Chapter 5

On NGOs and development management:
What do critical management studies have to offer?

Emanuela Girei, Federica Angeli and Arun Kumar

Introduction

This chapter is about management of global development, or development management for short. In particular, we focus on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) — a significant, prominent but not unproblematic type of actor in this field.

As is widely known, NGOs entered the development arena at the beginning of the 1980s with the promise of promoting bottom-up development, supposedly close to the needs and aspirations of the grassroots (Hearn, 2007). Four decades on, it is apparent that the NGOs' transformative promise has remained partly unfulfilled. The initial enthusiasm for NGOs has given way to a critical questioning of their role in international development and especially of their ability to articulate and implement an alternative to the neoliberal agenda (Chachage, 2005; Hearn, 2007; Manji & O'Coill, 2002; Shivji, 2007). Scholars have already identified a number of potential, and often competing, explanations of this shortcoming. For instance, some scholars have questioned the authenticity of NGOs' commitment given their self-serving interests (Manji & O'Coill, 2002); while others have drawn attention to the corruption within the wider non-profit sector (Smith, 2010). Contrary to their expected proximity to dispossessed communities, others have pointed to NGOs' inherent elitism (Lewis, 2017). Still others have explained the failures of NGOs with their lack of power (Michael, 2004) when compared to large donor agencies, governments, and corporate behemoths . Even as some scholars attribute many of the NGOs' failings to their lack of managerial capacity/experience (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002), others point to NGOs' uncritical embracement of technocratic and managerial approaches (Girei, 2016).

Interestingly, the definition of NGOs blends with the concept of civil society organisations. NGOs' role as the embodiment of civil society's voice is the basis of their legitimacy as 'democratizers of development' (Banks, Hulme, & Edwards, 2015; Bebbington, Hickey, & Mitlin, 2007). The changes of the aid industry over time, combined with the high relative influence of donors on NGOs with respect to the ultimate beneficiaries, has marked the evolution of the NGOs towards identifying organisations that can meet donors' requirements and satisfy strict accountability standards for a variety of funders, including

private donors, governments, Northern NGOs and social impact investors (Angeli, Raab, & Oerlemans, 2020; Banks et al., 2015; Mohan, 2002). NGOs nowadays face a number of tensions such as the need to develop and maintain accountability systems towards the donors versus accountability systems towards beneficiaries; their adherence to donors' development agenda versus the specific needs of the communities they serve; their focus on short-term, quantifiable outputs, versus longer-time structural and systemic impact, which is more much difficult to stimulate, monitor, measure and fund on an ongoing basis; their focus on short-term projects rather than long-term structural change (Angeli et al., 2020; Banks et al., 2015; Dicklitch & Lwanga, 2003).

Expectedly so, such debates raise an important question around definitional and typological issues. After all, the term NGO encompasses a plurality of meanings and organisational forms. The term NGO as applied in the mainstream management literature is ambiguous in itself (Srinivas, 2009, pp. 2-3; Tvedt, 1998, pp. 12-37). It refers to a set of organisations which differ greatly in size, budget, activities and ideological orientation—from transnational religious organisations that manage billions of dollars to secular community organizations that work locally and often on shoestring budgets. While some NGOs receive regular funding from a handful of established, institutional donors, others devote considerable resources in preparing and writing funding bids to ensure operational continuity. In an attempt at defining the term, Edwards and Fowler (2003, p. 2) focus on Non-Governmental Development Organisation (NGDO) that work "on poverty and injustice within 'developing' countries." Similarly, Lewis (Lewis, 2003, p. 1) defines NGOs as "the group of organisations engaged in development and poverty reduction work". Other authors further circumscribe the relation between NGOs and development, asserting that "NGOs are only NGOs in any politically meaningful sense of the term if they are offering alternatives to dominant models, practices and ideas about development" (Bebbington et al., 2007, p. 3). A relevant distinction is also made based on the type of work carried out by NGOs, which can be broadly classified into either operational or advocacy activities (Lewis, 2006). Charnovitz (1997, pp. 185-186) states that, 'NGOs are groups of individuals organized for the myriads of reasons that engage human imagination and aspiration. They can be set up to advocate a particular cause, such as human rights, or to carry out programs on the ground, such as disaster relief. They can have membership ranging from local to global.' Advocacy NGOs thus aim to raise awareness and to thereby influence governments and corporations towards issues of societal relevance. Operational NGOs concentrate on designing and implementing development-related projects. Charnovitz also distinguishes NGOs according to their geographical orientation, which can be national, international, or community-based (Charnovitz, 1997).

