BETWEEN AMBITION AND APPROACH: TOWARDS SITUATED MUTUAL LEARNING IN DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Julie E. Ferguson*[1]
Marleen Huysman*

* VU University Amsterdam, Department of Business Administration, Knowledge, Information & Networks (KIN) research group

ABSTRACT

Knowledge management has become a widespread organizational practice in the sector of development cooperation, but lacks a solid theoretical foundation. This paper aims to address this gap, contributing to development theory and knowledge management theory. The paper presents a three-tiered knowledge management model, encompassing epistemology, implementation, and effect, and suggests that the epistemological basis to an approach will influence its effects. The theoretical framework is illustrated with examples taken from 51 interviews in different development organizations actively involved in knowledge management. We identify a contradiction between the ambition versus the approach by which knowledge management is implemented, and argue that this risks being counterproductive to development goals. Yet, as a knowledge-intensive sector, knowledge management cannot simply be discarded. We therefore present a view on situated mutual learning as a promising avenue towards more sustainable knowledge management and, ultimately, more effective development.

[1] Corresponding author: Julie E. Ferguson, VU University Amsterdam, Department of Business Administration. Research Group Knowledge, Information & Networks, De Boelelaan 1105, Room 3A-19, 1081 HV Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Tel.: +31 20 598 6176. Email: jferguson@feweb.vu.nl

INTRODUCTION

Over the past forty years, worldwide efforts have been mobilized to address the inequalities that have led to the marginalization and deprivation of billions of people. These efforts have been broached by what has become a vast sector of development cooperation. The sector has seen a shift in focus since its introduction, reflecting a transition from foreign aid as predominantly a macro-economic impetus, to a perspective based on primarily humanist foundations (Sen 1999; Ocampo 2002; Thorbecke 2000). Development from this view is perceived as a process involving a repertoire of knowledge, skills, competencies and personal connections (human and social capital) (Laszlo and Laszlo 2002), which determines people's capacity to respond to the challenges in their environment (Powell 2006).

Organizations that differentiate themselves primarily through their ability to access, generate and leverage specialized knowledge have been described in the field of organization studies as knowledge intensive organizations (KIOs) (Alvesson 2001; Starbuck 1992). Correspondingly, development can be characterized as a knowledge intensive sector, and development agencies as knowledge intensive organizations. Many development organizations have adapted to this relatively new image of organizations as collectives of knowledge users and producers. In fact, the knowledge management (KM) hype that has been introduced more than two decades ago in business organizations has seen incremental and enthusiastic follow-up in the development sector (Quaggiotto 2005).

The interest in knowledge management within the development sector is also gaining ground in academia, reflected by the growing number of publications reporting on the role of knowledge management in development agencies and developing countries, both in the sectors of management studies (e.g. Haas 2006; Hardy, Philips and Lawrence 2003; Spencer 2008) and in development studies (e.g. King 2000; King and McGrath 2004; McFarlane 2006a,b; Powell 2006; Thompson 2004). Specific to these academic studies is that they recognize the complexities related to knowledge in terms of overcoming inequalities and effectuating change, towards which development is geared. In firms, knowledge management is oriented towards enhancing or creating a firm's value (Ruggles 1998). While in the private sector knowledge is thus a cog in the bigger wheel of strengthening efficiencies in product development and production (Davenport and Prusak 1998), in the development sector, the generation of knowledge is often the 'wheel' itself, among the recipients of development aid.

While knowledge management has become a widespread organizational practice in the development sector, it still lacks a solid theoretical and empirical foundation in terms of how such organizations go about managing the processes around organizational knowledge, and how this can impact development processes.

This paper aims to provide fill this gap, and provides two contributions to theory. First, it develops an organizational learning perspective on development theory and introduces 'knowledge management for development' (KMD) as a theoretically and empirically relevant orientation. Our second contribution is to knowledge management theory, building on Huysman and De Wit's (2002) theory on inhibitors to knowledge sharing practice, through the identification of an objectivist and a transfer bias. We further position these within Van den Hooff and Huysman's (in press) framework of engineering and emergent approaches to knowledge sharing, and discuss the specific implications to the development sector.

The paper is concerned with two research questions: How is knowledge management approached within the development sector, and how does knowledge management contribute to development? We understand knowledge management as those processes aimed at

supporting knowledge sharing, in order to strengthen knowledge generation, knowledge reuse and knowledge acquisition (Huysman and De Wit 2004).

We present a theoretical framework, illustrated with examples taken from interviews with 51 professionals in various development organizations actively involved in knowledge management, and identify a contradiction in terms of the *ambition* versus the *approach* by which knowledge management is implemented. On the one hand, many organizations have the ambition to improve their organizational learning capabilities in order to foster more effective development interventions, in terms of overcoming inequalities. They recognize that this calls for an open perspective, integrating the knowledge and expertise of a wide variety of development stakeholders. On the other hand, the approach by which knowledge management is implemented is often top-down, favoring representational knowledge of professionals over situated, local knowledge among development recipients (Thompson 2004). We explore the implications of knowledge transfer approaches within the development sector and argue that a mismatch between an organization's ambition and approach can be counter-effective to achieving development goals, strengthening rather than diminishing power inequalities. As a knowledge-intensive sector, knowledge management is a key organizational process and therefore cannot simply be discarded. We therefore advocate a focus on situated mutual learning, integrating locale-specific knowledge into dominant development paradigms.

The first section introduces the changing role of development organizations and the sector's ambition to foster learning through knowledge networking. It is followed by the research methodology and settings, also presenting the organizations' ambitions in terms of their knowledge management interventions, and the contribution to their development goals. The next section comprises the main body of the paper, and includes a theoretical foundation to KMD, supported by examples from practice. We unpack a three-tiered model of knowledge management model comprising epistemology, implementation, and effect (see figure 1). The model conceptualizes four knowledge management biases which affect the way development interventions are shaped and implemented: an objectivist bias, a management bias, an ICT bias, and a transfer bias. We discuss each of the biases, and suggest that the epistemological basis to a knowledge management approach will influence its effects. This model builds on configurational theory (Galunic and Eisenhardt 1994; Birkinshaw, Nobel and Ridderstråle 2002; Short, Payne and Ketchen 2008): superior performance is a function of a 'fit' among multiple interacting environmental and structural characteristics, including the characteristics of an organization's knowledge base.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT ORIENTATION

epistemology — objectivist bias | practice-based view

implementation — management bias | ICT bias | emergent approach

effect — transfer bias | situated mutual learning
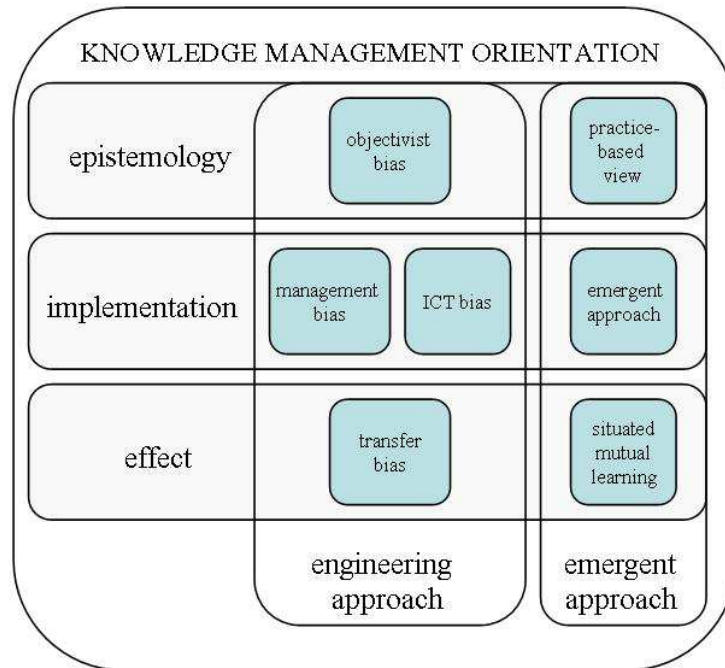
engineering approach | emergent approach

Figure 1: A three-tiered approach to knowledge management

The ensuing discussion addresses explores the potential consequences of the four biases, specific to the development sector. In response, we introduce the concept of 'situated mutual learning' as a promising avenue towards more sustainable and effective knowledge management – and ultimately, to development interventions. In an attempt to present KMD as an important field for further research, we conclude this paper with a critical research agenda.

