Politically oriented practice in development co-operation: "Pluri"-actor learning

Séverine Bellina and Ousmane Sy

> "The race for growth which at one and the same time blinds and escapes leaders, makes them miss one of the main challenges in governance today: that of creating confidence and pacifying conflicts by establishing a link between the actors and allowing co-production and ownership of the political stakes by all."
>
> J.-P. Delevoye
> President of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council

1. Introduction

The imperative for a political approach to development aid

The issues involved in development have become more complex over the years. The North-South dichotomy has lost some of its relevance and environmental issues are forcing development models to include the concept of sustainability. The economic and financial crisis is drastically reducing the capacity of government actors, and the state is no longer the only actor in public action. This fact is well documented[2] and proposals are made. For over a decade, especially in view of the mixed results obtained by neo-liberal aid policies (structural adjustment programmes, "good governance" policies), many donors and experts have advocated going beyond a prescriptive and purely economic approach to governance. Instead, a "development partnership" should be established, focusing on the political sphere, dialogue, pragmatism, respect for context, an integrated approach, greater responsibility forlocal capacities and local political dynamics. Similarly, the need to integrate the political dimension of governance has been emphasised.[3] These approaches contend that the rationale of development aid needs to change from one of supply to one of demand. However, none of this has been translated into an actual change in development aid policies paradigm. One justification for this is the nebulous and non-operational nature of this perspective.

In contrast, increasingly advanced economic approaches are continually being developed. Admittedly they include the political sphere, but only in a marginal way. They have tended to increase political dependence on economics while appearing to be less neo-liberal. Currently the tendency is to favour the social impact of economic development by reconciling fair and sustainable growth with development. From this point of view, the new buzzwords for development aid are an "inclusive economy", "social business" and "inclusive business" and a social and solidarity-based economy. The common denominator in these approaches is providing innovative and sustainable solutions for social problems which public policies cannot deal with adequately (Vincent, 2015). They rely on the creative capacity of actors to find appropriate solutions to the problems with which they are confronted. According to these models, sustainability is also considered to be synonymous with financial empowerment, in particular through private financing and state guarantees (Faber and Naidoo, 2014, p. 14). Many private firms are working actively on the social business model, which opens up new prospects for the economy by adapting production and targeting marketing on the middle classes of the countries involved.

Furthermore, political economy theory is finding support in the sphere of public action and development aid, with the objective being to gain a better understanding of the way in which a country is actually governed. Political economy lies at the intersection of the economy, politics and the law, and analyses how economic factors influence political ideology and the governance of a country. It therefore paves the way for an understanding of the power dynamics and relations at work in a country in order to gain access to resources and influence. The aim is to help overcome barriers so that reforms supported by donors can be implemented, and hence improve aid efficiency. However, the political approach is yet not central, and merely remains an adjustment variable for the economic sphere.

Paradoxically, this trend has been accompanied by numerous demonstrations of the intrinsically political nature of public governance, and of development aid in this sphere. The fact is that public governance is in itself a method of analysing and understanding the terms of the exercise of political power (Faber and Naidoo, 2014). It is one thing to assert that governance is pre-eminently political in nature, however, and quite another to learn its practical lesson: that aid should be based on the political paradigm. Nevertheless, this is an essential bridge to cross in order to put together more effective aid for the countries and population involved.

In particular, 'pluri-actor' social innovation needs to be used to jointly develop solutions to concrete problems, tailored to the complexity of the situation. 'Pluri' actor processes are not simply multi-actor but involve a meaningful plurality of stakeholder groups. By systematically including the inter-scale dimension, this would strengthen state refoundation, and

new state regulations would become the main framework for action. We believe that at least three conditions are needed for a political approach to development aid: 1) the context (a demand-led rationale and an approach based on need); 2) the actors (jointly acting in a pluri-actor context); and 3) acting in concert with the state (meaning legitimate and effective states are needed). This chapter examines some lessons learned regarding the change that this would bring about in project management.

If there is any consensus today in the development world, it is that the point of departure for any policy or project should be a sound understanding of the context and its challenges. If actors are to take effective ownership of a project, then the project must be responding to their needs. Yet in reality, the process of identifying these needs is all too often disconnected from the actual expectations of the inhabitants and institutions involved. Donors are often driven by constraints on their side, in particular the need to disburse funding, which wins out over adapting to the context. For their own reasons, local actors may be tempted to make demands that are more or less out of touch with the reality of their actual needs. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the governance of a country is not synonymous with the forms of the institutions of Western democracy. We should put an end to the charade of consultants arriving in a country with nothing but the turnkey solution of a liberal [New Public Management type] state, following a set of instructions to the letter. If we do not want to remain the agents of a sort of development which does not develop anything, then we need to use the actual situation – and not a prefabricated image – as the point of departure.

