ON THE SELECTIVITY OF ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT IDEAS WITHIN HIGH-LEVEL FORA OF AID EFFECTIVENESS

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Abstract

This is a work about how ideas and institutions connect together to generate policies. Therefore, it intends to contribute to a better understanding between ideas and policy making. In order to do so, it assesses the mechanisms of creation alternative development ideas emerging recently in Latin America, as well as their adoption, negation and distortion in the High Level Fora of Aid Effectiveness. Basing the evidences on the content analysis of official documents and declarations coming from High Level Fora of Aid Effectiveness between 2003 and 2011, as well as media reports and secondary literature, the paper highlights the extreme persistence of practices along the years, even after the broadening of consultation mechanisms in their last two editions. The paper argues that more than a matter of understanding the place of ideas and actors in policy-making, it is important to pay close attention to the processes of selection institutions adopt in order to promote either continuity or change.

Keywords: Development Cooperation; Political Economy; Latin America; High Level Forum of Aid Effectiveness

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Introduction

This research paper is inspired by the emergence of a void in development theory and practice. The last five years have seen the conflation and consequent mushrooming of two parallel, yet indissociable, crises: the combination between the failure of market-led, de-regulating strategies in the developing world, and the unprecedented chain effect of market-collapses the global "developed" North has led the world to a critical juncture. For the first time in decades, the evidence of a failed economic paradigm surfaces in every corner of the planet. More than ever, international policy theory and practice is in search for new ideas.

Alongside the demise of models inspired in reigning paradigms within northern liberal democracies, it is possible to identify the emergence of new development strategies coming from places once regarded as incapable of offering alternatives on a global scale. This work is about the underlying dynamics of the tensions and conflicts arising from the emergence of these new ideas. These tensions are particularly noticed in the field of international development cooperation, which has had, throughout the 2000s, the High Level *Fora* of Aid Effectiveness (HLF) as one of the main arenas of debate.

The rise of new southern economic powers (Sotero 2009), in conjunction with their ability to coordinate politically in order to offer counterweights to mainstream OECD/World Bank policy-sets (Girvan 2007; Roy & Andrade 2010), has brought a new set of ideas to discussion within international policy making. Yet, in spite of the urge for innovation, and the proven existence of alternatives to the current paradigms, changes are deceptively taking longer than expected. The recent active engagement of

BRIC countries in development cooperation through south-south coordination, followed by the export/exchange of their own hybrid models[1] is a clear evidence of the skepticism surrounding the HLFs.

Although the current political-economy scenario points to the apparent existence of a dichotomy in the international development cooperation field, the analysis of current international development cooperation dynamics would not be complete without the assessment of a third, less resourceful but yet substantial, "alternative development paradigm". Represented by political actors to the left of the so-called "pink-tide" that swept Latin America after the demise of neoliberalism in the region, these relatively new networks often involve grassroots movements, national NGOs and some political parties. This "alternative development paradigm" calls into question the alleged evident success of southern post-neoliberal paradigms (Grugel & Riggirozzi 2009), accusing it of not promoting a viable alternative to mainstream development. In essence, "alternative development" criticizes the reliance of these regimes on commodity exports, a too close connection with ever-present political elites, and an uncritical embrace of growth strategies as opposed to sustainable and equitable development. Alternatively, this "project" takes a different political economy approach that puts growth as secondary in relation to well-being, *buenvivir*(Walsh 2010; Escobar 2007), an alternative social perspective that gives primacy to historically marginalized groups, and a different political premise that radically embraces bottom-up approaches to policy making. Although mainly local, the alternative development paradigm is also backed by international non-governmental

1 The most recent evidence of this approximation is The India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) dedicated to "bring their voice together on global issues and to deepen their ties in various areas". Beyond "Dialogue", BRIC countries have recently revealed an interest of creating their own development bank (http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-02-23/india-said-to-propose-brics-bank-to-finance-developing-nations-projects.html).

organizations, which confers a global outreach to this set of ideas. Thus, in spite of their alleged grassroots character, alternative development has been present in the international development debate, with different degrees of centrality, for a long time.Therefore, this paper takes this notion of alternative development as its central object of analysis.

The difficulties around promoting institutional change even in times when it is widely agreed that improvement is needed point to an interesting and important theoretical concern about the role of ideas in global policy-making. Although ideas remain central to the dynamics of institutional continuities and changes, especially with the rise of "knowledge economies" (Castells 1997), there is still room for improvement in terms of understanding why sometimes ideas simply fail to be incorporated into institutions. In other words, although ideas have been widely explored as a way to promote action towards change (Keck &Sikkink 1999; Smith 2004; Tarrow 2005) and inform policy-makers about potential policy improvements (Lindblom 1980; Grindle& Thomas 1991; June & Clark 1995), not much has been said in terms of what kinds of mechanisms prevent ideas to be concretely translated into policies.

Moreover, the best possible explanation this body of literature can offer in linking ideas and policy is that policy-processes are more chaotic than one would like to believe, behaving either in outbursts (Gladwell 2000) or simply operating amid "chaos and complexity" (Clay and Schaffer 1984). This work tries to dig further into the dynamics that compose these links. By drawing upon Bøås& McNeill's interpretive CANDID[2] framework (2003), it intends to contribute to the understanding of the dynamics between ideas and policy by trying to clarify the dynamics of adoption, distortion and negation of ideas in the aforementioned High Level *Fora* of

[2] The acronym CANDID stands for Creation, Adoption, Negation and Distortion of Ideas in Development.

Aid Effectiveness. In order to do so, the paper asks how ideas around alternative development recently *created* in Latin America are being adopted, negated or distorted in the High Level *Fora* on Aid Effectiveness.

The sequence of steps used to answer this question is the following. First, this paper elaborates on the discussions about the role of ideas in policy-making in order to setout a clear analytical starting point. It argues, in the first section, that the best way to understand the role of ideas in policy-making is to analyze it from the perspective of the institution it is trying to penetrate instead of the internal validity of its claims. Additionally, it contends that ideas cannot be thought outside the set of relations that constitutes them, which leads to the premise that ideas can only acquire agency – and therefore analytical bulk - if understood as projects. After making the case of a strategic-relational approach (Jessop 2008) for the role of ideas in international policy-making, this work shifts its attention to the construction of *alternative development* (AD) as a situated set of claims that can only be understood in relation to the genealogy of the concept of development and its recent effects in Latin American conjuncture. The third and final section of the paper is dedicated to analyze which dimensions of this previously constructed set of claims have been adopted, distorted or simply denied by High-Level Fora since the HLF in Rome, 2003. The conclusion intends to reinforce the central argument of the paper, showing that the processes of filtering ideas in international development cooperation relates more to the imperatives of institutional balance for the sake of a certain pattern of capitalist accumulation than in the quality of ideas pertaining to alternative development.

Before proceeding, a few words of caution seem valid. First, although the paper talks about the creation of a certain "alternative development paradigm" in Latin America, it does not necessarily put Latin America at the center of a counter-insurgent

movement against mainstream development. Rather, it uses the Latin American example as one of the manifestations that critically engage with mainstream development practices stemming not only around the global south, but also in the global north. Second, it uses the example of HLFs as one of the various arenas where these struggles happen. Therefore, it does not intend to serve as an assessment of the evolution of alternatives to development, nor does it suggests or prescribes strategies for the better furthering of these claims. The contribution of this work is somewhat more modest and differently located. By focusing on the dynamics of institutional persistence and change in a deliberative arena across time, it serves the purpose of understanding the role ideas play in international policy making, trying to unveil the filters they go through along their creation and eventual implementation. In the sense the paper has the explicit intention of better understanding the behavior of social institutions, this work may be indirectly useful for policy activists, although this can be framed as an unintended consequence of this work.