THE AMBITION TO LEARN THROUGH KNOWLEDGE NETWORKING

Traditionally, development is often related to concepts of welfare and economic dynamics. Although these are without doubt important enablers, a humanist perspective (Sen 1999) emphasizes the human and social capital that determine to a large extent people's capacity to respond to the challenges in their environment (Laszlo and Laszlo 2002). Development is geared towards a change for the better, through people doing things differently (Powell 2006) and participating more actively in decision-making processes which affect them.

In view of the changing perspective on development from a primarily economic to a socio-political orientation (Ocampo 2003; Thorbecke 2000), organizations working in this field increasingly are required to maneuver political interests at international, national and local levels and broaching a variety of socio-cultural and political factors (see for instance Swidler and Watkins' (2009) discussion of AIDS programs across community, local, and national strata in Malawi; or Khan, Munir and Willmott's (2007) discussion of the local effect of industry-imposed child labor reform in Sialkot, Pakistan). To successfully transform, share and integrate the specific knowledge of different domains – conceptualized by Carlile (2004) as 'pragmatic boundaries' – development organizations increasingly draw on expertise pertaining to their specific field of work from both within and outside of the organization. Moreover, the global nature of many development challenges, such as child labor, HIV/Aids,

humanitarian crises, and so forth, combined with issues of 'globalization' (Anderson 2005; Collier and Dollar 2002; Doh and Teegen 2003; Lindenberg and Dobel 1999; Ocampo 2002; Ravallion 2001)[2], calls for joint forces and coordinated responses. Such responses should ideally be both globally informed and locally tailored. The distributed and complex nature of the development sector, together with the focus on connecting various fields of expertise and skills, induced many development organizations to search for ways to strengthen their access to knowledge.

In response, even the smallest NGOs have the ambition to create linkages and foster knowledge networks. Organizations are forging new connections and webs of relations to access expertise and relevant sources of knowledge, and to amplify their impact on a global stage (Lindenberg and Dobel 1999; Roberts, Jones and Fröhling 2005). On a broader scale, the trend towards a networking approach is in line with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which comprise eight priorities to be achieved by 2015. The MDGs were identified by UN member states and international organizations in an effort to combat poverty and inequality in a coordinated manner. All development organizations receiving funding from public donor organizations are committed to contributing to the achievement of the MDGs. In specific, MDG 8 targets the development of a 'global partnership for development', which at once signals the rising importance of networking, and provides organizations with a further impetus to adopt a networking approach to development.

In sum, the interest in knowledge management within the development sector was borne from the recognition that sustainable development involves interaction with stakeholders across different levels, and requires precisely the type of pragmatic boundary spanning described by Carlile (2004). The question is though, how is knowledge conceptualized, and how does this influence development interventions? After introducing our research approach, the organization settings and their knowledge management ambitions, we provide a further theorization of knowledge management in the development sector, and illustrate how KMD is being approached in practice.

METHOD AND RESEARCH SETTINGS

The overall question that guided this research is: "How does knowledge management contribute to more responsive development interventions?". We explored this research question from a theoretical perspective and supplemented this through interviews with professionals directly or indirectly involved in knowledge management. Different types of development organizations in different geographical settings were selected to gather varied perspectives.

---

[2] Globalization is a broad and fairly ill-defined concept but can generally be understood as a complex and multifaceted process leading to greater interdependence among countries and their citizens. The discourse is often placed in an economic setting, but also relates to other equally important factors such as political, technological and cultural aspects of life (Fischer 2003). Critical debate pertaining to globalization often focuses on the processes of global integration, exploring its effects on trade, cultural diversity, migration and labor flows, and so forth. The overall effect of globalization is that people across the world are affected to a large extent by developments in other countries.

Our selection of potential organizations was based on the assumption that at least two conditions might influence better participation in decision making. First is the introduction of knowledge management strategies. More and more development organizations turn explicitly to knowledge management as an attempt to improve their access to relevant sources of knowledge, particularly among their Southern stakeholders. The purpose of such approaches is to make their interventions more relevant to those they are trying to reach. We therefore included organizations that had introduced formal knowledge management strategies as well as organizations that took more informal approaches to knowledge sharing. The second condition is the organization's orientation to knowledge management. Our assumption is that an internal orientation to knowledge management is less likely to include the knowledge of outside constituents than an external orientation, making it more difficult for 'downstream knowledge' to be represented in complex processes, such as policy development (Carlile 2004). We included representatives of both orientations. Figure 2 schematizes the selected organizations' orientation towards the two knowledge management conditions (see table 1 for further details).
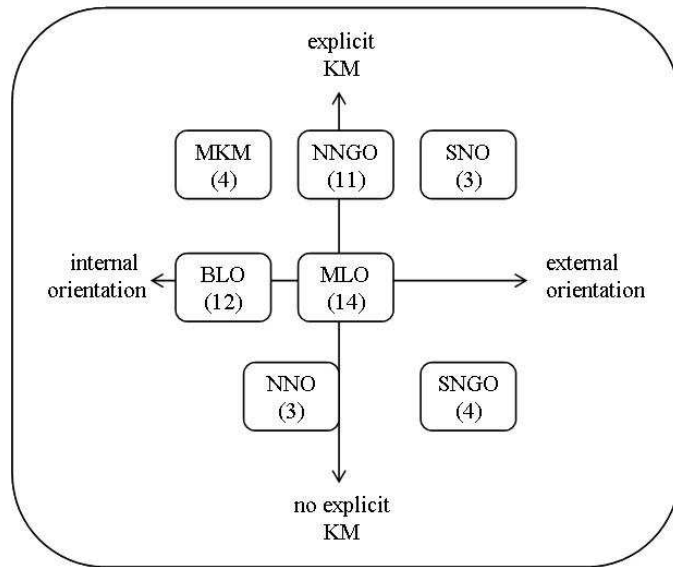

Figure 2: Organization profiles

Organizations were identified by means of a short unsolicited online inquiry[3], sent to members of an international KMD network[4]. 246 organizations responded.

We asked each organization to identify key people involved in knowledge management. This resulted in 51 semi-structured (fully transcribed) interviews with professionals who were all directly or indirectly involved with knowledge management[5] (Appendix A: table 3). The different weights among the sample can be explained by first, the differences in size between

---

[3] The survey questions can be provided upon request.

[4] The network is an active community of mostly development practitioners, plus researchers, policy makers and private sector representatives, who are interested in knowledge management and knowledge sharing issues and approaches. For a case study of this network, see Ferguson and Cummings 2008.

[5] The interview protocol can be provided upon request.

the organizations. The smaller organizations are characterized by denser ties, therefore staff members generally reflected similar perceptions on (issues relating to) knowledge management. The larger, 'hybrid' organizations, placed on the interstices of the axes in figure 2, were more complex to position and therefore required further inquiry before a degree of saturation was achieved (Miles and Huberman 1994). Second, however, it is important to note that the results we sought through these interviews were not intended to provide conclusive evidence but rather served to illustrate our theoretical arguments. The interviews were further supplemented through archival data of each organization to further cross-reference the results (mission statements, organizational and knowledge management policy documents, websites, evaluations, internal surveys, reports, et cetera). The results provide a stepping stone for further, more in-depth research and theory development.

Type of organization	Name & acronym	# interviewees
Bilateral organization	'Bilateral Organization' (BLO)	12
Non-government organization (the Netherlands)	'Civil Society NGO' (NNGO)	11
Multilateral organization (UN)	'UN organization' (MLO)	14
Multilateral donor organization, knowledge management division	'Donor KM Organization' (MKM)	4
Practitioner network organization (USA)	'Practitioner network (North)' (NNO)	3
Non-government organization (Uganda)	'Uganda NGO' (SNGO)	4
Practitioner network organization (East and Southern Africa)	'Practitioner network (South)' (SNO)	3
Total		*51*

Table 1: Organization overview

Below, we briefly introduce the seven organizations, and their stated knowledge management ambitions.