The state is not the only actor in public action; other stakeholders such as civil society organisations, local elected officials, the private sector and citizens should be taken into account. The best way to understand and define collective needs is by bringing together all of the actors involved. Bringing all the actors together will favour the integration of projects into the actual governance of the country or sector concerned. Support (capacity building) to promote interaction between them (inter-actors) and the various levels – local, national and international – is therefore appropriate. Such dialogue not only helps strengthen the bonds between state and societies, but also reduces the lack of ownership of actions conducted by the state and thus their feeble impact on reality, that is, on the lives of the actors.

We argue that Actors should not try to delegitimise the state as weak or politically closed it is. Experience in the field confirms the validity of this statement every day, in particular in a context of crises: development and public governance cannot build on without public institutions and the state. The fundamental role of effective public institutions has been at the center of many international engagment such as the international partnership, *the Effective Institutions Plateform*.[4] It is exactly for this reason that "strengthening the state" was selected as a priority objective, from 2007 by the OECD, with

direct mention to state strengthening in the "New Deal"[5] with a special link to legitimate and inclusive policies and a special focus on "establishing relations between the state and society" affirmed since 2010 (OECD, 2010). It is indeed the interactions between a state and "its" societies that give rise to the historical and collective processes from which real governance of countries are derived (Bellina et al., 2010). In this regard one could talk about "creating a roadmap" – *fabrique d'un parcours* – (Chataigner, 2008): any governance process, including those within the framework of development projects, derives from a highly uncertain, long and necessarily self-taught collective apprenticeship (Meisel and Ould Aoudia, 2008). The complexity of the intervention needed to support any such process can be an excuse used by development aid actors in order to, once again, avoid learning the lesson of the practical consequences of development policies.

Establishing project-processes around a pluri-actor management

The needs, constraints, interests and experiences of each actor should serve as the point of departure for the coalition of energy required for this collective learning process which is public governance. This problem centered approach, is based on the recognition that actors are more likely to feel involved in a specific issue which has an impact on them, rather than by more general aspects of participatory governance (Van Zyl, 2015). Co-production and co-creation are the result of actors working together, generating "the social, technical and structural innovation" (Faber and Naidoo, 2014) needed to create "a co-operative dynamic for social change" (IRG, 2013: p. 13). It's about the ability of thinking complex logic of action based on a collective elaboration of diagnosis and solution, very close to the diversity of social demands. The idea is to put into practice governance projects which are of a political nature, in the generic meaning of the term, i.e. the management of the collective. Pluri-actor processes should be systematically included into projects, to turn them into "project-processes". This type of approach is a project, in that it aims to acheive a specific result within a defined time frame. But it is also a process, in that it requires management of complexity over time. This "process" approach forms part of the legitimisation of public decisions, through the inclusivity of diverse actors in a dynamic of reflection and shared experiences,.

More generally, this concept of "process" refers to what it is now customarily called, in project management terms, an iterative, inclusive (or incremental) and adaptive approach. So-called "agile" methods prioritise satisfying the client, in accordance with the terms of a development contract based on values and principles. It is the collective (individuals and their interactions) that matters rather than the tools used, concrete outcomes rather than project documents, co-operation rather than a rigid procedure, and the flexibility to adapt to changing demands. Similarly, a needs-based

approach starts from the context and expectations rather than from a pre-established plan. It is based on the systematic adaptation of the project as the needs and the demands of clients and users evolve.[6] Acceptance of change, adaptation and co-operation become the key principles for carrying out a project. These principles underly development aid approaches such as Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA; Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock, 2012).

The process and multi-actor rationale aims at sustainable change. It is particularly important to release aid beneficiaries from their long-enforced passivity and to promote partnerships as complementary interactions, while donors become the catalyst of the process and the facilitator of dialogue. The way to become real partners is to participate in adaptations, complex though they may be, perceptions and practices. All the actors therefore have an active role to play in such a partnership.

A pluri-actor process generates collective knowledge on co-production and monitoring public action. The reflexes thus established contribute to more effective and transparent public action because the various actors are able to position themselves as the driving force behind proposals over which citizens have an effective means of control. They no longer find themselves only in an attitude of confrontation.

