large extent, therefore, contemporary development organisations are interested in learning from their clients/beneficiaries in the south, who are assumed to have strong tacit knowledge of their local contexts, in order to make interventions more effective (Chambers, 1997; Johnson and Wilson, 2000). Equally, much of what is learnt and produced in terms of knowledge is rooted in the analysis of the ongoing reality of developing countries.

Scientific (universal)/relative knowledge

Knowledge produced by developed countries tends to be regarded as scientific, as Kyburg (1990:3) points out: ‘Science – the scientific method, the libraries of scientific knowledge, the sophisticated theories that guide us to the inside of the atom and to outer reaches of the universe – is the glory of Western culture’. In this sense, scientific knowledge means that it has been discovered as a generalised truth which is applicable everywhere (hence the alternative title ‘universal’). This leads to the further idea that developed countries have best practices (because they are scientific) and developing countries should copy them. This then provides the justification to distribute such knowledge through development assistance to poor countries.

The ways in which knowledge is distributed are variously described as communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002; Hildreth et al., 2004), knowledge partnerships (e.g. The World Bank’s Development Gateway), and development assistance. For Karl Popper (1970), however, scientific results and knowledge were relative since they are ‘the results of a certain stage of scientific development and liable to be superseded in the course of scientific progress’ (Popper 1970: 657). He further argued that truth cannot be relative at all, asserting that if an assertion is true, it is true for ever. Against this notion, Michel Foucault (1980) argues that truth is relative, being constructed in particular moments of history and reflecting social power relations. On this point, Habermas (1984) proposes that truth is a validity claim (the commitments that speakers make) that needs to be challenged. Thought of in this way, truths are not for ever, although they can be sustained over relatively long periods where they appear to be natural and non-negotiable. In the development arena one can find truths that are almost unchallengeable. For instance, as a way of informing and measuring the impact of development assistance, the World Bank defines extreme poverty as an income of less than one US dollar per day and moderate poverty as less than 2 US dollars per day. These definitions are perceived as universal truths and unlikely to be changed by the actions or perceptions of relatively powerless organisations and individuals who are on the receiving end of the Bank’s assistance. We explore these issues and Foucault’s ideas on them in section 2.3 below.

Knowledge as product (commodity)/process

Broad (2007:701) argues that the World Bank is not only the main lender for development. It is also the world’s largest development research organisation and produces a large amount of knowledge for development. Heralded by its 1998/99 Annual Report, *Knowledge for Development*, it has even gone so far as to reposition itself as the ‘Knowledge Bank’ (Mehta, 2001; Gilbertn and Vines, 2000). As President of the World Bank during that period, Wolfensohn commented:

‘Development knowledge is part of the ‘global commons’: it belongs to everyone, and everyone should benefit from it. But a global partnership is required to cultivate and disseminate it. The [World] Bank Group’s relationships with governments and organisations all over the world, and our unique reservoir of development experience across sectors and countries, position us to play a leading role in this new global knowledge partnership. We have been in the business of

researching and disseminating the lessons of development for a long time. But the revolution in information technology increases the potential value of these efforts by vastly extending their reach. We need to become, in effect, the Knowledge Bank' (Wolfensohn, 1996)⁴.

Interestingly, development professionals and academics have heavily criticised the fact that World Bank's knowledge for development has, as implied in the Wolfensohn statement above, assumed the form of a commodity or product (Gumucio, 2006; Schech and Haggis, 2000:211).

Conceptualising knowledge as a product or commodity accords with the notion that knowledge is something that can be passed or transferred from the erudite to an ignorant. As Malik et al. (2002:13) notes, the underlying premise of knowledge transfer is that poorer countries can simply adopt a 'template [that] has been refined over time in the richer countries. No need to reinvent the wheel'. Similarly, Gumucio (2006) also argues that – in general – knowledge for development has been perceived as a one-way commodity, as an ingredient of Technical Assistance (see section 2.2.3.) given by those who have it to those who do not.

Gumucio (2006) goes on to articulate his preference for a process-oriented view of knowledge in development assistance, stressing that communication is central to it. Drawing on his professional experience of how development programmes are often imposed upon beneficiaries in poor countries, he suggests that learning and knowledge sharing require the creation of safe spaces to enable critical feedback, in other words, spaces where a process of knowledge generation can occur through communication. However, one should go one step further and consider the extent to which the nature of development assistance makes it almost impossible to communicate and share knowledge in the way that Gumucio advocates.

Macro/micro knowledge

At the macro level we have general understandings of how the world works, whereas our micro understandings are about detail and contingent on local context. Macro-level knowledge concerns the big regimes of truths (see section 2.3) that seem to frame development assistance, such as liberal capitalism being the way the world works (Thomas, 2000a).

Authors like King and McGrath (2004) have written about how knowledge is managed at the macro-level. Their book on knowledge for development is a comparative study of four development co-operation agencies. Using the term 'knowledge-based aid' they explore how the World Bank, Japanese International Cooperation Agency, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the UK Department for International Development address knowledge as a discourse and practice at the macro-level. King and McGrath's work, however, appears to be confined to analysis of how regimes of truths and how knowledge for development is perceived and shared by agency staff and within the organisational boundaries of the already mentioned agencies. Their analysis of knowledge for development therefore sheds valuable light on how knowledge for development is conceived, elaborated and how it circulates across staff members.

In contrast, the micro level has been widely explored in the form of local knowledge. At this level, knowledge appears to be multiple, variable, heterogeneous, and unevenly distributed. It is always incorporating new insights and practices from its social and organisational surroundings. Widely grounded in personal experience Olivier de Sardan (1995: 145-146)

⁴ The concept of knowledge bank was first introduced by World Bank President James Wolfensohn in his address to the 1996 Annual Meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

argues that 'knowledge at the micro level of development is claimed to be flexible and agglutinative, without explicative pretensions for the long or medium term'.

Knowledge has been analysed at the micro-level, the current literature on development tends to analyse knowledge at the micro-level from an anthropological perspective, for instance, authors such as Crewe and Harrison (2002) provide a rich anthropological analysis of social relations and political processes underpinning development assistance, based on their own experience of aid projects in Africa and Asia. In the same tradition, Mosse (2005) provides a valuable ethnography of aid policy and practice by focusing on a development project in India over a period of ten years. Another author who follows the same line of enquiry is Goudge (2003) who, on the basis of her personal experience and interactions with Nicaraguans and western experts, reveals the role played by race and its impact on the assumptions about white western practitioners. Another remarkable contribution is made by Grammig (2002) who, by anthropological means, analyses the unfolding of two development projects in Chad and Mexico, in which he is able to observe how experts and beneficiaries struggle with power and cultural distance. The contribution of these authors is evidently rich and valuable. They provide us with a detailed ethnographic analysis of how development actors interact with one another at the field level. They are concerned with the micro-interactions between individuals and how they perceive each others roles. Furthermore, their contributions help us to understand how culture and stereotypes play an important role in the way development projects are carried out. However these authors do not explicitly engage with the macro-level of development assistance where power relations between agencies and beneficiaries in poor countries shape face-to-face interactions at the field level.

Technical/hermeneutic/emancipatory knowledge interests

These categories are associated with German social philosopher, Jürgen Habermas (1972; 1984), who identified them as three knowledge interests that are possessed by all human beings.

The technical interest concerns the material reproduction of society and how one controls and manipulates one's environment. It is based on *scientific* approaches and largely instrumental knowledge exchanges. The hermeneutic interest concerns interpretation of the social world around us and is based on our communicative abilities to generate a greater understanding of meanings. The emancipatory interest concerns questioning and breaking free from structures which limit our options and which have hitherto been regarded as beyond human control. This involves critical reflection and is again based on transparent and open communication with others which allows for debate and challenge.

It would seem, both from an agency like the World Bank's own pronouncements and from the critical literature, that development assistance does no more than attempt to meet our technical knowledge interests. One of the underlying issues for my research, however, has been to assess the potential for engagements of professionals with clients/beneficiaries in development assistance interventions to meet hermeneutic and emancipatory interests. For this reason I explore further the ideas of Habermas, including the three knowledge interests, in section 2.4 below.

Situated knowledge

This is a category developed by Donna Haraway who conceptualises knowledge from an objective feminist perspective that she defines in the following terms: 'Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see' (Haraway, 1988:8). Based on this approach she argues that 'Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in

particular' (Haraway, 1988:17). This definition relates to some extent to the way groups of beneficiaries and development professionals might experience knowledge and is potentially of use for my study.

Haraway further articulates the implications of her category of situated knowledge as follows: 'Situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not as a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and his authorship of "objective" knowledge' (Haraway, 1988:19).

Stephen (2007:785) further argues that 'situated knowledge is not a new form of individualism, relativism, or identity politics whereby one can argue any position based on one's sexual, ethics, national, or economic location. On the contrary, it is knowledge gained from feminist objectivity that is situated rather than detached'. As noted above, situated knowledge could in principle, therefore, shed some light on the ways in which, for example, farmers (beneficiaries) perceive or produce knowledge.

However, I do not accept Stephen's defence of situated knowledge against charges of individualism, etc. as outlined above. When examining the engagements between beneficiaries, consultants and advisors, the knowledge they produce is likely to be only partially situated in the sense used by Haraway. In significant part it will also be a response to wider political agendas and wider social/institutional contexts (e.g. farmers in the countryside and advisors in capital cities).

Thus, although Haraway's notion of situated knowledge is a valuable contribution to the analysis of knowledge in the social arena, it does not provide the theoretical framework whereby I can analyse the dynamics of the knowledge processes - how and why different actors engage. Neither does it allow a way into the study of how personal perceptions shape and potentially undermine knowledge processes. In other words, it is unsuitable for the study of the themes of my thesis, respectively how knowledge engagements are framed by dominant discourses and the specific dynamics of engagement which offer a potential for transcending those discourses.

Colonial knowledge

This is a category frequently used to denote the way an empire describes its colonies, in Liao's (2006:38) words: 'Colonial knowledge is now conceived of by most postcolonial theorists purely as a matter of discourse and representation'. How beneficiaries, advisors and consultants are represented is an important part of my thesis. In fact in chapters 5, 6 and 7 I explore how consultants and advisors represent each other and how such representation affect the way they engage in knowledge processes. Colonial knowledge as a category tends to be concerned with two main questions. (Liao et al. 2006:37):

- Who represents whom or who is represented at the expense of whom (i.e. the question of imagination or representation)?
- What are the tools and techniques which are used to understand, describe and represent the colonised? What is the relationship, if any, between specific techniques and the colonial administration?

These questions might bear some relevance in development studies, especially amongst post-development theorists who argue that development is an attempt to westernise the developing world (see section 2.3.3 below). Although we shall see that some of my data illustrates instances of beneficiaries, advisors and consultants representing each other, I contend that

such representations are framed by a contemporary dominant discourse of development to which I refer as a regime of truth (see section 2.3). The extent to which such a discourse has continuities with colonial discourse would be an interesting study, but it is not the subject of this thesis.

More fundamentally, the concept of colonial knowledge carries static connotations, emphasising continuity with the past, and not acknowledging the dynamism of actual engagements and their potential to transcend that past. As with situated knowledge, therefore, colonial knowledge is unable adequately to address the themes of my thesis.

Of particular interest for this thesis are not so much the differences between all the above knowledge categories but the interplay between them. For example, to take my first theme of regimes of truth, to what extent do macro-regimes of truth frame knowledge engagements at local (micro-) levels, and to what extent might the reverse be possible where micro-engagements start to re-frame the macro-truths? We start to consider these questions in the following sections of this chapter.

2.2.2. Development

Development has been defined by Chambers (2005:185-189) as good change, but this definition, while mercifully short, begs many questions, such as what is good, who defines what is good, and, even if we can agree on what is good, how might it be promoted? Thomas (2000a; 2000b: 29) delves deeper into development when he identifies three senses in which the term is used:

- As a vision of what constitutes a desirable society
- As an historical process of social change in which societies are transformed over long periods. This sense is largely associated with the development of capitalism over time.
- As deliberate efforts aimed at improvement on the part of various agencies.

As Thomas (*ibid.*) himself points out, the three senses are inter-connected. For example the vision might be of a western society and its associated lifestyle, but this society is the product of a long process of historical capitalist change which has been made more or less created through deliberate interventions, themselves often the outcomes of struggle between opposing groups.

The field of development assistance, which frames the research analysed in this thesis, is clearly identified with deliberate efforts aimed at improvement. But such efforts are often aimed at facilitating the historical process of capitalist development while mitigating its inevitable social consequences – ‘ameliorating the disordered faults of progresses’ as Cowen and Shenton (1996) put it. The assumption of the main multilateral (World Bank, International Monetary Fund) and bilateral (donor country aid agencies such as the UK Department for International Development – DFID) development agencies is that capitalist development is the only game in town, and only by embracing it will there be progress in poor countries. Thus actions are taken to liberalise economies in developing countries, develop property rights and so on.

Some of the most representative examples of this kind of development are to be found in South America where Bolivia became one of the first countries that drastically liberalised its economy during the 1980s, heavily influenced by aid policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (see chapter 4). The Bolivian experience was perceived as successful to the extent that it was replicated by some Eastern European countries under the

auspices of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Other forms of deliberate intervention are intended to improve physical (e.g. roads) and social (e.g. health and education) infrastructures and finally to promote liberal capitalist democracy, usually labelled as good governance.

2.2.3. Knowledge for development

It is almost axiomatic that good change or development requires *understanding* of what constitutes good change and *knowing* how to do it. It can safely be assumed, therefore, that development requires knowledge and the active role of development professionals.

Although one can find examples throughout history, development assistance as institutionalised deliberate efforts aimed at improvement were triggered explicitly in the aftermath of World War 2 (WW2). The triggers were the formation of the United Nations and new US President Truman's inaugural address which referred to underdeveloped nations and the need for a grand programme of Technical Assistance (TA) in which knowledge is one of the most important components (Rist 2000:69-79).

Development assistance has adopted different names: in the 1950s it was described as TA and later as Technical Cooperation (henceforth TC). Although there is not a clear cut difference between these two terms, they have been used to describe specific sets of developmental practices, and assumptions about knowledge and development in general. In the 1950s, TA's main objective consisted of transferring knowledge and technology to developing countries (Blelloch, 1952; Goldschmidt, 1959; Buron, 1966; Mathiasen, 1968; Grammig, 2002; Bhouraskar, 2007).

TA during the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was strongly associated with technology transfer. Knowledge was thought to be embedded in tractors, insecticides, pesticides, seeds and agricultural machinery brought into developing countries by international development agencies and donor countries. For example, expatriate technical experts would be sent to developing countries and, along with local personnel (counterparts), would test new technologies associated with forestry, agriculture and so forth. Moreover, experts from different developed countries had their areas of expertise. For instance, Swedish experts specialised in population dynamics, Canadians in forestry, etc. There was also recognition that imported technology might need to be adapted to local conditions which, in agriculture for example, would occur through the counterparts working with local farmers.

The early literature on TA endorsed knowledge transfer as one of its main objectives and development professionals as their vehicles of diffusion. However, this approach to the dissemination of knowledge for development was contested and criticised from early on. For instance, Buron (1966:55) argued that 'TA and knowledge transfer were constrained because experts were convinced both of the superiority of the western civilization over any other, and the absolute value of the scientific and technical knowledge which they wanted to transfer to developing countries, often without any concern for the geographic and socio-political realities of these countries'.

The term Technical Cooperation (TC) started to be used by some agencies in preference to TA in the 1990s. Like TA, TC is also concerned with knowledge for development and its diffusion in poor countries. Taken at face value, however, the word 'co-operation' signifies an attempt at a more interactive process between professional and client. This is implied in the following definition, provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA):

‘Technical Co-operation is the *adaptation or facilitation* of ideas, knowledge, technologies or skills to foster development; it is normally carried out through the provision of long and short term personnel’ (Morrison 1998; emphasis added). Other development-related organisations have produced definitions that are similar in that they emphasise knowledge, but which retain the original TA focus on assistance.

For example, in the early 1990s, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defined TC in the following terms: ‘Technical Cooperation encompasses the whole range of assistance activities designed to improve the level of knowledge, skills, technical know-how, or productive aptitudes of the population in a developing country. A particularly important objective of technical cooperation is institutional development, i.e. to contribute to the strengthening and improved effectiveness of the many institutions in a country which are charged with development functions. Generally these functions relate to the effective management and operation of an economy and of society more generally’ (Arndt, 2000:159).

Thus TA/TC has always been heavily concerned with the transfer of knowledge, usually conceptualised as a thing, to developing countries. Meanwhile, other concepts associated with marshalling knowledge for development have entered the development assistance lexicon, for example, capacity building, knowledge management and innovation systems (Wilson, 2007), which demonstrate further its ubiquity.

Given that development assistance was largely equated with TA in the early days of development assistance, we can therefore equate knowledge with development from the very start. And so it has continued with the other conceptualisations. With hindsight one can also now equate the increasing criticism over the years of the knowledge transfer and technical assistance model with the birth and ultimate institutionalisation of the contemporary participation mantra in development practice. A key dimension of participatory approaches espouses respect for local knowledge, and that knowledge for development is constructed in context rather than simply adapted to it (Chambers, 1997). The vogue in recent years for capacity building similarly places knowledge at the forefront (UNDP, 1997; Sagasti, 1997) where it is again linked to participatory approaches to development (Mohan and Hickey, 2004).

Even the World Bank, having repositioned itself as the Knowledge Bank, now acknowledges the importance of participatory processes, and therefore, implicitly at least, the importance of local knowledge alongside its own expert knowledge (Cornwall 2000). This is partly because the Bank’s own evaluations of technical assistance have provided less than a ringing endorsement.

Nevertheless, despite its apparent conversion to participatory approaches, the World Bank still clings to the idea of knowledge as a product to be used instrumentally. Thus more recently, it has explored ways of applying market mechanisms of supply and demand to knowledge for development. In this it has applied classical economic theories to conceptualise previous failures as attributable to knowledge being supply-led by donor agencies, including itself (Mehta, 2001; Ramalingam, 2005).

The World Bank also discourages any professionals interested in producing critical research about it and its developmental endeavours across the world. As Broad (2007:704) puts it, people who do not project the World Bank’s paradigm are diminished or ostracised or deemed misfits. Authors like Broad (2007:702) argue that knowledge and information produced by the World Bank has played a critical role in the legitimisation of the free-trade paradigm over the past 25 years, and its Development Economic Research Department (DEC) has been vital to its role in establishing this regime of truth (see section 2.3). Broad asks the question: Why does the work of DEC researchers who support the dominant

knowledge framework – the neo-liberal policy agenda – get widespread attention? Here, he argues that the World Bank explicitly enforces its research agenda by promoting and encouraging authors and World Bank personnel to produce research that supports its political agenda. He even goes further and quotes a former World Bank professional that describes how review processes are undertaken: ‘It depends on what the paper is [about] and who the author is. If you are a respected neoclassical economist, then [approval] only needs one sign-off, that of your boss. If it’s critical, then you go through endless reviews, until the author gives up’ (Broad 2007:703).

Broad’s account represents a specific example of the argument of post-development theorists: that development agencies produce knowledge which is exercised and imposed through discursive practices in developing countries (Escobar 1984, 1988, 1992; Esteva 1985), and which I explore further in section 2.3. Pursuing a dominant development discourse enforces and privileges knowledge produced by a handful of powerful development organisations. This is despite the large and growing number of intellectuals and professionals who are from and work within developing countries, and who produce knowledge on the ground, both as part of, and actors in, the surrounding context. What is more, as noted by Torres (2000:10) ‘while professionals and intellectuals in developing countries are often multilingual or at least bilingual, and can thus have access to a wider variety of literature and views, many of their equivalents in developed countries are monolinguals and thus have limited access to the intellectual production available worldwide. However, this does not prevent the latter form speaking for the entire world and for a *developing world* in particular’.

Although it can be claimed with justification that knowledge is needed for any development activity, my own experience of Bolivia discerns three broad categories:

- Knowledge for physical and social infrastructure development
- Knowledge for economic development – both via producers and via government policies and instruments
- Knowledge for ordered rule or ‘good governance’ (Stoker 2004).

The case studies in this thesis focus on knowledge for economic development and for good governance (see chapters 5 and 6), but these foci are not really my central concern. I am more concerned with how knowledge for development is communicated and exchanged between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries and the interplay between all of these. On the one hand, central to my concern is the sense that knowledge is not neutral, but is associated with differences in social power, where some knowledge is highly valued (and therefore institutionalised as the truth) and other knowledge is deemed of less value. On the other hand, equally important to my concern is the terms upon which agents exchange and communicate knowledge for development. Such terms or rules of game are very often, if not always, established by powerful development organisations.

As I first indicated in chapter 1, for the purposes of this thesis, I identify two broad categories of professional development agent engaged with knowledge for development: development *advisors* and development *consultants*. Before explaining further these two broad categories, it should be noted that development professionals were first, in the 1950s, generically known as experts who were ideally not only chosen for their technical competence but also for their ‘sympathetic understanding of the natural backgrounds and specific needs of the countries to be assisted’ (Goldschmidt 1959:54). That is, it was argued that the men and women who were employed as experts needed to be chosen according to the realities of the situations in the poor countries. Although somewhat crudely put at the time, these ideal qualities expected of the expert heralded an enduring challenge for knowledge for development – the challenge of effective communication between people who probably have very different understandings of the world.

Development advisors are generally salaried personnel and tend to engage with beneficiaries over relatively long periods of time. This type of professional generally works for development organisations such as international NGOs and bilateral development agencies. One feature of this type of professional is the fact that they almost entirely tend to work for non-profit organisations, either in the public or NGO sectors. Their services tend, therefore, to be provided free of financial charge, as development aid to recipients, hence the term beneficiaries which is often used to describe the recipients. Chapter 6 of this thesis is an analysis of how a Dutch non-profit driven agency provides free of charge knowledge services through development advisors. Chapter 6 explores this type of professional in detail.

Development consultants, by contrast, are professionals who tend to work for short periods of time, and unlike development advisors, they are hired to deliver quick inputs on contractually bounded assignments. Development consultants generally work for the private sector, and hence profit driven, organisations such as development consultancy companies, although they may also be freelance. As far as the 'beneficiary' is concerned however, the services provided by the consultant are still free of charge, his/her fees having been met by the contracting development agency. Chapter 5 picks up on this dynamic.

Although both development advisors and consultants have operated since the inception of development assistance after WW2, the former tended to dominate until the 1990s. Partly due to agency reorganisations, espoused as improving their efficiency and effectiveness, consultants have come much more to the fore in recent years.

Based on my own professional experience in Bolivia, advisors and consultants are not a homogenous group of individuals. The differences between them are clearly defined by the organisations they represent, and also within organisations by whether they are expatriate or local. For example, with respect to consultancy, northern development consultants tend to be hired by northern international development agencies, often to carry out scoping studies, provide managerial oversight in bounded projects, and conduct evaluations. By contrast, consultants from developing countries are more likely to be hired to undertake on-the-ground assignments that involve close interactions with grassroots individuals and organisations, such as running training workshops.

The role of advisors and consultants has also been partially explored. For example Arndt, (2000:166) asserts that 'excessive reliance on long-term resident expatriate advisors sits uneasily within local institutional structures. Relative to local staff, they are extremely well paid'. Their advisor status leads to, at best, ambiguous placement within the local administrative hierarchy. The combination of high pay, little accountability and privileged access to critical inputs tends to trigger resentment and demoralised local staff in developing countries. I further explore this problem in section 4.4.2 where I examine the role of the first generation of development professionals who worked in Bolivia back in the 1950s.

Arndt's assertion represents one kind of critique. Another, more directly related to the subject matter of this thesis, is provided by the following quotation:

'The field of practitioner's knowledge is not neutral. Public policy professionals do much more than 'analyse' and 'solve' problems. Within the broader context of politically sanctioned normative directions as well as their own mental dispositions, they codify phenomena and interrelationships between phenomena. Moreover, they develop 'languages' through which these can be observed and discussed. They assign differential explanatory significances to various events, observations or facts; introduce methods and criteria for judging the plausibility of rival interpretations of situations' (Clay and Schaffer, 1984:148-156).

Investigation of this claim is a major part of my empirical study reported in later chapters. More generally, I am concerned with a critical appraisal of the mechanisms which promote the regime of truth that capitalism is the only game in town, as articulated on several occasions above. Where does this truth come from? Who says so? And to the extent that it is accepted, how does it mediate the knowledge exchanges at a more micro level that are a major part of my investigation. Do these exchanges provide any spaces for questioning such regimes of truth? How can development professionals engage in an open and risk-free reflective attitude towards development agencies?

Knowledge for development is geared to trigger actions which are performed/exercised by development advisors, consultants and beneficiaries. At this point it is important to acknowledge that the concept of 'habitus' developed by Pierre Bourdieu can potentially shed some light in the way actors' actions can be somehow anticipated. According to Bourdieu, habitus is 'a knowledge without consciousness, of an intentionality without intention, and of a practical mastery of the world's regularities which allows one to anticipate the future without even needing to posit as such' (Bourdieu, 1987:22 in Lane 2000:25). Thus habitus represents an internalised set of expectations, or as Lane (2000:107) suggests, 'an implicit sense of what could or could not be achieved which reflected objective probability, attested to by past experience and internalised into a structure of durable and transposable dispositions'. I find it difficult, however, to transfer the concept of habitus to my study of the engagements between development actors, where every engagement is unique in the sense that actors start with little knowledge of each other and where any anticipation is likely to be inadequate and contingent on the unfolding engagement itself. In other words, the actors are unlikely to anticipate events solely on the basis of their past experiences because, as I show later (sections 5.2.4; 6.4 and 7.5 of chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively), every single encounter between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries is a new learning experience. What is more, many development professionals who have years of experience in the field acknowledge that every assignment is different and thus is a new experience. For a more systematic and detailed exploration of the possibilities offered by these encounters, which is the second theme of my thesis, I turn in section 2.4 to the concept of communicative action as espoused by Habermas.

Before then, however, I do acknowledge that there is likely to be an element of Bourdieu-ian anticipation which to some extent frames the engagements of the actors in my study. Nevertheless, I also contend that such anticipation is most likely borne of the experiences, both tacit and explicit, of framing discourses, or truths, of development. This is the first theme of my thesis and to explore it, I turn to its major exponent – Michel Foucault – to guide my analysis.

2.3. Knowledge–power, regimes of truth and post-development theorists

This section examines knowledge and power, how regimes of truth of development are established and accepted, perpetuated by institutions and as instrumental knowledge through more local exchanges, but perhaps also challenged through them. It draws on the work of Michel Foucault and various post-development theorists.

2.3.1. The Foucaultian approach to knowledge/power

Foucault emphasises the conception of power as a constructive notion. He argues that power produces, makes and shapes, rather than necessarily masks, represses and blocks. These assertions are discussed in detail in his interviews and writings between 1972 and 1977 (Gordon, 1980). Wandel (2001) further claims that Foucault made possible the move from a

notion of power as negative – one that masks and conceals – to an understanding of power as a positive, productive force, in either case.

Much of Foucault's work can be read as an investigation of the relationship between power and knowledge, particularly the knowledge of 'Man' as an intrinsic part of the art of modern government (for example, his essay on 'governmentality' [Foucault, 1979]). Gordon (1980: 237) suggests that, in keeping with his studied neutrality on the effects of power, Foucault argues 'if certain knowledges of 'Man' are able to serve a technological function in the domination of people, this is not so much thanks to their capacity to establish a reign of ideological mystification as their ability to define a certain field of empirical truth'.

Curiously, Foucault's contribution on knowledge/power relations does not look at where and from whom power comes. Foucault is mainly concerned with its exercise and the effects it produces. He does not link the power/knowledge notion to a particular class nor explicitly to the state. Equally, he is not concerned with the possession of power but its exercise, application and effects, and how it circulates through society. This however, has triggered criticisms towards the way Foucault disregards the link between power-knowledge and its sources. On the other hand, authors like Escobar (1984, 1988, 1995 and 1996) have tried to fill this gap by expanding the scope of the Foucaultian analysis of development.

As an addition to Foucault, Clegg (2001) argues that power neither exists in specific individuals (as with Foucault) nor in concrete practices, but in the way in which individuals and practices articulate in a particular fixed ensemble of representations. These representations can be shared cultural grounds between individuals. On this point Habermas is useful insofar as he helps us to understand that individuals are in fact able to share and communicate knowledge better when it is facilitated through a shared lifeworld (see section 2.4) of skills, competences and knowledge between actors (see section 2.4 below).

Foucault uses the concept of discourse - also referred to as regimes of truth - to describe the general domain of all statements (Mills 2003: 64 -74; Smart 2002:40), sometimes as an individualisable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements (Foucault 1972:80). For Foucault, a set of specific structures and rules would constitute a discourse, that is, *discourse that is regulated by a set of rules* that allow its circulation. It is in this process that discourse produces power and reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it (Foucault 1978:100). Thus, for example, within the field of development assistance, regimes of truth are constituted by statements that are very often encapsulated in a codified form such as policy documents, development textbooks and development literature that are produced about and for poor countries. Such statements are constructed by development organisations. Each development organisation has its own agenda and thus regulates the way its discourses are circulated. For instance, the Dutch Development Aid Agency, SNV (see chapter 6), has produced its own development discourse - that is to say that, it has produced statements as to how – for instance – poverty should be eradicated in the developing world. The circulation of these statements is regulated by a *set of rules*. One of the most important rules is that the discourse is to be circulated through the development advisors.

From a Foucaultian perspective, discourses are groups of statements which deal with the same topic and which seem to produce a similar effect; for example, they may be groups of statements which are grouped together because of some institutional pressure or association, because of a similarity in origin, or because they have similar function. Each society has its own regimes of truth, that is, the type of statements which can be made by authorised people and accepted by society as a whole, and which are then distinguished from false statements by a range of different practices. In the field of development assistance, developed countries have largely produced regimes of truth about the other, that is, about developing countries. Such

discourses have become established frames of reference through which development agencies and professionals undertake their assignments in developing countries.

For Foucault, however, such dominant discourses or regimes of truth are continually contested and re-negotiated. They are not, therefore, unchangeable. Even within development assistance they can be shown to change, for example the change from conceptualising the main agent of development as the (developmental) state in the 1960s and 1970s, to the subsequent so called neoliberal era of rolling back the state in the 1980s and 1990s⁵. However, despite the more recent re-emphasis on the state – in relation to good governance – many argue that this is still within a context of neoliberalism which remains the basis of contemporary truth, and so one can also argue that regimes of truth can be enduring.

Much of the work of the Dutch Development Agency (SNV – see chapter 6) in Bolivia is broadly concerned with good governance, defined as the conditions for ordered rule (Stoker, 2004), while governance itself has been defined as ‘the sum of the many ways institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs’ (Commission on Global Governance, 1995: 2), Foucault’s notion of governmentality, referred to above, is a useful way of critically analysing the concept of (good) governance in relation to knowledge. He defines governmentality as ‘the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security’ (Gordon 1991:102 in Burchell et al.). The notion of governmentality is one that sheds light on the way development agencies use their agendas (tactics and strategies) that allow them to exercise and disseminate their bodies of knowledge in developing countries. Chapter 6 illustrates for instance how SNV activities in Bolivia are driven by a regime of truth and a set of techniques that aim at the development of a well ordered society in which every single individual is free to peruse his/her own sustainable development.

2.3.2. Power and knowledge are not ‘objects’

Foucault is very critical of the notion that power is something that individuals or institutions possess. He argues that power is not a thing, an institution, an aptitude or an object. Power describes relations of force, and as such it is a nominal concept, it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society (Foucault, 1978:93). Power is neither restricted to institutions nor to individuals, power – he argues – is a general matrix of force relations at a given time, in a given society. Power is something that is performed, rather than something which is or can be held onto.

Foucault asserts that power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather *exercised*, and it only exists in action (Gordon 1980:89), and while it is exercised through specific actions, it triggers resistance (Foucault 1980:142). At the same time, it is explicitly driven by a series of aims and objectives. What is more, power is there to be exercised through individuals and institutions (Gordon 1980:98). As Foucault puts it: power must be analysed as something

⁵ At this point it is important to clarify the terminology used in this thesis. Firstly, Karl Marx considered *capitalism* to be a historically specific mode of production, and in this line of argument, Saunders (1995:3) points out that ‘Capitalism entails private ownership of property, including those assets such as land, plant and raw materials which are employed in producing the goods and services on which the population depends’, Secondly, Neoliberalism ‘is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade’ Harvey (2007:2). Neoliberalism is, in fact, a particular form of capitalism with greater focus on the supremacy of the market, individual responsibility and reducing the role of the state in the economy than other forms. For the purpose of clarification, I use both terms (Capitalism and Neoliberalism) in the ways defined by Saunders (1995) and Harvey (2007)

which circulates or as something which only functions in the form of a chain. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation where individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application (Gordon 1980:80). On this point, I shall argue that the development assistance field is in fact a conglomerate of organisations whereby knowledge and power is exercised. However, unlike Foucault, in this thesis, I argue that individuals are both vehicles of power and points of application through which regimes of truth are disseminated and exercised.

In the case of development assistance, donor countries have their own development agencies and institutions where knowledge is produced and disseminated by professionals and applied in poor countries. However, what takes place at the micro level between individuals (i.e. professionals and beneficiaries) challenges the Foucaultian notion of power because, in the field of development assistance, development professionals are not mere vehicles but the points through which knowledge/power is applied and exercised upon development beneficiaries.

The above can be further explained if we consider that power/knowledge directly imply one another. That is, there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (Smart, 2002:76). When Foucault refers to resistance, he describes a situation in which individuals or institutions exercise power while others resist it. There has to be someone – Foucault says – who resists in order to exercise power. Within the field of development assistance however, one does not generally find substantial or representative examples where for instance knowledge for development has been *explicitly and directly* resisted or opposed by beneficiaries at the end of the chain. As will be seen from my empirical research, knowledge for development comes very often attached to financial assistance, and so it is welcomed by beneficiaries. This is not to argue that resistance does not exist, but that it is more covert (Scott, 1985). The participation literature for example, provides examples where donor projects are subverted by beneficiaries in indirect and implicit forms of resistance (Kothari and Cooke, 2004). The possibility that projects and programmes involving knowledge for development are similarly diverted by beneficiaries, while still receiving the money associated with the intervention, is another question for my empirical research.

2.3.3. Post-development

After WW2 a considerable part of the critical writings on development were inspired by Foucault (Nustand, 2001). Most of this literature sees development as a dominant discourse or regime of truth which informs interventions and action in poor countries. Likewise, Escobar (1996) has put forward a polemical Foucaultian view of development, where he argues that the discourse of development has been a mechanism for the production and management of the Third World. He basically claims that development is an apparatus that links forms of knowledge about the Third World with the deployment of forms of power and intervention, resulting in the mapping and production of Third World societies. He even goes further in his critique and claims that in order to understand development as a discourse, one must look not at the elements themselves but at the system of relations established among them. Escobar is perhaps the best example of how Foucault's approach to knowledge and power can be best used to explore the development apparatus. However he does not help us to understand how knowledge for development is communicated or exchanged between individuals at the micro level, particularly at the field-level where development experts are unable to openly criticise dominant regimes of truth.

Escobar also argues that 'development' is a regime of truth that allows the systematic creation of objects, concepts and strategies. It frames what can be thought and said. These relations – established between institutions, socio-economic processes, forms of knowledge,

technological factors, and so on – define the condition under which concepts, theories and strategies can be incorporated into the discourse of development. In other words, the system of relations establishes the rules of the game: who can speak, from what point of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise: ‘It sets the rules that must be followed for this or that problem, theory or object to emerge and be named, analysed, and eventually transformed into a policy or plan’ (Escobar 1998:87).

Escobar (1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 1998), is part of a group of post-development theorists who perceive the last fifty years of development as a continuation of the colonial project. Another representative figure is Sachs (1992:1) who claims that ‘the idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape’. Disillusion, disappointment and failure have been the steady companions of development and, according to Sachs, they tell a common story: it has not and does not work. Moreover, the historical conditions which brought the idea of development into prominence have vanished: development has become outdated.

Post-development theorists attempt to demonstrate why development in the form of interventions (development assistance) has not proved to be the panacea that development organisations post WW2 predicted it to be. In this respect, Rahnema (1998:378-379) asserts that development as it stands now has not only failed to resolve the old problems it was supposed to address, but it has brought new ones of incomparably greater magnitude to the fore. He also claims that development proved to be simply a myth for the millions it was destined to serve; the very premises and assumptions on which it was founded were misleading. I would add to this by arguing that anyone who has experienced and reflected on the historical unfolding of development assistance to poor countries can identify how different approaches to targeting poverty have been launched with marginal and sometimes no impact in developing countries. Based on my own professional and personal experience in South America, I could argue that Bolivia and other countries in the region have been used as ‘development laboratories’ where a large number of development programmes have been implemented without achieving much (see chapter 4). Some of the most representative cases in this respect are Structural Adjustment Programmes and the liberalisation of weak economies in the region during the 1980s.

Post-development theorists criticise the way development was conceived and the problems it aims to solve. The critique is geared towards the macro-structure of development in which discourses or regimes of truth are created. In fact, they have produced a large number of papers and other academic documents that offer an account of what they claim to be the failure and misleading purposes of development. However, their accounts are invariably polemical in tone and at a macro-level. They have devoted little attention to analysis of the micro-mechanisms through which development interventions are conducted. The extent to which development agents at the grassroots level transpose the discourses of development into the field remain largely unexplored, as does the possibility of resistance and challenge to these discourses.

2.4. Development assistance and the potential for communicative action

Both mainstream and post-development theorists have drawn on the work of Foucault, as reported in the previous section. By contrast, substantive references to the other influential thinker on knowledge during the second half of the 20th century, Jürgen Habermas, are comparatively rare. In what follows I explain how aspects of Habermas’ theory of communicative action and universal pragmatics allow us to understand how cognitive interests drive individuals to engage in knowledge processes and how knowledge can be better communicated between and amongst development professionals and beneficiaries.

Habermas is important for this research because he deals at the micro-level with the generation of knowledge through communication between people. Indeed for Habermas, our ability to reflect on what we do and justify such reflections through communication with others is what makes us human. This section explores therefore, some of his key ideas and outlines their potential application in terms of knowledge for development. They highlight some important areas for empirical research, both in themselves and also in the process of seeking a synthesis between them and the Foucaultian notion of regimes of truth.

Fundamentally, Habermas understands humans as communicative beings. He analyses the ways in which individuals use a range of communicative tools and skills to produce and establish social relationships. In this thesis, communication refers to the process through which humans come to share views of the world. This process is crucial if one wants to understand how individuals relate to each other in order to communicate knowledge for development.

By using Habermas's (1984) contribution to understanding communication, I explore below how knowledge is communicated and generated between individuals in the development assistance field. One of his central contributions is the theory of *universal pragmatics* which he explains as follows: 'The task of universal pragmatics is to identify and reconstruct universal conditions of possible mutual understanding. In other contexts, one also speaks of 'general presuppositions of communication' but I prefer to speak of general presuppositions of communicative action because I take the type of action aimed at reaching understanding to be fundamental' (Habermas 1976: 21)

Habermas argues that humans need skills and competences in order to be able to communicate. More specifically, universal pragmatics - as asserted by Habermas - is concerned with the ability, not just to formulate meaningful sentences but rather to engage others in interaction. This is possible, in as much as humans share a cultural and material world.

A basic assumption of Habermas is that all humans have *cognitive interests* (Habermas, 1976a, 1998) which stimulate them to generate knowledge about the social and physical/material environment in which they live. Other scholars like Stephen White (1995) who edited the Cambridge Companion to Habermas use the term *knowledge constitutive interest*, to refer to cognitive interests. Habermas' work has been translated by a number of scholars and thus some terms might vary slightly in the way they were translated.

Thus, cognitive interests are the preconditions that make knowledge possible or as White (1995:6) points out: 'We have knowledge constitutive interests in the technical control of the world around us, in understanding others, and in freeing ourselves from structures of domination'. Habermas argues that these cognitive interests can be divided into three areas (as noted in section 2.2.1) which stimulate generation of different forms of knowledge: a technical interest, a hermeneutic interest and an emancipatory interest which can also motivate people to engage with one another. I now explore each of these in turn.

The technical interest

This interest concerns human attempts to control and transform the physical/material environment in which they live. This type of interest is related to the Marxist concept of labour, which is our unique ability to reflect on and transform the material world in order to survive and thrive. Through this ability we innovate – that is we are driven to do new and better things with nature and to manipulate nature in new and better ways. The drive for the 'new and better' in turn drives our technical interest in improving our capacities and capabilities to innovate.

Although Habermas has tended to equate the technical interest with the natural sciences, it can easily be applied to other areas, such as management, for example, the management of a

firm, family life or society. In management circles the technical interest thus lends itself to the concept of 'best practice' – the routines and structures that represent the accepted proper way of going about things. For my purposes, it can be applied to both the management of development assistance – its accepted best practice(s), and to the ends to which it is put – thus, the kinds of knowledge clients and beneficiaries need so that they too can transform their physical/material environment.

The hermeneutic interest

In a dictionary sense, hermeneutics is the science of interpretation and the study of meanings. Within the Habermasian tradition, hermeneutics analyse the way in which meaning is contained in texts and also in objects, and hence interprets them. For instance, historians, sociologists and cultural anthropologists are regarded as hermeneuticians because they engage in the study of meanings contained in text as well as in objects (Edgar, 2006:13). Habermas however, extends the concept to communication between ordinary people which helps meet our interest in interpreting the social world in which we live. Thus, hermeneutics is important as it is linked to humanity's deep-seated interest in communication and making sense of each others' actions in order to be able to organise itself into social groups, both large and small. In this sense, hermeneutics is the process whereby interpretations of our social world are refined.

The emancipatory interest

For Habermas (1972) this interest is concerned with our human need to be free from oppression and exploitation. Combined with being able to understand and transform our material environment (our technical interest) and to communicate with each other in order to organise socially (our hermeneutic interest), our emancipatory interest completes the requirements which must be met if we are to live and thrive.

Meeting our hermeneutic and emancipatory cognitive interests can only be achieved, Habermas argues, when human beings reflect on their social worlds and justify the outcomes of their reflections with others in open, transparent discussion which involves debate and challenge. This he terms *communicative action*. Meeting our technical interest however, could in principle, be achieved by more limited forms of communication. It could be achieved, for example, through those who know how to do something teaching (i.e. transferring knowledge to) others. Within development this was explicitly encapsulated in the original conceptualisation of Technical Assistance (section 2.1). It could also, as in some forms of development assistance, involve both transferring knowledge and open, transparent discussion about how to adapt this knowledge to a local context. It has also been reported by Wilson and Johnson (2007) with respect to their research on North-South, practitioner-to-practitioner municipal partnerships.