Organization settings

The bilateral organization focuses on themes such as poverty reduction, education, health care and the environment. The organization can be classified as a distributed organization, with a head office in the home country and 150 posts around the world, although the data collected here comprise only a representation of the former. A ministerial policy was approved in 2005, aimed at developing and implementing knowledge and research strategies for each of the ministry's divisions, coordinated by the research and communications division. Four such strategies have been developed so far but further development seems to have stagnated at the time of our research. Furthermore, an initiative has been launched to develop thematic policy-research partnerships with leading research universities, aimed at fostering knowledge development and in-depth learning. So far, nine such partnerships are under way, in varying stages of development. The organization has a strong internal orientation to knowledge management, with the ambition to strengthen staff members' in-depth technical knowledge of pertinent themes, in order to respond more effectively to the requirements of the political environment (Wiedenhof and Molenaar 2006).

The Dutch NGO ('Civil Society NGO') contributes to programmes on basic social services, sustainable economic development, democratisation and peace building, through donor support to partner organizations in 50 countries, and through various lobby activities on a national and international level. The organization adopted an institution-wide knowledge and learning strategy and is currently reorganizing as a 'network organization', which means that it aims to decentralize and conduct its work through various Southern partner organizations. The organization's knowledge management orientation is currently internally focused, but aims to devolve as the strategy matures. Its overall KM ambition is to strengthen the network organization, and to ensure that knowledge is not lost after the decentralization.

The multilateral organization ('UN organization') is specifically focused on promoting social justice and internationally recognized human rights. It has a large head office and 40 field offices. The organization's management recently approved a knowledge management policy, but this is neither widely known, nor widely implemented across the organization's head office, let alone the field offices. The organization's knowledge management orientation can be considered a 'hybrid' in terms of its orientation towards both internal and external stakeholders. Its KM ambition is to improve the organization's effectiveness by leveraging knowledge resources both internal and external, but it also encompasses management's internal information needs.

A second multilateral donor organization in our study ('Donor KM Organization') is focused on capacity development on a wide range of development topics, directed towards policy makers of donor organizations as well as high level policy makers in developing countries. The knowledge management division of this organization aims to provide information management and ICT advisory support to the rest of the organization in order to improve their development effectiveness, and to provide e-learning courses. Although external constituents are sometimes included, the explicit knowledge management approach is predominantly internally oriented.

The Northern practitioner network organization ('Practitioner Network (North)') includes organizations clustered in and around the Washington DC region, providing information services mostly to US development workers across the globe, but also to various development counterparts directly. It focuses on health-related topics and does not have a formal knowledge management policy or strategy, although knowledge sharing is its main *raison d'être*. Its knowledge management ambition is to facilitate better internal knowledge sharing, to allow staff to more effectively carry out their day-to-day work.

The Uganda-based NGO ('NGO Uganda') is a network organization focusing on the use of technology towards sustainable development. It is geared towards the implementation of projects across the country, as well as policy influencing at a national level. It is locally managed but receives core funding from a European donor agency, supplemented at times by financial or in-kind support from local businesses. The organization's main aim is to generate knowledge, foster knowledge sharing and influence policy around the central theme it focuses on, but no formal knowledge management policy is in place. The organization has a strong external orientation.

Finally, the Southern practitioner network organization ('Practitioner Network (South)') is a Southern-driven organization, representing Southern practitioners working on infrastructural issues in a development setting, with gender issues as a crosscutting theme. Its main activities are advocacy and research. The organization is guided by an explicit knowledge management policy with a strong external orientation, and with the aim to fostering networking,

information sharing and mutual knowledge generation in order to more effectively conduct its advocacy activities.

In the following section, we further unpack these ambitions for KM, and explore how these should be understood in light of the changing role of development organizations.

APPROACHES TO KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT

Development organizations increasingly recognize the need to integrate knowledge across different levels if they are to improve aid effectiveness. Consequently, development organizations are turning to knowledge management as a way to support this ambition, and are incorporating concepts of knowledge, learning and networking in development strategies (Powell 2006, McFarlane 2006a). Based on a three-tiered model (schematized above in figure 1), we explore how organizations' epistemological foundations influence implementations of knowledge management, and what the effect of this is on organizations' orientation. Four biases are identified within the framework. We explore theory related to each of these issues, and present whether and how this resonates with findings from practice. Table 2 provides a summary of whether observations of these biases occurred in the organizations we studied.

Orientation	Bias	BLO	NNGO	MLO	MKM	NNO	SNGO	SNO
Epistemology	objectivist	+	+-	+-	+	+	-	-
KM implementation	management	+	+	+	+	+-	-	-
	ICT	-	++	+	++	+	+-	+-
Effect	transfer	+	+	+	+	+	-	+-

Table 2: Observations of biases

Epistemological grounding of KM: the objectivist bias

The first tier involves an organization's basic theory of knowledge. Various authors have argued that an organization's conceptualization of knowledge has far-reaching implications for how it comes to shape and practice its interventions (McFarlane 2006a; Birkinshaw et al. 2002; Thompson and Walsham 2004; Alavi and Leidner 2001). Current knowledge management literature often juxtaposes two perspectives on knowledge, namely the objectivist and the practice-based perspectives on knowledge (Hislop 2005). The practice-based perspective, increasingly adopted in knowledge management (Thompson and Walsham 2004), posits knowledge not as a self-contained entity, but as emergent in socially constructed practices (Gherardi 2006; Orlikowski 2002; Brown and Duguid 2001). Knowledge is recognized as culturally embedded (Hislop 2005) and is therefore context dependent[6]. Knowledge management strategies based on a practice-based approach thus focus on knowledge flow, rather than capture or transfer, and the management of social relations, embodied in the structures, practices and routines of an organization (Ringberg and Reihlen 2008). This is aimed towards supporting the ability of individuals to gain knowledge while carrying out their tasks (Tsoukas and Vladimirou 2001).

---

[6] We draw on Thompson and Walsham's (2004) definition of context as space in which "shared and non-shared, historically pre-existent, components of experience fuse completely in a unique configuration to a particular experience-in-activity" (Thompson and Walsham 2004: 742).

In the objectivist perspective, knowledge is viewed as a commodity or entity (Szulanski 1996, Glazer 1998) that can be transferred between a sender and a receiver. From this perspective, all knowledge – including personal, tacit knowledge – can be externalized and made explicit (Nonaka 1994), and meaning is perceived as embedded in words or symbols rather than in the mind (Ringberg and Reihlen 2008). Organizational knowledge comprises 'stocks', often captured and shared through technologies. Knowledge management strategies based on an objectivist approach to knowledge will, therefore, focus largely on gathering, storing and manipulating codified knowledge (Alavi and Leidner 2001).

Prior evidence from the development sector has shown that there is a tendency to favor a conception of knowledge as "objective, universal and instrumental" (McFarlane 2006a: 288). This results in what we conceptualize as an *objectivist bias* to knowledge management. The content of knowledge is not problematized, but taken at face value as if containing 'universal truth'. An objectivist approach is problematic for various reasons, as has often been argued (for instance Brown and Duguid 2001; Cook and Brown 1999; Hendriks 2001; Hislop 2005; McDermott 1999; Wilson 2002), and contributes to the failure of many knowledge management projects. In light of the particularities of the development sector, where contextual differences are so pertinent to the success of an approach, and power inequalities the essence of what development is aimed at overcoming, a knowledge management approach with an objectivist bias disregards the differences and dependencies between pragmatic boundaries. Indeed, such a universalist approach to knowledge management has more serious consequences than adding yet another project on the list of failed initiatives: it contributes to unequal power relations and reinforcing Western hegemony.

In our exploration of knowledge management in development practice, an objectivist bias to knowledge management is reflected in five of the seven organizations we studied (Bilateral Organization; UN Organization; Civil Society Organization; Donor KM Organization; Practitioner Network (North)). Knowledge is not perceived as 'real' knowledge or useful, unless it is made explicit. For instance, *"there is a lot of informal exchange and learning, but not much of that is captured. We are looking at how we can agendize this, to stimulate awareness that you can only have a successful consultation if the results can be made explicit"* (NNGO1). In these organizations, knowledge management is primarily operationalized towards making organizational knowledge explicit, and capturing it in documents and databases. Interestingly, we found that the two Southern-oriented networks have a less explicit externalization approach to knowledge management. These organizations recognized the importance of tacit dimensions to knowledge that are lost through codification and emphasized face-to-face knowledge sharing as the most effective knowledge management approaches. This might be attributable to a stronger oral tradition to transfer indigenous knowledge in many developing countries, versus the Western preference for written accounts and scientific knowledge to underscore the pretence of universal validity (Briggs and Sharp 2004; Finlay 2008; Jaya 2001). Less reliable technology infrastructure could also play a role. All in all, the way in which knowledge is conceptualized in organizations appears to affect how KM is implemented, both in terms of management and focus on technology. These two dimensions are comprised in the second tier and will each be discussed separately.