The project-process dynamic starts at the project identification stage. In traditional approaches, target actors are questioned about their problems and their causes. In contrast, the "process" approach starts by identifying values (what is important for target actors) and commitments (what commitments they would be willing to undertake and over what time period). Their aspirations are collected and systematised, based on the recounting of their own experiences. The following gathering of actors constitutes an (inclusive) process facilitating the emergence of a vocabulary that includes: collective challenges, consensus points and, above all, relevant catalysts to act on different levels and over the long-run. This stage alone could already be considered a concrete result, considering to what extent legitimacy is derived from a feeling of being part of what is happening and of having been heard. However, it is important not to fall into the "showcase" trap – making a show of dialogue to legitimise an action contrary to the terms of the debate – or of "dialogue for dialogue's sake" which does not lead to any action.

The multi-actor process should make it possible to manage the inherent complexity of public action today. It should also lead to the co-production of the knowledge needed to formulate a specific response to a given issue (Faber and Naidoo, 2014). For this, one needs a meticulous methodology, specific to each context, as well as a number of prerequisites. The sections that follow present elements which seem to us to be fundamental. We cannot claim that they are comprehensive, however, or can be systematically transposed into

practice: at the risk of repeating ourselves, each multi-actor process needs to be nurtured in accordance with its own objectives and context, keeping the process dynamic, the political "lifeblood" of each project.

There is one final point to note. A pluri-actor project-process entails that one has to work with all actors, even if one of them is problematic, we argue for example that this would mean government institutions even in an authoritarian state. Pluri-actor social innovation cannot be done "alongside" the state, relying on coalitions of actors from civil society and the private sector, as certain proponents of the inclusive economy propose, this dynamic can not happen outside from the public space.[7]

In our opinion, the multi-actor process is the political lifeblood of any development project. If actor coalitions do not form part of the public arena – by refusing to involve government actors for example – then they are reinforcing risks of disconnect between the state and other actors. By doing so, they are fostering the competition of parallel economic or religious regulations and political crises as well as the weakness of States.

We should therefore have the courage to think in terms of project-processes, based on actors and their collective and co-operative capacity. Let us bet on driving change in a way that is synonymous with collective learning about democratic governance. We would like to share four pathways that we have organised in the form of "principles". The purpose is not so much to sell a new tool, rather they amount to a plea to learn the practical lessons of working with the political sphere and a proposal as to how to do so.

2. Principle 1: Taking the stakes and the context as the starting point

Some political environments are less favourable than others for establishing a pluri-actor dialogue. Depending on the context, the actor and the level involved, such a dialogue may emerge naturally and voluntarily. The strategies for instituting dialogues and pluri-actor processes therefore have to be adapted to each context in order to build trust through participation.

Using leverage to adapt to the context: An integrated approach to governance projects

The multi-actor process should always be devised with the obstacles involved in mind. This is particularly important where the state is fragile, or where there may be political, economic or social crises, or in a context of economic and institutional instability. In contrast, political openness promotes the development of this kind of dialogue (IRG, 2013: p. 9).

In all cases, it is always possible to use certain levers to promote dialogue. This applies to the legal and regulatory framework of a country's

organisations. Most co-operation agencies already have support for structuring, organising and bringing together actors in civil society at the heart of their policies. These policies should be used to strengthen the public arena, however, and not promote the privatisation of aid. From this point of view, it is equally important to support policies to decentralise government management whenever a country initiates them. Such policies pave the way for local dynamics to play a role in the participation of local authorities as well as other local actors. In so doing they make it possible to take into account diverse situations: pluri-actor combined with multi-level are a means to connect and act with the closest possible contact with people needs. For this reason, development partners should anticipate how their own terms of involvement could evolve, whether with respect to duration (short, medium or long term) or levels (local, national or global). By promoting changes at the institutional or political level, the project-process can help strengthen their impact in terms of governance and public action.

In the most complicated contexts, the initiative may be one-sided. Often it will emanate from civil society, a procedure that is not always easy in places where government authorities are sometimes considered to be "inaccessible decision takers". Despite this, sometimes decisive change can happen. In Madagascar, for example, a pluri-actor dialogue has been established within the framework of public policy on the protection of the status of artisans and this has led civil-society organisation representatives "to consider government authorities as providers of solutions, allies". In other cases, where there is a lack of will on the part of government authorities, civil-society organisations have had to coerce dialogue in order to participate in public action and establish bonds of trust. Development partners can play an important role here, not by supporting civil society against the state, but by helping to structure civil society organisations and supporting any pluri-actor processes which help them interact with the relevant government institution. If civil society organisations are able to provide realistic and coherent proposals for policies, the government authorities will be encouraged to recognise them. Partners could suggest different ways civil society organisations could communicate with government authorities to establish trust or acceptance. The commitment, effectiveness, credibility and mobilisation capacity of these organisations help them achieve recognition by government authorities and open up possible arenas for dialogue.