Vakil (Vakil, 1997) further distinguishes NGOs from other third sector organizations. NGOs are 'self-governing, private, not-for-profit organizations that are geared towards improving the quality of life for disadvantaged people' (Vakil, 1997, pp. 2060). In this sense, NGOs pursue agendas focused on social, environmental and economic change, typically associate with the notion of 'development' and 'sustainable development'. The term 'private' distinguishes NGOs from governmental agencies, while the term 'not-for-profit' highlights the nature of NGOs as non-profit-redistributing. Finally, these organizations are self-governed, and hence autonomously managed.

Notwithstanding the tensions and extensive debates around what NGOs are and what their roles should be, they remain an important, even influential in some cases, organizational actor. In this chapter, we explore the role of NGOs within the wider developmental landscape. In particular, we focus on how NGOs as organizations structure and manage their roles, relationships, and responsibilities. Moving away from mainstream management orthodoxy, we focus on the extant and potential contribution of critical management studies (CMS), a three decade-long intervention that holds deep-seated scepticism towards mainstream Management and Organization Studies orthodoxy (Adler, Forbes, & Willmott, 2007). In particular, CMS challenges the ideology of excessive managerialism that is built around the primacy of the market where managerialism serves as a global ideology that once learnt, "can be applied anywhere, to anything and on anyone" (Parker, 2002, p. 5). The chapter is structured as follows: first, we outline the rise and role of NGOs in global development. Next, we focus on development management, that is the management of global development. In particular, we interrogate the potential and problems of managerialism in development. In the following section, we focus on how critical management studies can help us problematize and think about development management, followed by some concluding reflections.

The Rise of Development NGOs

The NGO phenomenon rose to global significance in the late 1980s, partly as a result of what is usually called the development 'impasse' or 'crisis' i.e. a widespread sense of disillusionment with, and sense of failure of, the current development thinking and practice at the time (Blaikie, 2007; Cliffe, Ishemo, & Williams, 1985; Simon, 1997; Wai, 2007, p. 12). Critics focused in particular on two key tenets of development 'orthodoxy': the central role of the state in development and the primacy attributed to economic growth. By the 1980s, there was widespread disappointment with the state-led models that had

characterised development interventions since the 1950s. On the one hand, the neoliberal Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) advocated a minimal state to remove a major obstruction to development (Gros & Prokopovych, 2005; Onis & Senses, 2005; World Bank, 1981). On the other hand, neo-Marxist critiques saw the state's role in development as oppressive and exploitative, especially in the light of rising military expenditure and the heavy taxation of peasants (Bernstein, 1990, p. 110; Hyden, 1994, pp. 316-317). In response to which, the aid industry began to focus on alternative organizational actors to lead, structure, and manage development, a role which NGOs came to assume.

Relatedly, there was also growing dissatisfaction with the obsession within development programs with economic growth. After initial assumptions that growth would automatically translate into poverty reduction came undone, questions began to be asked in the 1980s about the primacy of growth as a fundamental driver in development thinking. More specifically, the neoliberal reforms which dominated the development agenda since the early 1980s attributed to the market the role of key-engine of development, assuming that economic growth and wealth would trickle down to the poor, hence eradicating poverty and inequality (Stewart, 1997, p. 16). However, in the 1980s Africa and more generally the Global South witnessed an economic decline, an increase in poverty levels and a deterioration in living standards (ECA, 1989). Even as poverty levels have since begun to decline, there has been a steady, significant increase of income inequalities. Oxfam Novib – a large development charity – reported that in 2018 the world's 26 richest billionaires owned as much as 3.8 billion people (50% of the world population) at the base of the income pyramid (Oxfam, 2021)According to the UN, while in 1950 GDP per capita in the developed world was seven times higher than in Africa, in 2001 the gap had more than doubled (22,825 compared to 1,489) (United Nations, 2006, p. 5).