Strategic implementation of KM: Management bias

The second tier relates to the way by which organizations go about implementing knowledge management. A recurring theme within strategic knowledge management literature is how to effectively manage knowledge sharing processes. This is closely related to an organization's

perception on knowledge. On the one hand, where knowledge is perceived as culturally embedded, subjective and related to daily practice, the role of managers is pushed to the periphery (Van den Hooff and Huysman, in press). Management tasks involve fostering social relations and trust, and strengthening social capital and 'heuristic knowledge', i.e. the ability of individuals to gain knowledge while carrying out their tasks (Tsoukas and Vladimirou 2001; Spender 1998). Knowledge management from this perspective does not so much involve capturing and transferring 'stocks' of explicit knowledge, but rather involves facilitating knowledge flow (Alavi and Leidner 2001).

On the other hand is the more conventional perspective on management as a 'control' and decision-making function (Hofstede 1981). The desire to control critical organizational resources also translates to knowledge management. Grafted on knowledge-based theories of organizations (Spender 1996; Grant 1996) is the recognition that the key to an organization's success is its ability to leverage expertise. With this comes the perceived need to manage and control knowledge resources. This tendency has been described as a *management bias* (Huysman and De Wit 2004). The effect of the management bias is that knowledge management is approached from a managerial perspective, rather than as something that emerges 'naturally' from the organization in support of workers' responsibilities. The management bias is embedded in a view on knowledge as a stock, which can and should be externalized so that knowledge work can be monitored and replicated.

In terms of the management bias, our research revealed a hiatus between espoused theory and theories in use, to use the concepts of Aryris and Schon (1991). This was observed in the Bilateral Organization, the Civil Society NGO, the UN Organization, and the Donor KM Organization. For instance, in the Bilateral Organization there is a general recognition that knowledge sharing cannot be enforced, and depends on the willingness of staff, presence of trust, and relevance of knowledge to work. At the same time, the success of knowledge management is perceived to depend on coordination by 'knowledge managers' and incentives from top management, reinforcing the management bias. Similar tendencies were observed within the Civil Society NGO, UN Organization and Donor KM Organization, where specific staff was appointed for knowledge management purposes, devolving responsibility to a handful of people rather than dispersing it throughout the organization. An over-emphasis on management involvement in knowledge sharing appeared to entail two threats to the longevity of knowledge management in these organizations: first, a loss of perceived relevance of knowledge management to day-to-day work, as demonstrated by increasing resistance and rejection among staff (Bilateral Organization), knowledge sharing fatigue (UN Organization), or a tendency to placate management by "talking the talk but not walking the walk" (Bilateral and UN Organizations). Second, these organizations reflected a 'crowding-out effect' (Osterloh and Frey 2000): without explicit incentives to share knowledge, staff's willingness to continue sharing knowledge dwindled, particularly under time constraints. Such constraints were mentioned in each interview among these four organizations as the primary threat to knowledge sharing.

As has been mentioned in previous studies, successful knowledge management depends on the willingness of knowledge workers to share knowledge, which in turn depends on the relevance of the knowledge being shared to workers' context and activities (for instance Alvesson 2001; Tsoukas and Vladimirou 2001; Roberts 2006). Our research revealed that the management bias was perceived less where such a balance between willingness and relevance was present. This was observed especially in the NGO Uganda, the Practitioner Network (North) and the Practitioner Network (South). Knowledge management within these organizations emerged in response to concrete, on the ground needs (respectively, poor and

unreliable infrastructure and dispersed knowledge on how to address this problem; a cluster of geographically collocated organizations working on a common theme and having to address common challenges; and the recognition of a hiatus in terms of available infrastructure by development practitioners). While participation in these organizations' knowledge sharing and networking activities is entirely voluntary, participation has grown incrementally and activities are flourishing – despite, or perhaps thanks to, a lack of management 'control' of knowledge management.

Strategic implementation of KM: ICT bias

A second dimension within the second tier to knowledge management approaches relates to the role of ICT in knowledge management. Organizations which harness a stock approach to knowledge, and seek to manage and control it, often implement knowledge management according to a technology-driven orientation (Alavi and Leidner 2001; Hislop 2005). The technology-driven or *ICT bias* assumes that the most obvious way to share knowledge is through usage of ICT: as long as the appropriate tools and means are provided, people can and will share knowledge (Huysman and De Wit 2002). In terms of approaches to implementing knowledge management, the ICT bias induces organizations to focus on tools and methods for sharing knowledge, irrespective of whether they are in fact appropriate to match the objectives of the organization, or match its culture. Indeed, technology is perceived as key to improving knowledge sharing, and knowledge management efforts are largely related to implementing technologies, and training and encouraging staff to use them. Many authors have recognized the ability of ICT to inspire knowledge management and its importance in facilitating knowledge sharing and access to sources of knowledge (McDermott 1999; Walsham 2001; Alavi and Leidner 2001). At the same time however, ICT significantly reduces the ability to share social cues, tacit knowledge and the development of shared identity, and so ultimately falls short in terms of facilitating effective knowledge sharing (Hendriks 2001; Roberts 2000).

Our observations revealed a technocratic orientation to knowledge management in six of the organizations (all but the Bilateral Organization). An example of the ICT bias is the strong digitization focus within the Civil Society NGO on a central information database and the introduction of wikis, aimed to facilitate learning. The organization is spending a great deal of effort training staff in the use of these tools, but uptake is slow.

The Donor KM Organization also reflected strong evidence of ICT bias. The organization introduced knowledge management as a way to promote e-learning and improve communications, and seeks to implement this through the development of a website. "*We are trying to pick up knowledge management … So if you talk about exchanging experiences, you need a central tool to enable that, which is why we invested a lot in the development of a good website, and especially maintain it. We also have an electronic bulletin. … Those are the first steps. But if there are also other tools we can use, then gladly*" (MLO-KM1). The person in charge of this project (a senior official with a background in engineering) expresses that "*people like to participate in meetings far from the office, it's a good opportunity for walking around. But technologies are capable to fulfill all that instead*" (MLO-KM3). The knowledge management discussion paper guiding the project exclusively presents and discusses technologies for knowledge management and capacity building purposes, to be integrated in and around the website. However, what the organization experienced once the website was completed, was first, minimal active usage of the website; second, a call for the development of a new website with more/other functionality, because the initial website has

not improved communications; and third, an overall lack of interest to continue with what was being pitched as knowledge management.

These are typical symptoms of the ICT trap: organizations believe that earlier barriers can be overcome simply by improving the technology (Huysman and De Wit 2004).

In combination, the technology and management bias reflect an engineering approach to knowledge management that is quite pervasive in organizations (Van den Hooff and Huysman, in press). Typical to this engineering approach is that knowledge management is introduced as 'additional' to core business processes and as extra tasks in often already burdened workloads. This is identified as an obstacle to knowledge sharing in 48 of the interviews across the organizations studied. For instance, "*sometimes you just are so caught up in urgent issues, that you just don't have time to learn"* (NNGO11)*; "there is one thing about knowledge sharing, it is quite time consuming*" (MLO11); "*space has to be created for knowledge management. Everybody is already overburdened, so there is resistance because they think that knowledge management and time for knowledge is an extra burden which costs time that they don't have*" (BLO5). This approach to learning as an add-on, rather than organizational learning as a naturally emerging process of collective knowledge construction (Huysman 2000a), endangers the sustainability of knowledge management: when management develops different priorities, when a knowledge management tool is unsuccessful, or its novelty has worn out, staff proceeds back to the order of the day, and knowledge management is dismissed as ineffective.

The Practitioner Network (South) has adopted a different approach, first facilitating the development of a network through face-to-face encounters, and then introducing ICT after the network has become more established. This improves the likelihood of technologies responding to users' needs, and thus the chance for knowledge management approaches to succeed (Alavi and Leidner 2001). It is striking however, that now that a digitization trajectory has been initiated in this organization, the key to successful networking is said to be *technology* skills, and "*not being afraid of technology*" (SNO2).