Further consideration of the technical interest however, points to an issue with Habermas's classification. Although the categories of technical-hermeneutic-emancipatory comprise a useful heuristic distinction, in real life the separation is not so simple. Of particular interest to me is the way in which key aspects of development assistance – knowledge for good governance and economic growth for example – are presented by agencies *as if* they are meeting technical interests (thus framing and limiting debate), whereas for post-development theorists they are actually constructs which form the elements of a dominant development discourse, and hence of Northern domination and oppression of the South.

A further issue with communicative action, which Habermas has himself recognised, is that complex societies simply cannot function if all communication is open and questioning as in

communicative action. Much of the time therefore, we have to act instrumentally where we choose the best means to achieve given ends, but do not question the ends themselves. Instrumental action therefore, only requires limited communication about means. Quite often it requires no discussion at all as the best means are known. Instrumental action can be evaluated in terms of its efficiency to achieve a given end, it can also serve our technical interests much of the time, and is crucial for complex society to function. The problem is that it becomes increasingly dominant at the expense of communicative action. Opportunities for hermeneutic and emancipatory interests (which question ends) to be met are thus restricted.

The extent to which development assistance engagements between professionals and their beneficiaries/clients is instrumental, and the opportunities in such engagements for communicative action, form a key empirical issue for my research. The literature and theoretical insights from this chapter do not make me optimistic regarding the potential for communicative action on three grounds;

Firstly, I agree with the post-development theorists that, following Foucault, there exists a *regime of truth, or dominant discourse at the macro-level* (section 2.3). It is sustained by the power relations that are inherent in the donor-receiver relationship and there is no current sign of it being challenged in any substantive sense. Development receivers in general, and poor people in particular, will of course have their own visions of the world, but they are not in a position to challenge directly the dominant visions of development organisations. The dominant development discourse defines the ends of development assistance as the truth and so is unquestionable. It therefore leaves open only instrumental action which meets technical interests of how best to achieve the ends.

Secondly, there is the issue of how people relate to, and communicate with each other when their ways of being and their understandings of the world are completely different. In these circumstances, ‘their stock of skills, competences and knowledge which they use in order to communicate’ (Edgar, 2006: 89) – what Habermas (1976b) calls their *lifeworlds* – are likely to be inadequate. Habermas also refers to this as the background consensus that lies behind all narrative exchange (quoted in Fischer, 2003: 199). On this point, Cooke (1998:16) further explains that ‘Habermas draws attention to various kinds of background knowledge: for instance, knowledge of the speaker’s personal history or familiarity with the (culturally specific) contexts in which a given topic is normally discussed. These kinds of knowledge, although usually only implicit in acts can be rendered explicit without difficulty [...] this background knowledge of lifeworld forms the indispensable context for the communicative use of language; indeed without it, meaning of any kind would be impossible’.

This is particularly likely to be an issue in development assistance where people from one part of the world are attempting to share or communicate knowledge with those in another part. Nor is it simply a matter of different geographies. Development professionals from the North may well have shared understandings with professionals in similar fields in the South, as the North-South municipal practitioner-to-practitioner study by Wilson and Johnson (2007) showed. But development professionals from both North and South often have to work with non-professionals who have very different understandings of the world.

The third ground for my lack of optimism links lifeworld and the problem of instrumental dominance. A lifeworld is dynamic, being maintained and developed through the very communication with others that it enables. Instrumental dominance however, restricts such communication and therefore undermines our abilities to form rich and meaningful relationships, a process which Habermas (1976b) calls ‘colonisation of the lifeworld’.

For development professionals and clients communicative action is a challenge. Notwithstanding my own lack of optimism on this matter, Habermas himself would undoubtedly argue that fruitful communicative actions can be established between

development professionals and beneficiaries/clients if assumptions and claims made about each other are subjected to discussion and criticism. More importantly, people that do not share a similar lifeworld can engage in communicative action if four conditions, described by Habermas (1976, 1979) in terms of his theory of universal pragmatics, are secured. Adapted to a development context, these are:

1. Everyone in a development engagement must be able to share openly their understanding of the world about them.
2. Everyone must agree that development professionals and beneficiaries have the right to say what they think.
3. Claims and utterances of all actors should be sincere.
4. What is said must be meaningful, that is, everyone must either share the same language or recognise enough common idioms to sustain communication, or be able to rephrase an utterance in ways that others understand if necessary.

Provided that the above conditions are met, a Habermasian analysis would suggest that development professionals and clients can potentially engage in communicative action. In other words, they can share and exchange knowledge in a mutually enriching manner. To go further, they might also communicate through this enriching exchange and start to challenge at a micro-level the dominant discourse/regime of truth around development.

2.5 Habermasian and Foucaultian approaches in development

I do not argue nor suggest that the philosophies of Habermas and Foucault can be combined as a harmonious whole. Authors like Love (1989) have argued that such an attempt is almost impossible since both philosophies preclude each other's positions.

Indeed, if one tries to combine both philosophies, the differences that make them incompatible are self-evident. For instance, on the one hand, Foucault argues that discourse revolves around the relationship between power and truth, and that the production of regimes of truth is thoroughly imbued with power. He further advocates that 'truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produces and sustains it' (Foucault in Gordon 1980:133). This thesis shows how such a notion helps us to understand the way development assistance is articulated and operates. Regimes of truth are manifestations of power that determine what statements are acceptable. They also determine what we can say, when and where, and who can say what. On the other hand, Habermas defines discourse more restrictively, arguing that discourse is freed from power (Habermas 1984:42)

Another fundamental difference between these two philosophers is that Foucault does not accept Habermas's distinctions between universal forms of argumentation and particular contents of arguments (Love 1989:273). Furthermore Foucault unlike Habermas does not seek universal forms above and beyond particular contents. Instead he examines modern discourse, that is, the discourse about Man as an historical event in our constitution as subjects (Love 1989:275).

Undoubtedly the theories of Habermas and Foucault transcend those I have used in this thesis. In fact, a further analysis of their writings can reveal more reasons as to why their philosophical contributions cannot be combined as harmonious whole.

While accepting these arguments to a large extent, such polarisation in my view is unfortunate and itself is an unnecessarily universal claim. This is because my intention is situated in particular settings to analyse knowledge for development, the field where it is produced,

disseminated and more importantly the actors involved in its dissemination in the developing world. Having this focus, I use Foucault and Habermas as theoretical tools that allow me to analyse respectively the macro level of development assistance where regimes of truth are constructed, and the micro level of the field where knowledge for development is exchanged and communicated between consultants, advisors and beneficiaries. Therefore, I do not combine Habermas and Foucault but rather use them strategically, and for my purposes complementarily, to dissect and analyse one very specific field, the one of development assistance where knowledge for development is one of its major components. Box 1 below outlines how I have used their theories.

Box 1: Foucault and Habermas as used in this thesis

Preamble: Development Assistance is a field constituted by a number of actors. Some of the most important include development organisations, tertiary organisations in developing countries (i.e. development consultancy companies), development professional and clients/beneficiaries. These interact with each other in form of a chain and engage in power relations. In some cases such relations are more explicit than others. The chain's main target is to reduce poverty, where knowledge is one of its most important resources. This thesis explores consultants and advisors reflections as to how they enter in knowledge engagements with beneficiaries. Chapter 3 explains why such a processes needs to be analysed in the context of a development assistance chain. In this Box I outline how Foucault and Habermas have been used in order to analyse knowledge for development and knowledge engagements.

	Foucault	Habermas
Knowledge for Development	<p>Knowledge and power are heavily interrelated. Do regimes of truth produce and establish forms of knowledge about and for developing countries? To what extent are these regimes of truth accepted by all actors in the development assistance chain?</p>	<p>Knowledge To what extent are individuals who engage with one another in knowledge engagements reflective beings? To what extent are individuals who engage with one another in knowledge engagements communicative beings? To what extent is knowledge contested through communication? Is there evidence of meeting technical, hermeneutic and emancipatory cognitive interests? Can knowledge be conceived as capacity for action?</p>
Northern development agencies and Bolivian consultancy companies	<p>Role with respect to regimes of truth In what ways do they perform a general</p>	<p>Focus on instrumental actions To what extent do they focus on choosing the best means to achieve given ends without questioning the ends</p>

	operationalising and disciplining role?	themselves? I.e. Meeting technical cognitive interests only?
Development professionals (advisors, consultants and beneficiaries)	<p>Points whereby knowledge/power is exercised</p> <p>To what extent are advisors and consultants vehicles of power and points of application through which regimes of truth are disseminated and exercised?</p> <p>To what extent do they operationalise a governmentality function?</p>	<p>To what extent are advisors and professionals able to contest regimes of truth through reflexivity?</p> <p>Universal pragmatics</p> <p>What is the evidence for the 4 conditions for mutual understanding being met (see section 2.4)?</p> <p>To what extent do similar and dissimilar lifeworlds (or background consensus) affect differently the ways they engage with beneficiaries?</p> <p>Cognitive interests</p> <p>To what extent are development professionals communicative beings?</p> <p>To what extent are they driven by each of the following cognitive interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical interest • Hermeneutic interest • Emancipatory interest?
Clients/Beneficiaries	<p>Raison d'être of development assistance and regimes of truth</p> <p>To what extent, and in what ways, do clients/beneficiaries assimilate regimes of truth?</p> <p>To what extent, and in what ways, do clients/beneficiaries contest regimes of truth?</p> <p>To what extent, is the relationship of clients/beneficiaries to regimes of truth strategic?</p>	<p>Cognitive interests</p> <p>To what extent are Clients/Beneficiaries communicative beings in knowledge for development engagements?</p> <p>In what ways are they driven by the following cognitive interests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical • Hermenetic • Emancipatory? <p>Universal pragmatics</p> <p>What is the evidence for the 4 conditions for mutual understanding (see section 2.4) with development professionals and agencies being met?</p> <p>To what extent do similar and dissimilar lifeworlds (or background consensus) affect differently the way sthey engage with professionals?</p>

2.6. Conclusions: framing issues for the empirical research

This chapter has explored the development literature that relates to knowledge for development and its different dimensions. It has also examined how Foucaultian and notions of regimes of truth and power can be along with the Habermasian theories of communicative

action and universal pragmatics. By exploring some of the key contributions of Foucault and Habermas, I have:

1. Shed some light on how regimes of truth frame knowledge engagements at the micro-level where advisors, consultants and beneficiaries interact with one another.
2. Established in principle, how individuals who share and do not share the same lifeworld are still able potentially to communicate and exchange knowledge for development.
3. Established key theoretical differences between Habermas and Foucault.
4. Outlined that I am not combining Habermas and Foucault but using their theoretical contributions in a strategic manner.

In section 2.2 of this chapter, I established the importance and ubiquity of the notion of knowledge for development in the field of development assistance. Then I examined how knowledge for development has been addressed for over half a century, particularly under the labels of Technical Assistance and Technical Co-operation. Next, I noted the wealth of critical development literature that suggests that knowledge for development consistently falls short of expectations. Here, I also introduced the more radical and fundamental critique made by post-development theorists who argue that development creates dominant regimes of truths which in turn multiply problems for those who live in the South.

Section 2.2 of this chapter therefore, reinforces and expands on what I first noted in chapter 1: there is evidently an enduring problem with the practice of knowledge for development, and for the post-development theorists, the problem extends to the whole idea of knowledge and development assistance. What is the nature of this problem? My chapter sections offer three general, contrasting, but not necessarily mutually contradictory, answers from the literature and theories I introduce, which form the framing issues for my empirical research.

Firstly, in section 2.2, we are offered a general assertion that the supply-led nature of knowledge for development (and development assistance generally) is a basic problem for the effectiveness of knowledge-based aid. As presented in section 2.2, this issue derives from a straightforward classical economics theory of supply and demand and is attributable mainly to World Bank literature. As an answer to 'what is the nature of the problem', it rests on two assumptions:

- Knowledge is a thing, object or commodity that can be transferred through aid or through market mechanisms.
- If only demand could be articulated properly, the nature of knowledge on supply would change to meet that demand.

The limitations of these assumptions are exposed by the next two framing issues which draw from sections 2.3 and 2.4 respectively.

In section 2.3, I articulate the theoretical contribution by Foucault and those who have followed him, on how regimes of truth are established. This is picked up by post-development writers who argue that development assistance is framed by a regime of truth, or dominant discourse, the established truth being that liberal capitalism is the only game in town. This dominant discourse frames what can be learned and known during knowledge for development engagements at the micro-level, particularly between development professionals and beneficiaries. This forms my second framing issue, although I note that Foucault himself

qualifies this assertion, arguing that regimes of truth are resisted, contested and re-negotiated over time in relation to shifting power configurations. They are not, therefore, stable entities. Also with Foucault one can understand that power is exercised through organisations and individuals. This is more observable when we identify that the field of development assistance is in fact constituted by a net-like chain of organisations and individuals, in which power is embedded in the practice of individuals and organisations.

The third framing issue, from section 2.4 and the theoretical contribution of Habermas, concerns the restricted possibilities for communicative action because of the dominance of instrumental action. The conditions of engagement between development professionals and beneficiaries are not therefore conducive to meeting hermeneutic (social-interpretative) and emancipatory knowledge interests. Thus, technical interests are more likely to be met.

This thesis aims to explore these framing issues in relation to knowledge for development through empirical study of its practice in Bolivia, as conducted by Bolivian consultants and professional advisors from an international development agency (see chapter 1). The framing issues give rise directly to the following empirical questions, which guide my study.

1. To what extent does the supply driven nature of development assistance undermine knowledge engagements between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries/clients⁶?
2. To what extent does the dominant development discourse ('regimes of truth') frame what can be learned and known in engagements between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries/clients?
3. To the extent that a dominant development discourse ('regimes of truth') does frame what can be learned and known in engagements between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries/clients, how are both the discourse and the engagements sustained?
4. What is the potential for communicative action in knowledge engagements that might lead to meeting hermeneutic and emancipatory knowledge interests?
5. To the extent that there is the potential for communicative action in knowledge engagements, what is necessary for such potential to be realised?

In summary, this chapter has related key theoretical contributions of Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault to the problematic of knowledge for development. It has introduced particular explanatory approaches to ways in which development professionals could/could not exchange and communicate knowledge, but more importantly whether such processes of communication are able to question and challenge macro regimes of truth. This chapter has thus formed a framework for the remainder of the thesis. The next chapter outlines the methodology by which the research questions were investigated empirically.

⁶ 'Beneficiaries/clients' is admittedly a somewhat clumsy formulation. It stems from the fact that the CEP consultants (chapter 5) refer to their work with 'beneficiaries', whereas the SNV advisors refer to their work with 'clients'.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The role of development consultants and advisors is underexplored, in part because of the nature of their work. Their day to day work is undertaken in direct assignments and interaction with clients and beneficiaries, and is thus not usually open to anyone other than those involved. Consultants, in particular, are typically under time pressures laid out by their terms of reference. As result, I faced methodological challenges of different types: trying to open a door to a field that is not normally scrutinised, and gaining access to advisors and consultants with limited availability.

This chapter highlights the methodological issues and challenges encountered in the process of undertaking fieldwork in La Paz and Cochabamba between the August 2006 and May 2007. The chapter is structured as follows: Section 3.2 defines the field of the study, explains the methodology used and why I adopted a case study approach in collecting data on knowledge engagements between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries. Section 3.3 explores the process of gaining access to organisations, consultants and beneficiaries. In this section I also explain the use of two techniques that allowed me to refine the data collection process. I also explore ethical concerns, such as confidentiality and anonymity of research participants. Next, I examine how my own identity, cultural, ethnic and educational background played an important role in the way participants engaged with me. Section 3.4 looks at how data was analysed, the challenges of working in two different languages and the effect of this on the data collection process. On the whole, the process of conducting the fieldwork was a dynamic one, with continual reflection on the focus of the study.

3.2. Research approach

By exploring interactions between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries the thesis attempts to examine how knowledge engagements are framed by regimes of truth within the field of development assistance and more particularly how consultants and advisors reflect on knowledge for development. Thus, this chapter explores the methodological considerations that facilitated the study of such processes in the field. I am using the term field to describe a social arena in which actors struggle in pursuit of desirable results.

In order to explore knowledge engagements and the way they take place, the following research approach was adopted. According to Neuman (1994) research can be divided into three categories:

- **Exploratory:** Asks what this is about? It seeks to formulate more precise questions and methodologies for future research and uses qualitative data extensively.

- **Descriptive:** Asks how did it happen, who is involved? It provides a detailed verbal or numerical picture. It may use most data gathering techniques such as surveys, field research content analysis and historical comparative analysis.
- **Explanatory:** Asks why did it happen? It builds on exploratory and descriptive research and looks for causes and reasons; it links different issues or topics under a general statement.

If we want to understand knowledge engagements we have to describe the role of the actors that participate in such engagements. The field of development assistance consists of a chain of actors that work with each other towards a common aim, that is, to reduce poverty in developing countries. The provision of knowledge is one form of development assistance provided by the chain. The actors closely involved in the delivery of knowledge for development are *development agencies* and *development consultancy companies*. These organisations have the explicit role of providing knowledge services to individuals and institutions in poor countries. Other actors in the chain also participate, for instance, donor countries who fund knowledge services and hire consultants and advisors to assist beneficiaries.

Box 2: Development Assistance Chain

Level	Actors
Macro	Donor government.
	Recipient government.
	Donor's international development agency.
	Sectoral ministries and agencies within the recipient government.
Meso	Third party implementing organisations, including private consultancy companies and other contractors.
	Organised interest groups and civil society organisations within the donor and recipient countries.
Micro	Beneficiaries.

Source: 'The Chain of Aid Delivery' in Clark et al. (2005:62)

Knowledge engagements cannot be fully comprehended if one isolates and limits the analysis of knowledge engagements only to the interactions between development agencies, consultancy companies and beneficiaries. That is why the overall research approach adopted in this thesis assumes that the field of development assistance is constituted by actors that are interconnected with each other. At this point I must differentiate my approach from *social network analysis* which according to Wasserman and Faust (1994:5) postulates the following:

'The unit of analysis in network analysis is not the individuals, but the entity consisting of a collection of individuals and the linkages among them. Network methods focus on dyads (two actors and their ties), triads (three actors and their ties), or large systems (subgroups of individuals, or entire networks) [...] network models conceptualise structure (social, economic, political and so forth) as lasting patterns of relations amongst actors.'

My methodological approach does to a large extent aim to identify linkages between actors through analysing their engagements with each other as individuals (for example consultants, advisors, beneficiaries/clients) at the micro-level. However, it also seeks to explore how the macro-level of power relations and regimes of truth (see section 2.3), the meso-level of development agencies and other organisations, and these micro-engagements, inter-connect.

3.2.1. Defining the field of the study

My field of study is not a neatly defined space. Knowledge engagements between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries are processes in which other development actors are also involved. Moreover, boundaries between development actors are blurred and not clearly defined. This section therefore discusses how knowledge engagements are analysed in the context of the development assistance field. I will attempt to situate knowledge engagements not in isolation but as part of an interconnected field of development actors.

Research on development aid agencies and knowledge for development tends to assume two main methodological patterns. On the one hand, works such as King and McGrath (2004), Riddell (2007) and Easterly (2006) analyse development in practice as it is exercised by multilateral agencies, international NGOs and to some extent by development professionals. Although they provide valuable insights, they shed little light on how the macro-level of development assistance frames the way advisors, consultants and beneficiaries enter in knowledge engagements at the micro level. Another methodological approach tends to analyse micro-processes between individuals at the field level. This approach is used for example by Grammig (2002), Mosse (2005) and Goudge (2003) where ethnography is used in order to describe and analyse the interactions between individuals. This is a rather useful methodological approach that helps us to understand situated interactions between individuals. However, it does help us to establish how micro-processes at the field level are for instance framed or influenced by regimes of truth that emanate from the macro-level of development assistance.

The methodology used in this thesis sustains that micro-processes at the field level have explicative power over the macro- and meso-levels and vice versa. It is thus insufficient to highlight the 'links' between advisors, consultants and international development agencies - one needs to reveal and explicitly establish how micro-processes at the field level can be explained, at least in part, by what happens at the macro- and meso-levels where development agencies produce regimes of truths. This dynamic relationship between micro, meso and macro-levels is made evident when contradictions at the macro- or meso-level are reproduced by advisors and consultants at the field-level. Some of these contradictions are examined in chapter 5 and 6 where consultants' and advisors' jobs are undermined and weakened by the very regimes of truth endorsed by the development agencies for which they work. In short, the methodology adopted in this chapter assumes that knowledge engagements can be properly examined in so far as:

Knowledge engagements are understood as part of an interconnected field.

- Knowledge engagements cannot be limited to the interactions between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries.
- Knowledge engagements are the result of one particular form of development assistance. In this thesis such engagements are limited to two case studies (see chapter 5 and 6)
- There is not a mechanical linear connection between actors in the development assistance field; to the contrary, actors are dynamically connected with each other under one common aim, that is, poverty reduction.
- Understanding knowledge engagements as part of the development assistance field does not mean we have to analyse every single actor within the field; instead, it presupposes that we are aware of their influence and power over knowledge engagements at the micro-level.
- Every actor within the development assistance field is the result of an historical process. Development organisations and development professionals as we know them now, have had changing roles in the past. Key actors within the development assistance chain have evolved and changed their organisational and professional practices, chapter 6 provides a very explicit example of such changes.

Considering the above methodological approach, the field of my study has multiple layers or levels in which development actors are interconnected and in constant interaction with each other. These layers or levels or chains constitute the development assistance field, in which the key actors are: donor governments, recipient governments, international development agencies, third party implementing organisations including private development consultancy companies and target beneficiaries (see section 3.2. for the main actors that constitute the field of development assistance). My focus is the relationship between the macro-level of development assistance, knowledge for development and dominant regime of truth, the meso-level of organisations, and the micro-level of interactions between consultants, advisors and beneficiaries.

The organisational actors involved in my analysis are two: SNV and CEP (although there are obviously other organisations involved in the knowledge engagements, such as local NGOs funded by international agencies). SNV (see chapter 6) is a Dutch development organisation and CEP (see chapter 5) is a development consultancy company. Both actors are located at the meso-level of the chain. They are neither in the same league as multi-lateral or donor country bi-lateral organisations nor at the level of local beneficiaries (although, as we shall see in chapter 6, SNV tends to work with other meso-level organisations in Bolivia). They are situated at the inter-face of macro-level policy and micro-level practices.

SNV and CEP are organisations that share a common goal of providing knowledge for development services and use a common methodology of working through advisors and consultants respectively. However, they differ in one very important aspect: CEP is a Bolivian profit driven organisation directed to Bolivian development, whereas SNV is a Dutch non-profit organisation that works across the developing world. On the one hand, CEP represents a commercialised form of knowledge service, which is hired and paid for by (national and international) development agencies but which is then provided free to Bolivian organisations at micro- or meso- level that are deemed to need these services as part of an aid package. On the other hand, SNV represents western development agencies that provide knowledge services free of charge.

A number of problem areas relevant for this thesis have been raised by existing writers about the development assistance field. For example, Eyben (2005:59) and Pasteur (2006:22-40) suggests that reflexivity is a real challenge for development organisations and is not explicitly practised at any level. Another problem area is the issue of failure. According to some of the literature, actors within the field appear not to be aware of how development interventions have little or no impact (Loomis, 1968; Dichter, 2003; Riddell, 2007:179; Hopkins, 2000:432; Grammig, 2002:7; Mbaku, 2004:21). The problem areas raised by these writers inform my empirical investigation of knowledge engagements, and my investigation in turn illuminates them further by examining knowledge engagements as dynamic processes. I now go on to explain how I adopted a case study approach to do this.

3.2.2. Exploring the field: the use of the case studies

While I recognise that interaction between layers and different development actors are a fundamental part of the institutional landscape, I needed to define the parameters that will allow me to go into the study of knowledge engagements in a manageable and meaningful way. As mentioned in the previous section I chose to study CEP and SNV, two organisations that will provide the institutional setting within which I explore knowledge engagements.

In section 1.3 I defined knowledge engagement as a process whereby knowledge is communicated, shared and exchanged between consultants, advisors and beneficiaries. This is a process that occurs when individuals come to interact with one another in the context of a

development assignment. In both case studies I was able to clearly identify how consultants, advisors and beneficiaries interacted face-to-face with the intention to share and communicate knowledge. Thus, this section discusses the methodological considerations that led me to the use of these case studies.

Yin (1993:13) defines case study as ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’. In addition, Ragin and Becker (2005:3) argues that ‘a case may be theoretical or empirical or both; it may be a relatively bounded object or a *process*; and it may be generic and universal or specific in some way’.

Case studies are appropriate for answering the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions as well as ‘processes’ in social research. Since the thesis deals with knowledge processes, case studies would therefore fit well with the goals of the overall thesis. Within the boundaries of this thesis, I assume that a case study can be any actor (i.e. organisation) within the development assistance field. CEP and SNV both provide the context in which knowledge engagements can be explored.

Case studies are normally based on the idea of focusing on best practices in order to learn from successful cases. As Langrish (1993) points out, ‘if one of the aims of case studies is to improve practice, it seems a good idea to go and look at examples of best practice’. That is why I have purposely secured the cooperation of SNV, perhaps one of the very few development agencies that have ‘advisory services’ as the heart of its work (SNV, 2007, 2007b). Equally, CEP is one of the most important development consultancy companies in Bolivia which could greatly contribute to the study of knowledge process as exercised by development consultants. Both cases provide the institutional context where development professionals can be analysed while they interact or engage with beneficiaries. In addition – and important for the challenge of gaining access outlined at the beginning of the chapter– in both cases, the organisations agreed to collaborate and allowed me to participate in meetings, workshops and observe a number of events that are normally closed to the general public. The possibility to observe how development professionals behave and interact with beneficiaries has helped me to understand how knowledge engagements occur in real life situations.

CEP and SNV are meso-level organisations and thus interact with a number of actors at the macro and micro level. At the time in which the fieldwork was undertaken, CEP had a considerable number of assignments in progress, two of which were conducted for SOS-Faim an international NGO with headquarters in Belgium and SIDA the Swedish development aid agency. These two assignments became the focal point of my research. Access to other potential case studies was not possible. I approached other CEP’s clients and their respective beneficiaries and they did not want to cooperate with my research project. As mentioned before, not many beneficiaries and development agencies were willing to grant permission to interview and follow their beneficiaries and development professionals.

The first case (SOS-Faim) was about building the capacity of farm families in rural areas whereas the second one consisted of training and building the capacity of professionals of Bolivian organisations funded by SIDA. In both sub-cases the process was to provide knowledge services. CEP consultants were hired in order to exchange their expertise with two different sets of beneficiaries. The boundaries of both sub-cases were difficult to pin down insofar as they were part of a field in which actors are articulated with each other at different levels, for instance, both set of beneficiaries (i.e. farmers and consultants) have also direct relationships with SIDA and SOS-Faim and other national and international organisations from which they received aid.

In the case of SNV, I was dealing with a meso-level organisation that provides knowledge services to other meso-level organisations. Like the previous case, SNV provided a context in

which I could explore knowledge engagements. SNV works through development advisors who in turn assist a number of client (i.e. beneficiary, in this case) organisations. These included ministries, municipalities, associations of farmers and so forth. In the organisational context of SNV, advisors and their engagements with clients were the sub-cases. The reason for this is because SNV places a development advisor with each client and it is expected that the host organisation benefits from the expertise of their advisor. However, my analysis was not at the level of comparing these 'sub-cases' as in chapter 5. One reason is that, unlike the sub-cases in chapter 5, professional-to-professional engagements were common to all 'sub-cases' which enabled me to categorise my interviews with advisors and clients into a number of thematic areas. In other words the analytical categories were thematic rather than the sub-cases themselves. The second reason is that it was impractical to examine them as sub-cases because the engagements would take place (and were intended to take place) over relatively long periods of time, and I was consequently unable to follow through.

CEP and SNV have different ways of delivering knowledge services. They each also have a different institutional ethos. While the former is a private development consultancy company, the latter is a non-profit organisation. In both organisations, development professionals have the same role; that is the exchange of knowledge with beneficiaries. Perhaps the most interesting feature of my case studies was the fact that they allowed me to observe and explore the way knowledge engagements are played out in two different but equally dynamic contexts.

3.3. Engaging with multiple actors

Given the multiple layers of the study and the nature of the development assistance field, I needed to assume different styles of engagement with actors. By spending time with individuals and visiting development organisations and villages I gradually developed stronger relations with key individuals and, as they became more comfortable with my role as a researcher, I was able to ask more probing and potentially sensitive questions. In this section I discuss the processes I had gone through in order to gain access to SNV, CEP, advisors, consultants and beneficiaries in villages. This section also describes the process of negotiation as well as the challenges and tensions between different field sites, between different expectations of me as a researcher and research participants.

In August 2006 I contacted a number of international development organisations working in Bolivia as well as national development consultancy companies. These organisations, with the exception of the consultancy companies, provide knowledge for development services or hire other organisations in order to implement projects and provide knowledge services. I had first contacted these organisations with the intention of testing how this research would be received. Most of the organisations were initially interested in participating, but needed a better sense of the implications of doing so. Thus, I went to Bolivia twice. The first time to undertake pilot fieldwork and the second time to conduct the main fieldwork when most of the data was collected.

The pilot fieldwork took place in August 2006 and lasted one month. For me, it sought to test the appropriateness of the first set of research questions, while for the organisations which had shown initial interest, it enabled them to reflect on whether they wished to participate or not. Thus, during this period, I contacted development agencies and negotiated access to case studies. During the pilot fieldwork development organisations such as Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bolivia and CEP showed an interest in the study. A number of meetings were held with representatives of development agencies where the research project was discussed. The pilot fieldwork also helped me to fine tune my set of research questions. However the organisations were very careful about sharing information with respect to their

field level activities. When the pilot came to an end on 30th August 2006, GTZ and CEP were the only organisations that agreed to participate in this research.

The pilot fieldwork findings were analysed and reflected on in the light of the initial focus of the study, which led to a further refinement of the research questions. The main fieldwork started in October 2006 and ended in May 2007. During this time, GTZ took the decision not to participate in the research project, which they thought might have exposed internal issues. The fact that GTZ decided not to take part made me realise that this thesis examines a theme that needs to be treated carefully. Although this thesis is not an assessment of whether development organisations and professionals do their jobs right or wrong, it nonetheless explores and reveals the reality of providing knowledge services to poor countries, requiring development professionals to be reflective and potentially critical of their own and their organisation's practices.

From October 2006 to May 2007 the main fieldwork was undertaken. I had to look for another development organisation to work with, and had to be pragmatic. The process of securing the participation of SNV was rather anecdotal. I had first contacted a senior SNV development advisor who happened to have just arrived at the headquarters in La Paz. After one meeting in which I explained to him the aim of this thesis, he decided that SNV should contribute and participate in my research project. He therefore arranged a meeting with the national director of SNV. After this meeting, I was granted permission to interview advisors, client beneficiaries and to follow them and observe their day-to-day activities. I in turn agreed to present my findings to development advisors, which I did towards the end of my fieldwork in Bolivia. The details and outcomes of this workshop are discussed in chapter 7.

As far as CEP is concerned, the process of negotiation was different. CEP is a private development consultancy company that works for a number of international development organisations. I contacted CEP because it is a well known development consultancy amongst development agencies. CEP took part in this thesis on the assumption that research of this nature could allow them to evaluate critically the way they engage with international development organisations and beneficiaries at the micro-level. The director of the company allowed me to collect data (i.e. project reports, terms references, internal reports and so forth) interview all the consultants in the company as well as development beneficiaries (i.e. farmers). I was also invited to participate as an observer in workshops and meetings.

In both cases, SNV and CEP agreed to take part in this research project because they were interested in improving their organisational practices as well as the quality of their service. They were both informed that they would be expected to reflect on their own practices and on the way their development professionals work on the ground. In both cases I found that a relatively large number of advisors and consultants were able to critically assess the organisations they worked for and their own practices, although they did not officially share their views with their organisations.

3.3.1. Interview process

Semi-structured interview was the chosen method to collect data. According to Gray (2004:215): 'Semi-structured interviews are non-standardised, and are often used in qualitative analysis. The interviewer has a list of issues and questions to be covered, but may not deal with all of them in each interview. The order of questions might also change depending on what direction the interview takes. Indeed, additional questions might be asked, and may include some which are not anticipated at the start of the interview. The semi-structured interview allows for the probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to

expand on their answers. This kind of interview can provide a degree of structure and flexibility at the same time'. This type of interview allowed me to work through questions prepared beforehand. It also allowed me to explore issues raised by respondents and react directly to what they were saying. This interview method was particularly relevant when I was interviewing individuals that conduct their work based on experience and expertise.

The interview schedule began with a brief explanation of the purpose of the research project. Previously in this chapter I have explained that the interviews were mainly confined to advisors, consultants, beneficiaries and to an extent, included other individuals involved in knowledge services. It was stressed that the research did not involve any assessment of whether their professional practices were good or bad or right or wrong. Efforts were made to make the interviewee feel comfortable about being interviewed. It seemed that all interviewees understood the purpose of the research and contributed by answering questions in an open and friendly manner. All interviews were recorded digitally and additional notes were taken throughout the interviewing process.

The interviews I had conducted can be divided in two groups. The first group consisted of development professionals, that is, advisors and consultants. A large number of these professionals were trained in interview skills. I therefore needed to be cautious and accurate while asking questions. On the whole, the experience of interviewing development professionals was relatively easy insofar as they understood well what I was looking for in terms of data.

The second group consisted of beneficiaries, including farmers who had low levels of literacy and had limited knowledge of Spanish language. When interacting with them I needed to spend more time in thinking about how to engage with them around the same issues. Some of the interview questions had some theoretical elements that development professionals were able to engage with. Farmers did not have the same level of understanding of certain highly technical words. Thus, I used examples that they could relate to, and I also avoided technical language.

Not all interviewees were asked the same questions and yet all questions revolved around the core themes of thesis. Most answers varied in length and emphasis. In both cases, development professionals and beneficiaries answered questions that allowed me to construct a map of views and perceptions of knowledge processes.

3.3.2. Direct observation

Direct observation during the fieldwork was an important source of data. As a researcher I had the opportunity to attend a number of formal and informal meetings, workshops and other activities. In all these events, I undertook *systematic observation* of the way beneficiaries and development professionals engage with each other. One of the major advantages of observation is its directness. As Robson (2002:310) points out, 'you don't ask people about their views, feelings or attitudes; you watch what they do and listen to what they say'. In some instances, data emanated from direct observation corroborated the same interviewees' answers. Equally, there were circumstances where I identified a radical mismatch between answers provided in interviews and the way the very same interviewees behaved in the field.

For instance, during an interview, a couple of SNV advisors strongly criticised the way some Western experts wrongly advocated their superiority in terms of culture and knowledge over beneficiaries in poor countries. It was striking to witness how the same people were in some circumstances behaving in the same way that they criticised in interviews. It was therefore evident that some respondents tended to rationalise their answers during interviews. It has to be said that the type of location also mattered a great deal. For instance, when meetings and

workshops took place in villages, local beneficiaries tended to be more critical of the role of agencies. In these circumstances, development professionals tended to assume a very passive attitude and even supported the views of local beneficiaries. Something different occurred when meetings and workshops took place in capital cities where beneficiaries travelled long hours from their villages. In these types of events, beneficiaries tended to assume a very humble attitude towards development professionals and agency representatives.

One interesting aspect of undertaking systematic observation in different places and circumstances is people's awareness of my presence. It needed time until they (i.e. farmers, SNV advisors and CEP consultants) perceived me as part of their working environment.

3.3.3. Ethics

While this chapter as a whole presents ethical issues I encountered during my research, this section explicitly addresses some specific issues about consent and anonymity.

Brydon (2006:25) starts her chapter on ethical practices in development research by posing the following questions: what do we mean by ethics in the writing - and doing - of development research? Why is it important to make sure that research plans and practices are ethical? And more importantly what ought we to do when carrying out development research or writing? Her first answer is: 'there are, of course, no short answers here' (ibid.). What I present in this section are therefore the dilemmas and the way I produced best possible solutions to a number of ethical concerns.

In the process of investing consultants' and advisors' perceptions, reflections and practices, there was a good chance of revealing sensitive issues. The conduct of interviews thus has to follow the principles of fully informed consent. Interviewees were informed at first contact of the purpose of the study, my personal interest as a researcher, the use of recording equipment, their right not to participate in the study, to remain anonymous and to withdraw consent at any time. Where the interviewee requested, recording devices were turned off and an agreement as to how the researcher would use 'off the record' information was reached. Interviewees were not interested in seeing the transcripts as long as they remained anonymous. They were also aware the implications of this study - that is why all interviewees chose to be anonymous.

I have tried to provide anonymity to participants in writing up this research. I have considered the possibility that people engaged in development assistance work in Bolivia may be able to locate the places and people mentioned in this thesis. I have thus sought to depersonalise informants' comments as much as possible. I have also chosen to omit certain data and events that I considered to be too specific and potentially damaging.

Advisors, consultants and beneficiaries were made aware that I was at all times taking notes and recording interviews. On several occasions I had the opportunity to discuss with interviewees issues that were not covered in official interviews. Most of these conversations were informal and while having coffee or lunch. Even in these circumstances, development professionals as well as beneficiaries were made aware that such conversations could have been used as data.

It is not in my interest to produce negative statements about the role of development agencies in poor countries nor to diminish the role of development professionals. However, in the development of this thesis, I had the opportunity to see the way development professionals are aware of the real impact of their own work (similar concerns are explored by Chambers, 2002). There were a large number of development professionals who have ethical standpoints

and are able to look critically at their jobs. Some interviewees saw this thesis as an opportunity to make a case about the real situation of the development assistance field in general.

Interview data along with observational notes are presented and organised around the set of questions that have guided the development of this thesis. The process of analysing data as well as answering the research questions has led me to assume a particular attitude towards my data. I am aware that anonymity could not be fully achieved in all cases. Some of the interviews contain details that could clearly lead to the identification of the interviewee. Because of this potential problem, I have discussed and explained to interviewees that one of the ultimate goals of this thesis is to provide an honest exploration of how knowledge engagements can be improved.

3.3.4. My identity as researcher and its impact of the research

This section explores how my ethnic background and personal biography have played a role in the process of collecting data and engaging with development professionals and beneficiaries. Firstly, I attempt to describe and explain how my identity shaped the terms of engagement with the individuals I observed and interviewed. Secondly I make a comment on how this identity has also influenced how I have interpreted the data I eventually collected

Collecting the data: my engagement with the individuals I observed and interviewed

That ‘locals’ can understand other ‘locals’, is perhaps one of the most pervasive assumptions in development practice and research. This thesis shows in later chapters, however, how local development professionals were unable to comprehend the life and context of farmers in rural areas in Bolivia. When I decided to undertake my fieldwork in Bolivia I assumed that my identity and ethnic background could have allowed me to interact with locals and collect data in an efficient manner. I have also considered the fact that I did not have to hire an interpreter. I was capable of speaking the official language and to limited extent I was able to understand and speak some of the indigenous languages, therefore I assumed I was able to understand some of the national idiosyncrasy. The reality was slightly different: my cultural and ethnic background helped me only to a limited extent and not as I expected. For instance, when I interacted with farmers and other development beneficiaries in rural areas I was able to establish communication fairly easily. However, they were very careful in their comments. Besides the fact that we were all Bolivians they did not see me as their equal. My articulated Spanish as well as the way I dressed made them realise that I was not part of the immediate context. In some instances, however, the fact that I was Bolivian inspired trust amongst farmers and other local individuals who in many instances talked to me as if I had some power over development agencies. It took some time to build up an amicable relationship with the farmers and locals who were part of the case studies I analysed.

All the beneficiaries I spoke to during my fieldwork were fully aware that development agencies were in Bolivia to provide grants and/or knowledge services. Almost all my interviews tended to end up with the following question directed at me: do you know of other agencies or NGOs that could help us? Can you negotiate some extra money with the head of the project? This question and others were posed to me as if I were the representative of a development agency. Even though I had repeatedly introduced myself as a researcher, local farmers were inclined to see me as a development officer and not as a Bolivian researcher. This issue is also raised by Apentiik and Lapart (2006:37) who point out that communities tend to perceive researchers as representatives of either national or international donor agencies.

Engaging with foreigners was a different process. It was neither my nationality nor my ability to speak English but the institution I represented that allowed me to establish a good level of communication with development organisations. Being a PhD student from a UK based

university gave me the chance to walk into the World Bank office with ease. It has to be said that access to certain organisations such as USAID or UNDP is highly restricted for Bolivian nationals and yet I had few problems in talking to development professionals that work in such organisations.

While in the process of collecting data and interacting with beneficiaries and development professionals, I was constantly traversing between the space of an insider, outsider and sometimes neither. It was difficult to come to terms with the fact that I was an individual trapped in two cultural and institutional scenarios. In one, I was perceived as local but not local enough to comprehend the complexities of the local culture. In the other scenario, I was perceived as a local who knew a lot about the culture of international western organisations.

A comment on interpreting the data in the light of my personal background and biography

My personal background and biography have played a role in the way I have addressed and interpreted the qualitative data produced for this thesis. This is in line with the assertion by Rossman and Rallis (1998:9) that one of the key features of qualitative research is a ‘sensitivity to personal biography’ where valuing the unique perspective of the researcher is ‘a source of understanding rather than something to be cleansed from the study’.

Thus, in this thesis I am happy to proclaim my identity as Bolivian, as someone who has seen the ‘aid business’ at work in my country, as someone who has worked in this business (see chapter 1, section 1.4), and finally as someone who tacitly believes that much of the development aid in Bolivia has done more harm than good. Inevitably this perspective influences my interpretation of the data I have collected, although I have also reflected critically on the perspective throughout my work. I have not, thus, been immune to other interpretations and perspectives and have expected to be challenged by them. Thus, in the course of this research and the production of this thesis, I have indeed modified my starting interpretations after discussions with my supervisors, fellow PhD students and peers at workshops and conferences. All of these challenges and discussions, as well as my personal biography, have added to the richness of my interpretation.

3.4. Data analysis

In this section I explain the methods used to analyse my data. This is followed by a reflection of how my cultural and professional background have influenced the way I have handled the data. Lastly, I discuss the challenge of working in two languages and the way development assistance ‘vocabulary’ is very often misunderstood by beneficiaries.