Fostering the commitment of each actor: The collective interest

Any pluri-actor process is in itself an arena of power. It reproduces and modifies existing power balances, and pushes aside established positions and advantages. It is for this reason that some states or actors are reluctant to participate. By definition, a pluri-actor dynamic therefore has to deal with resistance, reluctance (fear of losing identity or of one's interests not being

guaranteed), centrifugal rationales and power relations. It is essential to take these into account, to anticipate them as much as possible and to manage the inevitable and necessary confrontations as well as the risks of manipulation.

Furthermore, everyone has "private" interests which are difficult to express in an arena devoted to public governance. Whatever their nature (financial, political, ideological, etc.) it is important not to ignore this reality but to deal with it. This is another case where the context and actors are the point of departure. In the economic sector, where this aspect is well understood, actors are expected to express any benefits that they hope to achieve with complete transparency from the start, because one cannot overcome certain contradictions unless they have been clearly identified. This is what specialists in change management would call a win-win rationale. Why would development be any different?

It is therefore important that the actors should collectively acknowledge their own individual interests. The foundation stage of the pluri-actor dialogue is to co-create a convergence around shared interests which would benefit the individual interests of all concerned. The collective interest needs to be something that is able to mobilise actors enough to win out over individual interests, or for these not to compete with it. This is much easier when the problem is concrete and specific. This is the fundamental step for a pluri-actors dialogue dynamic.

One also has to accept that some actors will refuse to participate or will turn out to be incompatible with the dialogue process (for instance if their private interests diverge too much, or their degree of commitment and transparency are too different). This is a lesson that it is sometimes difficult to acknowledge publicly and internalise properly in the sphere of development aid. However, to deny the fact that certain prospective actors are incompatible is to build the whole process on quicksand. Removing certain actors who at first seemed essential for the process may be the only way for the process to succeed. The dynamic thus defined around specific objectives and commitments will already have allowed governance to make progress. This is a result in itself, which some actors, one could think of donors, will consider mixed and not very satisfactory… but this is another step on the path toward legitimate political governance of the country and in the process of social change.

In contrast, other actors may have a leveraging effect on creating collective capacity, in particular the donors. By committing themselves to the identification and reciprocal recognition stages of the various actors involved in the project-process, they help build an inclusive dynamic for the project. Development partners always have a role or even the decision-making power regarding the choice of organisations to be part of a project or not. Here, this role is formalised in the framework of the governance of the project-process, in its capacity as a participant. They can also organise joint visits to actors

in the field (IRG, 2013) and support the process of gathering information on the challenges faced by actors and their aspirations. Bringing together diverse actors around an emerging collective challenge fosters consensus and provides useful levers of action. It is essential to have meetings and exchanges between actors, and allow them the free expression their interests and their expectations of the collective future process. They participate *in* and *at* the establishment of trust. From there it is possible to determine whether the route to achieving a shared objective is feasible.

3. Principle 2: Building collective capacity

Complementary interactions develop as the dialogue progresses, based on stakeholders finding a shared interest and the collective learning necessary to define the foundations of the governance project.

Actual needs as point of departure: A shared diagnosis

Developing mutual understanding, establishing trust and interpersonal relationships, and overcoming differences (cultural, professional, etc.), is a discontinuous, long and fundamental process. Donors, civil society and the private sector agree on this point but only the profit-making private sector seems to have learnt the practical lessons by defining this stage as being fundamental to the project. "This period of dialogue, when both partners start to get to know each other, is essential for the success of the partnership and must not be dependent on time constraints" (Danone Ecosysteme, n.d.: p. 14). Several months or even years may pass between identifying a need or an issue, expressing a request, and the beginning of discussions and the start of the project. Such a long time-scale may often seem very inappropriate given the realities of donors and sometimes even the realities on the ground. However, taking this fact into account remains a basic prerequisite for the success – and therefore the "productivity" – of an action.

An initial identification will often have preceded the introduction of the pluri-actor process. However, it is vital to carry out a shared diagnosis of the context and the problems to confirm the relevance of the action. This guarantees that the real needs are identified – a process which has now been widely documented and the basis for some well-respected approaches such as PDIA and issue-based approaches. Thus it is accepted that "a good issue is one that is locally driven and defined, when local actors define it, discuss it and express the issue within a framework by consensus" (Faber and Naidoo, 2014). What is important is the concept of iteration, a process of numerous consultations back and forth to get to a shared diagnosis and the formulation of the need. The requirement is to find a response to a specific need or issue, around which the collective interest can be developed. It is therefore the project that defines the context.