Hence, disillusionment with top-down state-led development practices on the one hand, and critiques against a predominantly 'economistic' understanding of development on the other led, in turn to a flourishing of alternatives conceptions of development, including 'participatory development', 'human development', 'post-development' and 'rights-based development' (Pieterse, 1998; Schuurman, 2000; Simon, 2007). Despite the heterogeneity among and within these perspectives, most of them advocated alternative, 'bottom-up' development thinking and practices. Against this background, a wide consensus emerged around the potentially positive role of NGOs, seen as the "'magic bullet', the panacea to failed top-down development and the means to poor people's empowerment" (Hearn, 2007, p. 1096). NGOs were expected to bring about fundamental change, by means of adopting participatory and emancipatory approaches focused on the development aspirations of grassroots communities, thus widening development thinking and practices beyond

economic growth. In addition to this, NGOs were also favoured by official development agencies, which considered them cheaper, more effective and less prone to political pressures than governments in the delivery and implementation of development programmes (Edwards & Hulme, 1996).

In the period between 1980 and 2010, the number of NGOs, national and international, in the Global South rose dramatically. Funding to NGOs and civil society organisations has steadily increased between 2002 and 2017. Figure 1 plots the official development assistance (ODA) financial flows in US million (reduced at current prices) disbursed in the 2002-2017 15 years from all development assistance committee (DAC) countries (source: OECD statistics).

<Insert Figure 5.1 here>

Figure 5.1 - ODA financial flows in US millions, 2002-2017 (source: OECD statistics)

From the early 1990s onwards the faith in neo-liberal development policies started diminishing. First the World Bank and later the IMF revisited their approach, articulating what came to be known as the "post-Washington consensus" (Onis & Senses, 2005; Ruckert, 2006). The novelty of the post-Washington consensus lies in three key elements: the recognition of the role of the state in development processes; a new interest in democracy and 'good governance'; and a renewed concern with poverty reduction (Onis & Senses, 2005, p. 276). All three key elements of the so called "post-Washington consensus" as well as the concern for participation and ownership, have significant impacts on the work, identity and role of NGOs within the development industry. From the new perspective, NGOs are expected to continue providing welfare services to the poor, but are also entrusted a key role in the good governance agenda and in the democratisation process (De Coninck, 2004). Our interest here, primarily, is to highlight that since the 1980s the prominence of NGOs has grown dramatically, so that today they are widely considered legitimate actors in development. They are actively involved in the implementation of development projects, usually participate in national and international policy-making and are allocated a significant portion of development funding.

However, four decades on, the increasing involvement of NGOs in global development does not seem to have brought the expected transformation in development thinking and

practice (Blaikie, 2007; Cliffe et al., 1985; Simon, 1997; Wai, 2007, p. 12). Hence, the initial enthusiasm for NGOs has left room for a critical questioning of their role in development and their ability to make development more just and inclusive.

NGOs and development management: Why we should listen to CMS

As mentioned before, some scholars point out that many of the NGOs' failings are predominantly due to their lack of managerial capacity and experiences (Edwards & Fowler, 2003). According to them, the growing prominence that NGOs have acquired in the development field requires them to incrementally move away from being informal, voluntary-based organisations toward more professional and professionally-managed organisations, capable of differentiating themselves from other development actors. Underpinning such a view of NGOs' role are two key assumptions. One, that management studies, with a focus on a certain type of management, can make a significant contribution to development and sustainable development goals; and two, that there exists a distinctive realm of development practice known as development management (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2010; Lewis, 2003). For instance, Lewis argues that while NGOs are called on to "give priority to well-established management principles, most of which are drawn from the business world" (see also Dichter, 1989; Lewis, 2003, p. 340), while there are also distinctive features of NGO management, including relations with funders and a commitment to participation and empowerment (Lewis, 2006, pp. 189-200). Likewise, Thomas (Thomas, 1999, p. 51) points out that "the clearest examples of good development management will be those which use the enabling and empowerment mode of management to achieve development goals for the relatively powerless;" thus combining instrumental (goal-oriented) and developmental (empowerment-oriented) dimensions. Similarly, Fowler (Fowler, 1997) sees NGO management as a combination of instrumental, task-driven features with value and process-driven dimensions, where conventional management thinking and tools are adapted to fit the distinctive NGO context and mission.