The qualitative analysis of the interviews was guided by the literature on qualitative data analysis (Moore, 2000; Jensen, 2002; Silverman, 2005 and Flick, 2006). I started by moving from a broad open coding process to more specific categories. The main codes were structured around the following themes:

Theme 1: Knowledge.
<i>Sub-themes 1:</i> knowledge for development, capacity building, tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge, knowledge transfer, knowledge exchange, and knowledge management.
The theory outlined in chapter 2 and summarised in Box 1, allowed me to scrutinize how data around these key themes shed light on the following concerns: - Do regimes of truth produce and establish forms of knowledge about and for developing countries? [Foucault]

<p>- To what extent are individuals who engage with one another in knowledge engagements reflective beings? [Habermas] Chapter 7 and 8 discuss the way my empirical data inform the theory and vice versa.</p>
<p>Theme 2: Development Assistance. <i>Sub-themes 2:</i> technical assistance, technical cooperation, development discourse, donor countries and power relations.</p>
<p>The theory outlined in chapter 2 and summarised in Box 1, allowed me to scrutinize how data around these key themes shed light on the following concerns: - To what extent are these regimes of truth accepted by all actors in the development assistance chain?[Foucault] - Is there evidence of meeting technical, hermeneutic and emancipatory cognitive interests? [Habermas] Chapter 7 and 8 discuss the way my empirical data inform the theory and vice versa.</p>
<p>Theme 3: Development Professionals. <i>Sub-themes 3:</i> consultants, advisors, knowledge practices, experts from developed countries and experts from developing countries.</p>
<p>The theory outlined in chapter 2 and summarised in Box 1, allowed me to scrutinize how data around these key themes shed light on the following concerns: - To what extent are advisors and consultants vehicles of power and points of application through which regimes of truth are disseminated and exercised? [Foucault] - What is the evidence for the 4 conditions for mutual understanding being met (see section 2.4).? [Habermas] Chapter 7 and 8 discuss the way my empirical data inform the theory and vice versa.</p>
<p>Theme 4: CEP – Commercialised forms of knowledge services. <i>Sub-themes 4:</i> types of development services, power relations and reflexivity.</p>
<p>The theory outlined in Chapter 2 and summarised in Box 1, allowed me to scrutinize how data around these key themes shed light on the following concerns: - To what extent do these services focus on choosing the best means to achieve given ends without questioning the ends themselves? I.e. Meeting technical cognitive interests only? [Habermas] Chapter 7 and 8 discuss the way my empirical data inform the theory and vice versa.</p>
<p>Theme 5: SNV/Non-commercialised forms of knowledge services. <i>Sub-themes 5:</i> development discourse, institutional practices and reflexivity.</p>
<p>The theory outlined in chapter 2 and summarised in Box 1, allowed me to scrutinize how data around these key themes shed light on the following concerns: - To what extent do these services focus on choosing the best means to achieve given ends without questioning the ends themselves? I.e. Meeting technical cognitive interests only? [Habermas] Chapter 7 and 8 discuss the way my empirical data inform the theory and vice versa.</p>
<p>Theme 6: Development beneficiaries <i>Sub-themes 6:</i> perceptions, assumptions and reflexivity.</p>
<p>The theory outlined in chapter 2 and summarised in Box 1, allowed me to scrutinize how data around these key themes shed light on the following concerns: - To what extent do similar and dissimilar lifeworlds (or background consensus) affect differently the ways development advisors and consultants engage with beneficiaries? [Habermas] Chapter 7 and 8 discuss the way my empirical data inform the theory and vice versa.</p>

Each interview was initially coded in a relatively open way (coding in this case was not however via means of grounded theory but was partially guided by prior reading and the research questions which in turn are informed by Foucault’s and Habermas’ key concepts). These primary concepts were ‘mapped’ using Banaxia Decision explorer (See Appendix No.2) as an illustrative tool in order to create a picture of each interview and demonstrate the links that each interviewee made between primary concepts. Interview maps could then be compared to see whether interviewees were making the same connections between the

primary codes. Maps illustrated both causal and non causal relationships between concepts. For example some interviews produced the concept of an assumed 'lack of knowledge' (concept A) of farmers which interviewees suggested giving rise to, or causing 'development interventions' (concept B). Other interviewees however did not link A and B in the same way and drew upon a third or fourth or even fifth concept to explain the rise of development interventions, for example, the 'non-validation of existing farmer's knowledge'.

Where the same patterns and relationships between concepts were illustrated across different maps, a process of triangulation occurred, allowing me to understand that there exists a common perception amongst these actors. Where maps showed different relationships between concepts, this led to further analysis and allowed me to theorise why different understandings might exist between actors or groups of actors.

Primary codes at an early stage could be grouped into emerging sub themes and then themes, and reflecting on the observations made from the initial maps and relationships between the primary concepts, led to a more detailed understanding of these themes.

Not all interviewees were used in this thesis. I have conducted a good number of introductory interviews that do not necessarily engage with the core themes of the thesis. There was an imperative need to first build up trust with consultants, advisors and beneficiaries before more detailed interviews were carried out. Therefore, the interviews I used throughout the thesis are those which shed light on the questions posed in chapter 2.

3.4.1. Language and writing challenges

After seven months of fieldwork in Bolivia I had conducted a total of 70 interviews out of which 90% were conducted in Spanish and the rest in English. Transcribing and translating all my interviews was in fact a major challenge. Different meanings and lack of homogenous definitions across development organisations and research institutions can potentially undermine one's research. Before I conducted interviews I faced the challenge of making sense out of the terminology used by researchers and practitioners. There is not a consensus on the meanings of concepts across development organisations - every agency as well as research institution tended to have their own definitions of words such as knowledge management, poverty, developing country and capacity building.

While undertaking interviews with beneficiaries and development professionals I realised that some of the labels used in the field did not have an accurate translation into Spanish. For instance 'livelihood' was the label used by farmers and development professionals alike and yet they did not know how to translate it. In a number of meetings and informal gatherings with beneficiaries I enquired how they were able to use such labels and other words without having an accurate translation and sometimes without knowing what it meant. Beneficiaries might not know a great deal about the concepts or definitions used by development professionals. However, they know very well that as long as they make use of the agencies' vocabulary, they have more chance of receiving aid. This point has been illustrated by Win (2004:125), when he explains the way language is used by beneficiaries who are somehow forced to use development agencies' language in order to secure aid.

'My language has also changed. Gone are the various words I used to describe women's reality in this part of the world. I now play what I call the word game. Accountability, transparency, civil society, good governance, poverty alleviation, engaging the state, critical, cutting edge, stake holders, participation, advocacy. I could go on and on. These are the words we now use. Yes, we do believe in these concepts. We do work around them. But it is almost as though if we don't use these words, we fail the test. Remember that report I wrote in 1999? How you

sent it back with lots of questions and comments because you said you couldn't follow what it is we were trying to say? Well, the simple solution was to use all of the big favourite words. It worked like magic. You stopped complaining.'

It was interesting to observe how beneficiaries and particularly farmers appeared not to be interested in finding out the meaning of the labels. However, they knew very well that the agencies' vocabulary needed to be used in workshops and meetings with agencies and development professionals. On a number of occasions, I found myself interviewing beneficiaries that spoke Spanish as their second language. Thus, the process of translating and explaining one label that is a concept in itself was tremendously challenging. A word such as 'knowledge' is not just a word but a concept.

3.5. Conclusions

This chapter has illustrated how real life research does not unfold in a linear manner. Instead, it is a rather dynamic process in which the actors being analysed are not always accessible. This chapter has explored three main methodological stages. In the first part, I have defined the field in which knowledge engagements take place. On this point, I put special emphasis on the way the field of development assistance is constituted by interconnected agents. From here I passed onto establish the focus of my study and the reason for which I used case studies as a way into the analysis of knowledge engagements. I explained that case studies allowed me to study real life processes. Next I described the process of gaining access to development organisations and development professionals. This is followed by an explanation of the methods I used in order to collect data. In this section, I also discussed the extent to which my personal background helped me to establish communication with beneficiaries and development professionals and has been an influence on my interpretation of the data I have collected. In the third part of this chapter I discussed the challenges I faced while working in two languages and how development assistance vocabulary is used and perceived by beneficiaries when interacting with development professionals and agencies representatives.

In all, this chapter has presented the distinct dimensions or layers of my research work. It also illustrated the fact the field of development assistance is constituted by agents who are interconnected and perform a role within the development assistance chain. This aspect of relationships was of particular importance to my research, as I sought to understand how advisors, consultants and beneficiaries viewed and represented themselves and others. Perhaps some of the key insights I gained during the processes of data collection arose from witnessing the effects of people and organisations crossing boundaries and interacting with people outside their more usual setting.

CHAPTER 4

COUNTRY CONTEXT

4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines some of the main socioeconomic reforms implemented in Bolivia in the past few decades. The overall aim of this chapter is to provide some historical background about the macro-level context in which consultants and advisors have been working. The historic role of development experts in Bolivia is underexplored and so this chapter puts together some of the limited documents that testify to their work within development programmes. The evidence presented in this chapter dates back to the 1950s when the first Technical Assistance agreements were signed between the Bolivian government, the UN and the USA.

Although underexplored, consultants and advisors in Bolivia have played an important role in the way major structural adjustment programmes and reforms have been designed and implemented. The chapter argues firstly that Bolivia has historically played by the rules of the development assistance field; it has implemented a number of programmes designed and mentored by international development organisations. Second, constraints such as weak national institutions and political instability are historically unsolved problems that have undermined development interventions. Third, the chapter underlines the extent to which foreign aid has dominated Bolivian economic and social policy, and development interventions in general, in which consultants and advisors play a part. This situation is nowadays reflected by the number of consultants and advisors working in almost every ministry of the Bolivian government. Lastly, the chapter illustrates how consultants and advisors in development are part of a powerful foreign aid apparatus. This sets up the analysis in the fieldwork chapters 5-7, which concerns the extent to which they: (i) reinforce this apparatus; and (ii) offer opportunities for doing something different.

4.2. Brief historical background and country facts

This section provides a brief historical background and some key country facts. First, it shows how national institutions have been a historical problem for the country with roots in the colonial period. Second, it explores the main characteristics of the national economy and how it has undergone major economic and social changes. Third, the section looks at the relationship between the country and the development assistance apparatus in general. Overall Bolivia suffers major structural problems, namely political instability and heavy dependency on international aid.

Bolivia was a Spanish colony between 1538 and 1825. During this period the Spanish empire exploited the natural resources and did little to set up national institutions to govern Bolivia. The colonial history of Bolivia is perhaps shared by other countries in Central and South America. However, within the Americas as a whole, there is a difference between those colonies ruled by the British and Spanish empires respectively. In North America, the British Empire left behind institutions that allowed the United States to develop its government and socioeconomic structure after independence. Przeworski and Curvale (2005:2-3) point out that 'United States and Canada reached their independence without having to drastically interrupt the role of their national institutions. Much to the contrary, the Spanish empire did not set up national or sub-national institutions in their colonies'. Therefore, Central and South American countries did not have national institutions in place after independence from Spain. Moreover, the Bolivian political and socioeconomic apparatus did not really exist until the early 1900s. On this point, Przeworski and Curvale (2005) assert that much if not all the institutions that later appeared were established by military organised forces and national elites. In the case of Bolivia, the state was governed by family elites and military forces that constituted an oligarchic type of regime until the 1980s.

Since 1825, when Bolivia gained its independence, it has had almost 200 military coups. The fact that Bolivia has had problems in setting up effective, robust and stable national

institutions has undermined national development. The lack of strong institutions has also, to some extent, weakened and constrained the role of development organisations. Authors such as Chandra and Sideras (2006:6) also note that weak institutions are part of the colonial heritage that undermines development endeavours. In chapter 6 I further explore this issue in relation to the knowledge engagements of SNV advisors.

By the end of the 1950s all the Central and South American countries had embarked on the first stage of industrialisation, and some had even become semi-industrialised. Despite the abundance of cheap unskilled labour and natural resources, countries in the region lacked know-how which resulted in high costs and mismanagement of national industries (Bulmer-Thomas, 2003:288-289). During the 1950s, countries in the region did not have the technical ability to compete with other developing countries and much less the industrialised regions. In addition, the large masses of indigenous people did not have adequate levels of literacy which contributed to the slow economic progress of the region and particularly of Bolivia. What is more, despite its historical capacity to generate production and wealth, mainly based on silver, tin, and gas exploitation, Bolivia still faces the challenge to redistribute its wealth and to create employment and income for the majority of the population.

The indigenous population of Bolivia is classified into two large groups according to where they live. The first group live in the lowlands of the Amazonian region and the second lives in the highlands of the Altiplano region. In 2007, the estimated population of the country was 9,119,155 inhabitants out of which 42% live in the Altiplano region in the west, followed by 30% in the eastern part of the country and 29% in highland valleys in the central part of the country. Bolivia has a young and ethnically diverse population, 35% of the population is younger than 15, nearly 60% is 15-64, and only 4% is 65 and older (INE, 2007:113). Bolivia is not dominated by any single ethnic group. The last national census in 2001 estimated that the population is constituted of the following ethnic groups: Mestizo (mix-raced) 30%, Quechua 28%, Aymara 19%, and European small ethnic groups constitute the remaining 11% (INE 2007:398).

Spanish is spoken by 87% of the population, Quechua by 34%, and Aymara is the other prominent language. The indigenous population makes up 70% of the total population (INE 2007:398). However from colonial times until recently this proportion of the population has not been represented in the political sphere of Bolivia. It is only recently that the large masses of indigenous people played an important role, when Evo Morales, the first ever indigenous president, was elected in 2006. Since then Bolivia has experienced profound social and political transformations that have put a lot of pressure on its democracy. Historically, the government has been influenced and dominated heavily by rather narrow oligarchic interests. Together with corruption, lack of transparency, and continued exclusion of the poorest, the result is the high levels of inequality that have fuelled racial discrimination between white European descendants and native Bolivians. The current government is the object of the hopes of transformation of the oppressed groups of society. As Orellana (2007:19) explains: ‘the current government led by Evo Morales represents the ant-imperialist struggle of recent years, and it signifies political sovereignty’.

Bolivia is the poorest country in South America, in 2005 it had a GDP of USD 9.3 billion and a population of 9.2 million people. 2005 figures also show an annual per capita income of USD 1,010 in 2005 and poverty rates of 90% in rural areas (INE, 2007:352). In addition to extreme poverty, Bolivia remains highly dependent on the exploitation of natural resources such as agriculture, mining and hydrocarbons that account for more than 40% of the economic activity and almost 80% of exports (INE, 2007:549). This economic profile reflects a narrow based economic growth model, and means that moderate economic growth figures do not impact on poverty. Furthermore, 85% of the employment is generated by micro and small enterprises which are characterised by their high level of informality – 65% of urban employment is informal – with poor quality employment conditions (no social insurance, low

income, long working days) especially affecting women because of their dominant participation in this sector (75 of every 100 micro entrepreneurs are women) (INE, 2007:290-291).

With regards to the development assistance apparatus, Bolivia receives aid from international financial agencies, bilateral agencies and international NGOs based in developed countries. Financial organisations such as the IMF, IDB and WB provide loans on preferential terms. Loans are allocated to different sectors, of which education, health, basic sanitation and transport are the most important. Bolivia has benefited from a large number of loans since the 1950s. Bolivia has had a good record of implementing programmes designed by international organisations and therefore it has managed to secure ongoing financial aid and technical assistance.

Between 1998 and 2002 Bolivia received US\$ 614 million annually in official aid from donations and soft loans. This amount increased to US\$ 766.6 million in 2007. This equals approximately 8% of the country's GNP. Around 60% of this figure stems from multilateral institutions (mainly the World Bank, Confederación Andina de Fomento, the Inter-American Development Bank and UNICEF) and the rest from bilateral donors (mostly USA, Japan, Germany, Netherlands) (VIPFE, 2005). These funds have multiple aims such as decentralisation, alternative development, education, health, water and sanitation, and are channelled mainly through governmental programmes or well established organisations. There is also a substantial amount of aid coming from Western international NGOs to local NGOs and grassroots organisations (i.e. OECAs).

National political instability predominantly driven by a narrow-based economy are structural obstacles for the achievement of the MDGs. Government research centres in charge of monitoring the national economy argue that reducing poverty and achieving the MDGs in Bolivia will not happen without an increase in per capita income via employment generation (UDAPE, 2007,). The country has a precarious labour structure, with high levels of unemployment that are unlikely to be solved by 2015. This situation is indeed worsened by the lack of strong national institutions in the country.

4.3. Development laboratory: economic reforms, development programmes and pro-poor policies

This section examines the main economic and social development policies implemented in Bolivia since the 1980s. It shows how Bolivia has followed the agenda set by international development organisations, the World Bank and the IMF being the most important ones. From the application of structural adjustment programmes to the implementation of pro-poor policies, Bolivia has been strongly influenced by donors and international organisations concerned with poverty eradication endeavours. This section examines the development assistance and policy field in which consultants and advisors work, the power of development organisations and the way that Bolivia has become a development laboratory where programmes, policies and other structural adjustment methods have been implemented. The section argues that on the one hand Bolivia is still a poor country, although there have been some positive changes in the way development aid is channelled across the country to key areas, and on the other hand, the changes at the socioeconomic level are gradual and there is a strong sense of external determination of policies and processes.

4.3.1 Structural adjustment and indebtedness

During the 1970s and early 80s, Bolivia, as well as other Central and South American countries, followed an economic model in which the state assumed control of the economy.

During these years, Bolivia achieved some degree of industrialisation. However, during the mid 1980s the Bolivian government was spending more than it received from taxes, which combined with political instability, resulted in hyperinflation, severe budget deficit and the build up of a huge external debt (Iriarte, 2000:386). In these circumstances, Bolivia was persuaded to adopt diverse structural adjustment programmes designed by the IMF, and the World Bank.

The first programme was called the Structural Adjustment Facility and was introduced in 1985 with the intention to regulate the already deteriorated macroeconomic structure of Bolivia. Thus, the government put in place an economic programme entitled 'The New Economic Policy – NEP'. This plan redefined the role of government towards international free markets and gradually opened up the economy to foreign competition (Aranibar, 2000:3). Some of the key measures adopted under these plans included fiscal reforms, market liberalisation, exchange rate policy reform, and free flow of capital.

Later in the 1990s, another programme was adopted, this time named the 'Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility' (ESAF). It had immediate effects on the economy in reducing inflation and stabilising the exchange rate. It brought a second phase of adjustment policies such as privatisation and capitalisation of those services provided by the state (e.g. electricity, oil and gas, telecommunications, transportation and water). Under capitalisation, the state transferred shares equivalent to 50 percent of each of its companies to foreign investors. The overall aim of this policy was to encourage foreign investment in key sectors of the economy (Barja and Urquiola, 2003). However, the capitalisation process was not accepted by large masses of Bolivia who witnessed employment decreases in former state-owned companies and massive price increases for utilities. Under these circumstances, farmers and people in urban areas decided to protest against the government. Like previous structural adjustment programmes, the process of capitalisation was heavily promoted by the World Bank and IMF.

In addition to the above courses of action, other policies were implemented under the ESAF. They included the Law of Popular Participation and the Law of Administrative Decentralisation as well as educational and health reforms. These measures were regarded as major institutional changes in the organisation and functioning of the government (Urdininea, 2000:59-63), which I return to below. Unlike the first measures adopted in the mid 1990s, these measures aimed to improve the welfare of the population by targeting poverty in its different dimensions. This was one of the first times in which poverty as such was officially targeted.

By 1997 Bolivia qualified for a debt relief programme known as the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative, proposed by international financial organisations (e.g. IMF and World Bank). This programme tried to make more sustainable the external debt while addressing both economic and social problems experienced at the time. The HIPC programme sought to use financial resources that were made available after the debt relief. In the first instance, these funds were destined for social sectors such as health and education. Eventually, the inclusion of the HIPC agenda added a new dimension to the way structural programmes were applied. This time, poverty came to be the key component of policy (CEDLA, 2003:2). In September 1999 the ESAF was replaced by a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility. The government of Bolivia was required to create a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in order to remain in the HIPC initiative and be eligible to receive further foreign aid from bilateral and multilateral donors.

Thus poverty became gradually the main focus of development programmes promoted by international development organisations and aid agencies. During this time, it became very clear that the provision of any form of aid was attached to conditions. Bolivia is perhaps an emblematic case that clearly shows how international development organisations, foreign aid and conditionality are able to shape the economic and social policies of the country. This has

become the standard way through which aid is channelled to Bolivia and the developing world in general. On this point, Cling (2002:7) noted that the strategy to fight poverty must be formulated in and by the beneficiaries of the country. Yet, such strategies must also meet the requirements of donors and international development organisations. This is necessary if the country is to have access to financial aid.

4.3.2 Post structural adjustment era

The previous sub-section has illustrated how a number of structural measures were implemented and how poverty became the focus of development programmes. During the 1990s, it was argued that economic growth and increasing openness to foreign trade had a positive impact on the level of income amongst deprived people in poor countries. This approach was rooted in the idea that poverty reduction can be achieved by 'trickle-down' mechanisms and was the official approach adopted by the World Bank, and exemplified in the famous paper by Dollar and Kray (2000). In addition, this approach used a very restricted view of poverty later to change in the World Bank to some extent in its 2000 World Development Report and in its Voices of the Poor publications of the early 2000s): economic growth and GDP per-capita were the main criteria to define and measure it (Urquidínea, 2000: 36-39). Nevertheless, the World Bank's definition of poverty was disseminated and used in a hegemonic manner across developing countries at that time.

The Bolivian economy has shown a cyclical behaviour since the first structural adjustment programme onwards. For instance GDP per-capita and GDP growth increased steadily between 1987 and 2007. However, during this period both indicators decreased substantially in 1992. Thus, the average GDP growth between 1994 and 1998 was 4.7%. The increase in GDP was caused by the increase in foreign direct investment that resulted from the privatisation and capitalisation of state-owned enterprises. As mentioned before, GDP growth declined during 1990s, probably as a consequence of the external shocks generated by the financial crises in neighbouring countries as well as domestic economic constraints. Notwithstanding the cyclical performance of the Bolivian economy, structural adjustment programmes have successfully prevented the problem of hyperinflation. During the 1990s and in early 2000, a steady decrease of inflation was displayed. In 1990 the inflation rate was 20%, later in 2001 the inflation rate was less than 2% and more recently in 2007, inflation has increased to a manageable 4.9% (INE, 2007:645).

Regarding external debt, there have been some changes in its composition throughout all the SAPs. Private and bilateral debt decreased remarkably during the whole period. However, in recent years Bolivia's external debt has increased despite the debt relief granted under the HIPC initiative. The last official estimate was US\$ 5.7 billion in 2004 (UDAPE 2007).

Although some of the objectives set by the structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s and 1990s have been achieved, the living standards of poor people have not improved. Thile and Wielbelt (2003:8-11) and Jemio and Choque (2003:7) argue that this unsatisfactory progress was due to the uneven socioeconomic structure of Bolivia, in which sectors such as traditional agriculture and informal sectors are deeply inter-connected and thus differences in levels of poverty are accentuated across the population.

Thus to summarise, the Bolivian economy after structural adjustment has been cyclical in its behaviour. Its international debt has increased, and the longer term impact of these reforms is still to be seen. However, what is already evident is the dominance and control that donor countries and international development agencies exert over the internal affairs of Bolivia. This chapter in many respects illustrates how foreign aid and the organisations that provide financial assistance have the power to change and shape socioeconomic structure of any developing country that is in need of international grants and loans.

In addition to the above reforms, the Bolivian government has also applied other major policies in the areas of education and health, and has joined in other initiatives introduced by international development organisations oriented to reducing poverty linked to the HIPC initiative. In relation to this initiative, PRSPs emerged as a framework to fight poverty. I go on to consider these aspects of the policy context.

4.3.3. Social policies

This section outlines some of the key social policies implemented by the Bolivian government in the last 20 years. International development organisations have been behind the design of the major social policies implemented in Bolivia. In addition, social policies have been influenced by other policies and approaches of the epoch, for example, participatory development in the early 1990s and the PRSPs linked to the HIPC initiative in the late 1990s. This section also underlines how international development organisations are able to promote and influence the design of key social policies in Bolivia.

Although the SAPs were not explicitly designed to explicitly alleviate poverty they had an impact on the levels of income amongst poor people Urdininea (2000:57-59). In the 1990s, social policies became more important, as several measures were implemented to improve education, health, and basic sanitation services, amongst others. During the same decade concepts such as human capital started to appear and thus became a central part of social policies that targeted poverty. Some of these policies, especially those on participation, decentralization and the engagement of civil society, both through legislation and the PRSP, are now an important part of the setting in which consultants and advisors work.

4.3.3.1. Popular Participation and Administrative Decentralization

In the mid-1990s, the government launched some reforms that explicitly targeted poverty. These were measures rooted in the theory of social development that endorses participation as an important element of social development processes. According to Midgley (1986:4) ‘participation in the context of social development is a reaction against the centralization, bureaucratization, and rigidity of the state’. Like the adjustment programmes, popular participation was promoted by the World Bank where ‘participatory development was developed in the 1980s by a group of development consultants’ (Forsyth, 2005:507).

In 1994, the Bolivian government introduced the ‘Law of Popular Participation’. It aimed to encourage and promote the participation of civil society and rural communities in the process of planning development strategies for their own regions. This law allowed individuals to participate and identify the real needs of 314 municipalities across Bolivia. It also implemented ‘Social Control which is a political mechanism by which representatives from civil society are allowed to participate in the process of project formulation and implementation of development projects’ (Llanos and Grandchant 2002:26).

In 1995 the ‘Law of Administrative Decentralisation’ was introduced. This law granted autonomy to municipalities to administrate their own financial resources. The law established that 20% of total national tax revenues should be transferred to the municipalities according to their population. This process was entitled ‘co-participation’. Its objective was to transfer financial resources and power from the central government down to municipalities, so that the latter can assume the responsibility of providing public goods to the general public. Thus, an important part of public spending is now managed by the municipalities in order to supply and meet the basic services, health, education and infrastructure (Urdininea, 2000:59-63).

The above two laws are amongst the most important measures adopted by the government in the last 20 years. They have allowed civil society to engage with the way policies were exercised. They have channelled resources to the regions that had never before received financial funds from the state thus increasing the levels of social welfare mainly in rural areas (España, 2003:82-85 and Carreon, 2004:188). Under these policies, rural and urban municipalities in the country have been able to hire consultants and advisors who have played an important role in the design of economic municipal plans, diagnosis of levels of literacy, and evaluation of other socioeconomic factors in municipalities.

4.3.3.2. HIPC's links to social policy and the PRSP

The HIPC is an initiative of debt relief available to poor countries whose public external debt is unsustainable. This initiative is the result of important changes in the way financial assistance is delivered to poor countries by donor countries, development aid agencies and international financial organisations. Eligibility for debt relief under HIPC relies on a good track record in implementing structural reforms. In other words, Bolivia needed to demonstrate that it followed and implemented what was suggested by the World Bank and IMF. Two versions of this initiative were launched: HIPC-I and HIPC-II.

In 1997, when Bolivia entered the HIPC-I initiative, the amount of debt relief was US\$ 448 million. The financial resources made available by this initiative were used to continue the social reforms in areas such as education, health, rural development and infrastructure (Andersen and Nina, 2000). Unfortunately, HIPC-I proved to be ill-conceived by the IMF, World Bank and the Bolivian government, because of poor financial calculations (Christiansen and Hovland, 2003).

In 1999, the IMF and World Bank launched HIPC-II which differs from HIPC-I in that it includes more indebted countries and is more realistic about threshold levels. It is more flexible about the timing of when countries may reach an exit point; it provides more, and probably quicker, debt relief. It embodies a stronger and more operationalised linkage between the relief provided and the reduction of poverty in debtor countries (Killick, 2000:2). The disbursement of these funds started in 2001 after the approval of the PRSP. This time, Bolivia applied for this initiative under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). In order to be eligible for this programme, Bolivia was required to continue the structural reforms initiated in the early 1990s, as well as formulating a PRSP. Although the emphasis on poverty reduction was renewed with the introduction of the PRSP initiatives, implementation had to follow rules set by the World Bank and IMF. In addition, the PRSP has conditions set by donor countries. The PRSP initiative introduced a new element to the traditional way of planning development in poor countries. This time, PRSPs introduced 'incentives' for policy makers in beneficiary countries. These incentives as Booth and Lucas (2001:4) argued should be understood as a path that leaves behind the traditional conditionality and introduces a new form of planning development.

PRSPs are outcome-oriented strategies that allow a rational allocation of resources. Accordingly, the framework of PRSPs consists of a phase of policy formulation and another of policy implementation. In addition, a monitoring system is incorporated in order to provide information and feedback from the implementation process. This process is not only concerned with the adjustment of poverty strategies but it is also related to the provision of development assistance and grants.

Access to HIPC funds was conditional on the formulation of a PRSP with the participation of different sectors; government, civil society and the private sector. The participation of these sectors was enabled through a process entitled 'National Dialogue 2000' (ND). This initiative consisted of discussions on poverty among diverse stakeholders, which generated information

towards the formulation of a PRSP. The schedule of the ND was as follows; firstly, several round table discussions were established at different levels: municipal, departmental and national. At each of these levels, diverse issues were tackled including education, health and assignation of resources. Besides these subjects, the ND included other areas of discussion such as economic development and political representation. The major issues in these two areas were economic policy and the modification of the political system in Bolivia. The main idea behind National Dialogue was to involve the poor in discussions about poverty. The process also endeavoured to measure the magnitude of poverty in the country through a consultative process. At the same time, ND generated information that was used in the formulation of the PRSP which later became the framework to fight poverty. Its implementation started in 2001 and should end in 2015.

Besides these provisions, a compensatory mechanism was created, which distributes funds from development assistance resources to small municipalities through the Single Funding Directorate (DUF). These resources should be invested in poor municipalities through co-financing of projects formulated by the local government.

At present Bolivia has a national infrastructure that allows a rather efficient distribution of foreign aid. The implementation of the laws explored in section 4.3.3.1 along with HIPC initiative and PRSP had resulted in a country that can now channel aid effectively. This is not to say, however, that development programmes are implemented successfully.

4.3.4. Poverty after reforms

Assessing the magnitude of poverty in Bolivia is a complex process due to the lack of accurate information. However, some poverty indicators based on data available from the national census and surveys may help us to illustrate the historical trend of poverty in Bolivia. Two indexes are commonly used to analyse the evolution of poverty in Bolivia. First, a monetary index known as the Poverty Headcount Index (PHI), based on income and consumption. Second, a non-monetary index called the Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index (UBNI) (Thiele and Wielbelt, 2003:7)

The level of poverty in Bolivia measured by the PHI increased until the late 1980s. A slight decline in the level of poverty was exhibited during the 1990s. Thus, poverty incidence was 58% in 1990 while in 1997 this share had declined to 52%. Rural areas were excluded from these estimations due to the lack of information. In contrast to the trend shown by the PHI, more elaborate surveys were carried out by MECOVI (INE 2007) that indicated that monetary poverty in Bolivia has remained stagnant since 1999 and has even worsened in recent years. According to these surveys, the incidence of extreme poverty at the national level increased from 35.92% in 1999 to 37.29% in 2001 and reduced to 25% in 2007 (INE 2007:111). Moreover, the level of monetary poverty in rural areas is more widespread compared to urban areas. The second index, the UBNI, considers aspects such as access to housing, water and sewage facilities, energy, education and health in each region. According to the data provided by the national census of 1976, 1992 and 2001, the UBN index decreased at an average rate of 1.33% per year between 1992 and 2001. Furthermore, the performance of the index differs among regions. For example, some regions (initially less poor than other regions), have experienced a sharper reduction in the UBN index than the initially poorest regions (INE, 2007: 352).

At the current pace of development, Bolivia can only hope to meet the MDGs regarding education, gender, water and sanitation, while those related to poverty reduction and health (maternal health, infant mortality, HIV, malaria and tuberculosis) are not likely or simply impossible to be reached by 2015. With its current Gini-index of 0.57 (INE, 2007:623) plus a

yearly growth rate below 6% (3.5 % for 2004) an impoverishing growth pattern will be maintained, and it would take 178 years for the poorest tenth of the population to overcome poverty, while this time could be almost halved with a redistribution of 10% of the income-generating activities. The existing policy framework, although quite developed in some sectors like water and education, is extremely dispersed and even contradictory and thus ineffective in its contribution to poverty reduction (UDAPE 2007).

Poverty has increased from 62.7% in 1999 to 64% in 2002 and has marginally declined to 60% in 2006 (INE, 2007: 352-354). Furthermore, the gap between rural and urban areas has increased. As we have seen, the goals defined in the Bolivian PRSP have not been achieved, nor has the major objective of reducing poverty. On the contrary, poverty has increased during the first years of its implementation. Such a situation puts into question the possibility of meet the MDGs by 2015. Yet again, in these circumstances, the Bolivian government and international development organisation have to make use of development consultants and advisors to further engage in research and socioeconomic evaluations of the Bolivian economy in order to design and establish a way forward if the MDGs are to be achieved by 2015.

In this section I have examined how Bolivia has implemented a number of externally-influenced development programmes and policies. It has – as it were - played under the rules of the development assistance field and has developed a structure that allows it to channel loans and grants. However, it still remains the poorest country in the region and is an ongoing target of aid, including that provided by consultants and advisors, from within as well as outside the country. Overall, section 4.3 has highlighted the importance of understanding the national policy setting in which consultants and advisors undertake development assignments. I now go on to examine how consultants and advisors have become part of the process of aid provision in Bolivia.

4.4. The Emergence of consultants and advisors in development assistance

This section explains how technical cooperation was first introduced in Bolivia and the emergence of the current use of consultants and advisers in development assistance. The section starts by briefly highlighting the historical setting in which development organisations were first set up. Next, it describes how major development interventions came to be carried out by foreign ‘experts’. After that, the section analyses some of the first treaties signed between the UN and the government of Bolivia. The section illustrates how development organisations rely heavily on the role of consultants and advisers, and shows how rules and agendas of these organisations provide the setting for how consultants and advisers work.

4.4.1. Expertise and development

The post World War II development apparatus started with the establishment of a new international economic order at the Bretton Woods Conference in July 1944. As the world's greatest creditor nation and with its economy enormously strengthened by wartime, the U.S. was in a unique position to dictate terms at the conference. Although almost half of the participating countries were from Central and South America, their ability to influence the final outcome was minimal. ‘The Bretton Woods conference reflected the U.S. preferences and priorities including the creation of two new international organisations that would operate under United Nations auspices: the IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development IBRD or World Bank’ (Bulmer-Thomas, 2003:259-60). The Bretton Woods conference was perhaps the most important event in the political and economic history of the American continent merely because it allowed the creation of one of the most powerful development organisations in the world.

Consultants and advisors have been present ever since the IMF and World Bank started to provide development aid first to Europe and then to the developing world. They have been an important part of international economic relations between developed and developing countries. For instance, in the 1920s, the USA's treasury department would only deal with countries that had a central bank. The creation of central banks in developing countries was usually preceded by a visit from E.W. Kemmerer, a U.S academic and specialist in monetary economics, and was often seen as an essential precondition for future USA loans (Bulmer-Thomas, 2003:176). Later, in the 1980s, the IMF and World Bank required the intervention of experts in order to implement economic and structural reforms in the region. Perhaps the best examples in South America are Chile and Bolivia. The former had undergone major structural reforms and shifted from a socialist state to a free market economy. These major reforms were reinforced by such academics as Milton Friedman from the University of Chicago, who designed and implemented a radical national economic plan for the country (Yergin and Stanislaw, 2002:235-240). Similarly, Jeffrey Sachs from Harvard University designed and mentored the 1985 structural adjustment programme that tackled hyperinflation in Bolivia. Four years later, Sachs replicated the same experience in Poland (Yergin and Stanislaw, 2002:274-275).

These are high level examples of how experts contribute to the design of economic agendas in poor countries. The focus of this thesis is not on such high level experts, but the role of national and international consultants and advisors which have become so prevalent in the aid industry. However, at whatever level, experts, consultants and advisors have experienced a number of problems that do not always emanate from the recipient country but from the way development assistance is designed to work.

The notion that knowledge needs to be transferred from the North to the South has influenced the way in which development assistance in its various forms has been conceptualised. This and related issues have been discussed in chapter 2, and they frame the following discussion of the introduction of technical assistance and later developments in Bolivia.

4.4.2. The beginnings of TA and TC in Bolivia

Bolivia started to receive TA in the early 1950s – in the wake of a United Nations declaration that highlighted the need to raise the standard of living of the people in developing countries. This followed on from the expression of good intentions to contribute to the prosperity and economic development of third world countries, which were made explicit by the USA President Truman in 1949. By the following year the UN held a major conference about TA where technical knowledge and skills were highlighted as the main inputs into TA for poor countries (Berg, 1993; Buron, 1966).

Bolivia was one of the targeted countries to benefit from development programmes and projects. In 1951, Bolivia signed a TA agreement with the UN in which the government of Bolivia requested assistance in order to draw up a programme of economic and social development. This agreement is one of the very first signed between the government of Bolivia and the UN:

- ‘CONSIDERING that one of the objectives laid down in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations is to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom;
- CONSIDERING that the Government of Bolivia in application of these principles of international cooperation, requested technical assistance from the United Nations, and that a Mission visited Bolivia in 1950 to aid the Republic in drawing up a programme

of economic and social development; [...] directed solely towards increasing the welfare and happiness of the Bolivian people

- Article 5: The United Nations will furnish the Government with experts [...] these experts shall be persons of proved administrative and technical experience, great competence and unquestionable integrity, and selected from various other countries' (Source: Technical Assistance Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Bolivia. La Paz, Bolivia, October 1, 1951. Archives of the Ministry of Diplomatic and International Relations of Bolivia).

The mandate for the UN to provide TA to Bolivia was based on the need 'to promote social progress, better standards of living and increase the welfare and happiness of Bolivian people' (ibid.). All these development initiatives were both introduced and undertaken by foreign personnel that proved to have technical experience in development matters. The above agreement illustrates the early stages at which these 'experts' were introduced as doers of development in Bolivia.

The US bilateral agreements to developing countries also used similar mechanisms to deliver aid. In 1953, Bolivia and the government of the USA signed an agreement through which technicians and specialists were commissioned to carry out developmental initiatives. For example, the UN and the USA provided aid by sending missions of experts to Bolivia. The following illustrates such a process:

"The government of the United States of America will make available a group of technicians and specialists to collaborate in carrying out the activities that may be provided for in such agreements. The technicians and specialists thus made available will constitute the Technical Mission [...] the director and other members of the Technical Mission will be selected by the Government of the United States of America but shall be acceptable to the Government of Bolivia" (Source: The American Ambassador to the Bolivian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship. The Foreign Service of the United States of America, American Embassy, La Paz, Bolivia, August 27., 1953. Archives of the Ministry of Diplomatic and International Relations of Bolivia)

Experts, technicians and specialists were indeed seen as key agents in the delivery of knowledge and skills, and were therefore given privileged access to institutions and their professional practices in order to allow a presumed fluid transfer. For instance, technicians and specialists assigned to ministries and other government units were entitled by the Bolivian government to perform the following activities:

- to have direct access at all times to the Minister or Chief of the unit in which they serve
- to participate in all decision-making processes concerning appointments, transfers, promotions, demotions and retirement of all senior personnel within the unit in which they serve
- to advise the Minister or Chief of the unit in which they serve in regard to organisational and operational changes and to participate in the carrying out of these changes.

It can be argued that experts and specialists needed special conditions in order to transfer some form of capacities to government officials. But it is also clear that they held considerable power within government ministries. Indeed, fifty years since TA was institutionalised most development agencies and donor countries with an interest in Bolivia have officials assigned to ministries and other government offices across the country. The

notion of knowledge transfer between experts and government officials has somehow changed and yet it has justified the allocation of considerable power to particular individuals.

The justification for the use of foreign consultants and advisors relied on the assumption that developing countries need knowledge. Such preoccupation is illustrated in the next agreement signed between USA and Bolivia:

'Article No.1, Point 1. The Government of Bolivia and the Government of the United States of America undertake to cooperate with each other in the interchange of technical knowledge and skills and in related activities designed to contribute to the balanced and integrated development of the economic resources and productive capacities of Bolivia. *Article No.1, Point 2.* The government of Bolivia will cooperate in the mutual exchange of technical knowledge and skills with other countries participating in technical cooperation programmes associated with that carried out on under this agreement' (Source: Article No. 1. Point Four -General Agreement for Technical Cooperation between Bolivia and the United States of America. La Paz, Bolivia, January 22, 1951. Archives of the Ministry of Diplomatic and International Relations of Bolivia)

A public recognition within Bolivia of the benefit to the government from knowledge exchange activities deployed at the early stages of TA, was encouraged. One interpretation of the above quote is that it was expected to be clear to developing countries that such assistance was a gesture of the generosity and friendship from developed nations towards the people of Bolivia. The agreement continues in the following terms:

Article IV.

(b) The Government of Bolivia will give full and continuous publicity in Bolivia to the objectives and progress of the programme under this agreement including information to the people of Bolivia that this programme is evidence of the friendship of the people of the United States of America for them, and will make public upon termination of this programme' (Source: Economic Assistance Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Bolivia, La Paz, November 6, 1953. Archives of the Ministry of Diplomatic and International Relations of Bolivia)

TA and economic assistance to Bolivia were aimed at promoting development in specific sectors in Bolivia. Funding expertise and technology were targeted to areas such as infrastructure (i.e. roads) and agriculture. During the early stages, the transfer of knowledge was strongly associated with the donation and transfer of technology to developing countries. The following is a later agreement and yet it further illustrates the same points.

'The technical, scientific and humanitarian assistance cooperation of the United States of America involves the temporary use of civilian and/or military personnel and the use of *necessary equipment in development projects* that are useful and participatory for the populace through activities such as civil construction, public services, health service assistance, education, and combined military technical assistance'. (Source: Agreement between the Government of United States of America and the Republic of Bolivia, December 1, 2003. Archives of the Ministry of Diplomatic and International Relations of Bolivia)

From the early 1950s, experts from western consultancy companies in the USA and elsewhere were hired to implement and evaluate projects. The type of projects in which consultants and

advisors were placed had a very specific area of action. Between 1950 and 1970 development projects had a focus on infrastructure and agriculture. The following agreement illustrates the spirit of the epoch.

- a) Development and improvement of the economic infrastructure through implementation of integrated rural projects which include the construction of irrigation systems, infrastructure of commercialisation (storage centres, warehousing, etc.) communal and penetration roads, control of land erosion and colonization projects,
- b) Establishment and improvement of the local infrastructure required, particularly through the integrated rural development,
- c) Improving agricultural expansion through development of activities that are directly productive (Source: Article 2 Agreement between the Republic of Bolivia and CARE Inc La Paz, Bolivia, February 27, 1976. Archives of the Ministry of Diplomatic and International Relations of Bolivia)

Working under the name of ‘experts’ and ‘specialists’, the people who formed part of the agreements and policies outlined above played a key role in the transmission of knowledge and the implementation of development programmes. In Bolivia, they did not work under the title of ‘development consultants’ until early 1990s. From the 1950s until the late 1980s, the term ‘expert’ described western and northern individuals that worked in and for development agencies and international NGOs. Some of the senior consultants I interviewed recalled that the term ‘consultant’ was only used to denote personnel working in accountancy services. According to senior CEP consultants, ‘development consultants and advisors’ became a consolidated service sector in Bolivia during the 1980s when NGOs mushroomed rapidly across Bolivia. The major economic and social programmes implemented in the 1980s and 1990s allowed the emergence of a professional service sector that provided knowledge services to the gigantic development assistance apparatus that operate in Bolivia.