Establishing complementarity and trust between actors

Collective learning is vital to allow this pluri-actor process to take place at different levels. First, it makes it possible to use the complementary nature of actors from diverse backgrounds, with diverse skills, social and institutional links, legitimacies, and networks. Each actor taken individually is intrinsically "incomplete". On the one hand, donors, institutions and economic actors are too removed from the field and the concerns and objectives of the population. On the other hand, citizens, civil society organisations and private-sector companies are poorly informed of the complexity of government interventions. Donors are actors in public governance in the countries in which they are involved and including them in the pluri-actor process undeniably increases its legitimacy, credibility, transparency and representativeness. Thus, within the Multi-Actor Forum (*Forum multi-acteurs*, FMA) on governance in Mali,[8] the fact that co-operation agencies are represented in the same way as other stakeholders comes down to their assuming co-responsibility in the public governance of the country.

Second, the pluri-actor process creates complementarity at the various levels of action, representation and therefore influence, from the local level to national level right up to international level. Experience has shown that actors gain skills during such a process. Their knowledge and expertise (technical, professional and political) are strengthened by mutual understanding and acknowledgement of each others' capacities and constraints. Non-state actors come out of the exercise with greater understanding of the complexities and mechanisms of public action. For their part, government actors gain greater expertise and knowledge of conditions in the field. "It promotes synergy and complementarity of skills to the benefit of greater collective capacity" (IRG, 2013: p. 11). From this point of view, when the governance of the project is formalised, it is important to clearly specify the contributions to be made by each one and to preserve the independence of all; donors have an essential role to play here.

Third, participation in a pluri-actor dialogue produces mutual acknowledgement and trust which empowers actors and positions them in a constructive approach. This mechanism may actually contribute to resolving social conflict in some areas. It promotes the practice of democratic and peaceful public governance. It falls within the home-grown development process and fosters a culture of working together. This is the fruit of developing individual and collective skills (knowledge, expertise, an understanding of the complexity of public action), the emergence of new actors – in particular the "voiceless" (migrants, youth, artisans, the unemployed) – and of greater listening skills. Thus, in Madagascar, as part of the *Sehatra sy Rafitra ho an'ny Asatanana* (SERA)[9] project, artisans were diverted from a head-to-head confrontation with the authorities from the Ministry of Livestock. Together with the authorities, they were gradually able to develop a policy protecting

the status of artisans and the labelling of their products such as honey and wickerwork, acquiring new knowledge of production methods in the process. Their local administrative counterparts also acquired a better understanding of the daily existence and needs of these artisans. They were thus able to find a more relevant definition for the government policies affecting their lives, and responses to emergencies (such as the fight against the *varroa* parasite which causes the bee colony collapse syndrome). Collective learning starts as soon as dialogue is introduced. It also allows participative democracy modalities to be involved in the refoundation of governance in the societies. In this process, collective learning has a part to play in the legitimisation of public action.

4. Principle 3: Co-defining the governance of the pluri-actor process

The internal organisation of the pluri-actor arena is fundamental to its cohesion and effectiveness. Once a shared diagnosis has been made, the project will be defined by common agreement. This agreement has to be based on the actors' specifics and cross-cutting perspectives, the identification of common challenges, the collective formulation of the issue to be resolved and the relevant thrusts of the intervention.

We have seen that the pluri-actor process is not synonymous with a mere accumulation of expertise and skills but of actual "co-production". The challenge therefore resides in achieving a collective capacity to generate a "dialogue-based" dynamic, or, in other words, one which allows everyone to open up to the rationale and imagination of others. The evolution of reciprocal perceptions is one of the best ways of creating mutual recognition, reflecting all participants' contributions and bringing about a real equilibrium (Danone Ecosysteme, n.d.: p. 20). This is when trust becomes established and develops into an effective driver for collective accountability and ownership of the process.

Defining a code of ethics around shared values and trust

The governance of the pluri-actor process serves the political strategy of the project. The terms under which the process operates should therefore be carefully thought out and formalised. Formalising a charter by establishing a common ethical basis, principles for identifying and selecting members, and the organising and decision-making principles, is a pledge of its collective ownership. The objective is to institute a dialogue around differences and to combine the group's diversity to build a shared vision, formulate the ethical values which will underlie the process and its governance, and build consensus to make sustainable work possible.