These perspectives assume that conventional management theory and practice, somehow adapted to the NGOs' focus on social change rather than profit, is capable of delivering micro-changes at the organizational level; which can be aggregated and will result in wider societal changes. For instance, Edwards and Sen (Edwards & Sen, 2000), suggest that social transformation occurs by integrating changes at three levels: personal, organisational and societal. They argue that personal transformation towards cooperative, caring and compassionate ways of thinking and behaving acts as a "well-spring of change in all other areas" (Edwards & Sen, 2000, p. 609) and as the basis of wider changes in the social and economic spheres. From this perspective, NGOs' effectiveness in promoting social change

depends on their ability to integrate personal transformation into their programmes, activities, partnerships and organisational praxis. This in turn requires them "to experiment more seriously with management practices, organisational structure and personnel policies that create the feedback loops we are looking for between personal change, institutional performance and wider impact" (Edwards & Sen, 2000, p. 614).

Consistent with the dominant performance culture permeating international development – the accountability and performance of NGOs have become central themes of development management. Proponents of development management argue that NGOs ought to invest in strategic planning, performance appraisal and strengthening their accountability mechanisms (Fowler, 2003). The case *for* development management comes, according to the proponents, from the increasing pressure on NGOs to evidence the impact their work makes, the increasingly competitive nature of the development 'industry' and issues of NGOs legitimacy towards donors and the public (Fowler, 1997, pp. 160-183). As donors' requirements and expectations differ from those of communities, NGOs are now expected to *manage* "multiple accountabilities", upwards and downwards, toward targets and towards participation (Ebrahim, 2003; Walsh & Lenihan, 2006), thereby experiencing tensions between the often clashing requirements of financial bookkeeping and social outcomes (Angeli et al., 2020)

Contrary to those propagating development management, some scholars take a more critical stance as they turn their attention to exploring the detrimental consequences of the *'managerialisation'* of the NGO sector: both to highlight the pervasiveness of management principles and techniques in NGO work (Wallace, Bornstein, & Chapman, 2007); and its detrimental effects. The critics address two particularly interesting issues on development management: the constraining impact of management thinking and practice on NGO work, and the furthering of inequalities within the NGO sector, especially between Southern and Northern NGOs, which we discuss next.

Critics of development management are, first and foremost, concerned about the pervasiveness of 'rational' management thinking and tools (linear, logic models such as logical framework analysis or LFA and project cycle management); and their impact in terms of depoliticizing development. Taking issue with the linear, rational, and deterministic conceptualization of development management, critics of development management argue that such approaches result in the silencing of concerns that do not fit such a linear perspective, while it also turns the attention of development actors including NGOs toward a micro-level of analysis and intervention, thus losing sight of the bigger

picture—that is, structural, substantial transformations (Wallace et al., 2007). Furthermore, critics argue that the obsession with results weakens the operational autonomy of NGOs, insofar as funding is usually constrained by the predefined plans, goals and priorities of donors (Bornstein, 2003; CDRN, 2004b). In this regard, several scholars have demonstrated how NGOs have progressively turned their efforts towards meeting donors' demands and requirements, so to ensure their survival, often drifting away from their original mission and their involvement with grassroots (Banks et al., 2015).