Chapter 1 - The political economy of ideas in international policy-making

The case for the connection between ideas and policy needs no making. Over the course of the XX century, this has been true for either pluralist, elite, neo-marxist, historical institutionalists or rational choice theorists alike (Campbell 2002). Regardless of one's ontological grounds, it is safe to say that ideas, either as the "switchmen of history"or a "smokescreen" used by powerful actors, have a role in policy processes (Béland and Cox 2011). If this connection is already evidenced when referring to policy making in general, it appears that, at the international level,ideas play an even more important role(Maxwell and Stone 2005; McNeill 2006).

Broadly put, ideas can be understood as causal beliefs (Béland and Cox 2011). In the case of international policy, ideas are particularly important, provided that international arenas often possess a higher degree of uncertainty, consequence of the complex, unequal and competitive environments in which they occur (Maxwell and Stone 2005). The combination of these three factors has substantially increased over the years, bringing about two concurrent processes. First, it has provided a wide set of possibilities for change, such as (1) new opportunities for civil society to participate in a new and more democratic 'global polity' (Maxwell & Stone 2005), (2) new possibilities for international collective action (Tarrow 2005; Smith et al. 1997; Della Porta et al. 1999), and (3) an increase in non-state international cooperation that even has alluded to the birth of a "Global Civil Society" (Anheier et al. 2001). However, it has also created significant space for continuities and perpetuation of inequalities, evidenced by the parallel rise of (1) new constellations of privatized power, (2) primacy of economic knowledge in the policy-making process and (3) concentration

of economic and political resources.

If ideas can no longer be deemed as innocuous to policy processes (Mehta in Béland and Cox 2011), there still remains a long way in determining what exactly is their role in processes of international policy making. What kind of ideas count? Why are they more important than others? Is there an identifiable pattern on what kinds of ideas are chosen and what kinds of ideas are rejected?

The possible answers to these questions are vast. The imbrications between ideas and policy can be viewed through a wide variety of lenses that provide different degrees of autonomy to them. All of these approaches run a serious risk, however. By giving ideas a central role, scholars may fall into the temptation of providing them with undeserved agency. However, an idea, no matter how important, does not act by itself. Although constitutive of subjects, social groups, essential to the promotion of collective action, institutional change and the overall understanding of social processes, it would be wrong to assume that ideas and interpretations can independently set things in motion. Therefore, this work firmly separates itself from postmodernand pure discursive accounts of the relations between ideas and policy found in the works of, for example, de Goede(2002) and Schmidt (2008).

Unpacking CANDID

Bøås and Mcneill (2004) bring an important contribution to the study of the relations between ideas and international policy-making.By creating the CANDID framework, the authors manage to start a nice debate on exploring the ways power distribution influence the formulation and primacy of certain ideas. The authors overtly embrace the works of Gramsci (1971) and Cox (1992) as the theoretical grounding of their project. From the first they borrow the concept of hegemony and the understanding of

power as manifesting a structure of dominance that combines force and consent. The work of the second serves the purpose of connecting this debate specifically to International Political Economy (IPE).

With this in mind, the authorsdive into the aforementioned debate about the constitutive links of ideas, power and multilateral institutions. As argued before, they sponsor the notion that ideas do not exist independently from "the constellation of institutions and interests already present" (Hall 1989 in Bøås and McNeill 2004). Ideas, therefore, are never found in a pure state, provided that the structure of any social system is comprised of not only them, but also material conditions and interests (Wendt 1999 in Bøås and Mcneill 2004: 6).

This set of assumptions has direct consequences in the construction of their framework. Whenexplaining how an 'idea' is taken up, interpreted, translated and/or modified by the development assistance community, one is necessarily analyzing ideas in the light of these other dimensions.Moreover, the analysis of how ideas 'travel' is also performed in relation to the historically grounded "institutions", sedimented ideas that are constantly iterated and constrain social action into a given social order that in turn builds the nexus between the material conditions, the interests and their corresponding ideas.

However, in spite of the merits of their approach, correctly situating ideas in constellations of forces that provide them with inherent contingent properties, Bøås and Mcneill end up falling in the trap of providing ideas with undeserved agency. This is a consequence of an omission often made by the literature, more specifically in the ideational strands of IPE (Blyth et al. 1997; Béland 2005; Béland and Cox 2011; McNeill 2006):unduly seeing the dyad of material conditions on one hand, and interest/ideas on the other as horizontal.

Bøås and McNeill argue, in accordance with Cox (in Keohane 1986), thatideas can be either understood as "inter-subjective meanings" or "collective images of social order" (Bøås and McNeill 2004: 6). While the former would be independent of material conditions, representing less contested and widely shared notions of social relations, the latter would arguably be materially grounded and more contested. Interests comprise both conceptions, and when defended and furthered end up having, purportedly or not, an effect in transmitting these ideas. The way in which these ideas are transmitted relate not to the traditional use of power, but rather to the construction of consent through "hegemony". The authors borrow the concept of hegemony from Gramsci(1971), and although they provide a precise account of its use, they fail to properly understanding their formation.

This is where the shortcomings of the CANDID framework start emerging. The first conception of ideas that ideational scholars such as Cox, Bøås and Mcneill embrace end up generating a self-referential cycle in which, ultimately, the emergence of new ideas need only to be related to old ideas. Although this line of reasoning is valid, especially if one sponsors constructivist perspectives that see iteration and institutionalization as drivers of continuity and change, this explanation seem limited and unable to account for the relations within the CANDID framework. In other words, in spite of the accuracy in identifying processes of Creation, Adoption, Negation and Distortion, the CANDID set of assumptions does not connect those processes in a coherent ensemble. To solve this shortcoming, wemust revisit the the concept of hegemony in Gramsci.

Some authors (Morton 2003; Jessop 2008; Jessop 2005) argue that ideational accounts in IPE fail to identify the ultimate purpose of hegemony in Gramsci, namely, the regulation and accommodation of social forces to support capitalism as a mode of

production[3]. If this is taken as a premise, ideas are not independent of material conditions in any way.Therefore, the aforementioned dyad comprising material conditions and ideas/interests should not be regarded as horizontal. If they are, scholars run the serious risk of providing ideas with an agency they often times undeserved. Contrary to the usual criticism to this alternative –"material"-interpretation of ideas (Cox 1986; 2011; Bøås and Mcneill2004), this does not entail the determination of ideas by material interests. It does imply, however, its inseparable character. Moreover, it also assumes the primacy of material conditions for the coupling of the two.

With this critical understanding of the role of ideas in policy-making in mind, the understanding of the Creation, Adoption, Distortion and Negation of Ideas in Development can be carried out with more precision. However, so far this work has only made efforts to unpack the CANDID framework. An additional effort is required to re-pack this same apparatus in a way that accounts for this obliterated vertical link between ideas and material conditions. How are material conditions and ideas constructed in a way that does not allude to the determinism so often pointed by ideational scholars in IPE? One strategy is to bring the work of Bob Jessop to the fore.