There is no typical governance model for a project-process. Moreover, there actually should not be such a model. This is because each project-process will develop its own governance within its own plurii-actor framework, depending on the actors involved, the objectives and the context. However it does seem to us that the governance model should answer the following questions: who are the main participating actors? Will they vary depending on the stage or the objectives of the project-process? What will be the rules for their representation? Are donors actors in this arena in the same way as the others? How will the process be conducted? What are the work procedures and how are agendas determined? What are the decision-making processes? What will the response be if the code and commitments are not complied with? How will differences or disputes be resolved? What are the management methods for financial resources and the operating budget? What accountability is there? Overshadowing all these questions, however, are the shared values which underlie the collective commitment. These should be central. In Mali, for example, stakeholders in the FMA process committed themselves to the following within the framework of a "charter of ethics":

- to listen to each other and to show mutual respect
- to be open to new ideas and practices
- to talk about the reality of their day-to-day actions
- to translate the decisions taken during the Forum into action
- to get involved on their own behalf in the necessary changes
- to participate in the dialogue process with the necessary diligence
- to comply with working methods jointly decided on
- to be punctual or to inform others of any impediment
- to organise a substitute if the representative is not available (ensuring that the Forum is an arena of continuity and sustainable learning)
- not to assign names to comments in the minutes
- to participate in electronic debates run between two sessions of the Forum, to read any reports made available before sessions of the Forum and to mobilise other actors within the dynamic of constructive dialogue.

Other examples of the values adopted by the main stakeholders in other projects include: the equality of men and women (North Africa), the spirit of working together (Madagascar), social justice, the principle of a right to a fair hearing and consensus (Mali), professionalism (Congo Brazzaville) and more generally, transparency, fairness and impartiality (IRG, 2013: p. 39).

Merely drafting a charter of ethics will also enable all stakeholders to get to know each other, to learn about their respective situations and the various concerns of each one, and so on around this ethical common base.

Conducting and communicating the pluri-actor process

Conducting a pluri-actor dynamic is the "mainspring for cohesiveness and consistency" (IRG, 2013: p. 10). Donors can play a special role here in providing methodological support. However, conducting such a process also involves communication between stakeholders. As such, it is important to consider the forms and arenas of formal expression (such as meetings) as well as informal expression (such as breaks and mealtimes) which make it possible to develop and maintain trust between actors. Depending on the topic and the objective, discussions may take different formats. Using a variety of methods of communication improves the mobilisation of stakeholders and collective functioning of the process. Communication also implies transparency. Its formal methods and tools should be defined and instituted collectively but experience has shown that it is important to prioritise this from the start. This can be done by establishing a database, or using internet information-sharing tools. While it is important not to make the process more burdensome than necessary, it is essential to channel the substance and acquired knowledge to benefit the process's strategic direction.

It is also important to balance traditional vertical communication with horizontal communication, the latter being shared to a greater extent. Therefore the rationale of decentralising the debate – removing it from conventional decision-making instances – and the integration of different levels (national, regional and international) all work along the same lines, including feeding back to the beneficiaries and main actors of the project-process. This is a prerequisite for mobilising actors and for the practical effectiveness of the intervention. The SERA project in Madagascar has instituted "a dual communication system going from its representatives to the base and from the base to its representatives" (IRG, 2013: p. 10) to guarantee accountability, communication, and a dialogue on the information and the realities coming in from the field. The principles of mutual learning and respect for each others' visions and points of view are also essential to this mechanism: they are the operational reflection of the shared values adopted by the partners. Communication tools are just the various technical means of achieving this, adapted according to the specific configuration of each project process. Written, digital, radio and video materials can now very effectively supplement direct formal or informal visits, meetings and interviews. The process needs to find ways of pooling information, getting to know each other and fostering dialogue. This is particularly significant in light of the widespread geographical nature and transnational scales of action of some projects, which make physical meetings both difficult and expensive.

Formalising collective responsibility

Formalising collective responsibility is about compiling the terms, secondary objectives, levels of engagement, resources and duration of the approach. Declarations in principle and declarations of goodwill in themselves alone will not lead to the execution of the project process, so these need to be put on an actual contractual basis between the actors. This should be a willing agreement creating a reciprocal obligation (plural in nature – ethical and/or legal and/or political and/or social, etc.) between the parties involved. The very form, terms and principles of this commitment should also be defined collectively. It is this co-definition of the principles and terms of the commitments which lead to empowerment and determine the focus of accountability. A pluri-actor process is managed through regular reminders and, if necessary, clarification of the initial commitments made by each actor as well as by the group. In fact, one has to check throughout the lifespan of the project that the interests of the actors are still converging on the co-defined objectives. Commitment and ownership are much better at ensuring the effectiveness in these processes than sanctions such as fines or exclusion from the process. Mutual monitoring by stakeholders is a very effective tool. The combination of the code of ethics discussed above and this contractual element is one foundation stone of the project process and of its ownership by its actors.

Co-responsibility – or rather collective responsibility – is the other foundation stone. The accountability of the project, of the group and of each actor is fundamental, not just in financial terms. It also has to relate to the role and participation all of the actors have committed themselves to. It is therefore multi-dimensional and should of course also lead to empowerment. The objective of the group is not approval but rather commitment and trust.