4.5. Conclusion

In the recent decades Bolivia has undergone profound economic and political reforms. These reforms triggered some socioeconomic development in the country and yet poverty is far from been halved by 2015. Social policies implemented 1990s have allowed the participation of groups formerly excluded from state affairs. People have also improved their relative position by being better informed and educated, which has generated expectations regarding more employment opportunities and better income conditions for all, though unfortunately this has not yet happened.

This chapter has also explored how reforms and measures were implemented in order to solve the weak economy of the country and later to reduce poverty. Bolivia is emblematic in the sense that it has played by the rules of the development assistance field and yet remains the poorest country in the region. Bolivia, therefore, has a very complicated socioeconomic structure and unsolved historical problems, namely weak national institutions and a continuing heavy reliance on development assistance aid.

Inevitably, there are many people operating in Bolivia whose careers and livelihoods are based on disbursing this aid. From the earliest days, much of it has been aid in connection with knowledge. Thus, the chapter has managed to put together some of the very few documents which illustrate how advisors and consultants were part of the very first development aid programmes funded by the USA and UN. Moreover, the changes in the socioeconomic landscape of Bolivia that I have outlined have allowed them to evolve as a consolidated service sector in the country, and to become a key part of the development assistance apparatus. The development consultants and advisors of my thesis, and the focus of my

fieldwork reported in chapters 5-7, therefore are firmly located in the broader development assistance context in Bolivia.

CHAPTER 5

DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS

5.1. Introduction

As I outlined in chapter 2, Habermas argues that people share a wide range of commonly accepted assumptions. He identifies these underlying assumptions as part of the background consensus that is behind every narrative exchange - the underlying beliefs and norms that are more or less uncritically accepted by people. As Fischer (2003:199) notes, it is the existence of these background beliefs that makes communication possible.

In this chapter I examine the role of background consensus in the context of knowledge engagements between CEP consultants and beneficiaries. In chapters 1 and 2, I have explained that knowledge engagements are processes whereby individuals communicate, share and exchange knowledge. In this case, I am referring to a two-way interaction process in which consultants and beneficiaries learn from each other. The chapter argues that there are two particular types of background consensus that are assumed to assist such knowledge engagements: professional and national. By the first I mean the set of professional practices and shared meanings between individuals. By the second, I mean the set of daily life practices – for example, language, beliefs, values – shared in part by the society as a whole but which may take on specific characteristics by different social groups within society. Thus in Bolivia, there are diverse ethnic groups which have particular languages, beliefs and values as well as an overarching view of what it means to be Bolivian.

This chapter examines two assignments or two ‘sub’-case studies within CEP. In the first assignment, CEP was hired by SOS-Faim to train rural farmers so they can leave their peasant condition and transform into small entrepreneurs. In the second assignment, CEP was hired by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) to train the employees of a national counterpart in the use of the Logical Framework Approach for project development. In both cases, SOS-Faim and SIDA had their own development agendas and thus their own views as to what constitutes ‘development’. It will be seen that these agendas, and the extent to which they were shared by beneficiaries, also influenced knowledge engagements between CEP consultants and both groups of beneficiaries. The chapter thus also examines the role played by CEP consultants in straddling the agendas of clients and beneficiaries and how this in turn affects knowledge engagements between consultants and beneficiaries.

Although not expressed using Habermasian terms, the clients engaged CEP consultants on the basis that one or both of the types of background consensus outlined above existed in some form. The chapter demonstrates that they existed to greater and lesser degrees in each case. In particular it shows that professional background consensus plays an important role in knowledge engagements, enabling a more fluent communication, whereas background consensus based on shared national characteristics alone is not a sufficient ground on which to promote knowledge engagements. However the chapter also examines the extent to which background consensus based on shared national characteristics was indeed shared, even when it was assumed to be present. In addition, in analysing the data, I show that other types of background consensus are important for knowledge engagements, for example, a shared vision of what is to be achieved. These shared visions are informed by dimensions such as social histories, social organisation and material circumstances.

This chapter also explores the extent to which CEP's profit driven nature allows CEP consultants to critically engage with development agencies' agendas. In addition, CEP consultants find it difficult to produce valuable codified knowledge that could contribute to improved development interventions. This chapter concludes that shared and unshared consensus backgrounds are central to knowledge engagements. Secondly, it points out the way that rigid development agendas influence interactions between consultants and beneficiaries. Thirdly, it shows how development projects are often based on erroneous assumptions which undermine knowledge engagements between consultants and beneficiaries.

5.1.1. Background to CEP

CEP is a consultancy company that was set up in the late 1980s. It is a profit driven organisation that operates in a field predominantly dominated by non-profit organisations development aid agencies. CEP works for national and international and offers the following services:

Services	Thematic areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development project evaluations • Capacity building and training • Research and surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Institutional reform and organisational change • Livelihoods and reducing poverty • Rural and agricultural development • Environmental management • Economic development

Source: Curriculum Institucional CEP, La Paz, Bolivia, 2008.

CEP has worked extensively for European and USA development agencies, international NGOs, multi and bilateral development aid agencies, national government and grassroots organisations. It has a differentiated price rate for its consultancy assignments depending on the status and finances of the client. This acts as a counter-balance to the price differentials for hiring international and national consultants:

‘International consultants would easily charge 700 to 800 US dollars per working day. They can be good professionals but they don't know the reality of this country and that is major problem in this business. We have consultants that do the same job but they are paid one third of the international salaries’ (CEP Consultant_1) .

Another tension for an organisation such as CEP is that its consultants are hired to perform a technical service and not to engage in a critical attitude towards their clients as pointed put by CEP Consultant_10:

‘I remember doing a project evaluation for the UN. We produced a report that we believed it was an honest and impartial, but the UN people in La Paz thought it was too critical. They asked us to re-write it. We didn't re-write the report and as a result of it they didn't hire our services for a long time. It took years before we did a consultancy assignment for them’.

As will be seen later in this chapter, the expectation that clients are not to be criticised is a limiting constraint on reflexivity and potential reinforcement for development agency regimes of truth.

In this context, it is worth noting some important aspects of the client assignments to be explored in the following sections. CEP's clients, SOS-Faim and SIDA, assume that CEP consultants have expertise or knowledge to assist SOS-Faim's and SIDA's beneficiaries. In the first case study, SOS-Faim assume that CEP consultants are the type of local professionals best suited to train rural farm families, partly because it is assumed that they share a common background through their Bolivian nationality and partly because CEP projects itself as an organisation with long experience of working in rural areas. I critically examine these two assumed dimensions of shared background consensus. However there are two further dimensions. The first is that SOS-Faim assumes that farmers 'need' knowledge on topics around production, marketing and political leadership while the evidence provided in this chapter shows that beneficiaries have their own forms of knowledge which are not recognised by SOS-Faim. One result is that the knowledge engagements are inappropriate in the context; another is that CEP consultants learn from beneficiaries (accumulating further expertise as consultants), but their learning is not codified or shared with the clients and remains as tacit, experiential knowledge on the side of the consultants. The second dimension is that SOS-Faim and the beneficiaries do not in practice share the same development agenda. Conflict over vision is however muted by the financial needs of the beneficiaries. Inevitably however, it also has an effect on the knowledge engagements between the beneficiaries and the consultants.

In the second case study, SIDA assumes that CEP consultants have the experience and knowledge to assist a national counterpart in the social and technical processes involved in Logical Framework Analysis. Like the SOS-Faim's previous assignment, there is an implicit assumption that local or national professionals will be able to relate to and understand local or national beneficiaries. As this case study will show, in this instance not only is there shared nationality, but the shared professional background between beneficiaries and consultants is the factor that allows for successful knowledge engagements.

The chapter has two main sections. The first section describes how SOS-Faim is promoting the transformation of collectively organised rural farm families into small entrepreneurs and examines the assignment given to CEP to support this process through workshops and training sessions. The section demonstrates the unshared background consensus between consultants and farmers (as well as between SOS-Faim and farmers) and examines the assumptions about farmers' knowledge deficit in the management of production and marketing. The second section of the chapter analyses the CEP assignment to train a SIDA counterpart. It shows by contrast how shared professional background consensus between CEP consultants and beneficiaries contributed to effective knowledge engagements.

5.2. Unshared background consensus

This section explores how unshared background consensus between SOS-Faim, CEP consultants and beneficiaries undermines knowledge engagements. SOS-Faim's development agenda aims to transform farmers into small scale entrepreneurs. In the process of implementing this agenda, SOS-Faim does not take into account their political forms of organisation and the fact that they have their own forms of knowledge on production and marketing related topics.

CEP consultants are hired in order to implement the SOS-Faim development agenda. This assumes the form of an assignment where farmers are trained. Farmers are willing to participate because they have financial ties with SOS-Faim. SOS-Faim's funds are used by farmers in order to improve their production processes, for example, to improve their production technology through the acquisition of new machinery.

A central assumption that lies at the core of this assignment is that CEP consultants and farmers share the same meanings and values because they are Bolivian nationals, and also that CEP consultants have the right kind of expertise to train farmers. The second assumption is because one of CEP's claimed strengths is knowledge of farming and the rural economy, and to this extent their consultants might be said to have shared professional background consensus with farmers.

This section examines these assumptions and shows that (i) shared background in terms of nationality is not sufficient in itself to build the kind of background consensus needed for fluent knowledge engagements; (ii) the guarantee of expertise in farming production techniques is insufficient to assume shared professional background consensus, and, in this case, the basis for the knowledge process did not take into account farmers' own knowledges. In addition there was a gap in the supposed shared vision between SOS-Faim and the OECAs⁷ which further compromised the effectiveness of the knowledge processes. Furthermore, the contractual relationship between CEP and SOS-Faim meant that it was difficult for CEP consultants to challenge SOS-Faim's development agenda.

5.2.1. OECAs

Central and South America have a highly capitalised agriculture which is geared towards a business logic and an export oriented dynamic. The agriculture sector employs 10 % of the rural population whereas non-capitalist agriculture or agriculture with little capital and rudimentary technology employs 90 % of the rural population of which, only 20 % is estimated to be for exports (FAO, 2005)

In Bolivia, over 40% of the labour force of the country is dedicated to agriculture (INE, 2007:476). Families in rural areas of Bolivia are the largest number of individuals working on this sector. Over the past decades, these families have organised themselves as rural organisations that operate politically operate as unions. In last two decades, these organisations have received the assistance from NGOs and, to a lesser extent, from the state. At the present, OCEAS have the stated objective of constituting self-managed enterprises (SOS-Faim, 2004).

In 2004, there were about 633 OECAs distributed across Bolivia, 47 % in the Andean region, 27 % in the valleys and 26 % in the lowlands and tropical areas. 87 % of the OECAs is dedicated to traditional activities such as agriculture and livestock, the remaining 13 percent has shifted into the artisan sector, forestry, fish-farming, ecotourism, and small scale transformation of agricultural produce, among which 'bio' products are becoming increasingly important (CIOEC). OECAs represent more than 100,000 peasant families from across Bolivia. Although OECAs are predominantly constituted by farmers, they also include a small number of artisans who in many cases were initially farmers. By working in the form of OECAs, farmers and artisans hope to position themselves in the national market and increase the added value to their production, thereby increasing production and income in rural areas. In the last two decades, OECAs have experienced some major limitations. According to SOS-Faim (2005), these include inadequate post-harvest handling and low product quality, limited knowledge of the markets, difficult access to sources of working capital, ineffective assistance from public and private institutions and international cooperation entities, little internal capacity to network and a marked reliance on cooperation agencies to cover their operating costs

Thus OECAs are the channels through which development organisations can reach farmers and artisans in the rural areas. However there is a contradictory side to the relationship

⁷ OECA is the acronym of 'Organización Económica Campesina' which translates as: Organisations

between OECAs and development organisations. On one hand OECAs define themselves as self-managed enterprises (and which, in the case of SOS Faim, appears to match their development agenda). However OECAs are also unions where collective action and reciprocity between farmers is an essential part of their lives. OECAs thus have a public face and a discourse for representing themselves to international development organisations which enables them to gain funding, even though, in the course of this research, I found out that a large number of farmers are far from becoming self-managed enterprises. This contradiction inevitably affects the relationship between the OECAs and development organisations and between the OECAs and the consultants.

5.2.2. SOS–Faim: assumptions and development agenda for OECAs

SOS-Faim is an independent non-governmental organisation founded in 1964 with a mandate to eradicate poverty in developing countries. SOS-Faim has a Brussels-based team that monitors projects in several African and South American countries. It has local offices in Peru and Bolivia. SOS-Faim is funded by the Belgian government, the European Union, Wallonia, and the Communauté Française. SOS-Faim works primarily in rural areas across developing countries.

It supports North-South partnerships and development projects that target poor people in rural areas. More specifically, SOS-Faim assists farmer initiatives and microfinance organisations in Africa and South America. SOS-Faim supports farmers' activities through funds and technical assistance⁸ (TA) in the following areas:

- Production: Improvement of production conditions, production diversification, quality control.
- Management: Production management and acquisition of appropriate equipment.
- Marketing: Promoting local commodities in international markets.

SOS-Faim encourages the development of farmer movements capable of transforming the economic and social spheres of farmers in rural areas. SOS-Faim started to undertake development activities in the early 1980s and in 1995 started to provide development assistance that included financial support to farm families in developing countries. At the present moment, SOS-Faim Bolivia has focused its activities on financial support and TA to farm family organisations. SOS-Faim has been financially supporting Bolivian OECAs for over ten years and will continue to do so until they become small enterprises. According to the national representative of SOS-Faim⁹:

‘SOS-Faim wants to consolidate economic agents in the rural areas of Bolivia. The strategy to achieve this goal consists of providing funds and technical assistance to OECAs in rural areas. We want them to be capable of competing in national and international markets. We want to transform rural farm families into small enterprises.’

⁸ In this case, technical assistance refers to training and capacity building being provided by development professionals. These are services provided through workshops in which development professionals (i.e. consultants) train beneficiaries.

⁹ SOS-Faim has a policy to support farmers between three to ten years. According to the Bolivia-based SOS-Faim representative: ‘development is a long term process. That is why we assist our counterparts for a minimum of three years and a maximum of ten’. In some cases farmers have been receiving financial support for more than a decade.

Although SOS-Faim has been providing funds and TA to farmers over the last 10 years to promote this transformation, there are only a handful of OECA members that have left behind their communal and farm family modes and have become small enterprises. The reasons that might explain the slow progress made by OECAs are explained by the SOS-Faim representative as follows:

‘OECAs lack qualified human resources. At the moment they are incapable of having a critical view of their own conditions. Farmer leaders and farm families are not educated and therefore lack knowledge and understanding of what is good for them’

There are two assumptions here, the first one, farmers are unable to assess critically their own reality, including the need to engage with international markets, and the second one, their needed for education and additional knowledge. These are the assumptions upon which SOS-Faim has developed its development agenda. Additionally, SOS-Faim believes that the way OECAs are politically organised is a major problem and threatens to undermine the transformation of farmers into small enterprises.

OECAs are organised in a similar way to traditional unions (explained above) and such forms of political organisation are not in line with SOS-Faim’s agenda:

‘In organisational terms, the setting up of OECAs has been heavily influenced by left-wing unions. OECAs operate under the same political principles that traditional unions do. These are the practices and political views that are limiting and undermining their own development. OECAs are not going to become small enterprises as long as they remain organised like unions’ (SOS-Faim Representative)

In addition to the above, SOS-Faim assumes that OECAs lack a macro vision of the world where exporting to international markets should be given priority. The representative also explained that SOS-Faim expects farmers to adopt its vision of development. In other words, OECAs are entitled to SOS-Faim’s assistance as long as they accept its development agenda:

‘Our counterparts need to share our vision of development if they want to work with us [...] if we don’t share the same vision for development we wouldn’t assist farm families or agricultural associations. We tend to work with farmers that share our vision of development’ (SOS-Faim Representative)

While on one hand, there is a rhetoric of shared vision that informs SOS-Faim’s aid, on the other, SOS-Faim’s resources have considerable persuasive power with respect to farmers’ engagement and also tie farmers in to a funding relationship. As noted by the representative:

‘I personally don’t know of any SOS-Faim counterpart (e.g. farm families or agricultural associations) in the world that does not rely on our financial support. Even the biggest counterparts in Africa need our financial and technical support’ (SOS-Faim Representative)

Seen analytically, this is a form of embedded power from which it is difficult for beneficiaries to disentangle themselves. The practice of ‘giving’ and ‘receiving’ is a traditional way of delivering aid. However, those who ‘receive’ have historically needed to comply with the policies and agendas of those who ‘give’ aid. In the case of SOS-Faim’s support for the OECAs in Bolivia, the aid package includes grants and technical assistance. Only those OECAs that are receiving SOS-Faim funding were entitled to attend the workshops organised by the CEP consultants. This overall package is obviously attractive on one hand but involves complex forms of engagement between SOS-Faim and beneficiaries on the other.

From my fieldwork, it would seem that the farmers' perspective is rather different. Farmers who are members of OECAs are not convinced by the small enterprise route and they appear to be interested in taking part in the training provided by the consultants because they do not want to lose SOS-Faim's financial support. OECAs in Bolivia have been historically targeted by many development organisations. They know by now that their status of 'farmer', 'rural', 'illiterate' have become labels that catch the attention of such organisations. In informal conversations with farmers, it became evident that they were aware of the fact that SOS-Faim had an agenda to implement and funds to secure its implementation. They knew what agencies and NGOs expected from them, and what to do in order to access financial support. Thus the large amount of agencies and NGOs working in Bolivia have contributed to create a culture of 'development-receivers' which is now perceived to be a structural problem for development. The SOS-Faim representative encapsulates it as follows:

'Our counterparts [i.e. OECAS] and the rest of our target groups who receive our assistance and support do not have a trace of dignity. We live in a country in which our poor people expect to be poured with money' (SOS-Faim Representative)

Nevertheless, SOS-Faim, like other development organisations in the field, is convinced that 'development' is not a short-term process. This is why SOS-Faim has been providing assistance to farmers sometimes for more than 10 years. However, in the process, SOS-Faim noticed that the OECAs were not making enough progress in SOS-FAIM's terms. After a period of reflection, SOS-Faim decided that OECAs needed further assistance:

'At the beginning we supported OECAs with funds and later we realised they didn't know how to manage the funds we provided. That's why we started technical assistance programmes, so they could learn how to use their resources' (SOS-Faim Representative)

In view of this, SOS-Faim decided to hire CEP consultants in 2004 in order to implement a project by which OECA members could be trained on themes around production and business management. In addition, CEP consultants were to train OECAs in management production related topics that eventually should help OECAs to rely less on agencies' money. At the point of interview, SOS-Faim was convinced that CEP consultants had done a good job:

'During these two years in which the project has been implemented, I believe CEP consultants have done a good job. The methodology they've used to build the capacity of OECAS has proven to be effective. Modules, workshops, follow ups and personal assistance from consultants to farm families have achieved their goal' (SOS-Faim Representative)

On the one hand, the methodology used by CEP consultants consisted of workshops and group activities. On the other hand, CEP consultants were not only providing training but also carrying out a political agenda with farmers. SOS-Faim had the explicit intention to persuade farmers to leave behind their political views:

'CEP is nursing and training the future leaders that will have the knowledge and capability to understand that OECAs organised in the form of unions is not a good option. SOS-Faim wants farmers to realise that the way in which they are organised will not help them to overcome poverty' (SOS-Faim Representative)

CEP is thus supposed to be facilitating a transformational change in farmers' mentality. CEP consultants are teaching and showing OECAs that the entrepreneurial path will help them to

overcome poverty, whereas their communal and union-driven practices will perpetuate their poverty.

‘CEP has played a key role in the introduction and teaching of business management skills to OECAs, we expect that eventually OECAs will organize their production as small entrepreneurs’ (SOS-Faim Representative)

However from the consultants’ perspective, during the first two years of this assignment, OECAs have made unsatisfactory progress and did not fully put into effect what they learnt during the assignments. CEP has produced two annual reports on the progress achieved by this assignment. They concluded that CEP consultants have delivered a high quality service, however the OECAs did not manage to achieve satisfactory results. I discuss the consultants’ perspective and the possible reasons for lack of progress below.

In this section, I have shown that SOS-Faim has a development (and political) agenda that farmers need to accept in order to access SOS-Faim’s funds. This development agenda advocates that farmers could overcome poverty if they leave behind their political practices and undergo a training process. SOS-Faim is however faced with a complex scenario where farmers have their own priorities – which I return to below. I now look at this assignment from the perspective of the CEP consultants.

5.2.3. Consultancy assignment and challenges

This section examines how CEP consultants perceive the way SOS-Faim has designed its agenda and their own role within it. The main argument of this section suggests that CEP consultants can be very conscious and aware of the limitation and weaknesses of any given assignment. However, they are not able to change or alter the course of the assignment. A further observation is that consultants’ reflections and critical views are forms of experiential knowledge that could in principle be used to improve development projects. However, such forms of knowledge are not in practice codified or passed on to clients and thus remain as tacit experiential knowledge.

CEP was hired in January 2004 to carry out a 3 year assignment in which OECAs were targeted. During the first year, the assignment consisted of training farmers in business administration, leadership, commercialisation, marketing, strategic and market planning. The training process was divided into three modules. Each module consisted of 30 days in which farmers were taught for eight hours every day, and 120 individuals were trained in total. These individuals represented 16 OECAs. However, the first CEP annual report about this assignment stated that results were not yet evident, in other words, there was no evidence that OECAs had applied what they were taught at that stage (CEP, 2005).

In 2005, CEP was hired again to continue the second phase of the project. This time, the assignment was divided into four modules. Like the previous year, every module consisted of 30 days and 8 hours of training every day. During this year, 146 individuals from 15 OECAs participated in the assignment, 5 themes were taught. These included strategic planning, business planning, production planning, budgeting and quality control.

The 2005 CEP annual report about this assignment concluded that although a total of 32 OECAs (262 individuals in total) were trained in the first two years of the project, only 3% implemented what the modules taught, 33% used it partially and 64% did not use any of the topics and methods taught in the modules. The first and second annual reports argue that OECAs lacked willingness and commitment to apply what they were taught in the modules.

There is however a difference between the annual reports and the views and perceptions of consultants. CEP consultants appear to have their own off-the-record version as to why OECAs did not make satisfactory progress. According to CEP consultants, SOS-Faim's position towards the political nature of OECAs is not clear: it appears as if SOS-Faim does not take into account the fact that OECAs are organised as unions:

'SOS-Faim didn't realise that OECAs are actually real unions. In Bolivia, unions are highly politicised groups of individuals that hold critical views on western capitalism. SOS-Faim looks as if it is not aware that is dealing with unions and not just farm families' (CEP consultant_3)

Adding to the above concern, CEP consultants had the impression that SOS-Faim did not understand the social context in which OECAs are embedded and the challenges that presents for the transformation of family farms into rural enterprises. For CEP consultants this is an evident fact. They are extremely aware that they are interacting with individuals whose experience is almost entirely based in their rural communities:

'For some farmers their social universe consisted of small towns and local markets. They did not know anything about international markets. They never got worried about exporting to international markets. In this consultancy assignment we are trying to explain to them that the way out of poverty consists on becoming part of the global economy. These people live in precarious socioeconomic conditions, thus, their perception of global markets is narrow. These are the very same people who we are asking to think as managers and entrepreneurs. Such a thing is not going to work! These people live as they think and they live as rural poor farmers' (CEP Consultant_3)

This consultant identifies the factors he thinks undermined the assignment, however such views are not shared with SOS-Faim because CEP consultants were hired to undertake an assignment and not to critically assess SOS-Faim's development agenda. This reflexive behaviour thus remains as tacit experiential knowledge with the individual or with CEP. Another useful reflection is produced by a consultant about the use of computers during the workshops with farmers. On the one hand he notes:

'farmers used to get very excited every time they saw how the letters and signs appear on the projection screen [...] the use of technology in workshops was crucially important because it helped us to keep/maintain the farmer's attention' (CEP Consultant_8)

Although computers managed to keep farmers interested in the workshop, it did not mean, on the other hand, that farmers were engaged in some form of communicative action with the consultant. This consultant told me informally that other techniques could have been used but it was SOS-Faim's initiative to use computers in the workshops. There was however no communication between the consultant and SOS-Faim about the down- as well as the up-sides of using computers. During the course of fieldwork, I attended a number of workshops where I saw how farmers struggled using computers. While, on one hand, they appeared to display a positive attitude towards this challenge, some farmers felt that their sense of ignorance was enhanced because they did not know anything about computers. Different factors contributed to this situation since many farmers were not literate enough to understand how to use computers. CEP consultants involved in this assignment were aware of the situation, but did not feel able to do anything about it. One consultant remembers how he perceived the situation during the first year of the assignment:

'The first year of the project, OECAs were asked to send attendees with a certain degree of literacy. This requirement was hardly met by OECAs. SOS-Faim and

CEP didn't understand that OECAs are mainly constituted by farmers that live in rural areas where levels of schooling are very low' (CEP Consultant_2)

In this assignment consultants are muted witnesses. They understand and rationalise the weaknesses and challenges of the project and yet they do not feel able to do much about it. Having participated in a number of workshops, I witnessed that farmers were able to remember very little of the topics taught (which I come back to below). Low levels of schooling amongst farmers were obvious to me and to the consultants running the workshops. However, they both behaved as if that was not such a problem. Several times I witnessed that farmers and artisans would not ask for help because they felt embarrassed to show that they did not understand something. One aspect that made communication very difficult between the consultants and farmers was the language. OECAs were from two ethnic groups, and spoke Quechua and Aymara, and little Spanish, while the workshops were conducted in Spanish.

One last and very important observation was made by a couple of consultants who were convinced that the workshops were only useful to dismantle OECAs. In Section 5.2.2 I explained that SOS-Faim's development agenda has two main goals. The first is to transform farmers into small enterprises. The second is to convince OECAs to stop organising themselves as unions. On the second goal, CEP Consultant_5 comments:

'Farmers are used to think as a group [...] they don't think in an individual form, this habit is very much embedded in their culture, this project is asking them to think individually as entrepreneurs'

Although, after two years, this project has not transformed OECAs into small enterprises, it has managed to persuade farmers to reconsider the usefulness of their own organisations. SOS-Faim's development agenda is therefore gradually achieving its goals. As CEP Consultant_5 explains:

'Over the last two years, farmers and artisans have participated in workshops, and are coming to realize that they can operate outside their associations. Now that project has taught them how to design a budget, how to plan and organize their production and so forth. Attendees are starting to reconsider the usefulness of being associated when they can pursue their own individual development'

Although CEP consultants are able to reflect and identify some major problems, they are also able to critically assess the way this assignment is ought to end. As the above comment explains, OECAs are now starting to reconsider the usefulness of being associated. This section has illustrated the way CEP consultants were aware of the weakness and limitations of the assignment and yet did think they could change the way it unfolded.

5.2.4. 'They assumed we didn't know'

This section explores the experience and perceptions of the OECAs. In this assignment I first show how financial ties between OECAs and SOS-Faim are the reason for which farmers participated in this project. I then examine two challenges for the consultancy: firstly the assumptions made by SOS-Faim and to a less by consultants about the educational and conceptual background of the farmers; secondly an assumption about fluency in the Spanish language on the part of the farmers. The challenge to the first assumption is that there was a shared professional background consensus with respect to knowledge and conceptualisation

of farming as a business enterprise; the second challenge questions the extent to which a background consensus based on common nationality was indeed shared. On the one hand, the first of these assumptions was related to a further issue: that farmers who attended the workshops would already be running their farms as enterprises, not as part of a collectively oriented union. On the other hand, which I go on to explain, farmers had deep knowledge of farming and marketing which was not taken into account by consultants who regarded themselves as experts on rural production topics. This was further compounded by the inappropriate methodology of the workshops (with the exception of one instance, which I shall describe), which meant that participation was highly instrumental and largely based on the need to maintain the financial link with SOS-Faim. Farmers ended up repeating concepts and methods without understanding them and it was extremely difficult for them to share this knowledge with other farmers within their respective OECAs.

This section is based on an analysis of interactions between farmers and consultants in two OECAs. The first is COMART, which was setup in 1999. COMART is an association of approximately 600 families from rural areas of Bolivia. These families have different activities: most of them are artisans who work from home and produce handcrafted ornaments. Like other OECAs, COMART receives funds from SOS-Faim and other development organisations. COMART was strongly encouraged by SOS-Faim to attend the workshops run by the CEP consultants.

‘In 2000 we started to receive funds from SOS-Faim. Later in 2004 they started to provide with technical assistance. At the moment we have put several bids and also applied for funds from a number of international NGOs and development agencies’ (COMART_Representative¹⁰)

The second OECA, ALVA, is an association that brings together milk producers from rural areas near Cochabamba city. A similar narrative is presented: ALVA has received SOS-Faim’s funds as well as technical assistance through consultants for over ten years:

‘The relation between ALVA and SOS-Faim is at two levels, financial and technical. From the beginning, SOS-Faim provided technical assistance in order to set up ALVA’ (ALVA_Representative)

ALVA and COMART are typical of many OECAs. On the one hand they are unions or quasi-unions. On the other hand, they are heavily reliant on funds from development organisations and present themselves as associations of farmers/artisans to secure funding relationship. I return to the challenges of this dynamic at the end of this sub-section, but first analyse the farmers’ and artisans’ responses to the workshops that SOS-Faim required them to attend.

The workshops were designed by CEP consultants on the assumption that OECAs had a deficit of knowledge with respect to commercial enterprise and consequently needed to be educated in business administration and related themes. According to those interviewed, workshops were run assuming that OECAs were fluent in Spanish and that participants had a prior knowledge of business management theory. I also observed that CEP consultants would only speak Spanish and used academic terminology that farmers and artisans did not understand. It was evident that consultants were not explicitly worried about farmers and artisans not understanding the training sessions. A farmer who attended the workshops explains:

‘I think that the methodology and content of the workshops need to be improved. For instance, there were farmers that didn’t have enough knowledge of Spanish

¹⁰ COMART’s representative is also a regular artisan who also performs represents COMART in public meetings with development organisations.

language to understand what was taught in the workshops. The methodology was designed for people who had knowledge of business administration themes. Most of us didn't understand all these business management concepts and theories' (ALVA Farmer_1)

Another farmer from ALVA also commented on the same challenge and added that the use of Spanish language established a form of power relation between CEP consultants and farmers:

'When farmers are trained in a language in which they are not fluent, the consultants is creating a distance between him and the rest. We farmers perceive that distance power relation in which we the non-speakers of Spanish are forced to learn the language of the consultant' (ALVA Farmer_2)

Having to deal with the above limitation is a major challenge for those members of OECAs who attended the workshops. The issue of language was however only one problem with the workshops. It was also evident that the workshop content was either inappropriate or subject to an inappropriate process or knowledge sharing. In many cases, farmers and artisans would pretend they understood the themes being taught by consultants when in fact they didn't:

'The consultants used participatory methodologies, but it was like a hollow participation, because we were trained and taught concepts and we were asked to participate in the workshops, but at the end, we would recite the concepts without understanding them [...] we were also asked to make comments on the way the workshop was carried out, we used to say *everything is good*' (COMART Artisan_1; emphasis added)

This unsatisfactory knowledge process had the further implication that knowledge could not be further shared with OECA members who had not participated in the workshops. Although farmers and artisans were relatively familiar with the themes, they still had problems understanding consultants. Some farmers were eventually convinced that they had to learn and therefore were willing to make an effort and yet despite their efforts, they were just unable to understand. An artisan comments:

'We were told that these methodologies and theories were important for us. Consultants made us understand the importance of learning things about business management. I only had one problem, I couldn't understand well the contents of the workshops nor I could share it with the other members of the OECA' (COMART Artisan_2)

Farmers and artisans who attended the workshops had the obligation to share what they learnt with the rest of the members of their respective OECAs. Therefore, those who attended the workshops needed to translate and adapt what the consultant taught during the workshops. According to one participant, this process was a challenging task because of the language:

'Explaining ideas and thoughts in Spanish for people whose mother tongue is Aymara and Quechua is just a big challenge. Thinking in Quechua and talking in Spanish is a risky business. Very often we end up saying the wrong thing' (ALVA Farmer_3)

Moreover farmers and artisans have their own forms of knowledge about the themes being addressed in the workshops. Farmers and artisans have been engaged in production and distribution of their own products for several decades and thus have knowledge and expertise on how to organise and sell their products. They do not have formal academic education about business management but they have tacit knowledge. However CEP consultants did not seem to take in to account, or perhaps ignored the fact, that OECAs had tacit and experiential

knowledge on these topics. The language along with the terminology used by consultants did not allow farmers and artisans to build up their existing knowledge. As one COMART artisan noted:

‘CEP-consultants were teaching us how to budget and organize our production; they assumed that we didn’t know how to do it. We are artisans and we have some knowledge of it. It was very irritating to see how the consultants were introducing themselves as experts. They don’t know how we do things’ (COMART Artisan_3)

Although this seemed to be the norm in the workshops, I did however observe an instance of a different approach with different effects. The consultant I observed had a highly innovative mode of communication and engagement with the farmers. Although using the Spanish language, he explained to the farmers that they knew how to read their own forms of writing and that they needed to make an effort to learn another language and form of writing. By using ‘ponchos’ that had drawings and patterns on them, he asked if any of the farmers were able to read and explain what the patterns and drawings meant. Farmers had no problem in explaining that every single pattern meant something and that the whole of the poncho was in fact a detailed agricultural calendar. However in spite of this interesting and creative approach, another consultant who had worked with the OECAs some years before suggested that by introducing terminology that was not familiar to the farmers and artisans, consultants were in danger of being blind to what the OECA members already knew.

In addition to these observations, having attended a number of workshops where farmers were taught how to elaborate budgets and plans of production, I noticed that workshops were designed as if OECAs were already enterprises. After several workshops, I had the opportunity to interview an ALVA farmer who attended almost all the workshops during the first two years of the project. He commented.

‘The way in which the workshops were run, assumed that the association was [already] an enterprise. Judging by the way in which the workshop was organized and run, it was clear to me that the workshops were aimed at enterprises. However, ALVA is not an enterprise it is an association that operates with a union dynamic, that means that the association does not have one ‘president’ or one ‘executive director’ instead it has a board of representatives’ (ALVA Farmer_4)

The question that follows from the above is why OECAs are willing to take part in this kind of development project funded by an international development organisation? All their perceptions appear to suggest that the process of knowledge engagement with CEP consultants is full of contradictions. The answer to this question suggests that OECAs adopt a rational attitude towards this kind of project. That is, they take part in these projects not because they necessarily learn but because participation is the process through which they secure funds for their OECAs. As observed by an ALVA farmer:

‘We almost always have problems with the workshops, sometimes they are difficult to understand, sometimes the consultant/facilitator speaks too quickly and we don’t understand...we need to attend the workshops anyway, if we don’t, we lose the money they give us for our organizations’ (ALVA Farmer_2)

However this situation presents tensions for the OECAs in terms of how much they engage with development organisations and on what terms. A COMART artisan noted:

‘In my community there are almost 20 international NGOs and development aid agencies doing the same work, we have to decide who to work with, sometimes

they ask us to commit to attend or apply X and Y methodology in our community [...] Sometimes we feel it is too much so we have to choose carefully who we can work with' (COMART Artisan_4)

This final quote highlights the dilemmas for the OECAs and their relationships with funders and with the types of knowledge engagement designed for them by funders and consultants. Not only are there challenges to building a background consensus that enables a more productive knowledge engagement, it also suggests that the OECAs have difficulties negotiating a different relationship with those who are keen to work with them, especially over the goals that are to be achieved. I discuss such issues further in chapter 7.

This section has demonstrated that any assumption of background consensus or shared lifeworld between the CEP consultants and the farmers, despite all being Bolivian was misguided. Training sessions were conducted as if the participants understood codified business theory and were literate in Spanish. The CEP consultants had no knowledge of, nor did they attempt to find out and engage with, the tacit business-orientated knowledge that the farmers did have. The consultants also assumed a shared conceptualisation of the problem around entrepreneurship, when the farmers through the OECA have more of a trade union understanding.

5.3. Shared background consensus

I now examine how shared background consensus can contribute to fluent knowledge engagements between CEP consultants and development beneficiaries. In this part of the chapter, I analyse a CEP assignment for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The assignment, which started in November 2005, involved the training of national counterparts in the use and implementation of the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). This case study focuses on a particular national counterpart, 'Fundación La Paz', a Bolivian foundation that provides legal services in human rights, gender and political participation awareness for the general public.

5.3.1. SIDA: development agenda and consultants

This section explores SIDA's development agenda and the role development consultants play in its implementation. SIDA believes that it is able to work effectively through CEP development consultants because there is both a national and professional shared background between them and the Bolivian counterparts. The following sections outline the extent to which this perception is shared by CEP consultants and by Fundación La Paz.

The overall goal of SIDA is to improve the living conditions of the poor (SIDA, 2000) through technical assistance and funds for development projects. SIDA refers to its development beneficiaries as 'counterparts', which range from government ministries to civil society organisations. In December 2005, SIDA funded and managed over sixty development projects on human rights and democracy, social development, private sector, natural environment and academic research. Funds and TA services are provided by SIDA on the assumption that its counterparts share its development agenda, that is, funds and any other form of development assistance have to comply with the agency's policy framework. An important part of SIDA's development agenda is how development is perceived to occur in poor countries. As far as SIDA is concerned, knowledge and learning are key components of development endeavours (SIDA, 2000, 2005). By focusing on those two factors, SIDA is committed make its development interventions sustainable and its development assistance superfluous in the long run. In order to do so, SIDA engages in discussions and negotiations with its counterparts to identify how they can be better assisted:

‘We discuss and establish a working relationship with our national counterparts in order to find out what they need. Once this is done, we analyse their demands and we let them know what we could and could not fund. Sometimes the counterpart doesn’t know what it needs, in that case, we don’t dictate to them ‘this is what you need!’ We provide them with assistance, so the counterpart can decide on their own terms what they need’ (SIDA Officer_1)

After a process of discussion and negotiation SIDA is ready to fund development projects and provide TA. Apart from funding projects, SIDA provides a particular form of development assistance in which national counterparts and Swedish organisations work together for some time. During this process, it is expected that both organisations learn from each other. This process was described by SIDA Officer_1:

‘We fund and promote twinning arrangements in which personnel from Swedish public institutions work together with Bolivian counterparts which are mainly civil society institutions and government ministries. We have been doing this for the last 25 years and we believe it has helped Bolivian counterparts to increase their knowledge and skills in different ways’

Twinning appears to be a very particular form of aid. It follows the organisational principle of SIDA that advocates knowledge transfer as the vehicle through which development is promoted in countries like Bolivia. The assumption that knowledge can be ‘transferred’ has been widely contested in development studies. However, the above officer suggests that such a way of delivering aid has been successful. According to SIDA officers, this form of development assistance is not imposed. This is somewhat contradictory since SIDA states that it only works with counterparts that share its development agenda. However, on this point, one officer explains the following:

‘We don’t impose methodologies. We facilitate and suggest methods that allow our counterparts to organise their demands and needs. We help them to visualise what is it they need’ (SIDA Officer_2)

What do counterparts really need? Are they able to formulate their demands? These are key questions for SIDA. When answers are satisfactory, SIDA proceeds to either fund projects or set up a twinning arrangement between Bolivian and Swedish organisations. In either both cases, SIDA adopts ‘capacity development’ as an approach to knowledge transfer. This is further explained by SIDA Officer_1:

‘Capacity development as a process implies an action from outside, that means someone comes with knowledge and tries to create capacities within our counterparts. Capacity development suggests that there is already capacity in the organisation that needs to be developed. Therefore, your starting point is based on the existing knowledge amongst individuals that work in our counterpart institution. In this process consultants need to find a way whereby the existing knowledge in the institution is increased. One way of doing it is by transferring knowledge from consultants to the personnel that work in the counterpart institutions’

SIDA says that it’s most important resource is knowledge (SIDA, 2006:5) and capacity development is an approach that facilitates knowledge transfer processes. While SIDA uses the concept of knowledge transfer to conceptualise how it works, it also frames knowledge transfer in wider processes (SIDA, 2000) and acknowledges that knowledge transfer is not always enough to promote development amongst national counterparts:

‘Sometimes, knowledge transfer is not enough to make things happen [...] In some cases augmenting the knowledge of our counterparts will not make any difference with respect to the result we want to achieve’ (SIDA Officer_2)

There are two issues here. The first is somewhat speculative with respect to whether SIDA’s conceptualisation is a limiting factor. Unlike other development organisations, SIDA still works under the impression that knowledge can actually be transferred. In chapter 2, I criticised the concept of knowledge transfer because it treats knowledge as a commodity or thing that can be passed from those who have it to those who do not have it. However the processual approach adopted by SIDA suggests that their conceptualisation goes beyond the conventional view of knowledge transfer.

The second issue refers to the challenges of working with counterparts in Bolivia. National counterparts in Bolivia tend to have weak organisational structures with high turnover of personnel provoked by economic pressures as well as political instability. Inevitably it undermines SIDA’s development assistance, a problem it shares with many other development organisations. As SIDA Officer_1 points out:

‘Very often we find that knowledge transfer is constrained by the way in which organisations function in Bolivia. We feel that organisational learning amongst our counterparts has not been easy. It is quite a challenge to pursue organisational learning and knowledge transfer in institutions in which the turnover of personnel is very high’ (SIDA Officer_1)

The above statement is not new for development organisations and professionals that are engaged in knowledge engagements with institutions and development beneficiaries. High turnover of personnel, weak organisational structures and lack of transparency in developing countries are some of the reasons that have historically explained why knowledge transfer has failed to achieve sustainable results over time. In addition to these problems, SIDA has identified another issue amongst its national counterparts:

‘Our counterparts have problems in formulating their demands. In other words; they have problems articulating what they want from us. That is why consultants are hired to train our counterparts how to use methodologies and approaches to articulate their demands and evaluate the outcomes of development projects that we fund’ (SIDA Officer_1)

Thus dialogue between SIDA and its counterparts is mediated by development consultants. In this instance, CEP consultants were hired to work with its counterpart, Fundación La Paz, which had had problems articulating its demands and reporting progress to SIDA. One officer in charge of monitoring this particular counterpart explained:

‘We engage in a dialogue with them [counterparts]. We need to identify together what are their priorities and needs. Once this is done, we give them money to fund their projects and plans. In the case of ‘Fundación La Paz’, we know they have problems formulating their needs and reporting back the progress and outcomes of the projects we fund. That is why we hired CEP to train them on how to use the Logical Framework Approach’ (SIDA Officer_2)

LFA is widely used amongst development agencies and other organisations involved in funding development projects. Although LFA has been criticised because it does not necessarily reflect the reality and problems faced by counterparts (Mikkelsen, 2005), nonetheless, it is applied by international development organisations across the world. Its standard use amongst development agencies and beneficiaries has transformed LFA into an important tool that is used as part of development assistance programmes.