Still others have argued that the managerialization of NGOs has exacerbated inequalities between Northern and Southern NGOs, leading to divisions within the NGO sector in the Global South (Mowles, Stacey, & Griffin; Wallace et al., 2007). They argue that the unequivocal adoption of mainstream development management by international NGOs (INGOs) has increased the pressure on NGOs from the Global South to adopt specific management approaches, tools and techniques. These include logframes and project cycle management, which – despite the rhetoric of partnership – are hardly ever negotiable (CDRN, 2004b; Wallace et al., 2007). Partly with a view to responding to the perceived lack of managerial capacity among NGOs from the Global South, some INGOs have taken on the burden of building and developing the capacity of their southern counterparts. Yet research suggests that these programmes do not focus on the capacity needs and aspirations identified by Southern NGOs. Instead, Northern NGOs tend to transmit management knowledge—on, say, strategic planning rather than on financial accountability, logframes or reporting—downwards on to their southern 'partners' (Mowles et al., 2008). This is often done without investigating whether Southern NGOs consider it appropriate (see also Lewis, 2008). Finally, the excessive managerialisation of NGOs has led to the marginalization of those NGOs unable to keep pace with the fads and fashions of management jargon and techniques (Bornstein, 2003). In Uganda, for example, there seems to be an extensive rural "hidden sector", progressively obscured by urban-based, "sophisticated" NGOs (CDRN, 2004a, pp. 23-29).

The criticisms of development management are interesting for two main reasons. One, they suggest that technic-driven nature of development management, epitomised by the heavy deployment of standard tools and model and accountability to donors, has a detrimental impact on social change agenda. Two, such criticisms bring into relief the dominant role of actors from the Global North in how we *think about* and *do* development. That is, development management, far from enabling NGOs in fulfilling their transformative promise, re-inscribes and re-produces pre-existing asymmetries: such as those to do with North/South, urban/rural, etc. We summarize these external pressures and dynamics in the

loop diagram represented in Figure 2. Donors' strict accountability requirements and focus on short-term solutions increase NGOs' pressures towards managerialism and professionalisation, leading to the adoption of managerial tools and technocratic practices borrowed from the private sector. This process strengthens NGOs' efforts to develop upward accountability and to meet donors' demands to the detriment of downward accountability towards beneficiary communities. The accountability shift negatively activates the second reinforcing loop, which becomes a cycle of progressively negative outcomes. The decreased involvement with grassroots reduces NGOs' adherence to their original civil society mandate and development mission, thereby decreasing their focus on beneficiaries' needs and their capability to design appropriate actions. This dynamic results in reduced NGOs' legitimacy within the target communities, to further impoverish their mission adherence.

<Insert Figure 5.2 here>

Figure 5.2 - Modelling NGOs tensions and evolution

While the detrimental impact of NGOs' heavy reliance on a technocratic understanding of management is evident, the fallacies it has created (in terms of disengagement from long-term social change agendas, progressive distancing from the grassroots, progressive proximity with donors' agendas and so on), cannot be answered simply by loosening the management requirements associated with development programmes. In this sense, critical perspectives from CMS might help us to identify ways through which NGOs' management can be understood and shaped so to serve social transformation, justice and equality.

Development management: Learning from CMS

From the previous sections we have seen that NGOs have increasingly embraced conventional management approaches and practices in their operations, and that this has attracted growing criticism. In this section, we aim to go beyond existing critiques and explore how CMS can contribute to development management approaches, practices and policies which are more suitable to support NGOs' engagement with social change, equality and justice. Among others, we focus on three in particular: a) a sceptical attitude toward abstract universal management principles and approaches; b) de-naturalization of

development management imperatives and c) consideration of how asymmetries of power shape NGOs management fads and fashions.

Scepticism

Similar to extant criticism of mainstream management orthodoxy—in particular, its emphasis on positivistic approaches and on an universalizing and modernizing impulse where context is rendered insignificant (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Alvesson & Willmott, 1996)—development management is no different. Applying CMS's questioning of management, we note that development management draws its strength from the following two: one, its claim to its own "scientific", value- and bias-free, objective nature which renders social reality as fully knowable, predictable, and amenable to modelling. Two, development management draws its popularity from its own transformative, emancipatory promise—that is, it can lead to efficiencies while further societal betterment. Development management relies on the atomisation of social realities, where results and impact are taken to emerge from the aggregation of discrete micro-events, linked hierarchically and causally. Borrowing principles from physics and biology, development management explains social realities and human behaviour in mechanical terms, divorcing them from their social fabric where they are generated (Townley, 2002). This problematic conception of development management is evident from the managerialism that NGOs adopt, or are often made to under pressure from donor agencies. A clear example is the SDGs, where development is measured by counting individuals in discrete categories, whose sum is assumed to correlate with social phenomena associated with poverty.