Clearly, the engineering approach to knowledge management is not helpful in fulfilling the organizations' ambitions towards a more inclusive approach to knowledge sharing. An overly coordinated approach, focusing on codification of knowledge in technologies, fosters an inward-looking focus, and appears not to be capable of integrating locally embedded knowledge that is developed within the developing regions and countries itself. This was revealed when we focused more on the actual content of the knowledge.

KM effect: transfer bias

The third tier relates to the effect of knowledge management where ambitions and approaches are incompatible. As discussed above, the objectivist bias to knowledge, conceptualized as an epistemology of possession (Cook and Brown 1999), reduces knowledge to a one-dimensional entity, separable from context. In terms of management, this contributes to control approach to knowledge and engineering knowledge sharing. Tools and technologies play a key role, towards gathering, storing and manipulating codified knowledge (Alavi and Leidner 2001).

The combined effect of the abovementioned biases on development is that knowledge management is conceived as an instrument "that can be delivered unchanged as a development 'solution' " (McFarlane 2006a: 289).

We conceptualize this as a *transfer bias*. While the aforementioned biases have similar effects on both private and public sector organizations, a knowledge management approach characterized by a transfer bias particularly jeopardizes development sector initiatives. Theory reflects three important reasons why this is the case. The first relates to a neglect of external constituents. Knowledge management interventions generally aim to help organizations more effectively reach and involve their development constituents. Knowledge transfer approaches however involve a focus on teaching, which entails a prescriptive approach to learning (Huysman 2000a). Moreover, the objectivist basis underlying transfer approaches contributes to reducing knowledge "to a technology that can be applied, that is, a static entity that can be shifted around to do the job of development" (McFarlane 2006a: 289). Knowledge management from this perspective inhibits the inclusion of perspectives beyond the boundaries of the organization. As a result, the primary focus is often the Northern development agencies themselves (King 2000) and the internal knowledge possessed by team members, as opposed to external knowledge, that is possessed with and by outside sources (Haas 2006).

The second reason relates to the neglect of contextual embeddedness of knowledge. Successful development practice depends on awareness and thorough understanding of the context in which interventions are set (Powell 2006). Yet transfer approaches are grafted on assumptions of 'universality' of knowledge, which unproblematically translates and transfers between contexts. This negates 'pluralistic epistemologies' (Spender 1998) or 'multiple knowledges' (Powell 2006), the different types of knowledge among its diverse stakeholders which an organization makes use of (Tsoukas 2004) and which are so pertinent to context-rich development practice.

The third reason relates to power aspects in knowledge management, and is based in critical development literature such as Escobar (1995), Mudimbe (1988) and Ferguson (1994). It resonates with theory on power/knowledge (Foucault 1980), related to the embeddedness of learning in relations of power (Contu and Wilmott 2003; Carlile 2004). Indeed, knowledge management is "not only about remembering and managing knowledge, but actively marginalizing, discarding and forgetting knowledge not deemed as legitimate" (Hislop 2005: 98). The dissemination of knowledge is perceived as a highly political process involving negotiations to establish the legitimacy of competing knowledge claims (Hislop 2005; Rossi 2004). Knowledge transfer is the expression of what is perceived as 'legitimate' knowledge, and conversely, rejecting other knowledge. In development practice, knowledge transfer is most often from North to South - whereby Western development solutions are imposed upon the realities of development constituents (Escobar 1995; McFarlane 2006a). While the development sector is aimed at overcoming inequalities and enabling marginalized people to express their voices, knowledge transfer can contribute to a converse effect, marginalizing alternatives (Rossi 2004; Briggs and Sharp 2004). As such, knowledge management can turn out to be counterproductive to development aims.

The transfer bias explains the preference within development organizations, encountered particularly at the beginning of this decade, for knowledge management approaches focusing on the collection and sharing of best practices, case stories, 'lessons learned', the development of 'knowledge clearing houses', and so forth.[7] Although the cases and stories

---

[7] For instance, the Bridges.org ICT-enabled Development Case Study series [http://www.bridges.org/case_studies]; the ICT Stories competition [http://www.iconnect-online.org/stories]; the Development Gateway [http://www.developmentgateway.org]. For a critical review of the Development

shared were often interesting windows into the challenges and approaches which specific development actors encountered, they said little if nothing about how such efforts could be duplicated in different contexts, or what it was that made them succeed or fail. Especially in the specific context of development organizations, the replicability of lessons learned is limited from one context to another, due to language barriers, differences in geographical and political circumstances, perceptions towards the cause of inequalities, and so forth. In other words, best practices have mediocre effect in fostering learning about more effective development. Indeed, after the initial hype, such approaches fizzled out.

Each of these three issues can be discerned among the development organizations we explored, most predominantly in the Northern organizations, and to a lesser extent in the two Southern organizations. Particularly the Bilateral Organization, whose ultimate beneficiaries are supposedly the Southern stakeholders in the developing world, reflects a strong internal knowledge management orientation. "*The target group is in the first instance the colleagues in the field offices* (and) … *the higher management layers, not the poor person in a shantytown. We simply do not work at that local level*" (BLO2). The organization recognizes that this contributes to a distinct disconnect between Northern and Southern development stakeholders, yet deems knowledge at the local level irrelevant to their practice: "*Everyone who says that we don't understand much about Africa is right. You can suggest activities to get local knowledge from villages into our organization, but that leads to nowhere as we can't do anything with that knowledge, we are not working on that level*" (BLO 10). The power/knowledge dimensions of knowledge management are also recognized in all organizations. "*The local staff knows much more about their local context than we do. And yet we barely take advantage of their knowledge. … This is in part because they are lower in rank and are deemed second rate. (Agency) staff always takes the lead, so you see that when they speak, the local staff keeps their mouth shut*" (BLO4). In other words, hierarchy determines the ability to participate in knowledge sharing, not one's knowledgeability. However, organizations are unsure as to how these issues should or can be addressed. For instance, the Civil Society NGO reflected: "*You try and develop a type of relationship which is more mutual than saying 'I am from the donor organization, so I determine how things go, because I have the funding'. We try and break through this dynamic, so you try not to address weaknesses in knowledge too harshly. But well, it is a balancing act between what you impose, and accepting people as they are*" (NNGO 1). (This organization is undergoing a transformation to a network organization, in an attempt to overcome this problem.) Another illustration of these problems is that many organizations mentioned budgetary constraints as putting pressure on Southern participation in face-to-face knowledge sharing events (Practitioner Network (North), Donor KM Organization), which prohibits more active involvement of these stakeholders. And as a final example, in the Bilateral Organization, the policy-research partnerships involve Northern research institutes, with Southern development constituents participating passively as the research subjects.

Where Southern stakeholders are involved, similar problems can be encountered. For instance, Practitioner Network (South) mentioned a case in which Northern development practitioners are aware of a problem on the ground, yet favor geo-political interests over evidence from the field that alternative priorities should be tended to. One example was the prioritization of World Bank agendas and high visibility infrastructure projects, over much-

---

Gateway, see for instance Bebbington, Guggenheim, Olsen and Woolcock (2004); Fidler (2001); King (2002); Mehta (2001); Thompson (2004).

needed maintenance projects that were agendized by the Southern constituents of the organization (SNO1).

The Uganda NGO reflected least evidence of the transfer bias. While there is some involvement with international organizations, and efforts are underway to strengthen this, the organization maintains strong ties with local and national policymakers, and therefore is able to generate direct linkages between the challenges, opportunities and solutions among its constituents. In the words of Mudimbe (1988), the organization addresses their own development challenges, rather than following a view on reality imposed by 'experts'' perceptions of the supposed beneficiaries. The Uganda NGO provides a positive example where knowledge is shared between policymakers and development practitioners, both in the North and South, as well as the recipients of development interventions. Explicit efforts are made to ensure people share a common understanding of important issues, so that development discourse is inclusive of varied interests. Rather than a transfer approach of the representational knowledge of professionals (Thompson 2004), the network is geared towards sharing situated, local knowledge. This model emerged in response to development needs, and the organizational has incrementally grown in size and in influence. As a result, it is succeeding in putting relevant issues on the development radar which would otherwise perhaps not have been picked up. For instance, the organization hosted a 3-day workshop, which was attended by almost 50 ministers and permanent secretaries of ministries (partly enabled through the active involvement of a senior member of parliament in the organization), who were given hands-on experience with the issues the organization was addressing. Not long after that, the government not only committed to, but actually established a Ministry dedicated to the theme the organization was advocating. Although it is difficult to attribute this result directly to the organization's advocacy efforts, it is highly plausible that they played a significant role.