According to SIDA, LFA has been used and tested for a long period and has proved valuable in promoting a common approach among development beneficiaries. It is regarded as a tool that ensures that fundamental questions are asked and weaknesses are analysed in order to provide policymakers with better and more relevant information (SIDA, 2005:73). Its application facilitates the assessment of the relationship between inputs, outputs, outcome/impact and objectives.

SIDA prefers to use consultants to carry out training such as that for LFA. The reasons that justify the use of consultants are explained by SIDA Officer_1:

Consultants almost always operate outside political and institutional settings of the target group or project beneficiary. They are hired to do a job in a 'X' institution. When the job is done they leave. All this is done without having to permanently attach the consultant to the institution in which the assignment is undertaken'

One of the most distinctive features of development consultants is the fact that they do not – as the above quote states – work permanently with development beneficiaries. They are hired to perform a specific assignment for a limited period of time. This aspect, on the other hand, means that consultants' engagement is highly bounded, which can have limitations if there is no shared background consensus. As in the case of SOS-Faim, SIDA aims to hire Bolivian nationals, rather than foreign consultants, because of their institutional knowledge and presumed shared national and professional backgrounds with the counterparts:

'Consultants that come from abroad to teach or undertake assignments in Bolivia lack knowledge of how organisations work in the region. They can have a wealth of knowledge but don't know how things are done in Bolivian institutions and therefore their contribution can be terribly weakened' (SIDA Officer_1)

That local development consultants understand local beneficiaries better than consultants from abroad is a contested assumption. Local consultants might have the comparative advantage to know 'how things are done around here' and yet they may have problems engaging with 'local' beneficiaries, as seen in section 5.2 of this chapter. As I argued, a shared background based on common nationality is not necessarily an accurate assumption and thus does not automatically allow effective knowledge engagements between individuals, and cannot be encapsulated by the term 'local' in a highly diverse society. However, in the context of this case, CEP consultants shared both a professional background and other aspects of their lives. That is, they both shared the same technical vocabulary, language, structure of meanings and the urban environment of living in La Paz. SIDA is thus convinced that the interactions of both groups of individuals are likely to be fruitful and that national counterparts will genuinely understand the need to learn LFA. This is further explained by SIDA Officer_2 when he describes his professional interactions with national counterparts:

'When we work with national counterparts, I feel we don't have too many problems in the way methodologies are applied, I mean, I know that most of the techniques and methods we suggest were developed in Europe and the USA [...], most of the individuals working in our counterparts have degrees from Europe and the USA so we get along well and they understand the need of applying certain methodologies' (SIDA Officer_2)

To summarise, there are several factors that SIDA perceives will facilitate knowledge engagements with counterparts. SIDA hires Bolivian consultants because it assumes that there will be shared professional and national backgrounds to enable fluid communication between consultants and counterparts. SIDA also assumes that CEP consultants know 'how things are done' in Bolivian organisations, as well as having intimate knowledge of the

institutional and political context. According to SIDA, this form of expertise is confined to local development consultants. In addition, as we shall see, an important dimension is that shared professional background enables short consultancy assignments to be effective and for mutual (but different) learning between consultants and beneficiaries to occur. The biggest challenge in such knowledge engagements, however, is, as in the case of SOS-Faim and CEP, whether such learning is also shared between the consultants and SIDA.

5.3.2. CEP consultants

I now examine CEP consultants' perceptions of how they undertook this assignment. In the process of doing so, I explore what consultants think about SIDA's development agenda and the way they perceive their role while training Fundación La Paz. This section argues that CEP consultants work with a different conception from SIDA's knowledge transfer approach to development.

When I examined the case of Fundación La Paz, I wanted to understand why SIDA had such a good perception of CEP consultants. I started my analysis by first asking CEP consultants whether they thought consultants from abroad could have done a better job. I asked this question with the intention of finding out why they believed they were suitable for this assignment. One consultant responded:

'On the one hand, a local development consultant is by far cheaper than one from abroad. On the other hand, Bolivia has a highly politicised social environment. From farmers in rural areas to teachers, they are all politicised individuals. Therefore, local consultants are in better to position to engage with development beneficiaries' (CEP Consultant_12)

National development consultants are seen to have the comparative advantage of working and living in the same social context. Although these advantages are likely to secure some degree of success they do not always guarantee fluent knowledge engagements as was seen in section 5.2. However, this assignment is different: CEP consultants were interacting with people with whom they share a common professional background (and, in this instance, a common background based on other characteristics). That is, both groups of individuals worked and lived in similar contexts and both were familiar with the operations of development agencies. On the part of CEP consultants, there was also the perception that SIDA had a positive orientation to development assistance:

'SIDA delivers development assistance based on the assumption that knowledge can be transferred. This is the way Sweden helps developing countries in their fight against poverty. In my experience, other development agencies are enterprises. USAID is perhaps the best example. At least, SIDA is, I think, one of the few agencies that really care about contributing to capacity development' (CEP Consultant_12).

The above consultant had worked for a number of development agencies. The fact that he believes that SIDA is different from other agencies is part of his personal reflection and the way he perceives the role of development agencies in Bolivia. Nevertheless, his positive perception of SIDA's development agenda does not necessarily mean that he has to conform to it in terms of his professional practices. For example, his own approach to knowledge engagements is different from SIDA's. He explains:

'I believe that knowledge is constructed. Whenever I carry out an assignment I try to generate a learning experience in the side of development beneficiaries. SIDA has its own development agenda. They can conceptualise development in the way

they want. We got hired in order to train the personnel of Fundación La Paz. This assignment is fundamentally about capacity building. Therefore I am trying to generate a learning experience where Fundación La Paz is able to learn more about the LFA' (CEP Consultant_12)

In section 5.2, I showed how CEP consultants needed to carefully follow SOS-Faim's development agenda. In this case, CEP consultants are able to use any approach to knowledge as long as they conduct the assignment effectively. The above quote explains how this particular consultant is more interested in creating learning experiences than establishing a knowledge transfer relationship with Fundación La Paz. In addition, he explains that the creation of 'learning experiences' aims to build up the existing knowledge of beneficiaries, in this case, Fundación La Paz's personnel:

'We don't want to do gap filling, as it is very easy to do it. Very often consultants assume a temporary role within the institution in which they undertake assignments. In this case we are training people who should be able to use LFA properly. They are aware that we are here for a short period of time. They know that we would not be doing their job' (CEP Consultant_12).

The training process appears to be conducted without significant problems. A shared professional background in place – in the view of CEP consultants – allows an effective knowledge engagement. This is further explained in the following terms:

'The people who attended the workshops were professionals [Fundación La Paz's personnel]. We didn't have to spend time explaining too many things. The whole training process ran relatively fast insofar they knew beforehand some stuff about the LFA' (CEP Consultant_12).

On the one hand, Fundación La Paz's personnel had some previous and basic knowledge of LFA, on the other hand, both consultants and counterparts were able to understand each other in a very effective manner. Even so, CEP consultants had faced some difficulties while undertaking this assignment:

'Our main challenge is to deal with the assumption that consultants are paid lots of money to solve problems. Beneficiaries must understand that we work on a temporary basis. In the case of Fundación La Paz, they know that we will leave and they should be able to use the LFA without our help. We facilitate learning experiences. We do not replace people's responsibilities' (CEP Consultant_11).

It is worth pausing to reflect on this comment. Development consultants are generally paid substantial fees for undertaking short term assignments. Therefore, some development beneficiaries assume that consultants must solve problems, including consultants assuming the responsibility of development beneficiaries. This process is known as 'gap filling' and it is severely criticised by development agencies and consultants alike (White and Dijkstra, 2003: 524). 'Although there was an identified tension, overall there was a perception that they were able to work well with counterparts of the kind in FLP because of the shared areas of background consensus

5.3.3. SIDA's counterpart: Fundación La Paz

I now turn to how Fundación La Paz perceived the role of CEP development consultants. I describe what Fundación La Paz does and its relationship with SIDA and other development agencies. Based on a key interview with the Director, I explore how the relationship with CEP

is seen and why it is thought that Fundación La Paz's personnel and CEP consultants are able to learn from each other.

Fundación La Paz is a typical SIDA counterpart in the sense that it receives financial support and technical assistance through consultants. Fundación La Paz has been working with several development agencies, and its personnel is thus constituted by professionals who are familiar with the way development organisations operate in the region. FLP has been receiving funds from SIDA in order to implement development projects since the 1990s. As far as SIDA is concerned, LFA is a tool to be used amongst its counterparts and this case is not an exception. The Director explains:

'Fundación La Paz was setup in 1991 as a non-profit organization that works with vulnerable women and poor children, it focus on providing psychological and legal assistance to abandoned children and abused woman. SIDA is funding a project on domestic violence in which we provide legal and psychological support to abused women and children. They want us to use LFA as part of this project. That is why CEP consultants were hired. What is interesting though is that we knew them from other projects. Some of our people attending the workshops know the consultants from other assignments'

Thus there was already an established familiarity with CEP, on one hand to be expected given that CEP provides knowledge services for a large number of development agencies in Bolivia, but on the other hand, it provided the basis for a working relationship. In addition, Fundación La Paz also knew the basics of LFA.

'We knew how to use the LFA but we weren't that good at it though. Being trained by CEP consultants has made us realise that LFA is indeed a very useful tool. We need to learn how to use it properly' (Director_FLP)

CEP consultants thus had the opportunity to train individuals that already had some degree of knowledge about LFA. In these circumstances, CEP consultants were able to establish a good level of communication with Fundación La Paz's personnel. When the training processes started, CEP consultants did not face major problems, further confirmed by the Director:

'I think CEP consultants were great. They are using participatory methods. We all get to talk about what we think. CEP consultants know very well how to use LFA. We in Fundación La Paz know what we do, I mean, we are in the field implementing projects. This is a good combination, they know a lot, we knew little and now we are hoping to know more about LFA'

The combination of field level expertise provided by Fundación La Paz's personnel and CEP consultants' knowledge resulted in new knowledge being created. Having attended the training sessions, I was able to witness how both groups of individuals learnt from each other. The assumption was that CEP consultants were hired to help and transfer some knowledge to Fundación La Paz's personnel. However, the assignment proved to be a learning space in which CEP consultants and Fundación La Paz's personnel learnt from each others' experiential knowledge:

'We both learned, CEP consultants and us. We are the ones that implement funded projects. We share our experiences, problems and limitations with them. They get to know about what is like to work with abandoned women and children' (Director_FLP)

On the one hand, FLP's personnel had the experience of funded development projects. On the other hand, CEP consultants had expertise on how to use LFA. This assignment has

therefore resulted in an effective knowledge process where learning was definitely not a one way process. Some of the evidence that certifies the effectiveness of this assignment is provided by the FLP's director who said the following:

'I will be preparing a report for SIDA very soon. In that report I need to detail what are those results achieved in the last six months. I should not have problems in reporting that. CEP consultants have explained to us in detail how to use LFA and how to report project results' (Director_FLP)

This part of the chapter and its 4 sections had illustrated how CEP consultants and development beneficiaries were able to interact effectively. This was possible because in part because CEP consultants and beneficiaries shared the same nationality and more importantly because they had a professional shared background that allowed a more fruitful knowledge engagement.

5.4. Conclusions

This chapter shows that CEP consultants need to be active learners. Every assignment poses new challenges in which they are required to be creative and open to learn from development agencies and project beneficiaries. This chapter also illustrates the vast amount of experiential knowledge being produced amongst CEP consultants. This new knowledge is not codified and thus is unavailable to academics and practitioners interested to know what happens behind the interaction between consultants and beneficiaries. In fact, consultants' services rely on their ability to make this knowledge available to development agencies and project beneficiaries and yet it is not easy to do this.

Consultants and project beneficiaries with shared background are more likely to exchange knowledge. To be more precise, when consultants and project beneficiaries have a shared professional background there are more chances to exchange knowledge effectively. However this chapter opens up what it means to have shared professional backgrounds. In the case of CEP consultants and farmers, the lived realities of farming proved to be more influential in knowledge engagements than the presumed shared technical background. Having a presumed shared cultural background also does not always result in effective knowledge engagements. In this respect, it is important to understand the diversities of cultural forms and practices within societies and not to assume that nationality equates to shared culture. Thus local development consultants can also misunderstand and misinterpret local culture - being 'local' does not mean that one is able to fully understand the way 'local' people think. The assumption that 'locals' know better than foreigners when it comes to undertake an assignment in villages does not necessarily hold true, although in the case of the SOS-Faim assignment, CEP consultants as well as the OECAs were also engaging with conflicting agendas. Thus, another feature illustrated in this chapter is the fact that development consultants do not necessarily advocate a development discourse of their own. They work under the institutional umbrella of various development agencies, adopting to some extent the discourse of their clients.

CHAPTER 6

DEVELOPMENT ADVISORS

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter examined how CEP consultants and beneficiaries engage in knowledge processes. By using the Habermasian notion of background consensus, which is associated with shared lifeworld, I illustrated how knowledge engagements are more effective when consultants and beneficiaries share the same broad background as professionals and have other characteristics in common. In this chapter, I continue examining how advisors and beneficiaries enter into knowledge engagements while taking into account how SNV's institutional setting affects the role of its advisors at the field level. This setting includes the supply driven nature of development assistance and how it affects advisors' attitudes and professional practices, and the incentives for beneficiaries to engage.

A feature of SNV is that it does not target macro or micro institutions but meso-level ones. To be more precise, 'SNV operates between, and links, the national and local levels. SNV argues that its knowledge services play a pivotal role in articulating national to subnational (meso-level) dynamics that will contribute to good governance and lead to reducing poverty' (SNV 2007:12). Another feature of the institutional setting of SNV is concerned with terminology used within the agency. For instance, SNV's advisors and its personnel use the term client rather than 'beneficiaries to describe those who are targeted by SNV's advisory services. This terminology appears to be preferred because it helps institutionalise what SNV perceives to be a professional relationship.

The chapter draws mainly on advisors' reflections and my personal observations. Clients' perceptions are presented to a limited extent, as not many clients were confident enough to share their views and reflections with me. They did not want to say anything that might be interpreted by me as criticising SNV and their relationship with the organisation, which they valued highly.

The chapter starts in section 6.2 by examining how SNV development discourse and practice have changed over the last 40 years, and how SNV advisors now play a different role from those of its original volunteers. Section 6.3 then examines SNV's current conceptualisation of capacity building and the challenges this poses for the organisation. Some of these challenges, such as high turnover in client organisations and the negative implications for reflexivity of the need to show success to donors, are general across the development aid sector. Others can be traced at least in part to the nature and method of operation of SNV itself. These latter include the challenges posed by SNV's meso-level approach to institutional capacity building and the distorted incentives inherent in its free-of-charge knowledge services.

For many SNV advisors however, a major challenge is that of the clients with whom they work – their failure to engage critically and their low commitment which are often summarised as a problem of culture. Section 6.4 examines critically this perspective, to which many advisors seem to subscribe, although there are self-critical voices.

Section 6.5 draws several of the challenges together in a mini-case study, where it illustrates that client technical interests can be addressed, although there is no evidence of hermeneutic (or emancipatory) interests being met through communicative action. Also, in the end, even the technical interests are undermined by other factors. Section 6.6 concludes the chapter, returning to the recurrent themes of reflexivity in SNV and client commitment.

6.2. A changing development agenda: from volunteers to advisors

This section examines how SNV's development interventions and discourse have changed over the last 40 years. From being an organisation of volunteers SNV has evolved into an

international development agency. Such a change has redefined the role of SNV's development professionals who went from volunteers in the 1960s to salaried development advisors in the 1990s. SNV has also undergone major changes that reflect the supply driven nature of development assistance. This section illustrates how, despite these changes, SNV's development discourse (or 'regime of truth') still assumes – as it did 40 years ago – that poor countries have a deficit of knowledge that can be solved by the provision of services that at the present fall under the rubric of 'capacity building'.

SNV started its activities in 1963 by posting mainly Dutch volunteers to developing countries. In the early years, these volunteers were trained at the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam (Verhoeven, 2002:11). This system operated until 1988, when volunteers were replaced by salaried advisors who had formal training and expertise in development issues.

'During its 40-year career, SNV has evolved from a voluntary organisation into a professional development cooperation organisation. Our expertise in technical assistance and our personnel's commitment to non-commercial goals still typify SNV. From an organisation sending out Dutch volunteers SNV has become a professional multicultural organisation of advisors' (SNV. www.snvworld.org).

Evolving from a volunteer organisation into a multicultural¹¹ one, where the advisors are not necessarily Dutch, had significant implications for practice. Advisors could not simply replace volunteers and replicate their role. Such changes called for a reflection of the way SNV has undertaken its role in the field of development assistance. A senior advisor sees these changes in the following way:

'If you look at the history of development cooperation it started with doing things. SNV itself is a nice example of the development sector. We started as a voluntary organisation, *people went over to poor countries and did things*, they taught children how to read and write, impact was 100 %, and sustainability was zero because the teacher, the doctor, the nurse would go home after two or three years of voluntary work and then again, there would be a gap as big as there was before the arrival of the volunteers' (SNV Advisor_3; emphasis added)

This quotation shows how the whole SNV discourse about its work changed has changed since 1988. In the 1960s, the dominant development discourse, of which SNV was of course a part, preached a hands-on approach amongst development workers. During those early years, SNV's development practices were driven by modernisation theory (see chapter 4 for the Bolivian context of modernisation) which emphasised economic growth through improving local and national physical infrastructure (i.e. hospitals, schools, roads, etc.), and human infrastructure (filling knowledge gaps through technical assistance – see chapter 2). However, after several decades, it became evident that physical infrastructure projects along with knowledge gap-filling solutions were not achieving the expected economic growth and developmental gains expected by 'modernisation theorists' such as Rostow in 1960 (Riddell 2007; Easterly 2006).

Evolving from volunteers to advisors has thus changed SNV's approach towards its clients in poor countries. Part of this change is reflected in the way SNV's advisors undertake their assignments. While in the past volunteers worked directly with poor people in villages, in the present, advisors enter into knowledge engagements with professionals in meso-level

¹¹ In this case the term 'multicultural' refers to the fact that at present, SNV has development advisors from all over the world providing knowledge services across the developing world. In this chapter, unless indicated otherwise all interview quotes are from European advisors.

organisations (i.e. ministries and government institutions). This shift in development practice is explained by the senior advisor above:

‘From doing and working with [poor] people, we are now not necessarily in contact with them, the target group is far away. Now, the distance between the western development agents and the poor is larger than ever before. I don’t talk nor see a poor person here in Bolivia at all. It is not my job, because for me to work directly with poor people has been perceived as not sustainable. We did it for a long time, doing projects and working in the rural areas, and it didn’t work because in all the countries where big development organisations have worked, poverty indexes have gone up, inequality has become worse, the human development index has gone down, we have nothing to show in terms of track record’ (SNV Development Advisor_3)

While conducting fieldwork I have observed that there tends to be a division of labour amongst SNV advisors. For instance, most of the high-level managerial jobs within SNV are performed by Europeans while direct contact with implementers is through Bolivians. I explore the implications of this division further in chapter 7.

The language used to describe what SNV does has also changed, again mirroring a broader evolution of the discourse around development practice. Rather than the language of knowledge and skills transfer of the early days, the current language talks of ‘capacity building’.

‘From doing, we went to transferring resources. We said we shouldn’t do. We should enable local agents to do things by providing resources [...] now the big buzz word is capacity building’ (SNV Advisor_21)

Capacity building is a key concept for SNV (2007b). However, as with the early days, it is still directly concerned with increasing clients’ knowledge. As it has been historically, therefore, the core problem for SNV is that developing countries lack sufficient knowledge:

‘The problem is that there is not sufficient capacity in the developing world. We (SNV advisors) should capacity build clients in poor countries so they can be sustainable developed. In that sense knowledge services are part of creating institutional and organisational capacity’ (SNV Advisor_17)

Another advisor, however, was more cynical about this change of language, and indeed about how the broader development practice discourse has evolved:

‘Is lack of capacity indeed the main cause of lack of development or lagging behind development? I am not so sure. It is a buzz word and there will be more buzz words coming in the future. ‘Capacity building’ is just one of them’ (SNV Advisor_4)

Ephemeral ‘buzz word’ or not, capacity building features strongly in SNV’s current literature, and can be claimed with justification to be an organising concept for the organisation’s work. The following section explores further SNV’s attempts to operationalise the concept in Bolivia and some of the institutional challenges it faces.

6.3. SNV’s approach to development assistance

SNV’s operations are highly dependent on financing by one donor, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2006, SNV allocated € 91.2 million to its capacity building programmes

in 33 countries, for the purpose of poverty reduction. It explains its approach to capacity building and poverty reduction in the following terms:

- SNV works with local meso-level organisations – such as local governments, business associations and civil society networks – these organisations have a need for the mix of capacity development and thematic expertise that SNV offers. However, they cannot afford to pay for such expertise at commercial rates. Therefore, SNV provides its services free of charge.
- Whereas most development agencies focus on particular sectors (health, education, finance, agriculture, etc.), SNV works with a diverse range of private, public and non-governmental actors. By working to bridge the micro-macro divide SNV aims to increase the impact of its support, and contribute to better governance.
- In addition to supporting individual clients, SNV's sizeable and sustained in-country presence in Bolivia and other countries enables it to support system- and societal changes. Thus, SNV aims to promote an environment that contributes to long-term development (SNV 2006).

Through the above processes, SNV aims to reduce poverty and improve societal governance in developing countries. Associated with the achievement of this aim, SNV regards itself as a learning organisation that incorporates lessons learned on the ground. In its 2006 annual report SNV illustrates this point in the following terms:

‘SNV continued to develop as a learning organisation thereby improving its advisory quality. Across all levels, staff have shown enormous efforts. The lessons learned were incorporated in a tailor-made strategy for the period 2007-2015’ (SNV, 2006:11)

Thus SNV characterises itself as a learning, non-profit organisation. There are, however, other pressures on SNV: for example, its achievements are frequently assessed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is its sole funder and reported to the wider audience in the development assistance field. In other words, SNV must comply with donor rules and norms.

Such norms have changed slightly since 2002. SNV still reports directly to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs but now the new relationship has become one of *subsidiser* and *subsidy recipient*. In 2007 SNV secured a new subsidy until 2015. The following quote illustrates its financial relation with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as this thesis goes to press (October 2008).

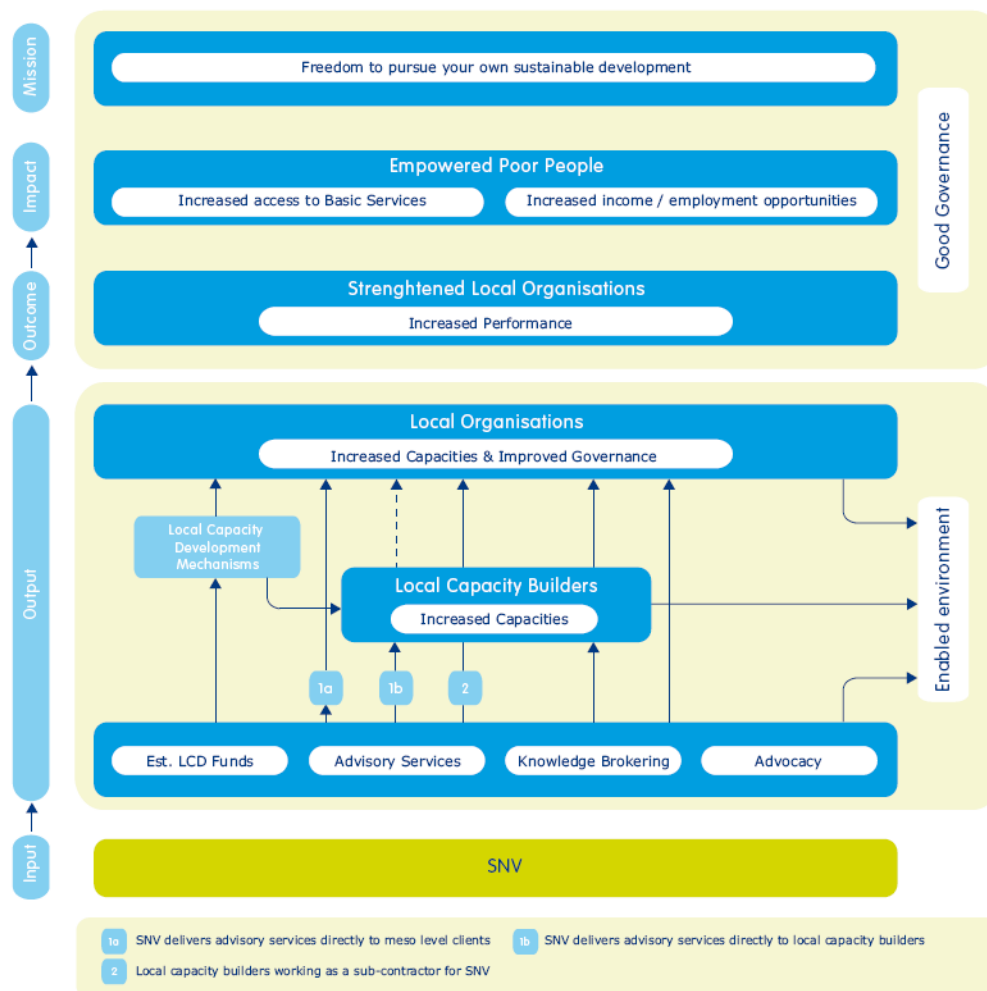
‘This is the first year of the new subsidy agreement for 2007–2015. For evaluation purposes, the subsidy agreement is divided into three periods: 2007–2009, 2010–2012 and 2013–2015. As a result of a change in the subsidy conditions underlying the new agreement, the accounting treatment of interest earned on subsidy money has changed [...] As of 2007 the annual accounts are prepared in full accordance with the accounting standards *for not-for-profit organisations*. The annual accounts of SNV reflect its three main activities: core activities, managing externally financed programmes and special agreements with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ (SNV, 2007:63; emphasis added)

It is in this context that it is useful to examine the extent to which SNV's approach to development assistance and more particularly its knowledge services are really achieving their goals in the way they are officially reported. What follows is not an evaluation of SNV's performance but rather an exploration of how advisors and clients perceive the challenges that SNV faces.

6.3.1. The challenge of uneven impact in terms of poverty reduction

Although SNV tends to work with meso-level clients, often based in major cities, there is still an assumption that this approach will serve to help reduce poverty throughout the country through a diffusion or trickle-down effect. The following diagram illustrates the way SNV targets poor people at ground level by working through meso-level organisations in poor countries.

Figure 1: Overview of SNV's way of working and results-logic



Source: 'Local impact - global presence' (SNV, 2007b:28)

How does such an approach work in the field? More importantly, how does it impact on the lives of poor rural people? In relation to the question, the following testimony was provided by a Dutch national advisor who had spent several years working in Africa before moving into South America. He stated:

'Picture in your mind poor people living in remote villages in Bolivia, and we here (La Paz, capital city) transferring knowledge and doing capacity building – no it won't do the job! This is a fact; all these knowledge transfer and capacity building services are taking place in the urban areas of the main cities of Bolivia. SNV has a policy and a focus and it says, our point of gravity is in provincial capitals but I would say that 90 percent of knowledge transfer activities of developmental agents take place in their respective capitals of the host countries' (SNV Advisor_3)

This statement was produced by an advisor who has also seen the way SNV's approach to development assistance works in Angola. He was able to compare his experience in the following terms.

‘For instance the capital of Angola has to do more with New York than rural Angola. The urban areas of Angola are to do with BMW cars, broadband internet, satellite TV and so forth, while the other side of Angola is to do with the most deteriorated and shocking levels of poverty you can ever imagine. Technology and access to information has narrowed the distance between the western world and capitals in developing countries That is where it all stops. If any, I have probably seen knowledge transfer between western consultants and individuals in capital cities in developing countries’ (SNV Advisor_3)

Although the above is the view of one advisor, it illustrates how SNV’s development approach, as conceived at headquarters, translates to a capital city bias, and suggests that the rural poor fail to benefit.

6.3.2. The challenge of high turnover in client organisations

SNV’s focus on the meso-level means that it views capacity-building especially in terms of enhancing institutional capacity which is a key development issue, where it is now widely accepted that a core problem in developing countries concerns missing institutions or perverse institutions instead of missing money (Burnside and Dollar 1997; North 1990).

In the Bolivian context, SNV perceives itself, therefore, to be addressing a core problem. Institutions, however, are populated by people who are guided to act according to certain norms and who might even play a role in evolving those norms (i.e. institutional development) over time. This, however, presupposes a critical mass of stability and continuity among personnel, who both embody the existing institutional norms and are potential change agents.

Unfortunately, a specific feature of organisations and institutions in Bolivia is the high turnover of personnel which is often caused by the political instability of the country:

‘As a sector we have not been able to solve the following problem: any advisory relationship is a person to person thing, any knowledge transfer is a person to person thing, but your objective (as an advisor) is not to coach, enhance the capacity, teach or train that person but the organisation that he/she represents. When I worked intensively with the vice-minister of popular participation (in La Paz, the capital city of Bolivia), I have not been able to install capacity in the institution and now that these ministers are out (because of political reasons) I would say that the work is completely wasted. Nothing of the work that SNV has done with the ministries will be ever sustainable. People are made redundant or just disappear. I think this is a problem that all major development agencies face all over the world’ (SNV Advisor_5)

Thus while advisors aim to enhance institutional capacity by engaging with individuals with whom, very often, if not always, they share backgrounds particularly in terms of their formal education, which, in principle, allows a more fluent flow of knowledge, a serious constraint is the high turnover of personnel. This point was also discussed in chapter 5 and I pick it up again in chapter 7. One advisor notes:

‘There are two problems out there. The first problem is a practical one and it relates to the extreme rapid turnover of personnel in our client institutions. I spent an enormous amount of time in coaching, setting up systems and procedures, implementing and designing monitoring systems in a number of

ministry offices here in Bolivia. All these people are now out; they all have been made redundant!’ (SNV Advisor_15)

High turnover of personnel appears to be a structural problem that undermines institutional development in Bolivia as well as SNV’s advisory services. In reality, of course, SNV alone cannot change such structural problems, but it might usefully reflect more on how to adapt to them.

6.3.3. The challenge for SNV as a learning organisation

Countries which heavily rely on donors’ funds tend to welcome development advisors whether they are needed or not. Moreover, organisations such as SNV which provide knowledge services through advisors need to report positive results in order to maintain a certain equilibrium between transactions in the development assistance field. As I explore in chapter 7, all agents in the field try to play a win-win game.

Development assistance as explained in chapter 2 and 3 can be understood as a system in which donor governments, donor and development agencies and recipient organisations in developing countries are the main players. It is also a system where norms and rules need to be complied with in order to keep it functioning. In other words, development agents and country beneficiaries are interested to comply and do their part to keep the development assistance functioning. In the case of Bolivia, which is a highly indebted country (see chapter 4), SNV provides advisors in a country context that has a heavy presence of development organisations funded by western countries. At one level, this context influences strongly clients’ working environments. At another level, the supply-driven nature of development assistance creates a tension:

‘It is very interesting to know that donor organisations complain that they don’t know what to do with their money. They know that if they don’t spend their money given to them by the government per year it will lead to a budget reduction. They also know that if they spend their money but they get negative reports and evaluations again, it will lead to a budget cut. Therefore, they have to spend and they have show that the money was well spent’ (SNV Advisor_5)

This dynamic where money has to be spent and positive outcomes reported does not bode well for SNV’s self-description above as a ‘learning organisation’ which in turn enhances its contribution to capacity building.. I explored a similar issue in chapter 5 where CEP consultants felt unable to feed back to development agencies what really happened at the field level. So what do advisors make of the way development assistance works and its implications for reflexivity and learning? The following advisor commented at length:

‘The way the whole development business game as set up does not encourage being auto-critical and honest. This business pays to be in ‘a-la-mode’, to use fashion words, and speak well about the performance of projects in developing countries. One big fashion word here in Bolivia is ‘intercultural’ and yet, I haven’t yet come across anyone who is able to explain to me what ‘intercultural’ means [...] True learning and capacity building needs a conducive environment based on honesty and self-criticism, learning from mistakes. I do not think that kind of environment is present in the development sector, I do not think so. For both development professionals and donors, it is a survival game making sure that next year you get the money

you need, so you can pay your bills, salaries and what have you [...]. In our politically correct world, the development world is a closed system. It is very difficult to be critical from within the system, because if you are, you get kicked out. But also it is very difficult to criticise the system from outside, because the answer will be: you don't know, we are the experts, we know what we do! Within the system, my experience is that a lot of the so called 'knowledge transfer', 'capacity building', doesn't work. In fact they are lip services. It leads to highly frustrated experts and a waste of enormous resources' (SNV Advisor_3)

According to this advisor, SNV faces a major challenge if it is to meet its description as a learning organisation. As with other development organisations it is part of a wider system of development assistance, and this system is not conducive to critical self-reflection. This is a major issue that I explore in chapter 7.

6.3.4 The challenge of free services and distorted incentives

SNV does not charge for its services. Although common throughout development assistance, this is unusual in a world driven by market transactions, and it poses certain challenges in relation to commitment of clients and incentives for their engagement.

Although free services can be described as an institutional practice for SNV, there are doubters among its own advisors. One senior advisor whom I interviewed once even went so far as to introduce payments in a country where he worked before being assigned to Bolivia.

'When I was working in an African country as the head of SNV, I introduced payment schemes for all our clients. Of course this is not what SNV does. There were rates for everyone, small councils, government offices and so forth. I decided that there was not such a thing as free knowledge transfer (advice). We were charging our clients for our advice. Of course, as a result of this measure, some clients said 'if you start charging us, we are no longer interested'. In some areas we would have nominal fees of something like 10 US dollars per day, per adviser. This money was nominal. We didn't intend to cover our costs with these fees. We started charging fees to our clients in order to select the committed from the non-committed clients. I cannot think of any other way by which knowledge transfer and a consultancy or advisory relationship are worthwhile the payment' (SNV Advisor_6)

The above statement is also interesting in that it illustrates a dilemma for free of charge services. If a service has to be paid for directly by the client, it contains an incentive to engage with the service in order not to waste money. Without such a charge, according to this advisor, you will have a problem of client commitment.

One factor that needs to be considered when exploring the way SNV advisors deliver their services is the fact that a large number of their clients have financial ties with several donor governments – i.e. they receive money from them, and therefore are accountable and committed to them. Given these circumstances, how can clients be committed to advisors when there is no financial or monetary tie between them? I asked a senior advisor his view about this challenging task, and he responded as follows:

'Once, there was a letter from the director of SNV in an African country. He wrote to the management team of SNV in The Hague and he stated in his letter that his impression was, 50% of all SNV-Rwanda clients simply or merely tolerated the presence of SNV advisors and as soon as SNV starts charging even one dollar per hour, they'll ask you to go. So, if you look at successful

advisory or consultancy relationships, a very important element is the commitment of the client' (SNV Advisor_15)

The above statement illustrates the ease with which a client can cut off its relationship with SNV. The advisor's view clearly stresses the view that commitment is heavily related to money. Of course, this is one senior advisor's view and we cannot generalise the above statement and claim that all SNV advisors are merely tolerated in client institutions across the developing world because of the lack of a monetary transaction. Nevertheless it appears to be a reasonable proposition and worthy of further exploration in terms of its dynamics.

One issue is that knowledge is envisaged by SNV in terms of long-term capacity building and therefore demands time and willingness to learn from clients. In this view, knowledge is not a product to be given but a longer-term process of learning through engagement where we might even start to invoke Habermas' concept of communicative action. This long-term aspect is largely absent, however, when identified and defined knowledge gaps are addressed by hiring short-term consultants to deliver a knowledge 'product'. On this point an advisor comments:

'Public institutions would prefer to hire consultants rather than getting involved with advisors. Why? Because whenever there is lack of capacities and knowledge, it is easier and more comfortable for the institution to hire a consultant to do the job that nobody knows how to do it, rather than getting involved with an advisor that would demand commitment to learn how to do the job' (SNV Advisor_7)

On this analysis by advisors themselves, why then does SNV attract any 'business' at all? The incentive appears to be that, despite the apparent lack of commitment and willingness to learn, client institutions are nonetheless interested in working with SNV advisors because their presence in local client organisations brings benefits that are not necessarily related to knowledge engagements. A number of SNV advisors perceive that their presence in client organisations inspires the confidence of donor governments and funding agencies in their local meso-level clients. This could well explain why client organisations work with SNV advisors.

Incentives are financial and non-financial factors that provide a motive for a particular course of action. The development assistance field can be described as an incentive structure where development agencies provide a number of incentives – such as knowledge and financial resources – to developing countries so they can pursue their own development and reduce poverty. SNV is an agency that operates on the same principles. Its services can be categorised as incentives that should motivate clients to learn and gain knowledge from advisors. However, SNV's presumed incentives can become distorted and serve different purposes from those embraced by the organisation.

Incentives can be seen as attached to rules and norms that guide people's behaviour. However, according to North (2005:101), rules and norms – or institutions - are imperfect incentive systems. Thus while SNV's free of charge advisory services can be described as incentives which in some circumstances should prompt clients to work with SNV advisors, the reality seems to be different. On this point, a senior advisor explains how the incentive of a free advisory service is distorted by client interests that welcome the opportunity to work with SNV, not because they are interested in learning from them, but because of the external benefits that are attached to having western development advisors.

'Local organisations that hire experts from the western world like SNV advisors fall in two categories. A lot of times, we western experts look very nice on the CV of the institution: it helps to enhance the profile of the local

organisation vis-à-vis potential donors. Another reason for which advisors might be hired is because of their links with a funding organisation' (SNV Advisor_4)

In another interview, this advisor added:

'There is no way whatsoever that we can guarantee commitment of the client. If the client has secondary reasons for contracting us, 9 out of 10 the reason is enhancing their institutional [i.e. organisational] profile by showing in their institutional [i.e. organisational] CV that they have a consultancy/advisory relationship with a western organisation of a more or less standing reputation. It helps them to get funds' (SNV Advisor_4)

In such circumstances, productive knowledge engagements for capacity building are unlikely to happen simply because SNV is offering such services. It is again impossible to generalise and later in this chapter I do describe a productive knowledge engagement, although it ended because of other factors. Also, it is perfectly possible that a free SNV service might coincide with a client's technical interests for which it would otherwise pay a fee to a consultant. One such case, which was described to me during my fieldwork, was when the Bolivian Ministry of Forestry was approached by SNV to provide advisory services. In this case the ministry's personnel perceived that SNV services were advantageous insofar as they did not have to pay for them, as well as providing an opportune input at a crucial moment for the ministry. The representative of the ministry explains his initial experience in the following terms:

'We did not look for SNV's advisory support. They came to us offering advisory services in different thematic areas. At the time we were busy evaluating a 10 year project. We thought their services would come in handy in the process of evaluation [...] The advisor facilitated the processes and methodologies by which we evaluated the project much better' (Bolivian Ministry of Forestry Officer_1)

In line with SNV advisory practices, the advisor supported the service he was providing by initially hiring local consultants who undertook a short-term assignment to help with the evaluation. Consultants are sometimes hired by SNV in this way to complement what advisors do. The following testimony is provided by the client and describes the role of consultants in the course of this advisory service:

'SNV hired a consultant that helped us with the initial part of the project evaluation in fact. The consultant produced a report which we used to start off with the project evaluation. Later in the process, another consultant (hired by SNV) organized and conducted workshops. The advisor was in charge of supervising the job of the consultant who facilitated and proposed methodological alternatives when conflicts arose. The advisor made sure we fulfilled what we agreed in the advisory plan' (Bolivian Ministry of Forestry Officer_1)

In this particular case the short-term technical needs of the client coincided with what SNV could provide, paradoxically through hiring and paying for the consultants who could do the job. Although it can be said to be meeting bounded technical interests, it could not be described in terms of SNV's ethos of long-term engagement to promote broader capacity-building.

There are undoubtedly, however, other instances where clients might consider working with SNV even if they perceive no need for its services. I have touched on these unintended incentives above and I explore them further in chapter 7 in relation to the development

assistance system and the way in which a dominant discourse or ‘regime of truth’ is maintained. The dominant sense made of the situation by advisors, however, is that the incentives to work with SNV do not translate directly into commitment to engage in the way that SNV would wish.

‘There are loads of advisors that leave this job frustrated due to the lack of commitment of the client. You cannot transfer knowledge, and you cannot build capacity if the receiving institution is not 100 percent motivated’ (SNV Advisor_1)

This section has highlighted some of the institutional challenges for SNV in its quest to enter long-term capacity engagements for capacity building. Many of the testimonies about these challenges have come from the advisors themselves. Such testimonies can, however, also present a more complex, if confusing, picture. Thus, in this section the testimonies and other evidence have pointed to challenges for SNV as an organisation: its focus on meso-level institution-building, its location within a broader development assistance system, and its basic system of operation. Quite often, however, in my interviews, some of these same advisors as well as additional ones conceptualised the challenges in rather a different way where the heart of the problem actually lies with their clients rather than with SNV or the development assistance system. It is to these testimonies that I now turn.

6.4. The challenge of the clients: SNV advisors on culture and learning

Section 6.3.4 highlighted the perceived lack of commitment among various clients as a problem of the distorted incentives inherent in SNV’s overall approach to its work. Some advisors, however, including some of those quoted in section 6.3.4, attribute their frustration about client commitment to differences in ‘culture’. For example, one senior advisor reflected on his past experiences in Africa and commented:

‘You have to transfer knowledge to the organisation but it goes through persons and we have not solved that problem. It is again a commitment problem. It is not only a turnover of personnel in client institutions but also a commitment problem. The other big problem is that we perceive the lack of capacity as a technical issue, in the sense that, we can solve it through knowledge transfer. We can solve the lack of capacity through conventional consultancy interventions. I don’t know for Latin America because I’ve only been here for a couple of months, but I am sure that for Africa that the basic problem, the basic cause for the lack of capacity in the African countries where I’ve worked, is a *cultural one and not a technical one*’ (SNV Advisor_8; emphasis added)

This perception is also shared by another senior advisor who stated the following:

‘Yes, cultural differences affect the way we engage with clients and the way we work with them. For instance, people in Latin America are not used to receiving feedback. People in Bolivia get upset and annoyed whenever I produce feedback about the way they undertake their work. People here do not accept constructive criticisms. There is a certain attitude – people [Bolivian clients] believe that we are here to serve them, not to criticise them. In part, I believe development aid agencies have contributed a great deal to fuel this attitude. Agencies give a lot without expecting too much in return’ (SNV Advisor_27)

This statement is more nuanced than the previous one in that it suggests that the perceived problem of client culture is a direct result of the way in which development assistance contributes to the creation of a culture of dependence on financial support and other forms of aid. It does, however, add a particular dimension to ‘culture’ relevant to this thesis, which is the clients’ inability to engage in critical discussion. If this is true, the potential for communicative action through knowledge engagement would appear again to be low.