Drawing on CMS, we would advocate for relentless questioning of the scientific character and neutrality attributed to development management. We would argue that the supposed and self-proclaimed universality and generalisability of mainstream development management are built upon an ideal "abstract management" (Townley, 2001, 2002), divorced not only from socioeconomic and political contexts but also from a historically situated cultural and relational texture. Variations (historical rather than economic, cultural rather than political) are thus obscured or manipulated to reflect the claimed universal validity of the model. This results in the neglect of important questions regarding, for instance, whose interests are being served by managerialist decision or approaches. The focus on micro-activities, micro-performances and micro-results, effectively discharges NGOs from analysing and reflecting on the history and the macro-level of international relations and political-economy where development takes – or should take – place.

Denaturalizing managerial imperatives

One of CMS's most significant contribution relates to the questioning of the taken for granted nature of long-standing views, principles and assumptions and calls for their 'de-naturalisation'. In the case of development management, this will include how key development management logics or imperatives are conceived. For instance, if we try to question and unfold the meaning of notions such as 'value for money', output-based aid (OBA), payments-by-results (PbR), which allegedly support effective and efficient decision making in key aspects such as resources allocation, we would begin to more clearly see that what are presented as 'technical' and neutral decisions are often political decisions based on dominant and taken for granted ideas, which privileges certain dimensions and objectives over others (Frenzel, Case, Kumar, & Sedgwick, 2018). For example, the pursuit of managerial ends – for e.g. number of users of a certain service over a set timeframe – tends to undermine other, more qualitative objectives, such as the quality of the service, sustainability of the service, engagement of user in the definition of the service and so on.

Of particular concern here is the progressive narrowing of perspectives resulting from the adoption of such models, and the constant exclusion of dimensions and dynamics that are intrinsically political, multi-faced and shiftable and, as such, cannot be contained in the prescriptive models adopted in the aid industry.

Focussing on power asymmetries

A third insight coming from CMS concerns how global asymmetries shape development management knowledge and practice (Girei, 2017). Drawing on Said, we use the term 'Orientalist' to characterize the way in which knowledge produced by the West about management in Africa rests explicitly or implicitly on a dichotomised and polarised definition of East and West. Binary thinking like this rests on the assumption that the West is the norm and the definition of the non-Western (the Other) based in what it lacks in comparison. Generic management and development management allow non-Western forms of organisation to emerge only with reference to the ways in which they differ from Western models, which generates mainly pejorative descriptions and labels ('traditional', 'corrupt' , 'backward') (Nuijten, 2005, p. 5; Prasad, 2003, p. 32). For instance, the good governance agenda rests on the assumption that Africa lacks management capacity, is

inefficient and is not performance oriented, unlike the West, whose technical assistance and programmatic leadership is thus legitimized. From this perspective, then, the discourse of development management is Orientalist, portraying Africa as in dire need of guidance from the West and perpetuating the latter's dominant role in defining both needs and solutions.

More generally, it can be argued that development management maintains and reinforces unequal relations, through the domination of knowledge, tools and techniques created and controlled by Westerners (Escobar, 1997; Kothari, 2005; Parpart, 1995). Given Europe's efforts to subjugate its colonies not only economically but also culturally (Mudimbe, 1988; Prasad, 2003), the neo-colonial dimension of development management can be traced within the apparently tireless effort to establish, under the guise of capacity development, the universality of Western worldviews and values at the expense of hindering and undermining possibilities for the development of alternative views.

The foregoing arguments also illuminate the geopolitical nature of the dominant management approaches, which is often overlooked in the mainstream debate on development management. As mentioned earlier, the technocratic and managerial nature of development management has been acknowledged and criticised by many scholars. Yet, the proposed solutions revolve around ever more and even 'better management', which often results in further disregard of the inherently political nature of development and of development management (see for instance Wallace et al., 2007). However, these perspectives place the technical and the political as opposing poles, as if a technicist understanding of management could be improved by loosening its formalist requirements and adding an assumedly absent political agenda.