Re-packing CANDID

The Strategic-Relational Approach (SRA) is originally rooted on critical accounts pertaining to debates around state-theory. However, it can more abstractly be conceived as a theoretical elaboration that tries to account for the complex interactions between the human and natural worlds (Jessop 2008). Alongside the CANDID framework, it takes Gramsci as one its major interlocutor, but has in Marx's

[3] For a proper, and extensive, elaboration on this alternative understanding of Gramsci's work, see Jessop (2008, chapter 1 especially) and Morton (2003).

critique of political economy its primary reference point. By resorting to Marx, Jessop re-reads Gramsci not in in the terms of Gramsci's greatest contribution (the elaboration of superstructural dynamics that produce consent), but reminds Gramsci Marxist origins.

Power, in this sense, is a concept necessarily related to the coupling between 'hegemony (and) armored by coercion'. In other words, Jessop sheds a strong light in the fact that power can only exist in the light of (potential) coercion. By critically engaging with Gramsci, the author focuses his attention on elaborating not the in its inclusive sense state (political society + civil society), but the economy in its inclusive sense (accumulation regime + social mode of economic regulation). This comes to show that social relations must be regarded as the departing point of any social analysis. Consequently, SRA, in consonance with ideational approaches to IPE, also embraces social construction as the main trigger for the creation of the world as we know it. However, it stresses that these social relations are deeply connected with men's necessity to fulfill basic needs and allocate the scarce resources at their disposal.

This regression to social relations and the "economy in its inclusive sense" (Jessop 2008: 24) leads to a shift in his analytical focus to social dynamics, and a regard of the state as an ensemble of institutions. With regards to the CANDID framework, this theoretical step back allows, analytically, for a proper relocation, provided thatit situates the understanding of processes of *Creation, Adoption, Negation and Distortion* of ideas in a wider and more coherent ensemble. It does not deny the existence of hegemony and the importance of consent in establishing it. However, it reminds that these dynamics around ideas are not just connected to the prevalence of a certain group in power,but to the regulation of social exchanges that ultimately serves

to preserve a certain mode of production.Nonetheless, if ideas were necessarily embedded in underlying socio-economic relations, it would be wrong to claim that they are, in themselves, concepts that powerfully influence policy. Although important in shaping peoples hearts and minds, analytically ideas should always be thought of as coupled to the interests and material conditions that are part of their context. In addition, as the argument so far has tried to show, the connections with these material conditions are not horizontal.

Analytical and Methodological Implications

Given these circumstances, the connection between ideas and policy are never fully understood outside a conception of the combination of the three dimensions mentioned above. Although ideas remain as the object to be understood in relation to policy, it is only truly manifested in the policy world under the guise of *projects*. Projects refer directly to the combination between the dyad between material conditions and interest/ideas in the vertical sense purported by the Strategic Relational Approach. Therefore, they are social endeavors that combine three properties in which agents:

(1) possess a common set of world frames and beliefs;

(2) share, knowingly or not, links that go beyond the mere alignment of these world frames;

(3) have a set of policy prescriptions to be advocated in spite of the fact that they are or are not taken up by institutions.

With this notion of project in mind, one last question remains. Having a proper analytical tool in hand, what methodological challenges this choice entail?

Robert Cox (2011) highlights that grasping ideas and identifying their proper role in a

causal chain is a complex task. By embracing the analytical unit of projects, we make this task simpler and more complex at the same time. If on the one hand we reduce the scope of palatable ideas to a number that is more manageable, provided that the requirements that qualify a project as such are stricter, on the other we create the need for a more comprehensive analysis of what exactly is at stake at one particular point in time. In that sense, this work adopts two strategies to situate the material, social and spatio-temporal boundaries of the *alternative development project.*

The first strategy is commonly known as genealogical analysis. In the context of this work, it relates to an effort of historicizing the emergence and unfolding of Development as a strategy for the Southern Hemisphere. It will do so mostly through the use of the vast literature that sees the emergence of Development as a critical juncture in the history of Southern Countries (Sachs 1992; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997; Rist 2008) . By engaging with the genealogy of the Development, this work intends to shed light on the grievances, power struggles and dialectics of alternative projects.Accordingly, this sets the terrain for the second methodological step in setting the boundaries of the *alternative development project*.

The second strategy draws explicitly on the SRA approach (Jessop 2008), and refers to a selective focus on the current conjuncture. More precisely, it accounts for the setting of asymmetries and differences in terms of the terrain and current stakeholders in the international development debate. The current debate is set to start with the emergence of a critical juncture characterized by the end of ‘big ideas’ in development (Lindauer and Pritchett 2002; Thorbecke 2006), a phenomenon that was particularly and more evidently felt in Latin America. At this particular stage, this paper deliberately draws attention to the debate taking place in Latin America in recent years to specify the set of ideas surrounding the *alternative development project*.

As a final methodological step, this work presents a second focus on the current conjuncture,concerned with the performance of the ideas around this *alternative development project* in international fora, more specifically in the High Level Fora of Aid Effectiveness (HLF). These *fora* represent one of the best arenas to assess to what extent alternative development ideas are being translated into policy objectives. After all, they evidence the recognition of policy inadequacy, the need of improvement in aid delivery and engage in efforts to take in contributions from recipient countries, historically considered as objects rather than subjects of development. This scale shift entails, however, an additional methodological effort, that is, the content analysis of the outcomes emerged in the policy documents related to these forums, namely, Rome 2003, Paris 2005, Accra 2008 and Busan 2011.

This work makes an effort to clearly establish all the spatio-temporal and material boundaries of its object. Consequently, it does not come without limitations that must be rendered explicit. The first one relates to the omission of important arenas and projects, both in international development and in particular regions of the world. By deliberately leaving out other arenas, such as UN*fora*, the World Bank, and spaces such as Southeast Asia and, to some extent, Africa, this work runs the risk of simply overlooking important projects that may be affecting HLFs. This is a calculated omission, nonetheless. The focus on aid effectiveness to account for the variety of projects comes from an assessment conducted beforehand, which highlighted that these spaces are both fairly permeable to the assessment of alternativesand the result of longer term processes of consultation worldwide.For example, the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra, 2008, counted with more than 1500 participants, brought together after a wide number of preparatory events and regional roundtables aiming at gathering inputs for the Accra event.

Another (general) limitation relates to the excessive reliance on official and written documents. Consequently, the ability to assess processes is limited to what is evidently manifested. Therefore, this work ends up falling short in understanding the internal dynamics that lead the transformations of ideas into policies. The reason for this limitation relates mostly to (lack of) time. As a palliative measure, media reports are also analyzed, so as secondary literature that conducts interviews with relevant stakeholders. However, it is true that this work faces the limitation of having an excessive focus on inputs and outputs rather than on throughputs.

Chapter 2 - The International Development Cooperation Debate in the 2000s: actors, projects and stakes

Historicizing Development

Development as a policy topic has a clear starting point in history:January 20, 1949. On this date, the North-American president Harry Truman delivers his inaugural address,in which he advocates for a "bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of *underdeveloped areas*"(Esteva in Sachs 1992: 6). The context behind this claim highlights the need of superpowers emerging from World War II to manage the breakdown of former colonial powers and re-build international geopolitics. Differently from the former context of imperialism, however, this new project is based in 'democratic fair-dealing'[4], which aims to assist the 'least fortunate' to help themselves in achieving a 'decent, satisfying life'.