This section examines critically, therefore, the above and other interconnected issues around the perception that ‘culture’ is the main barrier to productive engagement. I thus examine how some advisors mark their cultural differences between them and clients in poor countries. Then, I suggest that this emphasis on culture - as perceived by advisors - might actually demonstrate a lack of deeper reflexivity within themselves. Thus there might be lack of hermeneutic interest on the side of many advisors in constructing shared meanings and lifeworlds with clients.

6.4.1. The marking of cultural differences

Culture in the sense implied by my respondents broadly accords with the notion of a shared way of life. Cultural difference, therefore, concerns different ways of life between, say, European development advisors and their clients. For example in a workshop run by a European advisor, cultural differences with Bolivian professionals were expressed in the following way:

‘In Bolivia couples first get married and then struggle to meet their basic needs. That’s why *you* find so many poor households in Bolivia. *In Europe, we* first meet our basic needs, we get jobs, a house and then, only then we get married. You in Bolivia do things the other way around’ (SNV Advisor_9, emphasis added)

The advisor counterposes *you* and *we* and the diametrical difference between advisors from developed countries and the people in Bolivia. The distance between both actors is portrayed as evident and yet they need to interact with each other. The above also illustrates the fact that advisors either from Bolivia or Europe do not share the same lifeworlds with clients and yet they need to work with each other in order to meet at least their technical interests. Another advisor also commented:

‘They don’t understand the fact we do things differently in Europe. For instance, we are multi-tasking. We do different activities at the same time. Here people hardly manage to undertake one activity successfully. *The problem with these people is their culture; they have habits that reinforce their poverty*’ (SNV Advisor_24; emphasis added)

This form of othering relates to Hobart’s (1993: 14) view of experts and how expertise is exercised. He argues that the notion of the expert is closely related to the growth of ignorance in the local population; the belief that an outside expert monopolizing the search for solutions presupposes the ignorance of the people she or he is helping. This has a cultural dimension, as evidenced here. When advisors perceive local culture as a barrier to their endeavours, they are confronted with a major challenge to their own presumed expertise. On this concern, the senior advisor with experience of working in Africa argued the following:

‘I believe that 20 years from now, there will be Africa and the rest of the world [...] you can capacity build and transfer knowledge until judgement day in Africa. But if you do not recognise that the main cause of failure is a cultural one, you will not succeed’ (SNV Advisor_3)

The portrayal of culture as an obstacle to development is not new. In the 1960s, Oscar Lewis coined the term culture of poverty to argue that a mixture of economic, social and socio-political factors among Puerto Rican and Mexican communities could be passed on between generations, keeping the poor in poverty (Lewis 1965). In my interviews it appears to emerge very often in the testimonies provided by advisors. In fact, some advisors base a general critique of SNV's work in these terms. For instance, the following advisor had spent 6 years working for development agencies in Africa. During an interview he lamented that his work and services were not sustainable because of the local culture. He explains his views in the following terms:

'I am sure that all the stuff I did in several years of hard work doesn't exist today, nothing! It has all evaporated the day I left. If you look at my salary and the costs of me having worked there for six years, you want to cry. I have not seen in my lifetime, effective, efficient, sustainable knowledge transfer taking place. I have not seen organisation gaining sustained enhanced capacity because of the work we have been doing, no sir, I have not' (SNV Advisor_8)

The reference to several years of hard work has obvious connotations with the well known western, Christian-protestant cultural characteristic known as the 'work ethic' and the same advisor continued:

'After having worked for several years in a really remote rural area in Africa, if I had any impact at all, it was my example impact. I proved that it is possible to be transferred to a remote place with a very attractive budget at your disposal, and a car at my disposal and not abuse these things. I worked 60 hours per week, I was getting maybe a control visit once per year, and the boss didn't care about what I was doing. He would come once per year. So, people (in the village) were telling me, you are mad, you've got a nice budget, a company car, nobody controls you, no phone lines, no internet, no nothing why the hell don't you enjoy life? Why are you working so hard? In the end when I left, the locals said: you are the only person in this village that doesn't go to church yet on the other hand you are the only real Christian'. (SNV Advisor_8)

Reducing the issues, however, to a notion of culture which is based on being European or African or Bolivian (see chapter 7 for a further exploration), might also suggest a lack of deeper reflexivity on the part of these advisors. Indeed this point was taken up by other advisors. :

'There are a lot of arrogant advisors and consultants that come around, and they think they know it all, they are not sufficiently experienced, they are too young, they land straight from university and they drop into leading functions. All that I recognized too' (SNV Advisor_3)

And:

'In Europe we perceive that there is lack of professionalism and seriousness in developing countries. Such perception is false. The concept of professionalism here is different. People in developing countries have their own perception of professionalism and seriousness. As a European advisor you have to be able to listen and understand people's perceptions' (SNV Advisor_7)

For Habermas (1984), reflexivity is obviously key to learning and communicative action. It implies social interactions between actors, and it requires the capacity to question personal values and assumptions in oneself and others. My interpretation of that part of my data which

describes the problem in terms of culture suggests that such self-questioning was lacking in several of my respondents. On this point, Eyben (2005: 59) reflects on her professional experience in poor countries. She comments on the reasons for which some development professionals are not inclined to criticise their own worldview:

‘Like tourists, we take pains to exclude from our frame any image of unpleasant reality that does not fit our concept of how the place should be. And again, like a tourist, we only stay for a short period of time, three years on average, generally mixing with those with whom we feel most comfortable’.

My fieldwork thus evidenced a range of capacities amongst advisors to be reflexive about their own cultural standpoints. Moreover, when reflexivity was evident, it was in conversation with me, a supposedly neutral researcher. I have noted above the challenge of being reflexive *within* SNV as an organisation because of the way the development assistance ‘game’ (section 6.3.3) works. Chapter 7 again takes up these issues introduced here.

In concluding this section, although there is some evidence of reflexivity, there also seems to be a view amongst interviewees that culture in developing countries perpetuates existing conditions of poverty and prevents change. Advisors have presented themselves as critics able to interpret and judge the way people and institutions behave. The views posed by interviewees do not necessarily explore the culture or background of advisors themselves and how it influences the way they engage with local actors. Rather, views are formed about the client’s culture and how it impedes development. The problem of culture as perceived by some advisors suggests that knowledge engagements and any other development endeavours are bound to fail if locals do not change their mentalities and attitudes. The perceptions held by advisors portray their sense of reality and reproduce a worldview in which further work and assistance is needed to help people in developing countries. Reducing the problem to one of local ‘culture’ suggests to me, however, a limited capacity for reflexivity among the advisors themselves.

6.5 Illustrating some of the issues in combination: a mini-case study

‘Money is not the ultimate resource for economic or social development. Know-how and willingness can go miles in solving many rural developmental challenges.’
Henry Mugambi - adviser Rwanda’ (SNV, 2006:15)

One of my conclusions in chapter 5 was that the potential for productive knowledge engagement was greater if (in this case) consultants and beneficiaries shared aspects of their lifeworlds – for example if both groups of actors could be described as professionals. At the SNV advisor level, the relationship is often similar: professional advisors engage with professional clients. Other things being equal, the relationship should, therefore, confirm a similar potential.

This section examines this potential. It does so through exploring a single ‘mini’-case. This case was not alone in those I investigated but it is illustrative of the wider inter-connected challenges.

The client was the Municipality of Santa Cruz, the second biggest city in Bolivia. The advisor assigned to this client was asked to provide methodological support in the design of strategic plans for the municipality. In this case, the representative of the Municipality of Santa Cruz explains how he became involved with SNV. His testimony starts as follows:

‘When I started my job as a head of the unit [within the Municipality of Santa Cruz], I noticed that the municipality had signed a number of agreements with

a number of development agencies. There were piles of papers, agreements and documents that corroborated the interest of agencies that wanted to help the municipality in different thematic areas. I thought I could use some of these agreements [...] so I started to contact them and eventually I found myself having a meeting with an SNV advisor' (SNV Client_1)

In the context of the strong presence of development aid agencies in Bolivia, government institutions (e.g. municipalities) in Bolivia do not have to struggle to get aid or assistance. In some cases, clients can be selective and choose who to work with. Notwithstanding previous agreements, this municipality decided to work with SNV in the thematic area of supporting economic development through micro- and medium-enterprises. After the advisory plan was agreed, the advisor explained to me his role in the assignment in the following terms.

'I was helping to conceptualise what micro and medium enterprises are. The municipality lacked strategic competences and the knowledge in development economics. Of course, they knew some stuff but they needed more methodological tools, they needed to think strategically. They needed someone to help them to visualize their future and design their strategic plan.' (SNV Advisor_11)

Part of the advisory role was to strengthen the capacities of the client. In this case, the advisor built on the existing knowledge of the client and contributed to specific tasks, namely 'methodological support'. His role was described by the client in the following terms:

'The advisory plan we signed with SNV had contemplated various points. For instance, I had to design the annual operative plan in which I needed to produce a strategic plan for the different units within my department. The advisor helped me to design and produce the annual operative plan and other strategic schemes. In brief, the advisor had supported me methodologically and also introduced my municipality into a regional network of similar institutions' (SNV Client_1)

This particular client seemed to be very satisfied with the way the advisor performed his job. The client highlighted the fact that the advisor had experiential knowledge from other countries which had helped to undertake the assignment.

'I think what is also valuable, is the international experience they bring into the advisory process. These people [advisors], most of them have worked in different countries and therefore, they can advise on different themes. They also know how different approaches work' (SNV Client_1)

Up to this point, the representative of the municipality appreciated the interactions with an advisor who had a wide range of experiential knowledge. However, while I was following this case, political leaders in the capital city of La Paz were changed and as result people in different government authorities across Bolivia were made redundant, including this client representative. This kind of instability happens almost every time political leaders are removed from the government. Thus I witnessed how, from one day to another, the person to whom the advisor provided advice disappeared. A situation of this nature highlights the fragile nature of the advisor-client relationship based on individual interactions: while SNV's purpose is to build institutional capacity at meso-level, the process is focused on individuals rather than institutions. In this particular case, the person that received all the support and training did not in the end contribute to institutional capacity in the municipality because he was unable to share his knowledge with other colleagues.

Months later, I had the opportunity to interview this municipal official once again. On this occasion I asked him his views on the challenges of working with development organisations. He commented as follows:

‘Relationships and agreements between municipalities and development agencies don’t produce fruitful results because of the lack of political will on the side of municipalities and project beneficiaries. For example, once, the advisor and I travelled to the capital [La Paz] in order to lobby, negotiate and discuss with development organisations. We were quite successful, we managed to secure the financial support of USAID, CIDA and the Dutch Embassy and yet they complained about the lack of political willingness in the side of Bolivian municipalities. Apparently they have quite a lot to offer but there are few local organisations interested in using those resources’ (SNV Client_1)

Lack of political will and inefficient use of development aid are part of the reality that agencies and development beneficiaries face. In these circumstances, the advisory service has proven to be of little benefit for the client. On this point, the official explained that:

‘Nothing can be improved on the side of SNV. The municipality and I failed. SNV provided everything we asked for. The lack of political will and commitment of the municipality and the people who run it made our working relationship with the advisor unproductive and rather useless. During the 14 months I have worked within my unit, we even secured 1.5 million US dollars for a project which eventually didn’t take off. The reasons that blocked all these initiatives are, I think, our lack of strategic vision, and the personal interests of the people that run public organisations in Santa Cruz’ (SNV Client_1)

This case supports the observation in chapter 5 that productive knowledge engagements are possible. Again, as in chapter 5, this was a professional-to-professional relationship with apparently a shared problem-solving mindset and positive attitudes towards the challenges. It does, however, also neatly summarise other dimensions which have been highlighted in this chapter which militate against such engagements and suggest that shared background consensus or lifeworld might not be sufficient. Thus I note from this mini-case:

- Government (in this case local government) officials can to some extent pick and choose which development agency it is going to work with (section 6.3.4)
- Clients are likely to choose SNV on the basis of technical knowledge interests, rather than broader capacity-building which would more likely require a hermeneutic dimension (sections 6.1 and 6.3.4).
- There was a change in political leadership of the municipality and the municipal official lost his job. This is an individual example of high personnel turnover and weak institutions in the Bolivian public sector (section 6.3.2), but with serious implications – the project failed to take off.

6.6 Conclusions

This chapter has illustrated a general issue of reflexivity within SNV. Interviewee observations about their organisation and its role within development assistance, and the need to demonstrate success rather than failure, illustrate clearly the real disincentives to be reflexive, still less to engage in communicative action, within the organisation. The chapter has also put in evidence how SNV is guided by a regime of truth and techniques (see section 6.3.1) that

aim at the diffusion of knowledge in order to constitute an ordered society in which individuals are able to pursue their own sustainable development. This process is defined by Foucault as governmentality (see section 2.3.1).

More problematically for my analysis, the reduction of the many challenges faced by advisors to one of client culture seems to suggest a bounded reflexivity on the part of advisors, which crucially fails to question their own values and assumptions. Put simply this means that most advisors are well able to reflect on the other – whether this be the development assistance system or their clients. They are, with some exceptions, less able to reflect on themselves.

Lack of client commitment also features among SNV advisor testimonies. At various times it is seen, on one hand, as an issue of distorted incentives which emanate from providing free-of-charge services, and on the other hand, again a problem of client culture. A more nuanced view, however, links culture with dependency fostered by the donor aid regime.

Nevertheless, despite what appear to be formidable challenges, it appears that from time to time, client technical knowledge interests in specific projects can be met, although these too can be undermined by high staff turnover in client organisations. Such high turnover, moreover, is often associated with political change, suggesting a weakness in Bolivian public institutions.

In chapter 7 which follows, the insights from my study of CEP in chapter 5 and SNV in chapter 6 are discussed together, often introducing further data from my fieldwork.

CHAPTER 7

DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS AND ADVISORS COMPARED

7.1. Introduction

This chapter explores in the light of my fieldwork the two recurrent themes of this thesis that I indicated at the start of chapter 2, and which I reformulate below:

- The extent to which an interdependent development chain comprising all actors in development assistance helps maintain a dominant discourse which frames micro-engagements between development consultants/advisors and beneficiaries/clients in terms of what can be discussed, learned and hence constructed as knowledge.
- The converse, which is the extent to which these engagements can be described as communicative action, or at least their potential to be so, and thus broaden what is discussed, learned and constructed as knowledge.

These two complementary explorations draw respectively on the Foucaultian and Habermasian perspectives that I introduced in chapter 2. In so doing I elaborate upon the two cases I have already examined in chapters 5 and 6: the Bolivian development consultancy company, CEP, and the Dutch development agency SNV.

At one level, these organisations are very different: CEP is an ‘indigenous’ company operating solely in Bolivia while SNV a European development organisation funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; CEP is a business that sells its knowledge services to both local beneficiaries/clients and to international donor agencies while SNV is a non-profit development assistance organisation that provides free of charge knowledge services to beneficiaries/clients in poor countries. At another level, however, they are similar in that they both rely on professional expertise to deliver their services to beneficiaries/clients, and for those who directly receive the services no financial transaction is involved.

Thus, this chapter brings together, and expands on, the findings of the separate chapters on CEP (chapter 5) and SNV (chapter 6). Many of the sections explore issues first raised in these previous chapters with respect to CEP and SNV separately. By re-visiting them here, however, I do not merely re-state what I have already written with some basic expansion. Rather, I build on my analysis in these previous chapters to provide fresh insights and analytical handles, which can be gained through considering both organisations together. Sometimes my analysis will highlight broad similarities between CEP and SNV; at other times their contrasts will provide nuances to my analysis; and just occasionally the analysis itself will apply only to one or the other organisation.

Thus, section 7.2 below explores how the institutional settings under which CEP and SNV operate can act as a constraint on knowledge production in the field. Then, in section 7.3, I analyse how knowledge can be used as an incentive for development engagement, although not necessarily as envisaged by the development agency. For example, SNV operates on the assumption that free of charge knowledge can motivate institutions and individuals to engage in learning processes with experts, but often other incentives are identified and pursued by its clients section 7.4 explores knowledge interfaces, for example, how labels and power relations can frame terms of engagements between development experts and beneficiaries. It also examines how assumptions about culture and professional background can either contribute positively or undermine knowledge engagements. In section 7.5, the chapter analyses reflexivity amongst development experts and how chances to share knowledge are limited by the institutions they work for. More importantly, it explores how critical attitudes can sometimes put at risk one’s job security, especially if reflexive practices expose institutional inefficiency. Finally, section 7.6 explores how shared professional and other backgrounds can contribute to communication and knowledge engagement between actors.

The chapter concludes by arguing that knowledge sharing amongst development experts and beneficiaries is framed by the institutional settings under which actors interact. Development consultants and advisors as well as beneficiaries/clients represent discourses and institutions which frame the ways in which they establish working relationships with each other. Equally, beneficiaries might sometimes engage in knowledge sharing practices with the intention to gain other forms of benefits such as funds or grants. Knowledge engagement and sharing may

thus be motivated by a range of institutional, organisational and personal goals. However, notwithstanding their intentions behind knowledge engagements, actors appear to exchange knowledge more efficiently when there is a shared background consensus or lifeworld in place.

7.2. The institutional setting of knowledge in development assistance

In this section I discuss the importance of understanding the institutional settings – understood as the ‘rules of the game’– within which development organisations and their beneficiaries/clients operate. In so doing I examine a development assistance chain from donors through to final clients or direct beneficiaries. I argue that this chain is driven by power inequalities but that there is also a high degree of interdependence between the different actors which leads to a kind of collusion to maintain the status quo. Thus, although CEP and SNV operate under apparently different institutional settings and occupy different parts of the chain, they share the same overall ‘rule of the game’ - which is not to upset the mutual interdependence of actors. The section ends by examining the more general issue of the relative resistance of institutional settings to change and hence resistance to the learning and knowledge production that might lead to change.

Knowledge services within the development assistance field are a form of aid to developing countries. Such knowledge is mainly produced in developed countries. Organisations such as the World Bank, UNDP and others produce mainstream knowledge in various areas of development. Such knowledge is intended to be disseminated across developing countries in order to reduce poverty and increase their capabilities. Knowledge produced by these organisations is often freely available through websites and ‘global knowledge networks’ which are facilitated by electronic forums (Maxwell and Stone, 2005), for example the World Bank Development Gateway. The concern of this thesis, however, is where knowledge production forms part of a contractual agreement, broadly defined¹², between the development agency and a client or beneficiary¹³. Invariably in such contractual agreements, while the services are delivered as aid and are not therefore paid for, conditions to be fulfilled by the client are attached.

Contemporary development assistance is usually tied to the millennium development goals (MDGs) of reducing global poverty. With such a broad aim, the development assistance field is often described as being driven by altruistic purposes. This view is reinforced by the predominance of not-for-profit institutions involved, and many international NGOs, for example are explicitly altruistic in intent. Such assumed purposes should not blind us to the fact, however, that self-interest is often also involved on the part of the aid giver. This self interest might be explicit or hidden. For example, during the ‘Cold War’ governmental development assistance was often tied to support for either the North American or Soviet regimes. In the UK, prior to the formation of the Department for International Development in 1997, aid was tied to gaining preferential trade agreements with the countries involved. Today, as mentioned, aid is tied to the MDGs, but even here there is considerable self interest on the part of northern governments as reducing global poverty is considered to be an important component of global security and the ‘war against terrorism’, as well as ultimately increasing the size of the global market place.

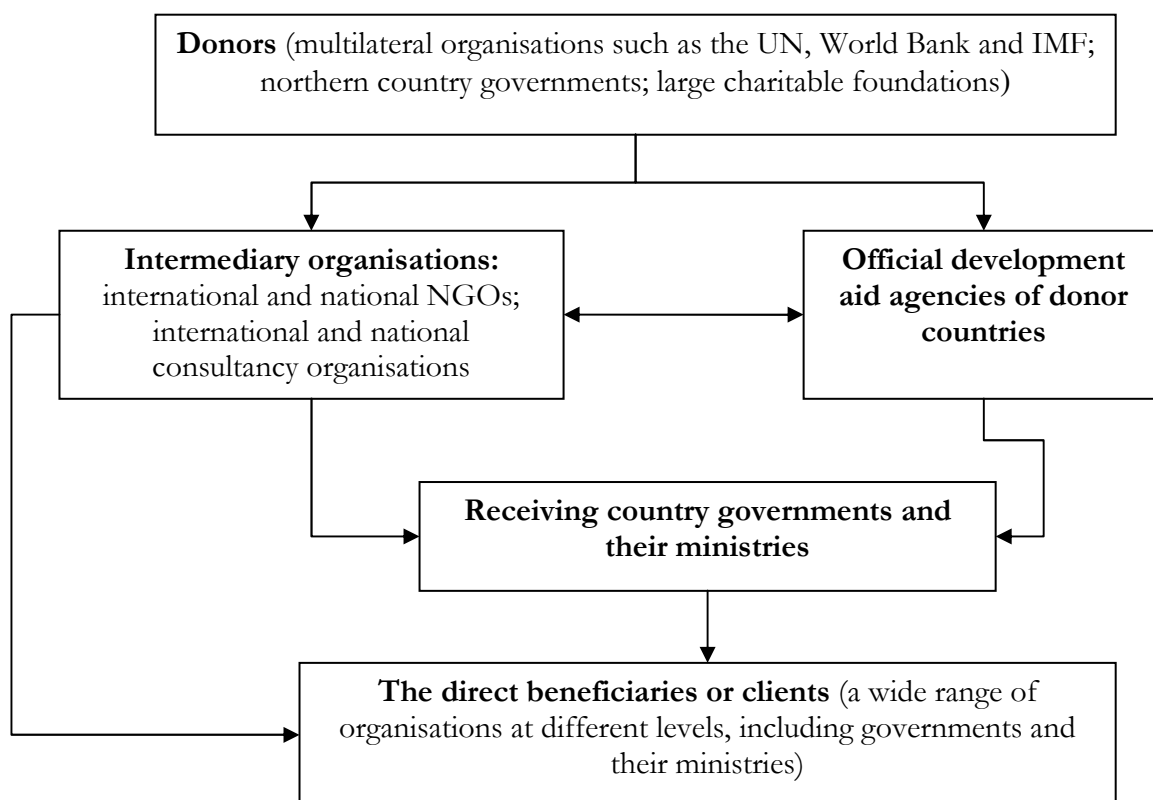
At a meso-level, development assistance is also inhabited by organisations that operate on a commercial basis, where self interest is obvious. In order to examine the connections between these different levels of development agent, it is useful to conceive of the development

¹² By ‘contractual agreement’ I mean the broad range of arrangements that may be in place, for example a memorandum of understanding, rather than ‘contract’ in the strict, legalistic sense of the term.

¹³ I noted in chapter 6 that CEP refers to working with beneficiaries, while SNV refers to working with clients. During much of this chapter, and Chapter 8, I refer to both terms together, as in ‘beneficiaries/clients’.

assistance field as a chain that contains a number of institutions and organisations that interact with each other. The chain can be represented as follows:

Figure 2: Development Chain – Key Actors



Understanding development assistance as a chain in this way allows us to identify the type of agents involved in the process of delivering knowledge. More importantly, it shows how the micro-process of exchanging knowledge and learning occur in a context in which knowledge/power inequalities largely define the terms of engagement (see chapter 2). Thus, every agent within this chain engages with each other in the context of a specific power relation. Other things being equal, the most power is held at the top of the chain because donors hold the key resources and virtually define what constitutes ‘good’ development knowledge. In the middle of the chain, intermediary organisations and official development aid agencies have knowledge of ‘best practices’ as a source of power, while receiving governments and the direct beneficiaries can usually claim at most specific knowledge of their local contexts. No agency within this chain has absolute power, however, for there is a degree of interdependence that demands collusion. The relationships in the chain presuppose that one agent cannot exist without the other: As an interviewee expressed it:

‘I call development a productive chain. If there is a project to be implemented, it’s because there are individuals that will benefit from it – or at least that’s what we assume in this business. Not having problems to solve such as poverty would mean that consultants and development programmes would not exist. In other words, the mere existence of poor people justifies the existence of the whole development consultancy businesses’ (CEP Consultant_18)

My analysis in this section is concerned with the specific parts of this chain that the two case study organisations, CEP and SNV, occupy in relation to other parts. CEP is an intermediary organisation that charges for its services, whereas SNV is a Dutch funded development organisation. Thus CEP is paid to operationalise specific aspects of policy and strategy that are made elsewhere. It is *demand*-led, responding to the opportunities provided by a range of

donors to deliver knowledge services. Its job is essentially to do what it has been contracted to do, not to question the basis of the job¹⁴.

While in both cases supplying knowledge services to a range of beneficiaries, CEP and SNV operate under contrasting institutional settings. Institutions can be summarised for our purposes as the ‘rules of the game’ rather than having defined organisational boundaries¹⁵:

Institutions are sets of rules that structure social interactions in particular ways based on knowledge shared by members of the relevant community or society (Knight, 1992:2). Compliance to those rules is enforced through known initiatives or sanctions. In other words, institutions are the norms, rules, habits, customs and routines (both formal and written, or, more often informal and internalised) which govern society at large. They influence the function, structure and behaviour of organisations – ‘group of individuals bound by some purpose’ who come together to achieve joint objectives (North, 1990:3-8) – as actors in society. ‘Institutions, by producing stable shared and commonly understood patterns of behaviour are crucial to solving the problems of collective action amongst individuals’ (Brett, 2000:18).

Whatever the differences in their institutional settings, one fundamental rule of the game for the actors of my study appears to be not to undermine the interdependency within the development assistance chain. This has important implications with respect to the ability of both CEP and SNV, and the beneficiary organisations with which they engage, to reflect critically and deeply on their practices, as we shall see below. For CEP, a guiding additional norm is that they are paid to do the job, not question it, as I have noted above and in chapter 5.

This fundamental rule of the game is illustrated by the following quotation,

‘After 20 years of working for CEP and other consultancy companies, I am convinced that everyone [within development assistance] is trying to do their best to keep their jobs and also achieve sustainable results. However, there are so many mismatches and wrong-thought projects that it will not be difficult to come up with a list of things that donors and agencies need to change. Do I want to do that? No I don’t. Thanks’ (CEP Consultant_ 26)

Collusion between the different actors in the development assistance chain is one manifestation of the relative inertia of institutions. On the one hand, they offer security because they are relatively stable – the rules of the game change only slowly and sometimes apparently not at all. On the other hand such inertia and stability mean that they are not usually very receptive to new knowledge and new ways of doing things. As the saying goes, they can be ‘stuck in their ways’. At the micro-level, however, in actual practice, the pressures might be very different and as a result there can be a mismatch between experts’ work in the field and organisational goals. In this sense, development organisations such as CEP and SNV can undermine the work of their own experts. A senior development consultant I interviewed during the course of this research explained this issue in the following terms:

¹⁴ In general terms, this can sometimes lead to consultants being appointed to justify ‘externally’ radical measures by an organisation. As one CEP consultant commented: ‘If a company needs to fire personnel, consultants are hired – they are in charge of producing report-evaluations that justify drastic management measures’

¹⁵ On organisations and institutions: some organisations become institutions because their influence is such that they set norms, rules and behaviours. Examples are the World Bank, the UN, the Bolivian armed forces etc. Apart from in localised contexts, SNV and/or CEP do not set norms, rules and behaviours, but embody them. As such, I would not describe either CEP nor SNV as an institution, while recognising that such a characterisation might be contested in some circumstances. For my purposes here they are organisations that embody certain norms, rules and behaviours.

'I think that institutional constraints are the most serious ones. Institutions became fossilised, institutions became rigid, and institutions became inward looking. Because of these circumstances, experts find it difficult to do their jobs efficiently' (UK Independent Development Consultant)

This point is further illustrated in the contexts of CEP and SNV in Bolivia by the following comments. Firstly from a CEP consultant:

'We are CEP consultants that work for different clients. These are clients like SOS-Faim that have their own views and political agendas. We as consultants have to operate under their rules. We are not hired to criticise them or question the usefulness of their agendas. We know that CEP works under the rules and norms imposed by clients' (CEP Consultant_28)

Secondly from an SNV development Advisor:

'We know that at the field level there a large number of problems. Whenever I work with clients I know what to expect, in fact, I know what is likely to happen and yet I carry on. There are a number of problems that I don't have report to head office. If I do it I will be taking chances. (SNV Advisor_ 18).¹⁶

These quotations raise the issue of a further link in the development assistance chain: that between the development organisation and the professional who is required to carry out the job (whether as consultant or advisor). To what extent is it possible to feed upwards, firstly to the organisation for which one works, knowledge gained through actual practice in the field? This issue of the relationship between individual and organisational learning was touched upon briefly in chapter 6 on SNV, but I return to it again below.

7.3. Incentives for engaging with knowledge-for-development service providers

I have shown in section 7.2 that, although at one level CEP and SNV clearly represent different kinds of organisation, their respective knowledge services are provided free to the ultimate clients or beneficiaries. 'Free' here means free of financial obligation on the part of the beneficiaries/clients, in other words they are not required to pay money for the services. In another sense, however, they are not 'free' services because invariably SNV and the agencies which pay CEP to deliver its services attach conditions to the provision.

The attached conditions can be both explicit and implicit. Examples from my research of explicit conditions being attached include:

In the case of the Belgian development agency, SOS-Faim which contracted CEP consultants to work with peasant-farmers (chapter 5):

'Every farm/artisan family that wants to work with SOS-Faim must agree with the vision of development pursue by SOS-Faim. In other words, SOS-Faim does not work nor fund any farm/artisan family that does not share the same vision of development' (CEP Consultant_8).

¹⁶ At the time of my fieldwork, SNV Advisor_18 was working in one of the advisory assignments I followed in Bolivia. He was advising the Mayor of Santa Cruz City. The advisor knew that the Mayor was going to leave his post due to political problems and yet he continued working with him. One of the main problems faced by SNV is the high turnover of personnel. Advisors know about this problem and tend not to report it to head office. See Chapter 6 for more on this context.

In the case of SNV:

‘As SNV we work towards the MDGs, our strategic vision of development is clear: SNV is dedicated to a society where all people enjoy the freedom to pursue their own sustainable development. All our clients in Bolivia must agree with this vision of development. We tend to work with client organisations that endorse the same vision’ (SNV Advisor_4)

If conditions are attached to the services of international development agencies, what is the incentive for beneficiaries/clients to engage? An incentive is a factor that provides a motive for a particular course of action. In section 6.3.4 I reported testimonies from an SNV advisor that a *disincentive* to engage with the organisation’s knowledge service would be if it tried to charge for them. The corollary of this claim, therefore, is that a *necessary* incentive is not to charge.

Behind the claim about charging lie two further arguments. One is that, historically, aid has been delivered generally either without charge or on preferential terms¹⁷, to the extent that this is now expected by recipients. Part of the argument goes back to the charitable origins of much development aid. In Bolivia, for example, in the 1960s religious and non-religious organisations used to hire local and international experts in order to assist target groups and institutions in rural and urban areas of the country. A senior development consultant recalls his experience:

‘In Bolivia, the genesis of development consultancy companies starts in the 1960s in the form of NGOs that were the first development organisations assisting poor people on rural areas. Most of these NGOs were supported by religious organisations based in developed countries and as a result, they didn’t charge nor ask for anything in return’ (CEP Consultant_21)

The second underlying argument derives theoretically from classical economics, which is that engagement of beneficiaries/clients with either CEP consultants or SNV advisors carries an *opportunity cost*. This is the cost associated with foregoing alternative opportunities in order to take up the opportunity of the proposed engagement, in this case with CEP consultants or SNV advisors. Charging for services clearly adds to the opportunity cost of engaging.

Consideration of opportunity cost raises the further issue, however, that, even if ‘free of charge’ is a necessary incentive to engage, it might not be *sufficient*. This is because opportunity cost is not defined solely by whether the agency charges or not. In development terms, time is often the more important factor. When a client/beneficiary engages with SNV advisors or CEP consultants, time is spent that might be better off used doing something different

The basic problem is that this kind of assistance is supply-driven. Development organizations can try and stimulate demand for their services, but in the end the beneficiary/client decides whether or not to accept. Examining the opportunity costs associated with engaging becomes in this situation a predominant consideration for the client/beneficiary, even if tacitly. As such she/he will try to maximise opportunities in the engagement that go beyond those intended and formally agreed. If such further opportunities are identified, the opportunity cost is lowered and there is added incentive to engage.

My data in both the CEP (chapter 5) and SNV (chapter 6) case studies suggest that beneficiaries/clients do indeed search out these added opportunities, which usually centre on

¹⁷ An example of preferential terms is that of the World Bank providing loans for infrastructure projects at low interest rates. Also, some specialised ‘technical’ services may require a fee because of known high demand, for example in computing and areas of financial control.

the perceived benefits of being included in, and being seen to buy into, the overall development process in Bolivia. Often such opportunities are seen as alternatives rather than add-ons to the official engagement in knowledge production. The latter, therefore, can be entered into reluctantly.

Enhancing the 'institutional CV' is seen as a way into more concrete benefits, however, such as donor funding. A less tangible benefit, such as strengthening the knowledge of beneficiary/client institutions is unlikely to figure so highly, even if it is the official reason for engaging. A senior SNV advisor who I quoted in chapter 7 also said: .

'I find that as a result of the way that the development game is played in terms of funding, many of our clients are not genuine. They are not really interested in learning from us [experts]. They want to hang around a bit, do small bits here and there. It is always the same question *'help me with the strategic plan'*. The sad picture is that SNV staff and probably from other agencies are frustrated with their clients because they find that clients are not genuinely interested in a long term institutional enhancement process. But forced by the way the development game is played, they (clients) need to have very quick results and also inspire security to potential donors.' (SNV Advisor_4)

This situation does, of course, undermine the work of the organisations and development consultants/advisors in the field. As noted by SNV advisors in chapter 6, it is usually manifested by lack of commitment and willingness displayed by beneficiaries/clients. In an expert-beneficiary relationship, knowledge production can only take place effectively if both sets of actors have the willingness and commitment to work together:

'Unless you have a highly skilled expert and a very committed client, knowledge transfer will not take place' (SNV Advisor_4)

Often, this lack of commitment on behalf of beneficiaries/clients is seen simply as a function of the knowledge services being supplied free of charge. Thus the senior SNV development advisor concludes by comparing SNV and other development agencies with consultancy companies who do charge for services:

'Normally in a consultancy/advisory relationship, the client has to put in at least as many person-hours or energy as the consultant does, and if you hired a consultant who is costing you a couple of hundreds dollars per hour, you will make sure that the reception capacity in the client organization is such that you can make optimal use of this very expensive person. Here (Bolivia) clients/beneficiaries are not really committed because most of the development agencies that provide capacity building services work for free. SNV works for free; we do not charge our clients' (SNV Advisor_33)

My evidence from chapter 5 on CEP does not, however, corroborate this assertion. For example, SOS-Faim (chapter 5) does not appear to have made sure that its beneficiary/client – the OECAs, ALVA and COMART – had sufficient 'reception capacity' before engaging the CEP consultants at a fee. On the contrary, this example appeared to show similar low engagement by the peasant-farmers and artisans in the knowledge services being provided, as by the clients (usually government ministries) of SNV advisors.

My analysis in terms of opportunity costs can, however, explain lack of commitment to the knowledge services provided by both SNV advisors and CEP consultants. The key incentive for engagement in this analysis is the 'unintended' one of improving one's 'institutional CV' and thereby increased access to donor funds.

The issue is further complicated because, as chapters 5 and 6 have both pointed out, there also tends to be an ‘over-supply’ of development agencies in Bolivia, each broadly committed to eradicating, or at least reducing, poverty, and hence to the MDGs. Potential clients can in fact be overwhelmed by the numerous offers of aid (see section 5.2.4), and they can certainly shop around for the best offer, which will include consideration of the opportunity costs.

To conclude this section, if beneficiary/client learning has taken place in these situations, it has been learning how to weigh up the opportunities and risks involved in engaging with the expertise provided by SNV advisors and CEP consultants and to come to a ‘rational’ decision. Insofar as the opportunities often outweigh the risks, this has often less to do with what is officially on offer (knowledge engagement) and more to do with the wider benefits that accrue from being the end point of the development assistance chain that I described in section 7.2.

My analysis in sections 7.2 and 7.3 has been driven firstly by ‘macro’ considerations of the institutional rules concerning actor engagements within the development assistance chain (section 7.2), and secondly, by ‘meso’ concerns – the particular institutional agendas - and the broad incentives for engagement in terms of alternative/additional opportunities. Both the institutional rules of the game and the nature of incentives describe the broader influences on advisor/consultant-beneficiary /client engagements for knowledge production. In the next sections (7.4 and 7.5) I turn to the micro-dynamics of the engagements themselves.

7.4. Problems, engagements and reports.

Knowledge engagements involve different types of actor. In my thesis the two most obvious types are firstly the CEP consultants and SNV advisors (i.e. professional development experts), and secondly the local beneficiaries (the preferred term of CEP consultants) or clients (the preferred term of SNV advisors) of their services. Following Latour (1987) and others, I also conceive of a third kind of actor, which is the *technology* of recording the engagements between the human actors so that other parts of the development assistance chain can gain an insight into what has happened and learn from it. This technology we know more simply as the assignment report that the consultants and advisors are required to produce at the end of their work and often at various stages during it.

This section reveals problems of both engagement and disengagement with knowledge production processes of all kinds of actor. For CEP consultants and SNV advisors some of these problems stem from their respective positions in the development assistance chain. Others stem from how they are perceived by beneficiaries/clients.

The assignment report(s) too can be seen to be linked to the self-perpetuating requirements of the development assistance chain. In contrast, the problems that are perceived to be associated with the beneficiaries/clients stem from their position at the end of the chain and their exclusion from it in some important respects.

My analysis starts by first understanding the nature of problems at the micro level where development experts and beneficiaries/clients engage, but which derive from the wider dynamics. Thus, CEP consultants and SNV advisors are agents whose expertise is authorised and legitimised by international agencies. The same does not apply to beneficiaries/clients where the challenge is often conceived as bringing them on board development and its shared values and practices. Both types of actor come into contact with each other having different backgrounds and diverse perceptions and assumptions about what constitutes knowledge, development and so forth. I then end the section with a brief examination of the problems associated with the reports that are produced.

Sections 7.4.1 and 7.4.2 below examine CEP consultants and the SNV advisors respectively. We have seen in section 7.2 that both are influenced by the same over-arching institutional pressures. There are thus similarities between them. There are, however, also significant differences and it is important to explore both. In section 7.4.3, I examine problems with the beneficiaries/clients – or more accurately, what are perceived to be problems with them according to the consultants and advisors. Finally (section 7.4.4) examines some reflections on the evaluation reports that are produced.

7.4.1. The Problem with development consultants

One key feature of consultants is that they are paid to do a job by somebody (see chapter 5). Another is that they are usually on short-term assignments. These features influence strongly how they are expected to work. Also, however, it is important to note that there are many kinds of consultant, who can be distinguished by sector expertise, the roles they are expected to play in an assignment, and their overall approach to client engagement. They are also differentiated by pay – as outlined in relation to CEP consultants in section 5.1.1 - and I pick up this point again below. A particular feature of development consultancy is the distinction, and associated wide pay differential between local (i.e. from and living in the southern country of the assignment) and international (usually from northern countries) consultants (see chapter 2).

This issue of wide pay differences between local and international experts transcends consultancy. In an interview with a Bolivian development expert who worked for USAID, the issue of ‘national’ and ‘international’ became the main point of his reflection, where he claimed it is a racial distinction:

‘Within USAID personnel there is racial distinction between American experts and the local experts. This racial distinction assumes various forms, such as unequal wages and special treats for American personnel’ (USAID Expert)

The implication of this quotation is that the local expert’s knowledge is valued less than that of the international expert. This, together with the racial aspect, suggests an assumption of superiority of the international expert that is likely to be resented by the local expert.

The wide pay differentials are associated with a division of expertise and hence labour amongst development consultancy professionals across the world. Those from the South are assumed to be more suitable to undertake grassroots assignments in rural areas, working directly with poor people, because they are familiar with the local culture, whereas consultants from developed countries are considered to have a more profound cross-country comparative knowledge and they work with local professionals to perform broader managerial assignments within development projects/programmes. One of my interviewees – not a consultant in fact but a development advisor – expressed the point as follows:

‘Local knowledge is the domain and the added value of local consultants and stakeholders. Western consultants on the other hand, don’t necessarily need to have a great deal of local knowledge because a consultancy assignment will demand the critical eye that western consultants have’ (SNV Advisor_21)

Thus, international consultants use their cross-country experiences as a professional tool which enables them to assume and bring to assignments a claimed universal knowledge and hence critical overview. Also, they are – apparently – able to perceive aspects and elements that are imperceptible to local consultants and development beneficiaries/clients. It is no wonder, therefore, that this critical overview role sees them placed in management roles. In

contrast local consultants' assumed knowledge of local context is considered to be useful for applying particular practices within that context.

The lack of knowledge of local context is, however, also seen as a drawback for a consultancy assignment. Thus, a UK development consultant interviewed during the course of this research observed:

'Consultants are in a place for a limited period of time. They rely heavily on general notions about the developing countries. Therefore, one major constraint is that they work from stereotypes, they don't have the time to get to know the country well enough' (ODG, Development Consultant)

The above quotation makes the further point that is common to consultants, although there are exceptions. This is that they are mainly hired to undertake short-term, bounded jobs. Thus they do not have the opportunity to overcome their lack of knowledge of the local context. The obvious solution, of course, might be to have local and international consultants working as a team on an assignment, or a hybrid situation where international advisors work alongside local consultants. I provided instances of such occurrences in the CEP (chapter 5) and SNV (chapter 6) chapters.

Because they are working on temporary, short-term assignments to do bounded jobs, consultants, both local and international, need to place themselves outside of, in other words disengage from, the institutional or cultural context in which they undertake their work. This is rationalised positively in two respects. Firstly, as I demonstrated in chapter 5, it is rationalised in terms of not creating any form of dependence while working with project beneficiaries/clients. Secondly, is the notion that their added value is precisely because they are *outsiders*. This point accords with the view of international consultants and their claimed critical eye as espoused above and again in the following quotation:

'The essence of consultancy is somebody who is from outside and has a job to help people inside to look at things in a different way [...] Consultants provide a fresh look to reality [...] Because consultants are not embedded in one reality, they are able to provide different points of view. However if a consultant spends too much time in one country it is very likely she/he loses freshness and objectivity. *Thus, being an outsider is the essence of being a consultant?* (CEP Consultant_13; emphasis added)

Note that the above quotation is from a CEP consultant. It therefore calls into question the assumption that CEP is somehow local because it is Bolivian and therefore more likely to be an insider, a point to which I return below.