While the criticisms regarding the heavy reliance on techniques and tools can be shared, the claim that such perspectives lack a political agenda renders it questionable. Those management techniques and tools and their foundations, presented by their architects as scientific, neutral and thus already depoliticised, can instead be viewed as inherently political. They might be seen as sustaining not only the unequal global relations mentioned above, but also the dominant neo-liberal regime: development management, with its emphasis on results, individual measurements and performance, contributes to naturalizing values, views and practice which underpin the neoliberal (market) ideology, and, simultaneously to silence issues such as power, justice and solidarity, just to name a few. The emphasis on standardized, quantitative approaches, metrics and indicators reveals a dangerous de-contextualization of development practice, which are instead deeply context-

specific and require situated perspectives. In this sense, it becomes of utmost importance for NGOs and their ecosystems to develop accountability practices that are unique to their sectors, activities and contexts, and that are co-created with both donors and grassroots communities. As highlighted in Figure 5.2, the adoption of managerial practices mutuated by the private sector likely leads to a dangerous spiral voiding NGOs of their very distinctive mission and related legitimacy.

Against this already complex picture, the role of donors – and in particular the evolution of their relative power, ideology, agenda and requirements – is of primary relevance to understand those upstream dynamics directly influencing NGOs' behaviours and outcomes (Banks & Hulme, 2014). NGOs face a general decline of available foreign aid from traditional donors and an increasing relative power of non-traditional donors (Kragelund, 2014), such as government new to the foreign aid landscape, as well as private donors, for example in the form of corporate philanthropists, also labelled as 'philantrocapitalism' (McGoey, 2014). While traditional donors have collectively matured experience and expertise on how to shape development efforts, these new donors are likely to bring about potentially radically different views, with growing 'voice and political influence of unelected and unaccountable stakeholders in national and international development agendas' (Banks, Hulme, 2014: pg 187). Tensions between traditional and non-traditional donors have been documented, with the former fearing that the advancements they achieved in terms of accountability and transparency of development assistance funds could be 'undone' by the new actors. Also in terms of focus, while traditional donors show a broad consensus on development priorities, such as poverty eradication, non-traditional donations seem more influenced by national leaders' agenda. Although financial flows from non-traditional donors appear to be still relatively low with respect to traditional channels, they are likely to alter the power dynamics between NGOs and their traditional sponsors.

An illuminating example is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, whose action has significantly reshaped the global health landscape, and agenda-setting. By fuelling enormous amounts of private capital through a innovative model, the foundation has undoubtedly revamped the development sector and set an admirable example for many super-wealthy private donors. However, the fact that one private foundation – acting on the basis of its global value and priorities as opposed to local needs - has comparable or even larger bearing in setting the health policy of developing countries is undeniably concerning (Banks & Hulme, 2014; McGoey, 2014). Elsewhere, Kumar and Brooks (2021) have argued that even when philanthropic foundations are acting in "partnership"

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with other legitimate development actors, they are able to exercise influence disproportionate to their financial or personnel involvement. They suggest thinking of philanthropies' determining influence in international development in the form of metaphors: of bridges, interdigitates, leapfrogging, platforms, and satellites (Kumar & Brooks, 2021). The risk is high for such powerful international charities to overrule the local governments, and disempower local health systems and civil society in their primary role of design, implementation and monitors of policies and programmes, thereby fundamentally failing in their development goals. Table 1 reports all private donors' development financial flows, between 2009-2019 (US million dollars, current prices – source OECD statistics).

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Private Donors Total	2620	1844	4332	2393	3496	3693	5472	4495	8284	6643
Arcus Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	15	16	15	17
Bernard van Leer Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14	13
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	2620	1844	4332	2393	3335	3497	5279	4026	4838	3214
C&A Foundation	..	..	..	..	7	9	18	29	30	..
Carnegie Corporation of New York	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	24	18
Charity Projects Ltd (Comic Relief)	..	..	..	..	38	57	59	44	47	25
Children's Investment Fund Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	207	219
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	..	..	..	..	42	50	47	50	50	41
David & Lucile Packard Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	119	120
Ford Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	244	216
Gatsby Charitable Foundation	..	..	..	..	17	7	17	8	12	13
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	50	113
Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	39	36
H&M Foundation	..	..	..	..	5	25	7	12	31	7
John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	240	100
MasterCard Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	77	54
MAVA Foundation	..	..	..	..	30	24	15	13	71	57
MetLife Foundation	..	..	..	..	22	23	14	9	28	18
Michael & Susan Dell Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	24	31	31
Oak Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	111	208
Omidyar Network Fund, Inc.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	57	52
Wellcome Trust	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	254	261
William & Flora Hewlett Foundation	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	183	172
United Postcode Lotteries, Total	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	249	352	349
Dutch Postcode Lottery	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	228	244	234
People's Postcode Lottery	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	21	38	45
Swedish Postcode Lottery	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	70	70