This is an example where situated knowledge is successfully shared across pragmatic boundaries, and a form of mutual learning achieved. We discuss the construct of situated mutual learning in the following discussion, and present it as a promising avenue for sustainable knowledge management that contributes towards more effective development.

DISCUSSION: TOWARDS SITUATED MUTUAL LEARNING

To understand the construct of situated mutual learning, it is helpful to briefly explore the core concepts of situated knowledge and mutual learning separately first. Theories on situated knowledge recognize that knowledge is embedded in locale-specific practices (Sole and Edmondson 2002); moving knowledge to a sphere beyond the cognitive contents of individuals' minds encourages a recognition of learning practices in wider social relations (Contu and Willmott 2003). In the struggle for legitimacy of domain-specific knowledge, power is being expressed (Carlile 2004). In other words, concepts of situated knowledge recognize the significance of power in knowledge management.

A knowledge management approach from a practice-based perspective takes into consideration the situated character of knowledge, recognizing that knowledge is embedded in locale-specific practices (Sole and Edmondson 2002). However, in the case of the development sector, it is at least questionable whether this practice-based perspective offers the best way to fulfill its ambitions. Most importantly, the concepts of situated knowledge still insufficiently provide a solution to the inward-looking view of development practitioners, restricting their ability to look beyond familiar practices and think beyond

dominant discourses of development professionals. Indeed, a criticism on situated knowledge is that it can be invisible to those external to a practice, because knowledge is often taken for granted by a community and is therefore not shared (Sole and Edmondson 2002; Amin and Roberts 2008; Huysman 2003). As a result, the possibility of influencing the external environment is limited.

Therefore, we advocate for a *situated mutual learning* approach that goes one step further. Mutual learning (March 1991) describes the interaction between individuals and their organizational environment. In a mutual learning situation, multiple learning units adapt to one another (Huysman 2000b). More concretely, individuals overcome their 'epistemic differences' (Brown and Duguid 2001), and specific situated practices, context, and bargaining positions contribute to the generation of common knowledge. Situated mutual learning is an outcome of negotiation between parties and takes into account unequal positions and power relations. Learning is not a one-way process of knowledge transfer, but comprises multiple, mutually dependent parties. Indeed, it is not *despite* epistemic differences, but *through* them, that learning occurs and novel solutions can be developed to pervasive development challenges (Haas 1990; McFarlane 2006b).

In this paper, we presented a theoretical framework linking knowledge management to development, with the aim of presenting why and how development interventions can become more responsive to the challenges encountered in practice. We illustrated this theory with examples from different development organizations harnessing explicit knowledge management approaches versus more emergent approaches, and based on internal versus external orientations to knowledge management.

Based on our review of prior work, and the examples derived from practice, we would suggest that there is less a need for an explicit knowledge management approach, than for an explicit concretization of the organization's underlying theory of knowledge. Examples were found in organizations with explicit (Practitioner Network (South)) as well as in organizations with implicit (Uganda NGO) knowledge management approaches, where knowledge sharing was an integral part of staff's work routines, and where a degree of situated mutual learning appeared to be achieved. Moreover, organizations with a focus on coordination and control of their knowledge management approaches, or strong technology orientations, appeared less successful in developing or sustaining support towards knowledge sharing (Bilateral Organization, Donor KM Organization). The difference between these organizations appeared to lie in the external versus internal orientation towards knowledge management, and the degree to which they responded to emerging needs of their staff. Therefore, we would suggest that organizations need to foster awareness how an objectivist versus a practice-based view on knowledge can further influence implementation and effects of knowledge management, and development processes.

The specific importance of these results to organizations in the development sector is related to the effect which different approaches have towards achieving development goals. Where development organizations have the ambition to foster more inclusive development networks, in order to develop more in-depth understanding of the contexts in which they work and ultimately to make their development interventions more effective, it is important to recognize what this means for managing processes that support knowledge sharing. An objectivist perspective on knowledge can contribute to a knowledge management approach that is counterproductive to these ambitions, by further reinforcing power inequalities.

The incompatibility between ambition on the one hand and approach on the other has serious consequences. To put it bluntly, without bringing the approach in line with the ambitions, in the long run knowledge management can be self-destructive of the sector's mission and purpose. The implicit focus on knowledge as an objective entity, implemented through a managerial bias to knowledge management and an over-emphasis on technology, stands in the way of achieving a sustainable and open relation with the recipients of aid. In the light of the specific sector as highly sensitive to political and power struggles, the bias towards knowledge transfer might be seen as the most serious condition detracting from the general ambition. Moreover, transfer approaches are likely to strengthen the domination of Northern agencies in terms of defining the policy agenda, further marginalizing Southern participation in agenda setting. Not only does such marginalization foreclose the opportunity to identify innovative development approaches, but it contributes to the perpetuation of power inequalities between donors and recipients. It is precisely these inequalities which the development sector is aimed at overcoming. In other words, development efforts risk becoming self-defeating.

In terms of organizational governance, this implies that the role of management needs to be redefined, moving from a traditional 'control' perspective towards a managed context within which a quasi-autonomous system can emerge, and which is "able to absorb and address the environmental uncertainties implicit in its chosen strategy" (Spender 1998). Such an organic system resonates with an emergent approach to knowledge management, and in the context of development cooperation, is more likely to provide space for the integration of diverse contexts into a mutual frame of reference. Where such space is created, mutual learning across pluralist epistemologies can be achieved, presenting a promising avenue towards more sustainable development.

CONCLUSIONS

This review served to provide a theoretical foundation to knowledge management for development, based on a review of the literature and some preliminary findings. We present a model that serves as an orientation to the issues related to different approaches to knowledge management. This model does not prescribe a contingency approach (Donaldson 2003) which links specific contingencies (such as size, complexity, strategic positioning) to an ideal-typical organization structure. Rather, the model serves to underscore that an organization's approach to knowledge management is profoundly affected by its basic theory of knowledge. This builds on a configurational approach in organization theory, which seeks to explain why some configurations fit a certain context better than others and thus are likely to be more successful (Short et al. 2008).

The paper provides a preliminary empirical basis to further research on knowledge management approaches. We explored how the development sector has embraced knowledge management and identified that knowledge management approaches in the development sector reflect a tendency towards first generation knowledge management, guided by an epistemology of possession. One of the most prevailing characteristics within the sector is a focus on knowledge transfer, and 'forced learning' processes. The risk is that knowledge management fails to contribute to the sector's ability to become more responsive to the needs of their intended beneficiaries in the South and develop innovative solutions to pervasive challenges. More fundamentally, power/knowledge inequalities are left unaddressed, or worse, strengthened. Overall, knowledge management might become counter-effective to development efforts.

As a recognized knowledge-intensive sector, development organizations have an intrinsic need for a management approach that puts knowledge processes at the centre of their operations. There is a growing awareness of the necessity to draw on sources of knowledge among a wide variety of development constituents to ensure that what are presented as development solutions correspond to on the ground realities. To ensure that this ambition can be reached, we believe an emergent approach to knowledge management can contribute to more sustainable development interventions.

This paper builds on prior work that identifies the inherent difficulties of knowledge sharing across multiple cultures and across unequal power relations (Bechky 2003; Holden and Von Kortzfleish 2004; Lam 1997; McFarlane 2006b; Sole and Edmondson 2002). Our research is not aimed at finding concrete solutions to these challenges. Rather, it reflects on the particular consequences of these challenges in the development sector, signaling the potential counter-effectiveness of an engineering approach to knowledge management towards achieving more sustainable development. We provide suggestions as to which approaches to knowledge management are likely to correspond with the sector's espoused ambitions, and argued for a focus on situated mutual learning as the core of KMD. Such a focus could contribute to creating space for pluralist epistemologies beyond dominant development discourses, and greater participation and empowerment in agenda setting processes.

We identify a number of implications for further research. This paper presents a theoretical framework, illustrated with a description of organizational perceptions, ambitions and approaches to knowledge management. The next step is to substantiate this first step through more in-depth empirical research, in order to further test the implications that we have touched upon in the discussion of this paper. Such research should include a broader representation of stakeholders, especially from the South, as well as organizations that are more geographically 'hybrid'. Follow-up questions to be addressed include, how does knowledge management contribute to strengthening participation of Southern constituents in agenda setting processes? How does knowledge management influence power dynamics, and how can it contribute to overcoming the inherent inequalities in dominant development paradigms (such as the donor-recipient relationship)? A further important question is how people maneuver themselves into influential positions within expert networks to negotiate stronger positions for their voices.