At the core of this project, we can identify four premises. First, the idea that 'greater production is key to prosperity and peace', which in turn should be achieved through the use of 'modern scientific and technical knowledge'. Second, an understanding of Western values as universal and the recognition of the need for spreading 'the benefits (…) of technical knowledge'.The third major premise of the Development project contends that the promotion of growth worldwide would generate a trickle-down effect that eventually would lead all peoples better off. Finally, the Development project takes freedom and democracy as a basic 'vitalizing force to stir the *peoples* of

[4]All excerpts can be found in Truman, Harry. 1950. "The Fourth Point in President Truman's Inaugural Address, January 20, 1949." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 268.

the world into triumphant action'.

In addition to the firm set of beliefs at the core of Development as a project, it is also possible to identify material interests aligned with sponsoring the continuing cooperation between northern and southern nations along the above-set lines.One of the most evident material interests at the time of the rise of Development as a policy concept related to the need of Northern countries industrialists continuing being provided with low-aggregate value goods, both for domestic consumption and/or adding value. Accordingly, this also benefits a variety of social groups in Southern countries with that make profits from this same exchange. In this sense, it appears that the Development project represents less of a break from Imperialism then Truman would assume. Moreover, this continuation appears to be a consequence of (mostly elite) entanglements that cuts across this northern-southern divide.

The realization of the nuanced aspect of development strategies emerging in the so-called 'development age' (Sachs 1992; Rist 2008) served as the inspiration for the first counter-proposition to Development as purported in the famous speech of Harry Truman. This reaction emerges as a consequence of the dissatisfaction of both academics and practitioners in southern countries with the specific role developing countries would have to play in order to sustain the above-mentioned paradigm. Therefore, this alternative development paradigm kicks off from a premise opposed to the Development Project: the existence of an identifiable center and a well-defined periphery that are structurally interconnected (Prebisch 1950). If this is the case, the dynamics of Development were to be understood more as a process related to equilibrium than to the promotion of capabilities of the less fortunate. Additionally, the trickle-down assumption sponsored by Development advocates was in fact wrong (at least at the international level), provided that the terms of trade between primary

products and manufactured goods tented to decline (Prebisch 1950; Singer 1949).

Given the realization of the structural 'dependence' of developing countries vis-à-vis developed ones, southern academics and policy makers advocated, to varying extents[5], for processes of internal economic diversification and a more active role of the state in regulating eventual imbalances arising from the inherently detrimental character of free-trade. This set of ideas and policy prescriptions can be understood to have gained relevance also because of the nascent process of industrialization and urbanization in Latin American countries - consequence of the uncertainties of the wars in Europe and the depression in the US - led them to a forced process of substitution of imported manufactured goods (Hirschman 1968). Therefore, the rise of this alternative development paradigm – which is not to be confounded with the rise of the *alternative development project* - also sees a strict connection with the material circumstances present at the time.

Latin America was the first region of the Global South to see the emergence of an alternative to policies emerging from Development perspectives from the north. It can be argued that the main reason behind that is the convergence of the three requisites to the creation of an effective project in the continent. The (1) combination of material conditions, consequenceof the rise of industrialists in the inter-war period, (2) the availability of alternative ideas, and (3) the politically unstable regional scenario has allowed for the growth of alternative projects of development. In countries like Brazil,

[5] The debate around development strategies arising from these two basic premises is extremely vast, and refers to a wide variety of political strands and policy prescriptions, ranging from outright import substitution in early years, to the overturn of the capitalist mode of production deemed as inconsistent with development. For more information on these debates, see Grosfoguel (2000)

this development project took a fairly authoritarian turn with the rise of military dictatorships. Allende's Chile, in the beginning of the 1970s, saw a more socialist version. Argentina has witnessed a populist of alternative to Development with Juan Perón sponsoring his 'third-way' industrialization. In all cases, however, the need to reconcile the interests between export-driven rural elites, internal-market driven industrialists was at the center of the agendas.

Regardless of political orientation, what is interesting to retain from these dynamics is the fact that the rise of alternative developments is almost simultaneous to the rise of Development itself. As critical theorists of development highlight, it appears that the 'development' has created "a common ground (…) on which right and left, elites and grassroots fight their battles" (Sachs 1992: 4). Additionally, Jan NederveenPieterse(1998)argues that the battles on this common ground follow a dialectic and constructive pattern, therefore making the boundaries and differences between mainstream and alternative development projects constantly unstable, and the definition of alternative development as inherently reactive to its mainstream variants.

Still according to Pieterse, this dialectic process of contestation has become increasingly more frequent along the years, a consequence of both the "widespread admission that several development decades have brought many failures" and the increasing self-criticism present in development circles (Pieterse 1998: 350). On top of that, the rise of a 'network society'(Castells 1996) has also permitted the creation of networks for alternative development in unprecedented levels.

The remaining part of this chapter is dedicated to explore the *Creation* of one of these alternative development variants in Latin America. Bob Jessop highlights that in moments of crisis, specific material and discursive mechanisms are more likely to be combined in different ways and, more importantly, selected and retainedby

institutions (Jessop 2008: 51).

The creation of the Alternative Development Project (AD)

Starting fourteen years ago, with the election of the Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez, Latin America has again become acentral arena for the emergence of alternatives to mainstream development. The demise of the Washington Consensus in the region, leading to the emergence of a so-called 'pink-tide' of center to left governments in the early and mid 2000s(Robinson 2007; Stokes 2009), has once again created the conditions for emergence, selection and retention of discourses being germinated ever since the introduction of market-led policies and privatizations in the 1980s[6].

If on the 1980s and 1990s, the resistance to neoliberalization could be seen as having a rather defined line between state and societal actors, the 2000s has brought theseclaimsto the center of the decision making process, i.e. the state. Not surprisingly, the clash between the old and the new has generated a series of tensions that remain unresolved. It turned out that overcoming neoliberalism would resemble more a series of accommodations within the realm of the politically possible, instead of a clear rupture with the previous development model. Whether this assessment holds true or not, it is safe to say that the pink tide has given room to the creation of an alternative strand of already alternative models.

Simply put, the creation of what this work calls*alternative development project* is a process triggered by the combination the two above-mentioned circumstances. First, an economic crisis, combined with an institutional stalemate and the availability of a solid political alternative that had been nurtured for years. Second, the deceit

[6] For a longer appraisal of the rise and nature of discourses countering neoliberalism in Latin America, see Escobar and Alvarez 6/8/2012 10:58:00 AM; Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 6/8/2012 10:58:00 AM and Walton 6/8/2012 10:58:00 AM.

generated in some spheres of society by the inability of governments to undertake all the reforms and ideals constructed along the years. Therefore, the *alternative development project* is itself a regional phenomenon; a project generated in relation to the dissatisfaction with the solutions to development in Latin America. Thus, the task of defining the alternative development project necessarily entails understanding the extent of reforms taking place in Latin America during the recent decade.

In spite of the desire for change, Latin America in the 2000s shows also a clear concern with economic security. On the one hand, as Cynthia Arnson (2007)states, center to left-leaning governments represented the choice of more than 60% of Latin American citizens by the year of 2005. On the other, a survey commissioned by the United Nations Development Program on the state of democracy in Latin America has shown that 56% of Latin American citizens put economic development as primary in relation to democracy, and 54,7% would support an authoritarian regime that could solve economic problems(UNDP 2004).