Table 1 – Evolution of private donors' development financial flows, between 2009-2019 (US million dollars, current prices – source OECD statistics)

Lessons for policy and practice: In conclusion

In the previous sections, we have argued that the pervasive faith in supposedly scientific, rational management approaches is problematic and might hinder the same purposes for which they are adopted. In this sense, we think it is crucial to re-think what kind(s) of management knowledge and practice might support NGOs to strengthen their engagement with social change agenda, driven by a commitment to social justice and self-determination. For those practitioners and policy makers committed to these principles, a way forward would be that of engaging with pluriversality (a world within which many worlds fit) (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015) and nurture the conditions of possibilities of various and alternative management and organisational approaches. Practically this could be done in several ways. For instance, Jammulamadaka (2013) proposes the embracement of what she calls 'odd-ball' approaches, through which alternative management and organisational praxes can be discovered. Crucial in this sense, she suggests, is the initial suspension of both evaluation and search for causality in favour of an ideographic approach attentive and responsive to context-specific dynamics. Importantly, many NGOs especially those from the Global South already do so, especially after having been made to adopt largely impractical and unhelpful prescriptive models required by the aid industry. However, the ways through which they negotiate top-down managerial requirements in their day-to-day practice remains largely undocumented, and potentially transformative critiques emerging from civil society organizations (CSOs) practices are left underdeveloped and unexploited. In this sense, there is a dire need of bottom-up evidence and reflections on CSOs management approaches (especially in the Global South), so to enlighten how they revise and transform abstract managerialist imperatives and which approaches they adopt in their attempts to make sense and transform the contexts where they work.

An engagement with pluriversality also requires an appreciation of the political role of CSOs and the acknowledgment that management is not only about "how to do" but also, and often especially, about "what to do", thus making choices among different agendas, interests and priorities. Thus, the ubiquitous expectations for NGOs to be apolitical might need to be reconsidered. Interestingly, some actors have been already doing so, as for instance emerges from the Dutch government "Dialogue and Dissent" policy programme, which, by acknowledging the intrinsically political nature of development and underdevelopment, specifically aims at strengthening NGOs advocacy capacity in the Global South and their ability to contribute to transformative political processes (van Wessel, 2020). Interestingly, at the core of this programme, lies a critical assessment of managerialism, which is contrasted with a 'social transformation logic', characterised by an appreciation of ambiguity and dissent and a commitment to challenge structural inequalities and to widening opportunities for CSOs to play an active political role (Kamstra, 2017).

This chapter has critically reviewed the debate on development management in the NGO sector. We have seen that, while contestations over development management are recognised along a spectrum, what changes is partly the extent to which such contestations are considered and partly how they are addressed. At the one pole, a problem-solving approach prevails which aims to advance the status of development management knowledge and practice. This position, by broadly supporting the primacy of effectiveness, seems to hinder NGOs' efforts at social transformation, insofar as the focus on results belittles the role of history and of the geopolitical context in which NGOs operate, thus narrowing opportunities to question who is served by development, who decides what the results are, how they are decided and what relevance these priorities and results have, locally and globally. At the opposite pole, the debate is more oriented towards a radical critique of the pervasiveness of management thinking and practice in development, illuminating its continuities with Western colonialism and imperialism.

By placing development management within the context of history and of global power asymmetries, not only do critical perspectives offer an interesting insight into how development management contributes to the expansion of the neoliberal agenda, for instance by naturalising certain values, views, and practices and simultaneously discouraging analysing beyond the micro-level, but they also make clear suggestions on how NGO management can be transformed to better serve NGOs commitment with issues of social change, justice and equality.

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