Despite these positive rationalisations, engagement with the local context creates further problems. Firstly such a situation is hardly conducive to productive knowledge engagement through building shared experience and understandings between consultant and beneficiary, as with Habermas's notion of communicative action (see chapter 2). This is particularly true of international consultants where their high hourly costs lead very directly to short-term contracts. As a CEP consultant observed:

'International consultants do not often engage with individuals (poor people) in developing countries. They are very expensive, they do their job as quick as they can and then leave' (CEP Consultant_12)

Secondly, disengagement probably means that consultants who have been hired because they are 'local' (as with CEP consultants) can never be local enough, because they never actually engage with the actual context of the assignment in a given place at a given time. For example,

the CEP consultants of my case study were overwhelmingly urban-based, educated to a high level and part of a professional class. They might be ‘Bolivian’ to a person, but this does not mean they are ‘local’ to, for example, the peasant farmers of the case study in chapter 5.

Development consultancy is therefore a double-edged sword. On one hand the consultant’s varied experience is a valued part of his/her expertise and enables a detached critical overview. This detachment also helps overcome any dependency tendencies on the part of beneficiaries/clients. On the other hand, the short-term nature of assignments and the expected detachment of the consultant suggest that productive knowledge engagements with the beneficiaries/clients are, to say the least, challenging.

In contrast, SNV advisors are long term and might be expected to mitigate some of the challenges suggested by being short-term. As we shall see in the following sub-section, however, their approach reveals further challenges.

7.4.2. The Problem with development advisors

SNV advisors are apparently many things that consultants are not. They are expected to commit to long-term rather than short-term assignments. They are expected to engage, get to know the local context and co-produce knowledge that is sensitive to that context with their clients/beneficiaries, rather than deliberately disengage and assert their general knowledge gained from other contexts. As discussed in chapter 6 they are expected to find out about local context before agreeing an assignment, and sometimes they will hire local consultants to do this job.

They do, however, share a particular characteristic with international development consultants, which is that they are *international*. Thus, in common with international development consultants, they are rarely found among the poor peasants at the grass roots of Bolivian Society. Their commitment is to working with fellow professionals in government line ministries.

Some of the critical issues raised in section 7.4.1 about long term engagement apply to SNV advisors. Thus, in chapter 6, several SNV respondents questioned the sustainability of their work, by which they meant the inability of their programmes to carry on once they had withdrawn, partly at least because of the dependency they had created. Also, to refer back to the CEP consultant quoted in section 7.4.1, being embedded in a single reality for long periods might mean that advisors are unable to maintain ‘freshness and objectivity’. The cynicism and weariness of several of my SNV respondents in chapter 6, testify, in a way, to this criticism, a point that I return to in section 7.5 when I discuss reflexivity.

Being committed over time to an assignment raises additional issues of legitimacy and authority for a development agency. A consultancy firm gains its legitimacy through being paid to do an assignment. If it loses its legitimacy during the course of its work for whatever reason, the consequences are simple – it won’t be contracted again. How does a not-for-profit development agency such as SNV gain its legitimacy, and how does this legitimacy square with its espoused intention of engaging in mutual learning with its clients? The rest of this sub-section explores these questions.

The questions in the above paragraph can be explored through the concept of ‘labels’ and ‘labelling’. SNV defines itself as a knowledge organisation that works through knowledge brokers who are labelled ‘advisors’. The terminology used by SNV sets the grounds upon which advisors engage with clients. As we shall see, labels do not just signify a neutral difference between ‘advisors’ and ‘clients’. They also carry power and signal unequal

relationships because of that power. Thus, being labelled an ‘advisor’ brings its own challenges. A Bolivian SNV advisor comments:

‘The most difficult thing is the job itself. The term ‘advisor’ has an arrogant tone embedded in itself. My experience is that nobody likes being ‘advised’ because it implies an unequal relationship between the one that knows a lot and the one that knows very little. From the very moment I introduce myself as an advisor, I am drawing a line between me and the rest, that is, between the one that knows and the ones that don’t know’ (SNV Development Advisor_8)

‘Consultant’ is also a label, but we saw in section 7.4.1 that the job of a consultant is short-term and he is rationalised to be detached. Almost the opposite is expected of SNV advisors and in this context their defining label takes on added significance.

They therefore face the challenge of dealing with labels that define parameters of thought and behaviour. What is more, the term ‘advisor’ itself establishes areas of competence and responsibility. The above advisor was honest enough to acknowledge that the term ‘advisor’ creates distance between them and clients. Another SNV advisor elaborates on the point of the unequal relationship that the label signifies in relation to the learning process:

‘The notion of advisors sets very often the idea that we know everything. Thus, it establishes an unequal relationship between us and the rest [...] Advising could be described as a mutual learning process between us and our clients [...] Very often we can influence processes because we are regarded as *experts*’ (SNV Advisor_16; emphasis added)

This quotation goes to the heart of one of the main issues for this research. If development agents are invested with labels that imply knowledge superiority over local clients/beneficiaries, productive knowledge engagement through communicative action becomes problematic because the actors are not operating on equal terms. Nor is the labelling completely self-imposed. It is at its most powerful when assigned and internalised by the weak themselves. Thus, another SNV advisor asserts:

‘Bolivians assume that everything from outside is better...clients give you the benefit of the doubt because you are a foreigner – they assume that you know what you are doing. People in general expect you to have an up-dated knowledge of the field in which you work [...] you get to realise that being from outside means legitimacy’ (SNV Advisor_4)

Being seen as having legitimacy through your expertise, however, is one thing, and probably a good thing overall. It becomes a negative attribute when legitimate expertise is confused with authoritative expertise, at the expense of the legitimacy of other knowledges, including that of the beneficiaries. As the above quotation makes clear, investing a label with an unequal power relation, is not just a matter of how a development knowledge agency such as SNV perceives itself (although that is important too), but of how it is perceived by those it is intended to benefit.

7.4.3. The problem with the beneficiaries/clients

In the previous two sub-sections I have quoted data from my interviews where two kinds of expert (consultants and salaried development advisors) have, through reflection, made sense

of their roles and the challenges they face. On occasion they have tried to make sense of each other's roles, but essentially the data have been based on professional experts' reflections on themselves.

In this sub-section about the beneficiaries/clients, I adopt a different approach. Rather than work from testimonies of these agents making sense of themselves, for which I have little data (see chapter 3), I have continued with the development experts' perceptions, but this time their perceptions of the 'other', the beneficiaries/clients. In what follows I draw on perceptions of SNV advisors, the reason being that, for reasons explained in sub-section 7.4.2, they have deliberately tried to engage over time with their clients rather than deliberately disengage as CEP consultants will have done. It is no surprise, therefore, that SNV advisors have more to say in this regard.

I have already touched upon the first perceived 'problem' with the beneficiaries/clients in sub-section 7.4.2, which is their tendency to invest the label 'advisor' with superiority, thus contributing to an unequal knowledge/power relation. In this sub-section I describe a further commonly perceived problem, that which is described as 'culture' by SNV advisors and which I explored in section 6.4.1.

'Culture' as explored in chapter 6 seems to have two dimensions: the beneficiaries/clients' attitudes to paid employment and their ability to receive critical feedback. Both dimensions are perceived to undermine knowledge interactions between development experts and beneficiaries. This sub-section examines further these dimensions.

Attitudes to paid employment

Chapter 6 posed attitudes to paid employment in terms of lack of commitment in Bolivia to one's job, an assertion which is generally claimed to be true throughout developing countries. An extension of lack of commitment is to be actively corrupt, which brings me to one of the most quoted deficiencies of a developing country. Some argue that corruption has little meaning for the people at the end of the development assistance chain – the beneficiaries/clients in Southern countries. Corruption is not a problem for them because it is embedded in their culture as a normal and accepted part of life. For instance, the senior SNV advisor who spent 10 years working in Africa prior to being posted to Bolivia made the following remark:

'Culture and behavioural codes are such that when Africans get jobs in the government or the NGO world, they abuse their positions. If they don't abuse their position they will suffer social pressure to do so. Therefore, what we perceived as corruption in the local culture is perceived [by them] as conventional, traditional and positively evaluated solidarity' (SNV Advisor_11)

It has to be emphasised that the above was not a junior development advisor commenting on his initial perceptions about local culture, but a senior person reflecting on many years of experience. He was referring to 'conventional, traditional and positively evaluated solidarity' with one's family rather than with work. In this critical analysis of local culture the potential to work successfully with local beneficiaries/clients must be inhibited because 'culture' impinges negatively on their commitment and also their incentive for engagement might have nothing to do with knowledge production.

If one's position in a work organisation is something that it is acceptable to abuse, a corollary is cultural failure to understand that a salaried professional position confers an obligation to work for one's wage. An independent UK consultant made this point as follows:

'Different cultural and environmental backgrounds influence the performance of both local and external consultants. Work ethics in Europe, working from 7 in the

morning, 5 days a week and then enjoy weekends, that's the way the English are taught. For instance if you get paid a salary, you are placed in a country in order to perform an activity [...] What is missing in developing countries is the notion that one works for a salary and people need to perform if they get a wage for it' (UK Development Consultant_1)

The ability to receive critical feedback

The SNV senior development advisor (11) quoted above also suggested that the educational system in poor countries fails its children in terms of capacity to think creatively, which in turn creates problems when they go into work:

'You can't expect people from poor countries to know what we know, to think the way we have learnt to think. The essence of our added value is our capacity for creative thinking, our capacity for seeing the problem in a different way... local experts are caught in an educational system that kills critical and creative thinking and just repeats facts' (SNV Advisors_11)

Developing the capacity to see problems in a different way, however, can't be done in isolation. A good part of it involves being able to engage with others, to observe, listen and generally be receptive to what they do and say – these are important elements of communicative action.

In chapter 6 I quoted an SNV advisor who suggested that constructive engagement with local counterparts was hampered because of a culture of dependency in Bolivia and other developing countries, a culture to which development aid agencies have contributed. From this perspective, therefore, the fundamental problem stems from the low expectations of development agencies. It is they who, undoubtedly unwittingly, are at least partly responsible for the problem of 'culture'. Whichever way we look at the issue, however, inability to receive feedback is hardly conducive to productive knowledge engagements.

7.4.4. The problem with reports

In sections 7.4.1, 7.4.2 and 7.4.3 I have identified problems for productive knowledge engagement that are associated with consultants, advisors and their beneficiaries/clients. Perhaps someone, somewhere along the development assistance chain knows about these problems through the reports they receive.

I start this sub-section with a quotation from a CEP consultant. It is not specifically about written reports, but has an important bearing as it makes well the general point regarding the difficulty of sharing and codifying a practitioner's experiential knowledge.

'Universities and research centres in Bolivia could be benefited from all our experience. If you take into account that we are in direct contact with reality - we use and reinvent the mainstream 'development theories' that are taught at universities. Unfortunately, we don't get to share our knowledge with academics and therefore, there is a great deal of knowledge that stays with us [...] There is so much knowledge that can be systematised and produced but it is not because our government doesn't have money for research in development' (CEP Consultant_19)

The quotation reflects a common sentiment for those who work in the field. Their experiential knowledge has been described as the 'theory in use' (Argyris and Schön, 1996) as opposed to the 'espoused theory' of universities. In terms of my work, it triggers a question concerning the extent to which 'theory in use' is able to be reflected in the reports that consultants and advisors are invariably asked to produce at the end of assignments, and hence communicated

up the development chain. The question forms the background to my discussion in this subsection.

The final reports of consultants and advisors have to comply with given terms of reference. Very often they contain 'lessons learned' and recommendations for follow-up to the assignment, or for future practice in the general area. There is a feeling, however, among those required to produce such reports that they are not taken seriously:

'In a project evaluation, we consultants are hired to produce a report. Such a report is the result of an investigative process where data is collected (mainly through document analysis) and after an intensive analysis of the available data we come up with recommendations. Unfortunately, we are good at finding out problems and coming up with recommendations and solutions that no one really cares to follow' (CEP Consultant_15)

Do the report-writers believe, therefore, that their efforts are wasted? Development consultants waste no time explaining why they show no interest in what happens to the reports that they produce. The following expresses a typical sentiment:

'My job as a consultant finishes when the report is handed in. Therefore, it is not in my interest to be bothered if my suggestions and advice was followed. What I personally care, is whether the people who I worked with have gained some form of knowledge in the process. As for me, every assignment brings me new knowledge.' (CEP Consultant_18)

It is interesting how the above consultant is more concerned with the process of interacting with beneficiaries as opposed to the usefulness of any final report. Somehow there is an implicit understanding that 'reports' are just pieces of paper that do not reflect in any way what takes place on the field. Another CEP consultant echoes the same concern. She comments:

'Most of the reports we write don't require theoretical or conceptual analysis. Reports are administrative documents that need to be produced in order to fulfil a requirement. The real processes in which knowledge is exchanged and learning spaces are created are not registered in reports. Agencies should be more interested in the process rather than in the outcome of development consultancy assignments' (CEP Consultant_13)

Thus, according to this consultant, and hinted at by the previous one, the 'real processes in which knowledge is exchanged and learning spaces are created' are hidden from further scrutiny. The real work is thus invisible and the report is notable more for its silences than for what it says. The point is amplified by a third CEP consultant, more senior than the previous two:

'Something that will never appear in the final report are the learning spaces that we [consultants] generate in the process of undertaking the assignments. For instance, when you are hired to evaluate a development project, you will identify the good and bad factors that led the project to its current state. Therefore all your findings along with your suggestions are translated into a report that then is used for different purposes by development aid agencies. What this reports does not contain is all the debates, discussions, exchange of ideas and learning that have taken place between us and those individuals evaluated in the project. Before we come up with suggestions and advice, we need to discuss and interchange ideas with those individuals who either implement or are the objects of the

project. There is a great deal of learning taking place but that is something that the development aid agencies and NGOs are not aware' (CEP Consultant_10)

What is the problem here? To return to the original quotation of this sub-section and my background question, why does it seem impossible to record and examine what are arguably the most important aspects of an assignment in these reports, which potentially form a 'theory in use'? Another CEP consultant provides the proximate cause – which is that reports are done to a set formula using a set vocabulary:

'Some of the problems we face while writing up the draft and final report are the ones related with the different forms of perceiving meanings. When reports are written, we sometimes struggle with the diversity of concepts that aid agencies use. On some occasions we need to be very creative in order to come up with a conclusion that reads as 'lesson learnt' or 'best practices'. Some agencies will use their own vocabulary and that means that the report needs to reproduce and reflect the vocabulary of the aid agency. We find very often that even project officials from western aid agencies are not certain of the meanings of the vocabulary which the aid agency uses' (CEP Consultant_1)

A Foucaultian analysis of this situation (see chapter 2) would suggest that these reports are technologies of power. They are designed to support and maintain the development assistance chain and the dominant regimes of truths that are embedded in that chain. They are revealing, therefore, as records of a perpetuated truth, not as anything that might challenge that truth or the development assistance processes that reinforce it.

In his book, 'Discipline and punish', Foucault (1977) also refers to the need for willing technicians who work the technologies. The CEP consultants quoted above do not appear to be 'willing', but they certainly acquiesce. An even more fundamental challenge can arise, however, when the consultant resists articulating his or her deeper knowledge, even in those rare cases when requested by his or her organisation to do so. Such resistance may occur when the consultant realises that his/her uncodified, tacit knowledge is itself a source of power that maintains his/her status as the expert who becomes consequently less dispensable to the organisation. Such knowledge can therefore remain the consultant's 'secret', and the consultant prefers to see it that way.

7.4.5. Bringing the problems together

The sub-sections of section 7.4 have examined the different agents who participate in development knowledge engagements, including the ubiquitous development assistance technology of reports.

The section as a whole suggests that productive knowledge exchange and sharing in these engagements is a significant challenge because:

- Consultants are paid to deliver a generalised body of knowledge in relation to a short-term assignment, not engage in a learning process. In fact they are specifically required to disengage from the local context in which they are working in order to be able to maintain a critical overview.
- Salaried development assistance advisors are more likely to be expected to engage with the local context through relatively long-term assignments. In their case, however, there is the challenge of creating an unsustainable 'dependency' situation, and of being able to maintain their own sharpness and critical faculties. A further dimension, applicable to all development 'experts' but particularly so to those who attempt longer-

term engagements, is that the term ‘advisor’ comes to denote superior knowledge – it is a label of power.

- Beneficiaries/clients are perceived not to possess nor have the incentives for critical attitudes.
- Reporting requirements are designed so as not to upset the equilibrium of the development assistance chain. In any case, consultants especially might not want to record anything that reveals and shares their tacit, experiential knowledge which is a source of their expertise and power.

Despite these unpropitious circumstances, there are suggestions in section 7.4.4 that some learning does take place:

- Consultants learn how to do their jobs better in that they add to their stock of experience which improves their ability to take a critical overview
- Some intangible long-term learning does take place by beneficiaries/clients and the experts, although this is not amenable to formal record or measurement and does not appear in formal evaluation reports

What seems to be missing, however, is a sense of *shared* learning, or communicative action. This applies to the engagements between experts and beneficiaries/clients at the end of the development assistance chain, but, as section 7.4.4 on the reporting technology suggests, it is a challenge for other links in the chain. Learning requires reflexivity (chapter 6) and shared learning requires shared reflexivity. These challenges are explored further in the following section.

7.5. Learning and Reflexivity

In this section I argue that development experts are active learners for whom reflexivity is part of their jobs. It appears to be innate in their profession. They are able to reflect, however, as argued in chapter 6, their reflections only seem to go so far. They do not, for example, question their own values and beliefs, apart from a few exceptions. What is more, their reflexivity seems to be confined to their own individual mental processes and not shared (except perhaps with independent researchers such as myself – see chapters 6).

In the second part of this section I show the other side of the coin to not sharing individual reflections, which is that agencies and donor are not interested to find out what really happens on the field as long as there are broadly positive reports being produced by experts. The third part of this section presents a brief cameo from my field work that illustrates that senior people in development agencies sometimes do not wish to hear anything that might have disturbing negative implications for the development assistance chain. Overall, the section concludes that development experts are active learners able to reflect critically on their work. Unfortunately they play by the rules set by donor and agencies. Such rules are in fact implicit norms that discourage development experts to communicate their honest reflections. Therefore learning at the agency level is very limited.

Stein and Ridderstrale (2001) argue that learning begins with a process of ‘internal simulation’ that causes a person or institution to draw on past experience in trying to interpret and assess the significance of current events and thereby to be better prepared to understand and even anticipate future events and circumstances. Related to this is the idea that learning is somehow a cyclical process whereby people and institutions reflect on actions, knowledge and experience, and, as a result, reframe their perceptions of their original experience, leading to

new actions in the future (Binney and Williams, 1995). The purpose of learning in the context of organisations is to improve practice, that is, there should be ideally be an action outcome (Binney and Williams, 1995; Pedler et al., 1991). The stage of reflection and questioning is critical to an effective learning process.

Unfortunately ‘reflection’ and questioning’ are not widely used practices in the development assistance field. While I show in sub-section 7.5.1 below that individual development workers are able to exhibit significant individual reflexivity, sub-sections 7.5.2 and 7.5.3 show that it is rather more challenging higher up the development assistance chain.

7.5.1. Development professionals as learners who are unable to tell

Although we shall see that agencies may find it difficult to learn, development consultants and advisors from my study appear to be avid personal learners whose wealth of experiential knowledge of development practice is unfortunately not codified. Partly this learning propensity stems from the nature of the work. The professional practices of consultants and advisors convert them into agents where a key competence is their ability to systematise large masses of knowledge and information over short periods. As a consultant comments:

‘When the assignment is a project evaluation you have to have the ability to systematise a great deal of information in a very short period of time. A project evaluation is the type of assignment that is performed in a short period of time, plus products (e.g. reports) need to be delivered’ (CEP Consultant_6)

Equally important is the ability to learn quickly, which is perhaps a very important skill for those consultants and advisors that have to work in unfamiliar social contexts. Such learning is mediated by their prior knowledge, itself a combination of previous experience and codified knowledge gained through formal education and training. This combination of codified knowledge, experiential knowledge and learning skills is a highly desirable attribute, as a second consultant explains:

‘A development consultant is someone that has both experiential knowledge and the academic background in a specific field. A consultant should also have quick learning skills. The ability to learn quickly from local contexts is highly recommended in this business’ (CEP Consultant_17)

Development consultants and advisors are perhaps more learners than knowledge suppliers because every assignment is a new experience that allows them to learn and reflect on previous experiences. Another consultant observed:

‘Something about consultancy assignments is that we learn all the time. Every assignment is a new experience for us. We engage in dialogues and interchange of knowledge all the time; however this is not reflected in our reports because we need to write down what is contemplated in the terms of reference’ (CEP Consultant_19)

In addition to their quick leaning skills, development experts need to be critical in order to identify and solve problems. Their ability to systematise large masses of information and critically assess problems in short periods of time along with their acute learning skills are therefore probably their trademark.

‘In this business we must be able to identify and understand problems very fast. In the same way we have to have a fine analytical capacity to solve problems. This kind of expertise is needed because, as consultants we are required to provide an

opinion or advice which is taken very seriously by development agencies and beneficiaries alike. We can't just speak out our minds, we must be very careful with our statements and provide if possible the needed answer' (CEP Consultant_4)

The above quotation is interesting because it clearly indicates that advice provided by development consultants is carefully considered. This is only possible if they are able to learn and reflect on their previous experiences. As pointed out in section 7.4.4, development consultancy assignments finish with reports. These are products that belong to the development agencies that paid for the service. Reports do not encapsulate nor reflect the way experts gain new knowledge but contain information about beneficiaries/clients. Notwithstanding the point also made in section 7.4.4 that such knowledge can be a source of power for the experts vis a vis those who employ them, interestingly, some development experts would clearly like to return a portion of that knowledge back to the beneficiaries, as the following quotation testifies:

'Right at the end of the consultancy assignment, we (as consultants) face a dilemma: how do we return the information to those who have provided to us? When we do evaluations we extract information from individuals but these individuals never get to see what we do with this information – only the agency or however has hired to do the evaluation knows the outcomes of the consultancy assignment'(CEP Consultant_21)

The quotations in this sub-section have, with the exception of the last, concerned the positive attributes that consultants attach to themselves and their work. The last quotation, however, poses a challenge: how might they (the consultants) share what they have learned with their clients? This relates to the background question I posed in section 7.4.4, but also, in part it is an ethical challenge – something they *should* do.

7.5.2. Exercising consultant and advisor reflexivity within donor-recipient relationships

Development consultants and advisors learn and exercise reflexivity as part of their profession. However, they do not assume an open critical attitude towards agencies. In fact their reflections and perceptions are often not disclosed as I indicated in section 7.4.4 in the context of what goes into reports. Here I build on this observation to argue more broadly that the development assistance field does not generally encourage critical attitudes and reflexivity amongst development professionals. Therefore, development agencies and other institutions involved in development assistance deny themselves the possibility to learn and improve their institutional practices.

For many SNV development advisors, the pressure to show positive results is probably the main reason that drives agencies and donor countries not to countenance negative feedback:

'The main constraint that development agencies face is not accepting the idea of *failure*' (SNV Advisor_2; emphasis added)

Reflection, however, has to accept the possibility of acknowledging failure. Another SNV advisor explains:

'It is shocking to see that the donor is not interested to know an honest evaluation. Normally the donor has to be accountable to her or his source and also tends to try to influence the consultants that do the evaluation. International and local consultants know how the game works - if they write a very critical

report, the chances of him or her getting a follow up contract with the same donor organization are very little. It is interesting to see that all actors involved at all levels have a vested interest in the truth not coming out. Very often, the contracting agency manipulates the outcome of the evaluation by establishing biased terms of reference' (SNV Advisor_8)

We discussed this collusion not to admit failure throughout the development chain in section 7.2 of this chapter in terms of the overriding institutional rule of doing nothing to undermine the interdependency of the actors. At the other end of the chain, that of the clients/beneficiaries, we can see the same process at work. For example, the clients/beneficiaries for SNV are often government ministries in Bolivia. Yet invariably SNV is not the only northern donor operating in a ministry, which is heavily dependent on funds from several in parallel at any one time, as pointed out by the following advisor:

'Donors fund up to 70 percent of one of my client's budget, I am talking about a ministry that I am working with at the moment. This ministry has several planning and monitoring systems imposed by USAID, DfID, SIDA, GTZ, etc. Every donor has its own monitoring system in place, and they are very strict and explicit in the ways in which their money should be spent. Therefore, this ministry has to dance to different tunes, that is, the people from this ministry have to do what donors suggest. If they don't, they don't receive money. Quite amazing, you can find 5 or 6 parallel monitoring and planning systems running at the same time in Bolivian ministries' (SNV Advisor_3)

Two points can be made from this quotation. Firstly, the sheer quantity of donors on which the ministry is dependent militates against meaningful reflection, despite the multiple monitoring systems that are in place. Secondly, with 70% of the ministry's budget coming from donor sources, it is unlikely to admit to any of them that anything might be failing, as such admission may jeopardise the funding.

Loans and financial grants are an intrinsic part of the development assistance apparatus, and the above quotation clearly shows that development experts do not work in a vacuum but in a context full of institutional and political interests. The following reflection was elaborated by a senior development advisor who – like the previous advisor – is aware of the existing power relations between donors and poor countries as well as the collusion not to admit failure. He asserts the following:

'I do agree that there is a power relationship between a donor and a receiver. Within that power relationship, international development consultants are asked to operate because very often international consultants are hired to do mid term reviews and project evaluations. These are very important because, in 9 out of 10 project evaluations, the recommendation is to make A,B,C changes and then continue the project for another 2 or 3 years, which means a continuation of funding for the local implementing organization (i.e. local NGO, consultancy company, etc)' (SNV Advisor_1)

Another advisor elaborates the point in this extended quote:

'I think people [all agents in the development assistance chain] try to deny that there is such a power relationship, or they see that there is such a power relationship but they try to balance it out. For example, an international consultant is hired to do a mid-term review or evaluation of a development project funded by an international donor. It is proposed by the donor, but the receiver has veto rights, that is, if the receivers says, "I don't want this consultant to evaluate the project", normally donors will try to work out something else. Another issue,

which very often is the way they do it, is that an international consultant is paired with a local consultant where the donor has the right to decide who will be the international consultant to do the evaluation and the implementer of the project will have the right to choose the local consultant. Therefore, the international consultants need to operate within that power relation [...] Very often the receivers and the donors don't want a straightforward evaluation when they fear it will be negative. They know that they get their money from somewhere. All the donors get their money either from public campaigns or taxes - they don't generate their money themselves, they get it from somewhere. If they have been funding a project that has been a failure and a waste of money, they don't want to see it. It's nice to see that nobody of the parties directly involved wants an honest evaluation. The implementing organisation [client/beneficiary] does not want it, they want an evaluation that maximizes the chances of getting more funds from donors. The donor organisation, very often wants a positive evaluation because they have problems – it has happened that the donor organizations from the Netherlands get their funds partly from the Dutch ministry of development cooperation. Donor organizations need to explain to the ministry what they have done with the money they receive. If they report that the money is wasted in development projects then the ministry will cut their budget' (SNV Advisor_29)

From the above quotations, and building on the previous conclusion in section 7.2, it can be concluded that 'development assistance' is a rational game, with all actors being rational in as much as they know the rules of the game. A major rule of the game is to report positive results and avoid failure so the game can keep on going and thus all players benefit. Inside the game, development consultants and advisors are discouraged to communicate critically against the main players (i.e. agencies and donor countries) and their regimes of truth because they could upset the game.

The donor-recipient relationship has been a widely explored issue. Many authors corroborate my data and analysis above, arguing that such a relationship is an implicit *mutual* dependency (Lister, 1997; Hudock, 1999; Fowler, 2000; Ebrahim, 2005). Positing this dependency within the argument I have developed above of not jeopardising the flow of funds, Shutt (2006:154-156) writes:

'Many argue that mutual dependency is implicit in donor-recipient relationships. Recipients require financial resources to pursue their missions and donors need recipients to facilitate development interventions and produce information that demonstrates their success – information that donors can use to claim legitimacy'

Thus, the implicit mutual dependency between donors and recipient countries is the reason for which reflexivity and learning are heavily undermined at the institutional level. There is a gap between a consultant's and advisor's ability to be individually actively reflexive and their ability to share that reflexivity with other agents in the development assistance chain.

In the following section I show what happens when the SNV Bolivian country director and a board of senior advisors were confronted with a critical overlook of their role as a 'knowledge organisation'.

7.5.3. Reflexivity at HQ

As indicated in chapter 3 (section 3.3) SNV senior personnel actively agreed to contribute to and participate in my research. They did so because they thought such independent research would be of use to them in improving SNV's organisational practices and services to its clients. A condition of participation, therefore, was that I shared my findings with them.

The above was the context, therefore, when, towards the end of my fieldwork, I was asked to do a presentation of my findings to these senior personnel at SNV headquarters in the capital city La Paz. It was a context which demonstrated an open-ness and willingness on the part of SNV to discuss the issues. In broad terms it was a positive indicator of SNV's preparedness to listen, reflect and learn. After all, another organisation which had initially shown interest in my research had subsequently declined because it might expose internal tensions in that organisation.

Given this context, I approached the feedback session in a positive vein. I was also confident that I could be open and direct about my findings. Although I had only been able to interview four clients for the reason indicated in chapter 6 (section 6.1), I had interviewed over 50 advisors over a period of five months. My confidence was reinforced by my audience which, as I began, appeared friendly, relaxed and genuinely interested.

As the presentation unfolded, however, their attitude changed as I explored the way clients and advisors perceived the role of SNV. During the presentation I emphasised that the data was provided by advisors who actually worked in the field. The last part of the session consisted of questions and comments. At this stage I was asked the following:

Advisor A: You have interviewed, followed and probably spoken to all our advisors. How do you perceive the role of SNV?

Author: At this stage, I have presented to you some of the perceptions of your clients and advisors. A large number of them appear to suggest that advisory services are not showing substantial progress. Lack of commitment, high turnover of personnel in client institutions, personal assumptions and rigid mindsets amongst advisors and clients appear to be some of the reasons that explain such a poor performance.

My response had been a mixture of direct evidence and my interpretation of that evidence. There was no doubt that fieldwork interviewees had cited lack of commitment and high turnover of personnel in client institutions as an issue. Personal assumptions and rigid mindsets were, however, an interpretation of the evidence, for example where advisors identified client 'culture' as the basic issue contributing to low effectiveness of their work (see chapter 6). I might expect to be challenged on this interpretation, but it did have a basis in the evidence.

Following this, a second senior advisor observed:

Advisor B: I find very interesting your initial findings. However they are not that encouraging, are they? You are literally telling us that we are wasting time and money because we are not really building the capacity of our clients. It looks like that we provide knowledge and as long as the advisor is working with the client everything is fine, but when the advisor leaves the assignment the client goes back to zero. Probably the clients and people you have followed and interviewed are not representative.

There are two elements to Advisor B's observation:

- That I was essentially arguing that SNV's work in Bolivia is ineffective in terms of its own aim of capacity-building
- That the evidence I was using to back up my argument might be flawed.

Of course, I again acknowledge that I expect to be challenged on my interpretations and be questioned about my evidence, but the way in which my presentation had been perceived as 'literally telling us that we are wasting time and money' seemed to close down discussion rather than open it up.

There then followed a discussion about the comparative lack of client interviews in my fieldwork. This was, in itself, valid critical questioning, although it should not be used necessarily to dismiss the insights of those who did give evidence.

Towards the end of the session the senior advisors turned to a further issue that I had raised from my findings. This was that clients perceived their SNV advisors as 'consultants'. This is a major issue since SNV emphasises strongly that advisors are 'knowledge brokers' and not consultants. Thus, one advisor asked me the following:

Advisor E: You are also telling us that our clients perceive us as consultants, that we donors should charge for our services. If this is true, do you think they would hire us if we charge money for our services?

Author: I don't know. I cannot produce an elaborated answer now. At the moment, in the light of my evidence, I would be inclined to say that they wouldn't hire you. At least not all your clients would work with you

The form of direct questioning from Advisor E, inviting 'yes' or 'no' answers, again seemed to be closing down rather than opening up discussion, although with hindsight my own response also contributed to the closing down. The session then ended.

The above is a single cameo of my experience in dealing with the SNV hierarchy in Bolivia, which cannot be generalised into a general critique of its reflexive capacity. It does suggest, however, that being able to engage with critical feedback, even when invited, can be difficult. Nor is it primarily an issue of internal capacity in SNV (or any other development organisation for that matter). The open-ness required for positive communicative exchanges requires a shared lifeworld or background consensus of shared meanings as this thesis has emphasised several times in different contexts, and which I take up again in section 7.6 below.

With hindsight, therefore, it was probably unwise for me to assume that during five months of my fieldwork, during which I met advisors in the field rather than these senior people, that such a background consensus between us would exist. Insofar as the feedback session had been an attempt at communicative action, this episode revealed just how difficult operationalising it can be. Beyond considerations for reflexivity of playing the development game which have been noted already in this chapter, I sense also that SNV advisors in the field also do not necessarily share the lifeworlds of their seniors and, given that they do very different jobs, this is hardly surprising despite working for the same organisation. Therefore, providing open, honest feedback from field level up the development chain is likely to be similarly challenging.

7.6. Background consensus

In the previous sections of this chapter I have argued that development assistance is a chain constituted by a number of agents driven by, personal, professional, organisational and institutional interests, and associated incentives. Agents who operate at the end-use end of this chain form the main focus of my study. These agents are, firstly, development consultants and advisors (which we loosely call development experts) and, secondly, beneficiaries/clients. They all are associated with a number of problems (section 7.4) and face the same institutional pressure not to disturb the mutual dependence of the development chain. Individually and

privately, however, they are able to reflect and learn and in the process gain new knowledge (section 7.5).

This section takes as one starting point the individual learning and reflection that I noted in section 7.5 to explore the possibility of a collective engagement for knowledge production, despite the distorted incentives and rules of the game of the development assistance chain. A second starting point is the examples in my CEP chapter (chapter 5) and (up to a point) my mini-case study in chapter 6 where such productive engagement apparently occurred. In chapter 5, this was the example where CEP consultants engaged with Bolivian ministry officials in training to use the logical framework project planning tool. I concluded then that the productive engagement was related to both sets of actors being professionals and that this shared experience of being professionals contributed to a 'background consensus' between them that facilitated their engagement.

Knowledge engagements between development experts and beneficiaries are processes of negotiations where both actors need to be able to communicate and interchange views (chapter 2). As indicated in chapter 2, Habermas used the term 'background consensus' which derives from a common 'lifeworld' as facilitating this communication and interchange. Fischer (2003:199) has since elaborated the concept as follows:

'Indeed everyday argumentation and storytelling is made possible by the fact that people share a wide range of commonly accepted assumptions that seldom have to be called into question. Habermas (1973) identified these underlying assumptions and interpretations as part of the 'background consensus' that is behind every narrative exchange. He refers here to underlying beliefs and norms that are less uncritically accepted by speakers. It is nothing less than the existence of these background beliefs that makes the communication possible'

Shared meanings and beliefs are therefore at the core of any form of background consensus. More broadly, and in its ideal form it might be conceived as shared ways of seeing the world, in other words a shared ontology. Background consensus can also be interpreted as having a shared culture, but we have to be careful here because the term 'culture' can be used quite loosely and differently by different people. For example, in development practice, 'culture' can be used to mean people who come from the same place, where that place might be a rural village or a whole country. This crude use of the term is inaccurate to say the least and does not acknowledge the multi-faceted nature of culture where even people who live in close proximity may be quite different culturally because of differences in wealth, religion, gender, means of livelihood and so forth. When the 'place' is a whole country, equating it with a single 'culture' becomes even more problematic.

As I have reported in previous chapters this confusing use of the term 'culture' as a synonym for 'place' was evident in my own field work. Thus, in chapter 5 on CEP, I demonstrated that professional development consultants, peasant farmers and artisans might all be Bolivian, but they certainly don't share meanings and beliefs to any significant degree, and one could not claim, therefore, a background consensus between them. A CEP consultant backs up this point as follows:

'Being local does not guarantee cultural affinity with local communities. Local consultants face problems when dealing and working with local communities' (CEP Consultant_15)

Turning to my SNV data, an advisor whom I interviewed used 'culture' problematically as a synonym for everybody being Bolivian, to claim that 'unshared culture' is actually better for productive knowledge engagement because it enables the advisor to share his/her new knowledge. Thus, she commented on her work in the field with local professionals as follows

(note that she is referring to herself somewhat problematically as a consultant in the quotation):

‘[Local clients] who are not familiar with the consultant’s cultural background are more likely to be interested in the new knowledge that the consultant brings into an assignment [...] Individuals familiarized with the consultant’s cultural background are less interested to learn from the expertise displayed in the assignment’ (SNV Advisor_30)

I have made the point before (chapter 6 and earlier in this chapter) that SNV advisors engage with fellow professionals in developing countries. If we are to use the term shared ‘culture’, therefore, it is the shared values and beliefs that stem from being professionals together. Professionals, whatever their background and subject or sector specialism and wherever they come from, tend to share two fundamental characteristics (Wilson and Johnson, 2007). Firstly they are educated and trained to a fairly high level, where that education and training is based all over the world on internationally shared standards. Secondly, they share a broad, practical problem-solving ‘mindset’, or lifeworld (ibid.) It is this shared ‘culture’ as professionals that transcends any ‘culture’ based on shared nation-state or locality, and which enables me to claim instances of ‘background consensus’ that facilitates knowledge exchange and mutual learning. The example of the logframe training in the CEP case study in chapter 5 illustrates this explicitly, but it can also be deduced from my consideration above of SNV advisors.

This isn’t to say that an understanding of place, of local context, is unimportant for effective engagement. However distant she or he might be from the site of a development assignment in terms of lifestyle, education and values, a Bolivian consultant is more likely than a European or North American to have a tacit understanding of, or at least know how to find out about, local contexts within Bolivia. Whatever the gulf between a Bolivian consultant and his/her beneficiaries/clients, understandings of them will have impinged and been accumulated throughout his/her life.

In this way ‘local’ (meaning Bolivian) consultants are often hired by international agencies to find out about the local context of a proposed assignment prior to embarking on it. Having ‘found out’, they then convey their understanding to the development agency as professionals-to-professionals. For instance, a CEP consultant explained to me an assignment with the Danish development agency, DIAKONA. He was hired, he said, because the Danish experts were rather unable to make sense of the local context. His role was therefore to decode the local culture for Danish experts. He explains his experience:

‘I had worked with Danish experts from DIAKONIA and I found that experts from this organisation had a very religious doctrinal approach to almost everything they do. On the other hand, they didn’t know the local context at all. Therefore, my job as a local consultant – among other things – was to teach them how the local reality was structured in social and political terms. What is more, they needed us (local consultants) to teach them how to understand the local context. For instance, as a consultant for DIAKONIA I was getting paid to read the newspapers and watch the TV so I could explain to them what was going in the country and in the areas in which they were implementing projects’ (CEP Consultant_4)

The CEP consultant was being too modest, however, in this quotation in suggesting that all he had to do was to ‘read the newspapers and watch the TV’. He had the experiential knowledge and understandings to be able to interpret those resources, and to be able to communicate that interpretation to fellow professionals from a distant Northern country. His expertise in performing these tasks was considered to be crucial to the success of the assignment.

This example is also interesting because it seems that the Danish experts at least had some understanding that they needed to know about the local context of their assignment. Their response was to hire somebody to find out for them and the CEP consultant could be therefore considered as the essential intermediary in this regard. Understanding the local context through an intermediary, however, is not the same as sharing a ‘background consensus’ directly with the local agents with whom you will be working. I take up this distinction in the next and final chapter where I examine further what might be required to enable a background consensus to exist, or to be created where it does not exist.

7.7. Conclusions

This discussion chapter has argued the following:

- Development consultants and advisors operate within a development assistance chain that has the donors at one end and the beneficiaries/clients at the other. This chain can be regarded in a broad sense as an inter-organisational institution with ‘rules of the game’.
- The key institutional rule of the development assistance chain is not to upset the mutual dependence of the actors who operate within it. All of the actors, including donors, beneficiaries/clients and professional experts comply with this rule to a large extent. The rule militates, however, against genuine and honest knowledge exchange and learning between actors, and organisational learning.
- The incentives for beneficiaries/clients to engage with the development assistance chain often have little to do with what is officially on offer, for example knowledge engagement. They are more likely to seek further or alternative opportunities from the engagement, such as access to donor funds. This situation again militates against genuine and honest knowledge exchange and learning between the actors.
- Development consultants tend to stress their disengagement from the contexts in which they work in order to maximise the generalised knowledge and expertise that they have to offer. Salaried development advisors tend to stress their longer term engagement with clients/beneficiaries in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the contexts in which they are working.
- Southern beneficiaries/clients are perceived by some development experts not to have the capacity to engage in productive knowledge exchange and learning. This is put down to the beneficiaries/clients’ ‘culture’ which (i) favours solidarity to family rather than work (and which leads to ‘corruption’ in the Northern consciousness), and (ii) is resistant to receiving feedback. This reduction of the problem of engagement to beneficiary/client culture, however, can also be interpreted to indicate limited reflexivity on the part of those who make these claims.
- In other areas of their practice, however, most consultants and advisors are able to reveal a high level of individual reflexivity and learning, but there is a serious blockage to this being shared across the development assistance chain. This blockage is related to the institutional mutual dependency between actors noted above. My fieldwork suggests that actors higher up the chain might be particularly prone to defensive attitudes of not wanting to absorb negative reflections.
- Learning and knowledge engagement between actors that share the same professional background is more fluent.
- A development assignment usually ends with a report. Such reports can be regarded as a technology of power in that they are produced to a formula that serves the mutual dependency of the development assistance chain.
- Despite the constraints, some knowledge exchange and joint learning does occur. It appears to be most effective in professional-professional engagements. In these situations a shared professional culture between consultants/advisors and

beneficiaries/clients seems to create a 'background consensus' within which more effective engagements can occur.

The last bullet point above raises the issue of whether more productive engagement between expert and beneficiary is able to occur in other situations where an *a priori* background consensus is absent. In such situations the challenge would be to create this consensus. Habermas (chapter 2) suggests that it can be created through communicative action between the actors – being open with each other, challenging each other to justify their views and being reflexive. My sense, taken up in chapter 8, is that something more is required to enable such communicative action, which I now posit to be shared experience of the actors. Such an argument, however, would require us to re-conceptualise the expert's engagement with local context away from gaining deeper understanding (as the SNV advisors espouse) and towards gaining shared experience. I explore these possibilities in the final chapter of the thesis.