This double concern leads to a hybrid development outcome.Post-neoliberalism in Latin America entails the design of a new social contract between the state and the people at the same time that reinforces countries' reliance/dependenceon the current high price of commodity exports(Robinson 2007; Grugel et al. 2009; Riggirozzi et al. 2012). This relatively stable economic situation allows for the combination of generous support for social policies with little or no conflict with long-ruling elites and without addressing thorny issues in the region such as fiscal and political reform (Brazil), foreign debt payments, disinvestment of foreign and domestic owners of strategic enterprises (Argentina)[7], dependency on exports (Venezuela), and so on.

[7](Petras and Veltmeyer 2006)

This incongruent development hybridity has not come without growing pressures and fissures in relation to once historically connected groups. The rise of the left in Latin America is the product of decades of struggles and alliances between various groups in the political and civil society. Usually assembled in the 1970s and 1980s, the struggle either for democracy or against neoliberalism was always the common denominator that brought these groups together.However, once seizing power started to become a real possibility, the divisions among these groups tended to appear in a more evident fashion.

One of the most concrete evidence of these tensions is found in Brazil, although some similar evidences are easily found in other Latin American countries (Alvarez 2009; Petras and Veltmeyer 2005). The election of Lula in 2003 has undoubtedly represented an inflexion point in Brazilian and Latin American history. At the same time, however, it can be argued that his election was only made possible after a series of adaptations in discourse. One of the most famous and evident changes Lula had to go through is state in his "letter to the Brazilians"[8], a document allegedly addressed to the Brazilian people in which he ensures the abidance to national and international contracts signed by the previous government. With different variations and degrees of extensiveness, the shifts to left-leaning governments in Latin America always involved some degree of adaptation to this set of circumstances.

Therefore, a sense of discomfort has been created from the outset of these governments in power. Along the years, the articulation of these groups, most already with a long history and expertise in the promotion of alternatives to development/neoliberalism, turned a sense of discomfort into a more substantial

[8] Unfortunately, an English version of the letter could not be found. A full account of the content of the letter is made available on a BBC story however. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/2062473.stm

dissent. Three are the main grounds that sustain this claim, three constitutive breaks, which in turn represent the Creation mechanisms of the *alternative development project*(AD) not only in Brazil, but in several Latin American countries.

The Constitutive Breaks of AD

The first constitutive break of AD relates to economic policy. Although AD advocates still highlight the centrality of the state as central to the organization of the economy and an important funder on the long run (Plataforma BNDES 2007), they claim that the state still remains captured by economic forces that are detrimental to its public and democratic purpose. In other words, the rupture with the past, and more recently with neoliberalism has not been made in its entirety.

If the overreliance on markets was indeed corrected, the issue of dependency on commodity exports still remains, even showing signs that it has worsened along the 2000s (ECLAC 2010: 74).This in turn puts at risk the entire set of important social policies this particular development model sponsors. Alternatively, AD proposes a more radical break from the historical dependency already identified five decades earlier. It suggests, instead, forms of coordination oriented towards regulating non-capitalist markets, that is, markets that are more self-reliant and not inherently dependent on international trade and the increasingly unstable global economy (Wainwright 2012).In addition, and especially after the financial crisis, it insists in dismantling what they understand as an over financialised economy, which creates fictitious money that ultimately leads to increase in inequality. The examples these claims drawn upon are various, to community banking initiatives with alternative, parallel currencies in Northeastern Brazil [9] tothe creation of broader alternative, people-centered regional integration as a way of reducing the dependency on global

[9] For an example of such initiative, see http://www.bancopalmas.org.br/oktiva.net/1235/secao/9963

markets[10].

The second constitutive break is a sociopolitical one. Alternative Development understands that one of the reasons that led to this unsatisfactory break from the past relates to the imperatives of scaling up and organizing for taking power,which in turn has brought the disregard for grassroots elements that must be at the center of policy-making (Castro in Mapas 2005). Therefore, AD advocates in favor of a policy process that truly and genuinely takes historically marginalized and *subalternized* individuals both as the beginning and the end of it. In other words, it argues in favor of a radicalization of social processes and democracy as a whole (Fleury 2004;Fernandez 2012).

Although AD recognizes the need and cherishes redistributive policies, those are more often than not carried in a way that deprives the target audience of agency, which reinforces the disregard of citizens as agents of their own fate. In addition, it is argued that the design of such policies often reinforce the perpetuation of local clientelistic political dynamics, given that frequentlylocal elites are the managers of cash transfers oriented towards poverty alleviation. Thus, AD firmly supports and engages in movements that "reclaim the state" back to the people (Wainwright 2003).

A third break relates to the outcome that an eventual adoption of this AD model would generate. This may be understood as a normative/philosophical break. AD advocates often acknowledge the detrimental characterthese measures may bring growth in the short run. Nonetheless, this is not necessarily regarded as detrimental, provided that growth and inequality are allegedly more connected than growth and human development(Ferguson 2010). Instead, the whole AD agenda is set, normatively, in

[10] For more information on these alternative regional networks, see http://www.alternative-regionalisms.org/

terms of the rejection the idea of development as it was conceived in its origins[11]. In retrospect, the *Alternative Development Project* can be thought of as the product of successive decades of evolving development policies thatfailed to account that, ultimately, capitalism, individual liberties and liberal democracy are part of a project that is inherently directed towards the perpetuation of the inequalities it is supposed to address. Thus, the alternative lies in rejecting the underlying assumptions of this model, one that is more recently expressed in terms of both the post-neoliberal model in Latin America and the financialised global economy recently shattered by the crisis.

This systemic understanding of economic dynamics is at the center of AD's international reach. The neoliberal development project is one that had in its core a teleological understanding of development. Thus, although context-sensitive, neoliberal policies had the explicit aim of opening economies and integrating them in world markets. This brought as a consequence a series of common challenges for developing countries worldwide, such as institutional reform, privatizations, and de-regulation of internal and external markets. In this sense, an also context-sensitive countermovement arose, with different claims, different speeds, but brought together by the common challenge of an antagonist global governance system.

So far, the debate around AD failed to account to the long discussed material underpinnings required for a project to be regarded as such. AD, up until this point, seems like no more than a set of ideas connected together by the alignment of these actors along the years in a variety of arenas, such as networks against neoliberal regional integration, the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, the World Social

[11] For a further appraisal of the ontological and epistemological foundations of Alternative Development, see Escobar (1995), Sachs (1992) and Rist (2008). For a critical appraisal of post-development, and more specifically Escobar, further incorporated in AD, see Pieterse(1998; 2011).

Forum, Regional Social Forums etc. Nonetheless, the material links between those actors are also present, not only regionally, but also globally. Along the years, International Private Aid Agencies such as the Ford Foundation, Oxfam, ICCO, Cordaid, 11.11.11, Hivos etc. have played a major role in acting as brokers for similar initiatives happening worldwide(Sogge and Biekart 1996). In Latin America, specifically, they were the keyin terms of transforming a general sense of lose discomfort into policy propositions (Biekart 1999). Therefore, the material groundings for the creation of AD as a project are defined first in terms of a process triggered exclusionary dynamics of neoliberal and post-neoliberal development models. Later on, it gained a concrete existence through the brokering role and material support of International Private Aid Agencies.