Multi-stakeholder approaches towards co-responsibility are developing beyond the development policy area.[10]

Once these two foundation stones have been cemented in, the schedule of activities to be carried out as well as the sources and coverage of their financing need to be specified. The project-process will, where appropriate, allow the scope and terms to be adapted as the project, the actors and the context evolve. Any adjustments needed within the framework of the iteration will be taken into account. This dynamic definition – "in process" – of governance and the execution of the project must of necessity include capitalisation, which is the subject of the fourth principle.

5. Principle 4: Managing project-process knowledge by capitalisation

To help permanently adapt the project process, the actors involved must be able to view the project and their actions with some detachment in order to learn lessons from them, so as to become even more invested in carrying them out (IRG, 2013: p. 23). This is what brings about the capitalisation of knowledge and experience.

Capitalisation: Collective learning to promote action

Capitalisation is a pluri-actor iterative process of sharing information feedback, dialogue generation and analysis (contexts, actors, practices, expertise and knowledge) which develops individual and group memory and learning to support the action in question as well as the actors, for now and in the future.

Capitalisation can occur throughout the project, or at the end. Permanent capitalisation, integrated into the project process as an organisational principle from the start, is of great help, however, as it facilitates not just adaptability and constructive iteration but also transparency, confidence building and perpetuating the actions. It can also be useful if the project has to be strategically reorientated during the process.

In real terms, capitalisation depends on the participation of actors and the sharing of experiences. It initiates a mutual collective learning process between peers. Capitalisation makes it possible for some actors to better formulate the difficulties they encounter as they know that they will be shared for the sake of progress together and will not lead to any judgements or sanctions. Within the framework of the capitalisation undertaken by the IRG, the group felt collectively that it contributed to "the emergence of new ideas and the highlighting of project impacts" (IRG, 2013: p. 23). This capitalisation also facilitated the expression of points of convergence which was helpful in formulating the strategic orientations for the projects involved. Questions raised during capitalisation also served as a "framework for the drafting of public policy" for the use of stakeholders and helped to revise the priority level of action for the project as a whole.

The collective must define the objectives and terms of capitalisation. One should of course avoid falling into the trap of creating a second project: capitalisation serves the project by improving its governance and relevance, not by creating a parallel process. In particular it benefits the collective learning dynamic that is at the heart of our proposal and which we believe is should be an objective in itself for governance projects. According to actors who have been involved, the internal project process dialogue is one of the main added values produced by capitalisation. The time and sense of perspective that dialogue necessarily imposes – asking oneself questions

and developing them collectively – allows for the emergence of new ideas throughout the project while promoting a better understanding of its impacts. Capitalisation thus helps refine the formulation of strategic directions during the course of the project and its capitalisation.

Some prerequisites for capitalisation

The expectations about what capitalisation can acheive must be realistic, especially with respect to the financial capacities of the project. Continual capitalisation requires time to gain perspective so it works better for medium-term projects than for short-term ones. It can also be difficult for actors within the project, or directly involved in its implementation, to create the conditions for this perspective. It may be a good idea to get an outside actor to pilot this process, as long as some of the project's actors are clearly identified as focal points. Also, since capitalisation depends on an exchange of information, it needs its own organisational mechanism. Meetings in the field with project actors, collective exchanges between actors, and meetings with external actors and peers can all lead to an essential cross-cutting view in terms of scale and geography. However, these should be weighted so that momentum is not lost and they do not encroach on the execution of the project itself.

The exchange of information which underlies capitalisation can only take place if there are proper tools. These will be co-defined and designed in order to provide feedback on experiences, practices and contextual elements. They can take the form of written materials (capitalisation worksheets[11] raising co-defined questions, experience worksheets etc.), digital or video materials, and opportunities for individual and collective dialogue. These various materials are aimed at improving the reciprocal knowledge of actors, contexts and practices (obstacles, positive levers etc.). In all cases they should also help to define possible adjustments to the project (governance, goal formulation etc.). They also constitute the collective institutional memory of the project. In all cases they must serve the project by permanently facilitating communication, transparency and information exchanges between the project actors, obviously including development partners. The latter can thereby directly follow and understand – and even co-decide on – any collectively adopted or implemented adjustments.