CHAPTER 8

FINAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has explored knowledge engagements between consultants, advisors and beneficiaries/clients, where engagement refers to the processes whereby knowledge is communicated, exchanged and shared. It has illustrated how knowledge at macro-, meso- and micro- levels interact.

In chapter 2, I outlined how knowledge has been addressed in the development literature. At the macro level, the development literature examines how knowledge is managed at the inter-agency level and how it has been constructed as a discourse by donor countries and international development organisations. In this and later chapters, I have also examined the development discourses of individual organisations working at the meso-level. At the micro level, the development literature tends to be concerned with exploration of how knowledge is perceived, contested and used between individuals in the field, particularly between 'local beneficiaries' and professional development actors.

My thesis is framed in terms of the interaction between these levels. I have used Foucault to understand how dominant regimes of truth are constructed which sustain unequal power relations between beneficiaries/clients and development organisations in the development assistance chain, and the extent to which these might be challenged in their engagements. In this, I draw on the post-development theorists, but also try to go beyond them. In exploring

the engagements, I have drawn on Habermas, but in a pragmatic way. Thus, I have not tried to expand Habermas' theory of communicative action but rather used it in order to explore the potential for consultants, advisors and beneficiaries/clients to engage in fluent knowledge exchanges.

In chapter 2, I elaborated my research questions as:

1. To what extent does the supply driven nature of development assistance undermine knowledge engagements between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries/clients?
2. To what extent does the dominant development discourse ('regime of truth') frame what can be learned and known in engagements between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries/clients?
3. To the extent that a dominant development discourse ('regime of truth') does frame what can be learned and known in engagements between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries/clients, how are both the discourse and the engagements sustained?
4. What is the potential for communicative action in knowledge engagements that might lead to meeting hermeneutic and emancipatory knowledge interests?
5. To the extent that there is the potential for communicative action in development engagements, what is necessary for such potential to be realised?

The above research questions have formed the background to my empirical exploration in chapters 5, 6 and 7. In the case studies on which these chapters are based, I examined knowledge engagements in relation to two specific groups of development professionals – Bolivian consultants (chapter 5) and international development advisors (chapter 6). Chapter 7 serves as a point of critical comparison between the two groups where I have presented my findings. In this final chapter I address these questions directly. Before doing so, however, I revisit the theoretical background to the thesis. In the following section I revisit Foucault's and Habermas' theories in the light of my empirical findings.

8.1. Revisiting Foucault and Habermas

In this section I revisit Foucault and Habermas in the light of my empirical data. This section outlines the way in which both authors have guided my analysis. I also explore how the explanatory power of their theories was limited by the nature of my data. My intention is not to repeat how Foucault and Habermas were used. Instead I examine critically how their theories have helped me to make sense of my empirical data. To do this I revisit the categories from Box 1 at the end of chapter 2 which provide a useful summary framework of how I have made combined use of Foucault and Habermas in this thesis.

My first and main category in Box 1 (in the sense that it is the category to which all others in the Box relate) concerns knowledge for development. My thesis has illustrated that the development assistance chain, conceived as a hierarchy stretching from donors and their agencies to the beneficiaries/clients, operates within a Foucaultian regime of truth which is largely a product of donor and agency power. To a large extent this regime of truth frames what can be learned and known within knowledge for development engagements. It is the product of rich northern governments and the multilateral institutions that they control, for example the World Bank and IMF. Although this regime of truth contains many agendas of direct relevance to my major case studies, at a meta level it advocates global economic integration within a capitalist system and good governance in the political arena (including representative, multi-party democracy).

I elaborate on this fundamental challenge concerning how knowledge for development is thus framed, particularly in my comparative discussion in chapter 7. Formally, the regime of truth is

largely accepted by all actors, including the beneficiaries/clients, as through it resources can be levered and credibility built (see below). Thus the most apparently successful engagements between consultants/development advisors and beneficiaries/clients occurred when both categories shared similar professional mindsets and consequently where their engagements mainly concerned learning that raised no questions about the dominant framing truth. The best example of this was the engagement between CEP consultants and Bolivian professionals over logical framework analysis, described in chapter 5.

Less successful engagements occurred when, at a tacit level at least, the dominant regime of truth was apparently less accepted by the beneficiaries/clients. Again, chapter 5 provides a good example, where CEP consultants were unable to engage constructively with OECAs' peasant farmers who considered themselves more as trade unionists exhibiting mutual solidarity through their organisation than the entrepreneurs that the donor agency, SOS-Faim, would like them to be. It was also evident in chapter 6, when SNV advisors noted poor engagement with beneficiaries/clients, explaining it as a problem of the latter's 'culture' – having greater commitment to family than to the job and unable to receive feedback.

However, my thesis has also illustrated a basic Habermasian contention that human beings have a unique ability to reflect on their actions. Reflection was especially evident among the SNV advisors I interviewed (chapter 6), while, among the beneficiaries, the peasant farmer 'beneficiaries in chapter 5 also provided me with reflective insight regarding why their training sessions with CEP consultants had been to a large extent unsuccessful. For Habermas, this ability to reflect on their social situations indicates a potential for emancipatory action, or, in Foucaultian terms, to challenge and transcend dominant regimes of truth. To do so, however, it needs to go beyond individual reflection, to the second basic Habermasian contention – the ability of human beings to communicate with one another. This ability potentially leads to communicative action, where the consultants/advisors and the beneficiaries/clients are able to engage openly, challenge each other and be required to justify their ideas and actions. The only time I witnessed such engagement, however, was in a restricted technical domain, with the engagement between CEP consultants and Bolivian professionals on the Logical Framework Analysis noted above (see also section 5.3). These two groups of actors obviously shared a similar professional lifeworld. The point of emancipatory communicative action, however, is to build a new lifeworld and Habermas does not offer any mechanisms for this latter process. My suggestion, made at the end of chapter 7, that communicative action might be possible if the different actors are able to work together and build shared experience over time, is untested in this thesis but could be a topic for future research.

My further categories in Box 1 relate to northern development agencies and Bolivian consultancy companies, the consultants and advisors at field level, and the beneficiaries/clients themselves. These are the main actors in the development assistance chain (see Box 1 in chapter 2 and Figure 2 in chapter 7).

The development agencies which have featured in my empirical work are SOS-Faim (Belgian international development NGO), SIDA (Swedish Government International Development Agency) and SNV (Dutch Government international development agency). While they might have very different meso-level policies, the work of the agencies as observed in my research was to operationalise the broad agendas encapsulated in the development regime of truth described above. Thus they had a disciplining role, to use another Foucaultian conception. Hence, SOS-Faim's work in Bolivia was essentially to turn peasant farmers into capitalist entrepreneurs (economic global integration at a local level) and SNV's work with government ministries concerned a variety of initiatives which fall under the general rubric of good governance. My contact with SIDA concerned a bounded project on logical framework training (see above), but this too was an aspect of the good governance agenda in that it arose from reporting difficulties in SIDA funded projects with one of its Bolivian counterparts.

The Foucaultian perspective which informs the above paragraph has synergies here with a Habermasian approach. Habermas's concern would be with the instrumentality of the activities and projects of SOS-Faim, SIDA and SNV. By this he means that the role of these agencies is to choose the best (most efficient) means to achieve given ends of global economic integration and good governance, not to question those ends. Fundamentally this is no different from the Foucaultian perspective above which would see these agencies as operationalising given regimes of truth. For Habermas, the dominance of such instrumentality inhibits opportunities for communicative exchange and action between the development agencies and the beneficiary/client organisations which would potentially challenge the ends. There is thus a colonisation of the lifeworld (see section 2.4) by instrumental action, and this is borne out throughout my case studies. Habermas also recognises, however, that dealing with complexity (and international development is certainly a complex arena) inevitably requires a degree of instrumentality. If every end was challenged and had to be justified through communicative exchange, nothing would get done. Habermas offers no suggestions, however, as to how the limits to instrumentality might be determined in the interests of fostering communicative action, which forms another possible area for further research.

The development organisations of my study employ their own staff (e.g. SNV advisors) to engage with beneficiaries/clients or they contract consultants. From a Foucaultian perspective, these people as individuals have two roles:

1. They are simply the vehicles of northern dominance. In contrast to Foucault's general point, however, that individuals are vehicles of power (Gordon, 1980), my thesis suggests that they are also points of application of that power through which regimes of truth are disseminated and established. They would not be able to fulfil their roles were it not for the power of their employers which derives from their control of large amounts of financial and other resources.
2. Bolivian consultants particularly can also serve a governmentality function (see section 2.3.1) in that they find out, and provide to the development organisation, knowledge about the local context. I provide an illustration of this in chapter 6, (sections 6.5 and 6.6), and chapter 7 (section 7.6) where I quote a CEP consultant's experience of being employed by a Danish development agency.

Rather than diverge from Foucault in this consideration of individual development advisers and consultants, Habermas helps us to go further. Because he regards humans as both reflexive and communicative beings, the processes of establishing regimes of truth and gaining knowledge of the local for governmentality purposes that Foucault describes are not dead ends. Through reflection and communicative action there is the potential to transcend these purposes, as noted above.

Again as noted above, however, the barriers to communicative action seemed formidable from my empirical observations, except in a limited technical domain. The over-riding interest of development advisors and consultants was technical, leading to instrumental approaches, a point explicitly made when CEP consultants told me that they were paid to carry out an assignment with specified terms of reference, not question it (see chapter 5 and chapter 7).

In the absence of communicative engagement it is also easy to see how individual reflexivity had its limits in questioning fundamentally the apparent failure, or at best limited success, of many assignments. If human beings do not communicate meaningfully, individual reflection tends to remain a reflection about the 'other' – their 'culture', their 'corrupt' tendencies and so forth – rather than a critical appraisal of oneself and the regime of truth on which one's activities are based. In all of my interviews with SNV advisors, while I noted their individual ability to reflect, in the end many of their conclusions concerned the behaviour of their counterparts. To a lesser, although still significant extent, they did also reflect on development agencies, noting their inability to admit failure, an inability that steered the advisors into 'safe' directions when reporting. Likewise, in their interviews with me, CEP consultants also

questioned their agency's (i.e. SOS_Faim's) organisational discourse of creating business entrepreneurs out of peasants, but were unable to communicate their concerns further to SOS-Faim itself. Communicative engagement involving open discussion and challenge between development advisors/consultants and both their agencies and counterparts could have been a way to go beyond such reductionist conclusions to a more challenging reflection, but I detected none of that.

Turning to my final category in Box 1 – the beneficiaries/clients – one can note that in many instances there was evidence to suggest that they were often strategic in their dealings with development organisations and their advisors/consultants in order either to gain resources directly or to gain credibility with donors that would enable them to access future resources (see section 6.3.4 and section 7.2). Thus they did not necessarily buy into the regimes of truth that were exercised upon them. As noted above, examples included the OECA peasant farmers and their engagement with CEP, and Bolivian 'culture' being an obstacle to SNV assignments. Such strategic action to gain or have future access to resources can be seen as a form of resistance in the Foucaultian sense.

As explained in chapter 3, I was not able in my empirical work to engage with a large number of beneficiaries/clients. I noted above that, in the case of Logical Framework training of a Bolivian counterpart organisation for SIDA, the clients appeared to have similar technical interests to those of their consultant-trainers, but beyond this illustration I have no knowledge of whether the beneficiaries/clients of my study would have expressed further cognitive interests in the hermeneutic and emancipatory domains had there been opportunity to do so.

8.2. The broader thesis contribution and the research questions revisited

This thesis is a contribution to the field of development studies in so far as it explores the central role played by knowledge since development assistance was set up by United States President Truman in 1949. It exposes how knowledge for development has been historically produced by developed countries which in turn have established organisations that assist poor countries with knowledge and financial resources. More specifically, it looks at all these key themes in the historical and socioeconomic context of Bolivia.

It shows how the current literature on knowledge for development has been focused either on the macro-level or micro-level of development assistance and not in the interplay between both. Furthermore, at both levels it is evident that different analysts and commentators have not made a genuine effort to analyse how dominant regimes of truth undermine knowledge exchanges at the micro-level where field-based knowledge is created. In this thesis I have addressed the field of development assistance as an interconnected whole (see section 3.2.1) and in chapter 7 I called it a 'development game' where all actors including donor countries and the beneficiaries in rural villages collude in order to benefit each other.

The data presented in this thesis reveals how the actors I interviewed found the idea of openly debating 'failure' problematic. Most of the professionals interviewed for this thesis admitted that such a practice is a risky one. More importantly, my empirical findings indicated the lack of safe spaces where development professionals can safely criticise agencies and knowledge produced in developed countries. The lack of this safe space limits the possibility of producing new and adequate knowledge for development. What is more, it reveals the challenging nature of getting development agencies, advisors, consultants and beneficiaries to openly talk and reflect about knowledge for development (see section 3.5). Throughout the thesis, I have shown how difficult it is to have access to development professionals and even more to engage in an honest discussion with development aid agencies.

This thesis also unearths the first international agreements signed between the government of Bolivia and international development organisations. Signed between 1950, 1951 and 1953,

these agreements show how knowledge and experts were a central part of development aid programmes. Furthermore, these agreements illustrate how development experts were able to exercise a lot of power. These documents explain how poor countries like Bolivia have little power to challenge and openly criticise donor countries and development aid agencies. This does not necessarily mean that beneficiaries or Bolivian development consultants are passive actors. On the contrary, my findings suggest that despite the lack of power to change or influence the role of development aid agencies, consultants and advisors do criticise development agencies, albeit a limited critique within the confines of the dominant regime of truth and rarely communicated to the agencies themselves.

The thesis also unpacks and shows how reflexive learning seems not to occur in the development chain (chapters 5, 6 and 7). The thesis provides evidence that illustrates the unwillingness to openly discuss failure (chapters 5, 6 and 7). As in section 8.1, it has strategically used aspects of Foucault's theory of knowledge/power and discourse and parts of Habermas' notions of communicative actions and universal pragmatics. As stated in section 2.5, I do not attempt to combine them both in a harmonious manner. The current literature on development has largely used Foucault's concepts of discourse and power to critically analyse 'development' – I extend the use of these categories to the analyses of consultants, advisors and beneficiaries through a Habermasian lens.

I now return to my research questions as elaborated in chapter 2.

1. To what extent does the supply driven nature of development assistance undermine knowledge engagements between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries/clients?

The whole field of development assistance has been, and still is, to a large extent supply-driven. Throughout the thesis I have illustrated how, at its inception in the 1940s, Technical Assistance was considered to be a process whereby 'developed' countries transferred their 'technical knowledge' to poor countries in the name of helping them to develop. The case study in chapter 5 concerning SOS-FAIM and CEP consultants, where business training was provided to an audience of peasant farmers and artisans, can be described in this way. Then, in chapter 6, some of my SNV advisors explicitly conceptualised the supply-driven nature of their knowledge services as being the source of problems.

This kind of analysis makes sense at a fairly superficial level and can be attractive as an explanation – as it certainly is to some SNV advisors and sections of the World Bank. Probing more deeply, however, it does beg two further questions:

- Why does there appear to be a mismatch between supply and demand of these knowledge services?
- Given that there is a mismatch, why do the beneficiaries go along with it?

The answer to the second of these questions is fairly straightforward. In the cases I have explored in chapters 5 and 6, beneficiaries/clients engage with consultants and advisors because they do not only receive 'knowledge' from development organisations but also funds. As I indicated in chapter 7, the beneficiaries/clients often conceive of knowledge engagements in the form of training or capacity building as a condition that must be met in order to obtain access to the funds, and they evaluate the opportunity costs of not complying. This is the case even when the development organisation is not supplying any financial resources directly, as with SNV. Here, beneficiaries/clients engage with the agency's free knowledge services because the association legitimises them as players in the development 'game' (see chapter 6) and enables them to lever funds from other organisations.

In other words, the financial ties between donor countries, development organisations and beneficiaries/clients are an important part of the equation and should not be underestimated. Also, as noted in chapter 7, it should not surprise us if this is translated into lack of commitment by beneficiaries/clients in the practice of the knowledge engagements with consultants and advisors.

However the first question requires more consideration. The training of peasant farmers and artisans by CEP consultants was framed by the international development agency, SOS-Faim's desire to turn them into capitalist entrepreneurs. Yet the organisations which represent these farmers and artisans (OECAs) have the attributes of a trade union. As such, they emphasise cooperative endeavour and collective solidarity. OECAs, therefore, are an institution in the sense used in chapter 7: they comprises a set of 'rules that structure social interactions in particular ways based on knowledge shared by members of the relevant community or society' (Knight, 1992:2). This set of rules is in many ways the antithesis of what SOS-Faim, through its CEP consultants, is trying to inculcate in OECA members. Doubtless the farmers, in particular, do exchange goods with each other, but it is more likely to be within a framework of mutual support rather than individualised market competition. There is thus an institutional mismatch between OECAs and what SOS-Faim would like them to be which can be articulated in practice as a mismatch between supply and demand. The main reason that these farmers and artisans enter knowledge engagements with consultants is to try and secure funds from SOS-Faim.

We further saw in chapter 6, and elaborated in chapter 7, similar considerations at work in SNV advisors' engagements with their clients. The latter were usually government officials, and SNV's knowledge-transfer work falls under the broad rubric of capacity building for good governance. Here again, we saw complaints from advisors about lack of commitment from these officials – for example, that they considered their families before their careers. Such behaviour, however, makes sound sense when we consider extended families as social institutions with particular rules which structure the social interactions of their members, and which in turn influence priorities.

In short, existing institutions – ways of behaving and doing things – matter. The SOS-Faim agenda of converting peasants to entrepreneurs and the SNV agenda of capacity building for good governance might be the basic pillars of modern capitalism, but to many people in the world they do not comprise obvious realities or aspirations.

Considerations of supply and demand are useful in the context of this thesis where I have shown how beneficiaries/clients might not demand knowledge for development. Chapters 5 and 6 respectively have shown how farmers, artisans and SNV's client organisations did not really need or demand more 'knowledge' in order to develop. However, CEP's beneficiaries and SNV's clients do not let pass the opportunity to make use of free of charge knowledge services and use their knowledge engagements with advisors and consultants to secure funds. However, a supply-demand approach might not be sufficient, for explaining apparent problems, and often straight failures, in development knowledge engagements. Underlying these problems and failures is the mediation of donor agendas of capitalist entrepreneurship and good governance by local institutions, whether articulated in organisations of peasants or in family social norms and commitments. Without consideration of these, no abstract analysis based on the 'supply' of knowledge will ever be adequate.

2. To what extent does the dominant development discourse ('regimes of truth') frame what can be learned and known in engagements between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries/clients?

3. To the extent that a dominant development discourse ('regimes of truth') does frame what can be learned and known in engagements between advisors, consultants and beneficiaries/clients, how are both the discourse and the engagements sustained?

I will deal with the above two questions together as they are closely interlinked. Before I elaborate, I should highlight a key concept contained in the above questions. I have argued that the dominant development discourse is the domain of dominant statements which are mainly produced by developed countries. I also refer to these dominant statements, including in earlier sections of this chapter, as 'regimes of truths' that are produced by development organisations (World Bank, UN, SNV, SIDA, etc.). In using these terms I draw on a Foucaultian analysis of power relations in knowledge production, as elaborated in chapter 2 and section 8.1 above.

The evidence I put forward in this thesis demonstrates that dominant development discourses frame knowledge engagements between actors and also what can be reported in evaluations. Thus, chapter 5 illustrates how consultants were hired to undertake an assignment which was designed in line with the SOS-Faim development discourse of developing a capitalist market economy. The assignment advocated, therefore, the need for farmers and artisans to adopt an entrepreneurial mode in order to develop. Most of the CEP consultants who participated in this assignment were aware, when I interviewed them, that such a 'development discourse' was ill-conceived. What is more, they were very critical of the way in which the SOS-Faim development agenda was implemented and yet they held back from reporting their view and perception to SOS-Faim.

The reason for this is that CEP consultants were hired in order to deliver a service for the aid agency SOS-Faim and not to assess critically its development discourse. As a private development consultancy company, CEP provides knowledge services to a wide range of development actors. Consultants that work under the umbrella of CEP have to adopt variations on the over-arching development assistance regime of truth (broadly speaking absorption into a modern and global capitalist economy) every time they work for a different agency. Such regimes of truth very often dictate the content of the assignment as well as the products that need to be delivered. In these circumstances, CEP consultants have virtually no chance to challenge or openly criticise dominant development discourses.

In my interviews, however, CEP consultants were not only critical of SOS-Faim's development discourse but also were able to learn from the peasant farmers and artisans and, to some extent, produce knowledge and insights as to how SOS-Faim could have improved its development agenda (see also below in relation to research questions 4 and 5). A full reporting of these views and knowledges gained by consultants might have revealed the extent to which SOS-Faim's development discourse is ill-conceived. However, at an instrumental level, to do so would have not been part of their conditions of employment by SOS-Faim. At a related, broader level it would have challenged the dominant framing discourse upon which development assistance is predicated

The same problem was identified in chapters 6 and 7 where SNV's advisors expressed their concerns about how donor countries and development agencies are not interested to know about failure. Some advisors explained to me that donor countries and agencies use evaluation reports for their continued functioning in development assistance. This in turn influences to a large extent what such reports are allowed to discuss and limits the possibility to report what really happens on the ground where advisors, consultants and beneficiaries/clients interact with each other. Certainly these reports are not supposed to challenge the dominant discourse of development, which therefore goes unchallenged and is perpetuated.

In chapter 7, I have argued, therefore, that evaluation reports are ‘technologies of power’. They are produced after almost any development endeavour, from short-term project evaluations performed by consultants to annual reports produced by development advisors. Within them, development agencies are compelled to prove that the money they receive is well spent or at least is translated into ‘development’ in poor countries. Failure to prove that funds are well spent, however, questions the usefulness and role of development agencies funded by donor countries. To this end, I have suggested that, to a large extent, some reports are intentionally written with the purpose to support and maintain the development assistance chain from donor to beneficiary (see chapter 7) and regimes of truth imbedded in that chain. In other words, the actors in this chain play out a ‘game’ of collusion.

My deeper argument therefore is not that CEP consultants and SNV advisors on the ground did not reflect and learn. Many demonstrated learning at least to some extent during my interviews, although it was a particular form of reflection on the (lack of) effectiveness of what they are asked to do in assignments, rather than on the specific development outcomes of their engagements. As I argued in section 7.5.1, ‘every assignment is a new learning experience’. The problem was that, framed by the dominant discourse and development ‘game’ of which they are a part, they were unable to tell what they had learned or to put it into practice in future engagements. And if these consultants and advisors, who work on the ground, could not tell or put into future practice what they had learned from an assignment, those further up the management chain in the organisations for whom they worked would not learn either. Finally, to take this a step further, if the senior managers did not learn the organisation would not learn. It is no surprise, therefore, that my own confrontation with lack of reflexivity occurred when I reported the initial findings of my fieldwork to senior SNV managers (see chapter 7).

Nevertheless, the fact that, from my interviews, several individual respondents, both CEP consultants and SNV advisors, revealed reflection and learning leads me to ask whether the dominant regime of truth can be challenged and contested, as Foucault himself suggests (see chapter 2). My empirical evidence reported in chapters 5 and 6 suggests that unfortunately this was not the case among these professionals. The reason, to use another Foucaultian term, is that the development ‘game’ serves as a powerful *disciplining* mechanism, as I have documented elsewhere in this thesis, especially in chapter 7 and above in this chapter.

However, again drawing on chapter 7 and above in this chapter, one can perhaps analyse the actions of beneficiaries/clients, if not the consultants and advisors, as suggesting a kind of resistance. This is not an open resistance, but more a covert and strategic manipulation of the ‘game’, which plays on the knowledge that everyone in the development chain is ultimately interdependent and needs to collude in order to perpetuate and gain from it. What superficially appeared to be passive behaviour of the peasant farmers and artisans before their CEP consultants (and fellow country ‘men’), and the apparent lack of motivation among the government officials for whom SNV advisors were trying to build capacity can both be seen in this vein. Passive behaviour and lack of motivation indicate resistance to engage fully. Put the other way round, they indicate instrumental and rational acceptance of what the beneficiaries/clients have to do to fulfil their other agendas, where the calculation involves a careful weighing up of the costs and benefits of engagement - but without enthusiasm.

We can therefore conclude provisionally from this analysis that ‘regimes of truth’ are likely to be challenged only to a limited extent in the field of development assistance. Moreover, any challenge that does occur is more likely to be a covert manipulation for ones own ends. It would seem from this study that all actors in the development assistance chain, from donors to beneficiaries/clients, have a vested interest not to disturb the way it is provided.

Is this an insuperable problem? I now turn to my final two questions where I hint, without making any grand claims, at a possible way forward.

4. **What is the potential for communicative action in knowledge engagements that might lead to meeting hermeneutic and emancipatory knowledge interests?**
5. **To the extent that there is the potential for communicative action in knowledge engagements, what is necessary for such potential to be realised?**

I again deal with these two questions together. I should first summarise briefly what communicative action entails and how it has been used in this thesis.

Communicative action is considered in chapter 2 where, drawing on Habermas (1976a, 1976b, 1984, 1998), Edgar (2006), I noted that it has three functions. It can be used to convey information, it can be used to establish the total relationships and it can be used to express one's opinions and feelings. The combination or independent use of these functions should allow transparent communication between actors. Such a process of communication potentially meets our hermeneutic and emancipatory cognitive interests as human beings. Hermeneutic interests are broadly about our ability to interpret the social world and emancipatory interests our ability to change it in the direction of freedom and social justice. They can together be contrasted with Habermas' third cognitive interest – our technical interest in how things work.

Communicative action principles are based on application of Habermas's theory of universal pragmatics which I have adapted to the field of development assistance. This theory postulates four points that should potentially enable knowledge to be communicated even between consultants, advisors and beneficiaries/clients who do not share the same background. I now explore each of these points in the light of the data presented in this thesis. What is more, I show the potential of communicative action in knowledge engagements and what is needed in order for the concept to be useful for development assistance.

Point No. 1: Everyone in a development engagement must be able to share openly their understanding of the world about them.

The evidence in this thesis suggests that consultants, advisors and beneficiaries/clients were able to share openly their understandings with me, the independent researcher. With each other, however, this was not the case. For example, in chapters 5, 6 and 7, I showed how consultants and advisors are reluctant to share explicitly and openly their views and understandings with the agencies they work for. I also found no evidence of consultants, advisors and beneficiaries/clients (whether peasant farmers and artisans as in chapter 5, or government officials in chapter 6) sharing views with each other about the effectiveness of the processes in which they engaged.

The problem seems to have been that some forms of understanding question the usefulness and appropriateness of the dominant development discourse. On this point we should remember what I have stated many times: consultants, advisors and beneficiaries/clients play the rules of the development assistance 'game' that frame what can be discussed, reported and disseminated.

Point No. 2: Everyone must agree that development professionals and beneficiaries have the right to say what they think.

Consultants, advisors and beneficiaries might all have a right to say what they think – nobody can physically stop them. However, as indicated above, we should not under-estimate the disciplining power of the development 'game'. Consultants, advisors and beneficiaries are aware of the risks involved if they genuinely say what they think about development assistance and why knowledge engagements do not always facilitate 'development' for the beneficiaries.

Thus, there is a wealth of knowledge that is not codified or shared by consultants and advisors.

For example, in chapter 5, I observed a clear lack of engagement and even some hostility on the part of the farmers and artisans towards CEP consultants who clearly saw their role as imparting didactically knowledge of entrepreneurship which was alien to the farmers and artisans in most respects. This case study was in some ways straightforward, that is to say, CEP consultants were critical and aware that SOS-Faim's development agenda was ill-conceived. Meanwhile, the OECAs were more interested to meet their technical interests than engaging in genuine knowledge processes with consultants. Neither the CEP consultants nor the OECA farmers and artisans felt able, however, to say what they think and make their agendas explicit. In other words, no-one was prepared to question openly SOS-Faim's regime of truth – to say what they think.

Point No. 3: Claims and utterances of all actors should be sincere

Claims and utterances on the side of consultant, advisors and beneficiaries/clients might not always be sincere. Chapters 5 and 6 showed that farmers, artisans and SNV's clients are not genuinely interested in learning or engaging in knowledge processes with advisors and consultants and yet, the assumption was that beneficiaries/clients enter into knowledge engagements with development professionals because there appears to be a need for knowledge. Beyond the scope of this study, I also suspect the sincerity of development agency claims about the need to provide knowledge services to beneficiaries/clients (although they possibly themselves believe that they are being sincere).

Point No. 4: What is said must be meaningful, that is, everyone must either share the same language or recognise enough common idioms to sustain communication, or be able to rephrase an utterance in ways that others understand if necessary.

Chapter 5 is a good example where 'language' is a major issue and yet it appears that it was not noticed by SOS-Faim. A number of farmers did not speak the Spanish language in which the training was provided. This problem was in fact realised, but ignored, by some individual consultants who nevertheless carried out the assignment as if there were no problems.

To give a counter example, however, in the case of SIDA (my second case study in chapter 5) and SNV (chapter 6), consultants, advisors and beneficiaries/clients were able to sustain communication in an effective manner. This seemed to arise from the ability of all actors to speak Spanish. Also, in the case of training provided by CEP for SIDA's beneficiary (Fundación La Paz), I argued that the effectiveness derived from the shared backgrounds (and hence lifeworlds) of the consultants and trainees that was associated with being professionals and other aspects of their lives, and which allowed a meaningful engagement between them (see below for further consideration of professional shared background).

Combining the elements of universal pragmatics: is it possible to move towards communicative action?

Communicative action is an ideal which is probably impossible to realise in actual practice in its pure form. Considering the above, my empirical research suggests that the potential for even moving towards communicative action in development assistance engagement is low, except possibly where it meets technical cognitive interests. The only case where I noted anything which even approximated to communicative action as espoused above concerned the CEP logical framework training of SIDA's Bolivian beneficiary Fundación La Paz and section 6.5 where a SNV client/beneficiary argued that he was able to interact and communicate fluently with the SNV advisor in charge.

The above cases apart (and to which I return below), being open, saying what you think and sincerity were generally at a premium in the cases I studied. For example, in chapter 6 I showed how SNV advisors blame their clients for having other agendas (i.e. unable to share openly their understandings and not being sincere), and not having a reflexive 'culture' (and therefore unable to articulate what they think). My own observations suggested that also the SNV advisors themselves did not have open attitudes, and were limited in terms of their reflexivity. The more experienced they were the less reflexive they became towards their own personal views and professional practices, tending to frame the issues as a 'problem with the locals' and their 'culture'. SNV advisors utilised the term 'culture' in order to describe the way people in developing countries behave and the job practices shared by the local professionals who form their clients. In particular, I found striking the way senior SNV advisors were able to criticise their clients and not their own professional practices and the way their own assumptions undermined their own job.

One reason why advisors/consultants and beneficiaries/clients alike showed a lack of openness and reflexivity with each other and the agencies they work for is undoubtedly because of the way their engagements were framed by the dominant development discourses as discussed above, and the consequent way all actors were interdependent in a development 'game' with a deal of money and careers at stake. A different way of examining this issue, however, derives from Habermas's concept of 'lifeworld' (see chapter 2). Advisors and consultants often inhabit very different 'lifeworlds' from their beneficiaries/clients and therefore the 'background consensus' that might have enabled communicative action was difficult to build.

A key issue for me, therefore, has become the possibility of building common lifeworlds between very different kinds of people. In exploring this issue, I take up the argument I made concerning SNV in chapter 7. SNV did show a concern to understand the social, economic, political and cultural contexts in which they work, and this could be claimed at one level to illustrate efforts to acknowledge and come to terms with the lifeworlds of its clients. These efforts, however, were invariably instrumental as Chapter 7 has suggested, often using briefing reports from consultants hired for the purpose.

What seems necessary, therefore, is not an instrumental understanding of each other's lifeworlds, which probably ends up being used for purposes of manipulation towards one's own agenda. For example, the SOS-Faim case in chapter 5 showed how beneficiaries in all my case studies understand the lifeworlds of their benefactors to the extent of being able to manipulate the development 'game' to their advantage. Farmers and artisans were – in chapter 5 – individuals who understood the way the development chain works, and a large number of them knew that there were prerequisites to be fulfilled before gaining access to funds. Some of those I interviewed expressed that they carefully selected the type of agency to engage with. In some cases, due to the large number of development organisations 'on offer' in Bolivia, 'beneficiaries' were pushed to think carefully who to work with.

Rather, what does seem necessary, if we wish to see a more hermeneutic and emancipatory approach to knowledge, is to evolve *new* shared lifeworlds between actors. Similarly, also needed is a process whereby personal agendas can be negotiated without having to risk losing access to funds or endangering existing knowledge engagements. Habermas suggests that this can be achieved through communicative action – through challenge and justification during engagements. It seems to me and my work in this thesis, however, that exchanging words and ideas is not enough especially when money is involved. Challenge and justification need to be grounded in shared experiences through doing things together in a genuine manner.

Having argued this point about the importance of evolving a shared lifeworld, I must make a possible qualifier. The case I recorded where a background consensus might be said to exist and which did facilitate productive engagement – that between CEP consultants and Fundación La Paz (FLP) professionals requiring training in Logframe (see above and chapter

5) – was aimed at meeting technical interests. Although the Director of FLP also indicated that he felt CEP consultants learned from FLP about what it's like to work with 'abandoned women and children' (section 5.3.3), which suggested an additional process of evolving a shared lifeworld through communicative exchange, the driver of the communication concerned these technical interests. This empirical observation supports the point made by Wilson and Johnson (2007) that, while a background consensus of shared meanings and beliefs might be necessary for narrative exchange, it also might limit what is communicated and discussed and hence the kind of knowledge that will be generated.

In this particular case, however, the initial background consensus which brought CEP and FLP together was in a sense ascribed – it existed because of pre-existing professional backgrounds which have similarities with one another even when they emanate from different parts of the world. Having to evolve a new 'lifeworld', and hence background consensus, through shared experience, as I have indicated above, should broaden the knowledge horizons because ultimately it has to be built out of difference rather than similarity between the actors.

There are also several ways (but all ultimately inter-related with one another) in which further research on the issues raised within this thesis could be pursued empirically and theoretically. For instance, an analysis of how beneficiaries'/clients' knowledge can be recognised as legitimate by development agencies should allow a more genuine interaction between them and development professionals. Equally important would be to explore how development agencies could encourage the creation of shared meanings between their development professionals and beneficiaries/clients in poor countries. Perhaps a possible research question could be framed as follows:

How can development professionals codify and communicate 'knowledges' that challenge dominant development discourses? This question is further divided in two.

- Can development organisations create a safe 'space' where development professionals could reflect and openly criticise dominant development discourses?
- How can development professionals and beneficiaries/clients be encouraged to openly share their views about development assistance?

The above questions could allow us to explore avenues and strategies whereby the valuable knowledge created at the field level could be recorded and then used to improve the way development discourses are implemented in developing countries.

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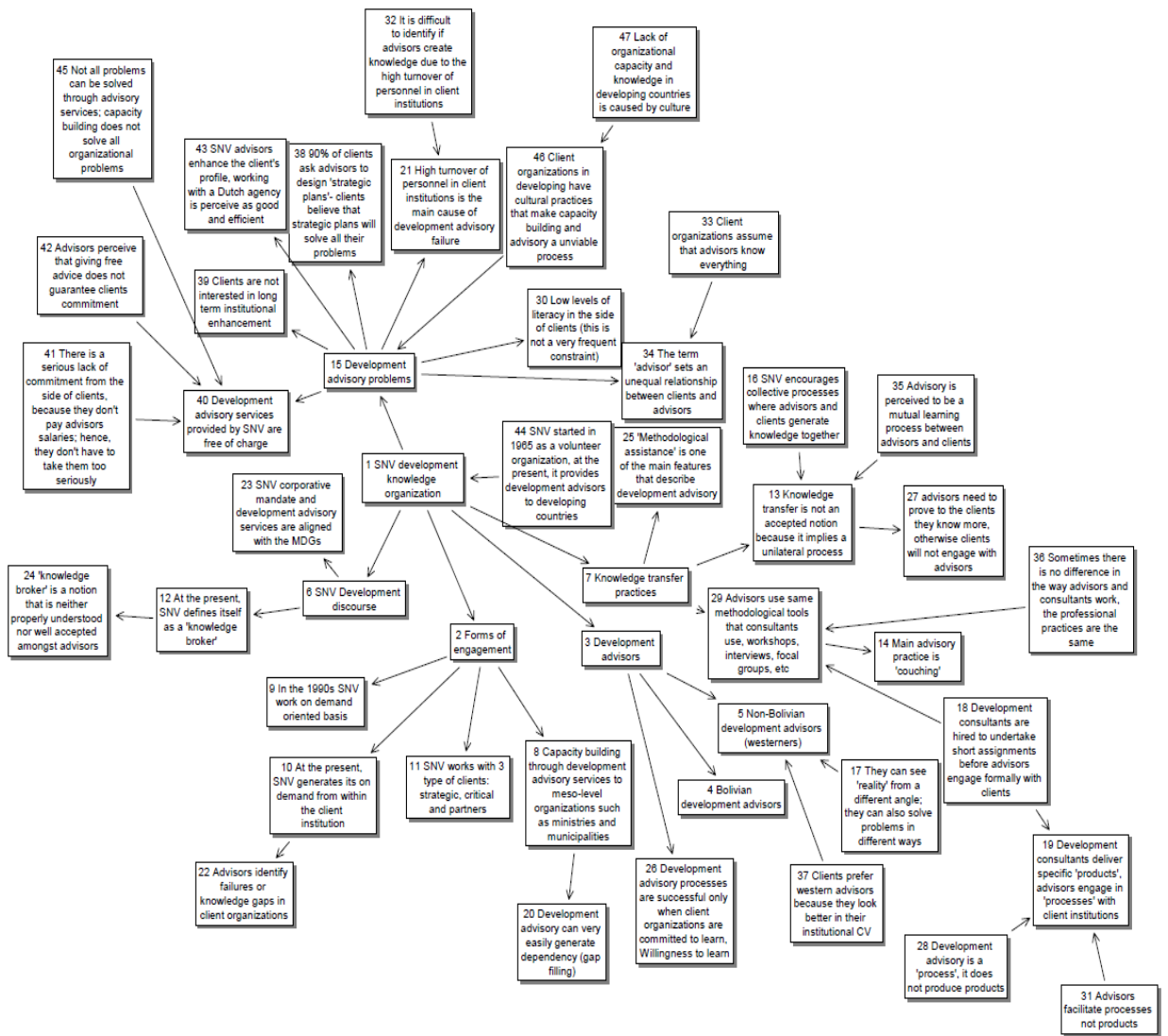
Appendix 1: Interviews

Code	Location and Date	Description or Affiliation
CEP Consultant_1	La Paz 17.12.06	CEP development consultant
CEP Consultant_2	La Paz 20.02.07	CEP development consultant
CEP Consultant_3	Santa Cruz 12.11.06	CEP development consultant
CEP Consultant_4	La Paz 13.11.06	CEP development consultant
CEP Consultant_5	Santa Cruz 25.3.07	CEP development Consultant
CEP Consultant_6	La Paz 16.02.07	CEP development consultant
CEP Consultant_8	La Paz 25.11.06 La Paz 12.05.07	CEP development Consultant
CEP Consultant_10	La Paz 21.04.07	CEP development Consultant
CEP Consultant_11	La Paz 17.04.07	CEP development Consultant
CEP Consultant_12	La Paz 26.11.06 La Paz 5.03.07	CEP development Consultant
CEP Consultant_13	Santa Cruz 6.04.07	CEP development Consultant
CEP Consultant_15	La Paz 19.01.07	CEP development Consultant
CEP Consultant_17	La Paz 27.10.06	CEP development Consultant
CEP Consultant_18	La Paz 10.02.07	CEP development Consultant
CEP Consultant_19	La Paz 16.11.06	CEP development Consultant
CEP Consultant_21	La Paz 4.05.07	CEP development Consultant

CEP Consultant_26	La Paz 3.05.07	CEP development Consultant
CEP Consultant_28	La Paz 26.04.07	CEP development Consultant
SOS-Faim Representative	Cochabamba 4.01.07 Cochabamba 16.01.07 Cochabamba 15.02.07	National SOS-Faim Representative
SIDA Officer_1	La Paz 18.03.07 La Paz 19.03.07	SIDA Project Officer, SIDA Headquarters
SIDA Officer_2	La Paz 26.03.07 La Paz 27.03.07	SIDA Project Officer, SIDA Headquarters
Director FLP	La Paz 29.03.07	Director Fundacion La Paz
SNV Advisor_1	La Paz 18.01.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_2	La Paz 27.02.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_3	La Paz 26.01.07 La Paz 31.01.07 La Paz 16.02.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_4	La Paz 30.01.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_5	La Paz 5.02.07 La Paz 23. 03.07 La Paz 12.04.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_4	La Paz 21.04.07 La Paz 8.05.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_6	La Paz 27.04.07 La Paz 31.04.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_7	Santa Cruz 1.04.07 La Paz 30.04.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_8	La Paz 15.03.07 La Paz 18.04.07	
SNV Advisor_9	La Paz 17.11.06	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_11	Santa Cruz 9.04.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_15	La Paz 12.12.06	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_16	La Paz 23.12.06	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_17	La Paz 18.01.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_18	Santa Cruz 9.04.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_21	La Paz 3.02.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_24	Santa Cruz 6.04.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_27	Santa Cruz 4.04.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_29	Sucre 30.03.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_30	Snta Cruz 10.04.07	SNV development Advisor
SNV Advisor_33	Santa Cruz 5.04.07	SNV development Advisor
UK Development Consultant	England 15.06.06	Independent development consultant
USAID Officer	La Paz 13.011.06	USAID development officer
ODG Development Consultant	England 19.05.06	ODG development consultant
Ministry of Forestry Officer_1	La Paz 16.02.07	Officer at the Ministry of Forestry in Bolivia
SNV Client_1	Santa Cruz 3.04.07 Santa Cruz 7.04.07	Main chief officer at the Municipality of Santa Cruz City
COMART Representative	La Paz 17.02.07	COMART Representative
COMART Artisan_1	La Paz 27.03.07	COMART Artisan

COMART Artisan_2	La Paz 12.04.07	COMART Artisan
COMART Artisan_3	La Paz 11.04.07	COMART Artisan
COMART Artisan_4	La Paz 3.04.07	COMART Artisan
ALVA Representative	Cochabamba 26.02.07	ALVA Representative
ALVA Farmer_1	Cochabamba 18.03.07	ALVA Farmer
ALVA Farmer_2	Cochabamba 22.03.07	ALVA Farmer
ALVA Farmer_3	Cochabamba 21.03.07	ALVA Farmer
ALVA Farmer_4	Cochabamba 21.03.07	ALVA Farmer

Appendix 2: Conceptual Maps
Banaxia Decision Explorer - Sample 1



Banaxia Decision Explorer - Sample 2