The recent financial crisis, first in the US and more recently in Europe, has brought the issue of exhaustion of the neoliberal development model once again to the fore. This time, however, the development challenges relate no longer to how the knowledge transfer should be made, but rather if reliance on markets and finance is the way to go. Whether one would agree with this statement or not, current circumstances call for the emergence of new ideas. In this sense, the international political opportunity structureis conducive to the emergence of collective enterprises that may render a bigger centrality to AD.

The High Level Forums of Aid Effectiveness (HLF) are interesting arenas to evaluate to what extent these alternative ideas are being incorporated into the international development mainstream. The HLF are born in 2003 from the recognition that aid "was not producing the development results everyone wanted to see"[12]. Thus, it

[12] Available at: http://www.oecd.org/document/43/0,3746,en_2649_3236398_46310975_1_1_1_1,00.html. Accessed on May 30, 2012.

intended to become an arena where actors from around the globe get together to establish a truly global partnership that produces feasible and (politically) binding[13] decisions on parameters relating to how aid should be delivered.The Fora were structured in a way that consultation processes were usually carried out beforehand, so that actual decisions and compromises could me made along the Fora themselves.

Along the four editions of the HLF, circumstances have tremendously changed. Starting from the financial crisis, and the swift recovery of middle-income countries such as the Brazil, India and China, HLF became one of the main mirrors reflecting the evolution in the terms of the debate on north-south development cooperation. That does not mean, however, that room for alternative development has increased, given that the opportunity window opened with the crisis was mostly seized by regimes that do not fully align with AD (nor are completely misaligned). The kinds of consequences these changes have brought to the centrality of AD as a development strategy is uncertain, which in itself is not surprising.

The remainder of this work intends to assess how this uncertainty is portrayed. In order to do so, it pays close attention to the fine lines that either accept, reject or distort these 'new', alternative development ideas. Given the three above-mentioned constitutive breaks that account for the creation of AD as such, this work will assess the selectivity of a wide set of ideas on economic, political and normative grounds.

[13] No concrete direct sanctions are foreseen in the summative documents emerging from the Fora.

Chapter 3 –The dynamics of Selectivity of AD in the High-Level Fora of Aid Effectiveness

Before proceeding to the description of the mechanisms of Adoption, Distortion and Negation of AD in the Fora, an initial mechanism of translation, related to the transnationalization of AD, is remarkable from the start.States remain, expectedly, the main signatories of the declaration, representing 76.5% of signatories of the Paris Declaration (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008). From these, more than three fourths represent the Global South. This is also a predictable statement, provided that the ratio between aid receivers and aid providers is skewed towards recipients[14]. What is striking, however, is that Latin American states are disproportionately underrepresented in relation to African and Asian nations - 14.6% of all represented states, number that goes down to 12.42% with all signatory states comprised. Finally, Latin American civil society organizations are officially represented by only one organization in the list of signatories on the Accra Agenda for Action[15].

At first, the underrepresentation of Latin American organizations on official documents within the forum would lead to assume a necessary effort of translation of demands from these organizations by states and other civil society actors, which eventually lead to an inherent distorted contribution of these organizations in these events. However, a closer scrutiny on non-official documents, declarations and manifests reveal that, in fact, Latin American organizations not only participate in the HLF, but also have an organized common position. This advocacy process is mostly

[14] In 2010, the 24 members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), along with multilateral agencies, account for 96% of the total Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the world, according to the OECD. Available at: http://stats.oecd.org/qwids. Accessed on June 6, 2012.
[15] Paris was the first High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness that allowed for the direct participation of civil society. However, it did not recognize CSOs as development actors in their own right.

conducted in two ways: (1)through the ALOP[16], an organization actively engaged in the advocacy of Latin American Organizations since 1982, and present at the first HLF that allowed for the direct participation of civil society in Busan (2011); and (2) by the direct participation of more than thirty Latin American NGOs platforms, previously organized around the *Mesa de Articulación*, platform created with the purpose of achieving common agreements for international negotiations. It is thus reasonable to assume that simple negation of space is not what causes eventual negations and distortions of *AD*.

Alternatively, the ideas around *alternative development* can also be thought of as being diffused through the indirect representation of middle-income countries. The combination between the realization of challenges in development cooperation and aid effectiveness, and the success of southern practices in promoting development has put Middle-income countries at the center of debates. The ever-present and increasing number of references to it in the HLF documents is a clear evidence of that. Therefore, Latin American alternative development projects could see in these channels a fruitful way of scaling their claims and ideas to the international level. However, this particular pathway to transnationalization of alternative development faces at least two powerful filters: the same growing divide that triggered the creation of regionally and the attention of middle-income countries towards the creation of south-south cooperation mechanisms that reinforce their current development paradigm.

In any case, it is important to stress that the representative deficit of Latin American organizations in official documents in Busan does not relate to their absence in such arenas. The dynamics of adoption, negation and distortion of *AD* cannot be simply

[16] Latin American Association of Development Organizations

explained by an evident marginalization of these actors in these arenas. That said, it is possible to assume that the mechanisms in place within the HLF are highly active in filtering the contributions provided by advocates of *AD*. We can now turn to their investigation.

Mechanisms of Adoption

The current setup of the HLF is a result of a constant adaptation to the demands of the international community. It would be unjust to affirm that, along the years, these spaces were not permeable to dissenting voices coming from all over the world, mostly from the Global South. The most evident example of this evolution is found in the comparison the HLF along their editions, and refers to the above-mentioned incorporation of a wider variety of actors in these arenas.

First of all, the analysis of official documents show that there is a recognition that development and the international aid architecture is flawed, and takes place in an environment that still fails to bring development partners to a horizontal type of relation. The apparent reason for that, however, would not lie on power imbalances, but on improper coordination among actors. Therefore, the HLF usually evaluate the relative ineffectiveness of aid and development not as originally connected to power distribution, but as consequence of a lack of 'harmonization' between the rightful actors of development. Not coincidentally, 'harmonization' was the main topic of the first High Level Forum in Rome, 2003. Along the years, it has lost force, a recognition that aid effectiveness challenges lied beyond the mere 'streamlining'of already existing policies.

The HLF in Paris, Ghana, and Busan progressively adopted the notion that reforms in aid effectiveness needed both more incisive measures of 'ownership' and a wider

spectrum of contributions from different actors. However, the adoption/empowerment of other groups within these arenas, albeit evolving along the years, still seem to be accepted only upon the fulfilling the requisites of minimally partaking the five principles present of the Paris Declaration (2005)[17], which in turn connect, on the case of CSOs, to the Istanbul Principles for CSO Effectiveness. These documents serve a double purpose: (1) a standard to determine the agreement on a set of principles; and (2) a mechanism of promoting certain parameters of what is acceptable or not. Therefore, those two documents can be regarded as the evidence of an adoption mechanism of controlled dissent. However, even the adoption of such standards is the product of a historical process, illustrated by the progressive engagement of civil society in the HLF.

If in the first two HLF in Rome and Paris, CSOs were simply disregarded as international development cooperation actors, having to express their perspectives via national governments, the Accra and Busan have made room for the engagement of civil society. This process of adoption took two steps, however. First, in Accra, CSOs were invited to indirectly contribute to discussions providing inputs to discussions via an Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, summarized in the "Synthesis of Findings and Recommendations"[18]. It is only in Busan 2011, that CSOs effectively became considered actors in their own rights.