A particularly important focus which future research should take, which was beyond the scope of this paper, is a significant elaboration on the theme of power/knowledge. This is widely acknowledged as a central challenge in knowledge management, yet is seldom explored thoroughly (Alvesson and Kärreman 2001; Contu and Wilmott 2003; Fox 2000; Hardy 1996; Hislop 2005; Roberts 2006). Concepts of power are relevant to any knowledge-intensive sector, but are magnified in the development sector through precisely those intrinsic inequalities which it seeks to address. This is not only of value to the development sector, but also can provide valuable insights for more general theories of organization. Analysis of power/knowledge concepts in the international sector of development can deepen understanding of internationalization on organizational dynamics and ways to articulate a space 'for the local within the global' (Jaya 2001), and vice versa. This can reveal insight into forms of organization, tensions and leadership examples beyond predominant Western ones (Jaya 2001; Karsten and Illa 2005), and can thereby strengthen the development of innovative approaches to pervasive organization and development challenges.

Overall, as a nascent field, the realm of research in KMD is still wide open. Through our research we have touched upon a number of the preliminary questions, presenting some of

the challenges which the development sector encounters in its core business in general and in knowledge management in particular. We hope to trigger interest in an important research field that can contribute to more sustainable knowledge management, and ultimately, the mitigation of pervasive development challenges.

REFERENCES

Alavi, M. & Leidner, D. E. 2001. Review: knowledge management and knowledge management systems: Conceptual foundations and research issues. *MIS Quarterly*, 25(1): 107-136.

Alvesson, M. 2001. Knowledge work: Ambiguity, image and identity. *Human Relations*, 54: 863-886.

Alvesson, M. & Kärreman, D. 2001. Odd couple: making sense of the curious concept of knowledge management. *Journal of Management Studies*, 38(7): 995-1018.

Amin, A. & Roberts, J. 2008. Knowing in action: Beyond communities of practice. *Research Policy*, 37(2): 353-369.

Anderson, E. 2005. Openness and inequality in developing countries: A review of theory and recent evidence. *World Development*, 33(7): 1045-1063.

Argyris, C. & Schon, D. 1991. Participatory action research and action science compared. In W. F. Whyte (Ed.), *Participatory Action Research*: 85-96. Newbury Park, N.J.: Sage.

Bebbington, A., Guggenheim, S., Olsen, E. & Woolcock, M. 2004. Exploring social capital debates at the World Bank. *Journal of Development Studies*, 40(5), 33-64.

Bechky, B. A. 2003. Sharing meaning accross occupational communities: The transformation of understanding on a production floor. *Organization Scienc*e, 14(3): 312-330.

Birkinshaw, J., Nobel, R. & Ridderstråle, J. 2002. Knowledge as a contingency variable: Do the characteristics of knowledge predict organizational structure? *Organization Science*, 13(3): 274-289

Briggs, J. & Sharp, J. 2004. Indigenous knowledges and development: a postcolonial caution. *Third World Quarterly*, 25(4): 661-676.

Brown, J. S. & Duguid, P. 2001. Knowledge and organization: A social-practice perspective. *Organization Science*, 12(2): 198-213.

Carlile, P. R. 2004. Transferring, translating and transforming: An integrative framework for managing knowledge across boundaries. *Organization Science*, 15(5): 555-568.

Collier, P. & Dollar, D. 2002. *Globalization, growth and poverty. Building an inclusive world economy*. New York: World Bank/Oxford University Press

Contu, A. & Willmott, H. 2003. Re-embedding situatedness: The importance of power relations in learning theory. *Organization Science*, 14(3): 283-296.

Cook, S. D. N. & Brown, J. S. 1999. Bridging epistemologies: the generative dance between organizational knowledge and organizational knowing. *Organization Science*, 10(4): 381-400.

Davenport, T.H. & Prusak, L. 1998. *Working knowledge: How organizations manage what they know*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press

Doh, J. P. & Teegen, H. 2003. *Globalization and NGOs: Transforming business, government, and society*. Westport: Praeger.

Donaldson, L. 2003. Design structure to fit strategy. In: E. A. Locke (Ed.), *The Blackwell Handbook of Principles of Organizational Behavior*: 291-303. Wiley-Blackwell

Escobar, A. 1995. *Encountering development. The making and unmaking of the third world*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ferguson, J. 1994. *The anti-politics machine. "Development", depolitization and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ferguson, J. E. & Cummings, S. 2008. Knowledge management in practice: The case of international development. In: A. Koohang, K. Harman & J. Britz (Eds.) *Knowledge management: Research and application*: 75-112. Santa Rosa, CA: Informing Science Press.

Fidler, S. 2001. Who's minding the bank? *Foreign Policy*, 126 (Sept.-Oct.): 40-50.

Finlay, S. J. 2008. Indigenous organizing: Enacting and updating indigenous knowledge. In: D. Barry & H. Hansen (Eds.) *The Sage handbook of new approaches in management and organization*: 528-537. London: Sage.

Fischer, S. 2003. Globalization and its challenges. *The American Economic Review*, 93(2): 1-30.

Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge. Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. Brighton: The Harvester Press.

Fox, S. 2000. Communities of practice, Foucault and actor-network theory. *Journal of Management Studies*, 37(6): 853-867.

Galunic, D. C. & Eisenhardt, K.M. 1994. Renewing the strategy structure performance paradigm. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 16: 215-255.

Gherardi, S. 2006. *Organizational knowledge: the texture of workplace learning*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Glazer, R. 1998. Measuring the knower: Towards a theory of knowledge equity. *California Management Review*, 40(3): 175-194.

Grant, R. M. 1996. Toward a knowledge-based theory of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17(Winter Special Issue): 109-122.

Haas, E. B. 1990. *When knowledge is power. Three models of change in international organizations*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Haas, M. R. 2006. Acquiring and applying knowledge in transnational teams: The roles of cosmopolitans and locals. *Organization Science*, 17(3): 367-384.

Hardy, C. 1996. Understanding power: Bringing about strategic change. *British Journal of Management*, 7(Special Issue): S3-S16.

Hardy, C., Philips, N. & Lawrence, T. B. 2003. Resources, knowledge and influence: The organizational effects of interorganizational collaboration. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(2): 321-347.

Hendriks, P. 2001. Many rivers to cross: from ICT to knowledge management systems. *Journal of Information Technology*, 16(2): 57-72.

Hislop, D. 2005. *Knowledge management in organizations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hofstede, G. 1981. Management control of public and not-for-profit activities. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*. 6(3): 193-211.

Holden, N. J. & Von Kortfleisch, H. F. O. 2004. Why cross-cultural knowledge transfer is a form of translation in more ways than you think. *Knowledge and Process Management*, 11(2): 127-136.

Huysman, M. 2000(a). An organizational learning approach to the learning organization. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 9(2): 133-145.

Huysman, M. 2000(b). Rethinking organizational learning: Analyzing learning processes of information system designers. *Accounting, Management and Information Technologies*, 10: 81-99

Huysman, M. 2003. Communities of practice: supporting social learning while frustrating organizational learning, In: H. Tsoukas & N. Mylonopoulos (Eds.), *Organizations as knowledge systems*: 67-85. Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan.

Huysman, M. & De Wit, D. 2002. *Knowledge sharing in practice*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Huysman, M. & De Wit, D. 2004. Practices of managing knowledge sharing: Towards a second wave of knowledge management. *Knowledge and Process Management*, 11(2): 81-92.

Jaya, P. S. 2001. Do we really 'know' and 'profess'? Decolonizing management knowledge. *Organization*, 8(2): 227-233.

Karsten, L. & Illa, H. 2005. Ubuntu as a key African management concept: contextual background and practical insights for knowledge application. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 20(7): 607-620.

Khan, F.R., Munir, K.A. & Willmott, H. 2007. A Dark Side of Institutional Entrepreneurship: Soccer Balls, Child Labour and Postcolonial Impoverishment. *Organization Studies* 28(07): 1055–1077

King, K. 2000. Towards knowledge-based aid: A new way of working or a new North-South divide? *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 3(2): 22-48.

King, K. 2002. Banking on knowledge: the new knowledge projects of the World Bank. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education*, 32(3): 311 – 326.