Nonetheless, although regarded as legitimate actors, the three hundred organizations that took part in the discussions and panels along the HLF in Busan ended up being represented by only one platform during the discussions of the final document. The BetterAid platform congregates a vast numbers of organizations and has conducted

[17] The Paris Declaration provides an agreement for aid effectiveness on the grounds of five general principles: Ownership, Harmonization, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability.
[18] Available at: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/8/41205249.pdf. Accessed on May 30th, 2012.

several consultation processes before sitting on the table for drafting the final resolution in Busan. Yet, regardless of their commitment to the cause, it is interesting to notice how the adoption of civil society in the debates must be submitted to one single voice and is put in a position where its most relevant contribution is restricted to such constraints. Thus, although civil society is regarded as an actor, it is explicitly considered as *one*, making the *adoption* of CSOs inseparable from mechanisms of *distortion* as well. In between these two connected processes, however, a clear mechanism of negation presents itself.

Mechanisms of Negation

The first evident absence identified while analyzing the documents relate to the inexistence of any notion of power and political conflict in official documents of the High Level *Fora*. These terms, more often than not, are understood to be something to be eliminated, excluded, translated into other terms. Therefore, power arises indirectly, as an abstract concept that alludes to dynamics pertaining to the inclusion or exclusion of some groups in the debates around aid effectiveness. The most common translations in this sense are empowerment and ownership. However, as this paper intends to show, the institutional mechanism in place is such that ultimately these translations allude more to collaboration efforts than to power struggles, therefore making them sterile.

For example, the concept of 'empowerment' consistently comes in a form that follows the pattern of recognition of obstacles/problems, identification of solutions, and the subsequent devolution of agency. Concretely, it assumes the form the recognition of over-centralization, decentralization with eventual inclusion of marginalized perspectives, and a sort of democratic coat alluding examples that were at the same

time inclusive and successful[19]. The concept of ownership, in turn, although connecting to the recognition of the aforementioned North-South imbalances, addresses the causes of it by restructuring coordinating mechanisms and transferring the agency of development practices to partner countries that are supposed to pursue their self-established aims. It does not, however, allude to the existence of power dynamics permeating these relations, and offers no remote measure to avoid the manifestation of power in the material, physical and symbolic dimensions that advocates for alternative development often allude to. Thus, HLF internal evolution ends up conflating the perspectives of problem solving and institutional learning, therefore soothing the urges of alternative approaches with reference to the political character of development and aid effectiveness debates. By emphasizing the role of empowerment in development processes, the concept of power is ironically denied of its agency.

A second, even bigger absence, relates to the maincause of the recent drought of new big ideas in development according to *AD*. Although the HLF itself, as mentioned, recognizes the need for renovation in their official documents,they do not recognize neoliberalism as a valid concept. None of the official documents of Busan, nor the declarations of high-level officials made available in the HLF websites point to the existence of neoliberalism. The only reference to it appears in documents, unsurprisingly, drafted by the International Confederation of Trade Unions and BetterAid. It is puzzling that a concept that structures an alternative project of such magnitude does not appear at all in the lexicon of the rather vast, varied and expanding field of HLF.

[19] All evidences to these claims can be found at the Chair's Summary Report of the HLF-3 in Accra, 2008, especially with reference to the ownership debate on Roundtable 1. Available at: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/56/13/41571216.pdf. Accessed on May 19, 2012.

If neoliberalism is, as argued, at the core of the constitutive break that created the *alternative development project*, it follows that recognizing its existence may represent a potential threat to the internal consistency and stability of HLF. In other words, embracing neoliberalism as an actual project brings along a set of imperatives that are potentially harmful or contradictory to the ultimate purpose of HLF: the reduction of transaction costs in the international aid structure in order to render the delivery of aid more effective and, therefore, development goals a reality.

The example of alternative to neoliberalism purported by *AD* helps to illustrate this rather complex argument. The *alternative development project*, once recognizing the negative effects of neoliberalism, also brings to the fore the connections between ideas, interests and material conditions in development policy. Therefore, constructing alternatives to policy failure would entail addressing these three dimensions, and potentially offering alternatives to those three. Consequently, it assumes the risk of potentially having to change the material conditions if those are the source of problems. Provided that HLF were created by OECD countries in the first place, that is, connected to a project ultimately composed by the same set of material conditions prevalent in the neoliberal years,the recognition of neoliberalism could bring along the issue of having to overcome it. Nonetheless, by doing so they run the risk of realizing that, rather than the solution, HLF may be either part or the cause of the problem. Thus, ignorance on the matter may be understood as a mechanism of institutional self-protection.

The last mechanism of negation of AD ideas identified in this work relates to the discomfort expressed on "The Regional Thematic Consultations on Development Effectiveness of CSOs working with Marginalized Groups" (IBON-PCFS 2011).The consultations, held in preparation for Busan 2011, show that even the "Istanbul

Principles"[20] fail to "adequately reflect the realities and problems of marginalized communities" (IBON-PCFS 2011: 2)[21]. We can identify, therefore, a *negation of grassroots*. The official documents reinforce this even more clearly. Among the official documents made available in the website of all HLF, the only references to grassroots, either organizations or communities in general, are found in civil society documents. Indirectly, some of the documents refer to decentralization, especially when dealing with the follow up of the implementation of the Paris declaration in Accra 2008. That is made, however, in close connection with ownership promotion via governments, and does not involve directly grassroots movements.

The circumstance does not demonize CSOs or the HLF themselves. It refers more to the strategic imperative of the institutions that were created around aid effectiveness. This presence, either as strategic or impairing, reveals the increase complexity of international participatory procedures. The combination of their inherent complexity with the constrained access of these organizations to international high-level *for a* leave a very narrow scope for action by Civil Society. In turn, this confers processes of consultation with a character resembling more the endorsement than actual challenge and advocacy of alternatives. As a consequence, little room is left in these spaces for the advocacy of AD as a policy alternative. In sum, it is hard for CSOs to keep control of their constituency when having to dedicate so much time to such complex negotiations, and this specialization leads to a detachment from grassroots (Alvarez 2009).

By disregarding the grassroots dimension as paramount to policy-making, the HLF

[20] The 8 Istanbul principles for CSO Development Effectiveness are considered to be the most distinguished reference for effective development for CSOs worldwide. It is a tacit precondition for participation in the HLF. For more information, see: http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/IMG/pdf/final_istanbul_cso_development_effectiveness_principles_footnote_december_2010-2.pdf

[21] Available at: http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/IMG/pdf/pcfs_consolidated_report-2.pdf

policy-set breaks part with *alternative development project* at a very basic level. The same holds true for the negation of neoliberalism and civil society as an arena. Accordingly, the mechanisms of negation of ideas in development relate extensively to the normative dimensions of the *AD project*. By either turning a blind eye to these, or actively engaging in creating strict boundaries so that they cannot overspill, the High Level Fora succeed in distorting a vast number of ideas in development.