King, K. and McGrath, S. 2004. *Knowledge for development? Comparing British, Japanese, Swedish and World Bank aid.* London: Zed Books, 2004

Lam, A. 1997. Embedded firms, embedded knowledge: problems of collaboration and knowledge transfer in global cooperative ventures. *Organization Studies,* 18(6): 973-996.

Laszlo, K. C. & Laszlo, A. 2002. Evolving knowledge for development: the role of knowledge management in a changing world. *Journal of Knowledge Management,* 6(4): 400-412.

Lindenberg, M. & Dobel, J. P. 1999. The challenges of globalization for northern international relief and development NGOs. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 28(4): 4-24.

March, J. G. 1991. Exploration and exploitation in organizational learning. *Organization Science,* 2(1): 71-87.

McDermott, Richard (1999) Why information technology inspired but cannot deliver: knowledge management. *California Management Review*, 41(4): 103-117

McFarlane, C. 2006a. Knowledge, learning and development: A post-rationalist approach. *Progress in Development Studies*, 6(4): 287-305.

McFarlane, C. 2006b. Crossing borders: Development, learning and the North-South divide. *Third World Quarterly*, 27(4): 1413-1437.

Mehta, L. 2001. The World Bank and its emerging knowledge empire. *Human Organization*, 60(2): 189-196.

Miles, M., & A. Huberman. 1994. Qualitative data analysis. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mudimbe, V.Y. 1988. *The Invention of Africa*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Nonaka, I. 1994. A dynamic theory of organizational knowledge creation. *Organization Science,* 5(1): 14-37.

Ocampo, J. A. 2002. Rethinking the development agenda. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 26(3): 393-407.

Orlikowski, W. J. 2002. Knowing in practice: Enacting a collective capability in distributed organizing. *Organization Science*, 13(3): 249-273.

Osterloh, M. & B. S. Frey. 2000. Motivation, knowledge transfer, and organizational forms. *Organization Science*, 11(5): 538-550.

Powell, M. 2006. Which knowledge? Whose reality? An overview of knowledge used in the development sector. *Development in Practice,* 16(6): 518-532.

Quaggiotto, G. 2005. Elective affinities? Reflections on the enduring appeal of knowledge management for the development sector. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*, 1(3): 41-45.

Ravallion, M. 2001. Growth, inequality and poverty: Looking beyond averages. *World Development*, 29(11):1803-1815.

Ringberg, T. & Reihlen, M. 2008. Towards a Socio-Cognitive Approach to Knowledge Transfer. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45(5): 912-935

Roberts, J. 2000. From know-how to show-how? Questioning the role of information and communication technologies in knowledge transfer. *Technology Analysis and Strategic Management*, 12(4): 429-443.

Roberts, J. 2006. Limits to communities of practice. *Journal of Management Studies,* 43(3): 623–639.

Roberts, S. M., Jones III, J. P. & Fröhling, O. 2005. NGOs and the globalization of managerialism: A research framework. *World Development,* 33(11): 1845-1864.

Rossi, B. 2004. Revisiting Foucauldian approaches: Power dynamics in development projects. *Journal of Development Studies*, 40(6): 1-29.

Ruggles, R. 1998. The state of the notion: Knowledge management in practice. *California Management Review*, 40(3): 80-89.

Sen, A. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Short, J. C., Tyge Payne, G. & Ketchen Jr., D. J. 2008. Research on organizational configurations: Past accomplishments and future challenges. *Journal of Management,* 34: 1053-1079

Sole, D. & Edmondson, A. 2002. Situated knowledge and learning in dispersed teams. *British Journal of Management*, 13(S2): S17-S34.

Spencer, J.W. 2008. The impact of multinational enterprise strategy on indigenous enterprises: Horizontal spillovers and crowding out in developing countries. *Academy of Management Review* 33(2): 341-361.

Spender, J-C. 1996. Making knowledge the basis of a dynamic theory of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17(Winter Special Issue): 45-62.

Spender, J-C. 1998. Pluralist epistemology and the knowledge-based theory of the firm. *Organization*, 5(2): 233-256.

Starbuck, W. H. 1992. Learning by knowledge-intensive firms. *Journal of Management Studies*, 29(6): 713-740.

Swidler, A. & Watkins, S.C. 2009 (in press). Teach a man to fish: The sustainability doctrine and its social consequences. *World Development* 36(4)

Szulanski, G. 1996. Exploring internal stickiness: Impediments to the transfer of best practice within the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17(Winter Special Issue): 27-43.

Thompson, M. 2004. Discourse, 'development', the 'Digital Divide': ICT and the World Bank. *Review of African Political Economy*, 31: 103-123.

Thompson, M. & Walsham, G. 2004. Placing knowledge management in context. *Journal of Management Studies,* 41(5): 725-747.

Thorbecke, E. 2000. The evolution of the development doctrine and the role of foreign aid, 1950-2000. In F. Tarp (Ed.), *Foreign Aid and development*: 17-47. London: Routledge.

Tsoukas, H. 2004. Complex knowledge: Studies in organizational epistemology. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tsoukas, H. & Vladimirou, E. 2001. What is organizational knowledge? *Journal of Management Studies,* 38(7): 974-993.

Unwin, T. 2007. No end to poverty. *Journal of Development Studies,* 43(5): 929-953.

Van den Hooff, B. & Huysman, M. (in press). Knowledge sharing: Emergent and engineering approaches. *Information and Management*.

Walsham, G. 2001. Knowledge Management: The Benefits and Limitations of Computer Systems. *European Management Journal*, 19(6): 599-608

Wiedenhof, C. & Molenaar, H. (2006) One never knows. Research policy and knowledge management in Dutch development cooperation. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal* 2(3): 5-18

Wilson, T. D. 2002. The nonsense of 'knowledge management'. *Information Research* 8(1): paper no.144.

Appendix A, table 3: Interviewees

Identifier	Function within organization	Identifier (cont'd)	Function within organization
BLO1	Director, Department of Documentation and Information	MLO 4	Coordinator, Knowledge Management [theme 3]
BLO2	Policy Officer, Effectiveness and Quality Division	MLO5	Information Manager [theme 3]
BLO3	Knowledge Officer, Environment & Water	MLO6	Financial Manager [theme 1]
BLO4	Organization Advisor (HRM)	MLO7	Head, Policy Integration and Statistics
BLO5	Policy Officer, Environment & Water	MLO8	Information Assistant, Technical Cooperation
BLO6	Country Officer, Africa	MLO9	Policy Officer, Donor Relations
BLO7	Head, Organizational Development	MLO10	Program Analyst, Programming and Management
BLO8	Policy Officer, Financial Economic Affairs	MLO11	Project Manager, Gender Equality
BLO9	Senior Policy Advisor, Knowledge and Research	MLO12	(Former) Project Manager, Knowledge Management [theme 2]
BLO10	Policy Officer, Research and Communications	MLO13	Head, Training and Staff Development
BLO11	Policy Officer, Social and Institutional Development Civil Society	MLO14	Project Manager, Knowledge Management [theme 1]
BLO12	Head, Department of Social Policy	MKM1	Chair, Head of Training Division
NNGO1	Program Specialist, Democratization and Peace building	MKM2	Training and Staff Development Officer
NNGO2	Human Resources Advisor	MKM3	Senior Official, Knowledge Management and Training
NNGO3	Project Officer, Economic Development	MKM4	Webmaster
NNGO4	Facilitator of Learning	NN1	(Former) Co-Chair, Head of Knowledge Management
NNGO5	Head of Knowledge Management	NN2	Co-Chair, Director of Communications
NNGO6	Advisor, Learning and Development (HRM)	NN3	Co-Chair, Head of Research and Publications
NNGO7	Project Officer, Economic Development	SNGO1	Network Coordinator
NNGO8	Facilitator of Learning, Economic Development	SNGO2	Founder, Board Member, Network member

NNGO9	Officer, Instrument Management		SNGO3	Executive Manager
NNGO10	Executive Advisor and Director, Organizational Change		SNGO4	Officer, Knowledge Sharing
NNGO11	Program Specialist, Food Safety		SN1	Executive Director
MLO1	Program Manager [theme 1]		SN2	Communications Coordinator
MLO2	Program Manager [theme 2]		SN3	Network Coordinator, East and Southern Africa
MLO 3	Chief Librarian			