Mechanisms of Distortion

The most evident mechanism of distortion of *AD* ideas relates to the dynamics between the need for pluralizing arenas and the imperative of control, and is based on the institutional premise of civil society as an actor. The simplification of the concept of civil society as an actor directly confronts the *AD* paradigm, in the sense that conflict and dissent are necessarily the center of their project. By denying the possibility of promoting the notion of civil society as an arena, mostly by constraining its participation, HLF makes it ultimately incompatible with its format. In other words, the ongoing institutional setup present in HLF, where CSOs are allowed to provide inputs, but need to form a consensus in order to negotiate the final outcome of debates is highly aligned with the understanding of civil society as nothing more than an input provider and an output evaluator. The throughput dimension of this dynamic is simply denied, generating an evident and impairing distortion of the role of civil society actors in policy formulation. Therefore, a clear limit is established for the advance of AD in these arenas.

Another distorting consequence of the denial of the normative groundings of the *alternative development project* relates to the use of politics in HLF. The concept, instead of its pervasive and embedded character when attached to *AD*, is stripped of

its weight. The mechanism that renders this possible is directly connected to the negation of power as constitutive of the processes taking place in the HLF. As a consequence, although politics is relatively stressed in a variety of documents, it closely connects to the role of political support for the consensus achieved in the High Level Forums on the level of partner countries as well as the need of political coordination to simply achieve consensus. The effort of reaching policy guidelines is a process of coordination, streamlining and harmonization, not a political struggle. This is evidenced by the overwhelming majority of references to politics as referring to the outputs of policy processes, that is, the coupling of politics with 'support', 'will', or 'efforts'. Politics, in this sense, similarly than civil society, is accessory rather than constitutive of development processes. It could be argued that some declarations allude to politics as constitutive of the outcomes achieved in the HLF. This is the case, for example, of the references relating to the hard work delegates had to perform in order to reach the consensus needed for drafting the outcomes of HLF[22]. However, these declarations also reflect a distortion of politics as purported by *AD*, in the sense that they relate to the struggle of actors and their clash of interests, as opposed to constructing collective commonly agreed collective different interests produced by the encounter of subjects.

In sum, the content analysis of the official documents, declarations and media reports lead us to identify, more schematically, a selectivity that is triggered by the negation of *AD* premises, that is,its normative constitutive break. This negation, in turn, brings consequences to all the other mechanisms operating to *AD* contributions into palatable mainstream policy alternatives. Thus, mechanisms of adoption are more likely to be seen in relation to the sociopolitical constitutive break of *AD*. However, the denial of

[22] Chair's Summary Report of the HLF-3 in Accra, 2008. Available at: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/56/13/41571216.pdf. Accessed on May 19, 2012

the plural dimension of civil society domesticate this this idea in a way that still confers HLF with a fair degree of control over change. Finally, provided that the negation in AD is done at such an essential level, it can be argued that *distortion* mechanisms operate everywhere, that is, exercise of selectivity is made through distorting ideas of *AD*.

Final Remarks

Ideas and policy are connected in complex ways. The main objective of this work was to shed some light on the possibilities of improving our understanding of how ideas and policy relate to each other. By analyzing the role of the *alternative development project* (AD) in High Level Fora of Aid Effectiveness, this paper tried to assess the dynamics of change taking place in this institution. How are these ideas emerging from a specific set of conditions in Latin America interfering in the ways we see development as whole? What were the most evident changes? What are the ever-present elements?

This work has showed that, as far as *AD* is concerned, elements of persistence are much more pronounced than elements of change. It turns out that, in spite of the all the elements pointing towards the need of changes in international development cooperation, the institutions that are part of it absorb inputs at a very low pace. The evident explanation would be that there interest for change is not as conspicuous as one would assume. Although this assessment is not entirely wrong, it does not do much in helping to build better alternatives to solve these problems. After all, a whole universe exists between the realization that interests exist in policy debates, and the reluctance of failing institutions to acknowledge and act towards change. Within this universe, this work provides three main contributions, potentially useful for scholars, policy activists and policy-makers alike.

First, it demonstrates that ideas can never be properly understood by ideas themselves. The connection of ideas and policy necessarily involve connections that transcend them. It is only in this way that ideas can be understood as possessing agency. Second, alternatives to development usually appear coupled with their antagonist, and must

always be re-built in terms of the situation they are part of. In other words, old ideas, in new situations, are ultimately new ideas.

Third, interests, ideas and their relation to institutions are less an issue of quality, or even the power of their advocates, than it is an issue of the inter-constructed norms and regulations pertaining to the institution itself. If institutions are understood as a process of creation of collective action, whoever manages to overcome the high costs of initiating it, bear a clear advantage in relation to latecomers. This is not because of the adherence of actors to the rules of the game per se, but ratherto the internal set of rules and regulations that work towards the survival of the initial institutional setting. Analytically, this implies that processes of change and continuity are best understood in terms of how institutions react to external and newly built elements, instead of the acquiescence or not of participants of this process.

In concrete terms, it can be argued that the High Level Fora, constructed from the realization/premise that aid should be rendered more effectively, not delivered differently (if at all), has generated a path dependent process that is made active through the highly-selective filters evidenced by the mechanisms of (selective) adoption, negation and distortion of alternative ideas. Rather than prohibition, this selection is built through a set of requirements, namely, bearing the high monetary costs of participation in international conferences and the political costs of reaching forced consensus among a variety of differently situated alternatives. This ultimately lead advocates of *AD* to internationally push an agenda that is in many respects simply disconnected from the original situated tenets of *alternative development*.

By muddling through the internal dynamics of HLF, it is also possible to identify a pattern in terms of how ideas travel from Latin America and end up being disfigured by these filters. Provided that HLF do not share, in any way, the normative premises

of *AD* (i.e. it *negates* their premises), distortion mechanisms are omnipresent. This work has demonstrated that given the different context and situation these ideas play out, *adoption* of the need for participation is identified, but with a high degree of selectivity and a series of constraints to agency. Moreover, given the increasing need of HLF to incorporate new ideas to face their growing challenges, *distortion* mechanisms are seen frequently, especially when connected to actual re-distribution of actual decision power within these arenas.

Given the difficulties of pushing for changes in HLF, marginal actors (states and CSOs alike) are constantly looking for new arenas, new institutional settings that allow them to address their development challenges. The rise of different types of international development architectures, such as south-south and triangular cooperation mechanisms is a clear sign of this particular change. Now, more than ever, marginal actors have ideas, practices and, more importantly, money to ignore fora such as the HLF when they fail to adopt policy recommendations that follow their predicaments. The allusion to the creation of a BRICs Development Bank, along with the strengthening of parallel arenas such as the UN Development Cooperation Forum, point towards a clear trend in this regard, which must not be overlooked by further research endeavors.

Certainly, these new development should not be regarded as a panacea, a final and definite materialization of the longing for decoupling development from colonialism. Undoubtedly, however, new and more independent ecologies of development are emerging. It is now time to investigate in what kinds of grounds are these being created, what kinds of antagonisms they build, and what kinds of alternative developments are also being generated as a consequence of their own constitutive breaks. Additionally, it is time to investigate their links in a global space that

increasingly shows different, independently regulated systems that share links with various densities and qualities.

Finally, it is also time for the centers of development to act towards truly acknowledging recent unfoldings.For their own sake.Wolfgang Sachs (1992), twenty years ago, argued that the age of development was coming to an end. He was wrong, mostly for ignoring the ability of the center to adapt and the margins to generate viable alternatives. For good or bad, now the margins have adapted and the center is increasingly unable to generate alternatives. If the center wishes to remain as such, it must adapt and accept the voices and interests coming from elsewhere.

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