Once the tools have been established, every actor takes ownership of them and uses them to provide feedback. To facilitate this, and depending on the financial resources available, field trips can be organised to promote a more informal local dialogue with the project actors and observe their experiences. This questioning, using a variety of materials, allows for a regular dialogue and the cross-pollination of practices at the heart of developing cross-cutting ideas. Meetings with external actors allow the stakeholders then to take ownership of their collective thoughts. It is a real knowledge production process for the project and, more generally, for the development aid that is starting up. Progressing

in this way – from good practices implemented by international experts to a cross-pollination of experiences in the interests of the social effectiveness of the projects – represents a further step in a politically oriented approach. Indeed, capitalisation acts as a lever, using the lessons learnt from some projects to the benefit of others. Cross-cutting analysis of projects using these practices allows one in the end to propose the main thrusts of public policy.

6. Conclusion: Creating a collective knowledge that is useful for action

The capitalisation of governance projects also constitutes a tool for improving development aid and public governance (Rouillé d'Orfeuil, 2014). Capitalisation, by being rooted at the heart of the experiences and of the actors, draws very closely from their practical knowledge base and is incomparably useful for development aid and defining more effective projects. It is in and of itself a mechanism to record and produce knowledge on social innovations. There are calls for donors to help set up a "platform", a database or laboratory that would be both the receptacle of this knowledge and the basis for its transmission on the model of the FACTS Reports (Field Actions Science Reports)[12] journal and the RESOLIS (Research and Evaluation of Innovative and Social Solutions) association.[13]

According to Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil, the aim is to create "a system of knowledge and innovation which is co-operative and directed at producing references on local innovation processes" (Rouillé d'Orfeuil, 2014 : p. 23). The collective knowledge thus constituted informs public action based on experiences and practices and their cross-cutting analysis. Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil suggests that "Perhaps it is in this direction […] that development aid […] could find its second wind" (Rouillé d'Orfeuil, 2014 : p. 23)

Notes

1. J.-P. Delevoye, "Métamorphoses du politique", *in* IRG, *Tous responsables ? Chroniques de la gouvernance 2015*, Paris, ECLM, p. 205-212.
2. See in particular Faber and Naidoo (2014).
3. See Bellina, Magro and de Villemeur (2008) and, in particular, Bellina (2008), p. 15.
4. www.effectiveinstitutions.org/.
5. www.newdeal4peace.org/.
6. The issue of sequencing which this raises has already been the subject of critical studies in the field of development aid. We will see in Section 5 that managing knowledge through capitalisation seems more relevant in terms of the adaptability and perpetuation of the project. Capitalisation of knowledge and experience is a multi-actor iterative feedback process, with the joint establishment of dialogue and analysis of information (contexts, actors, practices, expertise, knowledge) which will lead, either after the fact and/or during the process, to individual and collective learning and memory for the benefit of the action and the actors, for the future and/or for the present.

7. For example see also work from multinationals, civil society and government departments on approaches to facilitation and methodology guides by private actors.
8. In particular, see the FMA Facebook page (FMA, n.d.).
9. Support project for consultation between the artisans and government authorities in Madagascar (*Sehatra sy Rafitra ho an'ny Asatanana* – SERA), undertaken by CITE and GRET, and supported by the SCP (Civil Society and Participation) programme of the CFSI from 2009 to 2013.
10. See for example the initiative 'Societal progress towards co-responsibility for the well-being of all- SPIRAL developed by the Council of Europe. https://wikispiral.org/tiki-index.php?page=Home.
11. For example, capitalisation worksheets make it possible for questions to be considered collectively, leading to shared thoughts on the objectives of the project, its execution and the role of each stakeholder. As examples, see the thrust of the questions that emerged during the Civil Society Programme of the Comité Français de la Solidarité Internationale (French Committee on International Solidarity, CFSI) (this programme combined 18 projects and focussed on promoting civil society participation by developing the prerequisites for dialogue between civil society organisations and government authorities on the one hand, and by promoting multi-actor consultation to achieve an impact on public policy, on the other). See IRG (2013).
12. See "About FACTS Reports", FACTS Reports website, http://factsreports.revues.org/102.
13. See RESOLIS website, http://resolis.org/uk.

Bibliography

Andrews, M., L. Pritchett and M. Woolcock (2012), "Escaping capability traps through Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)", *Center for Global Development Working Paper*, No. 299, Center for Global Development, Washington, DC, www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/1426292_file_Andrews_Pritchett_Woolcock_traps_FINAL_0.pdf.

Bellina, S. (2008), "Introduction" in S. Bellina, H. Magro and V. de Villemeur (eds.) *La Gouvernance Démocratique: Un Nouveau Paradigme pour le Développement?*, Karthala, Paris.

Bellina, S., D. Darbon, S. Sundstol Eriksen and O. Jacob Sending (2010), *L'État en Quête de Légitimité : Sortir Collectivement des Situations de Fragilité*, ECLM (Editions Charles Léopold Mayer), Paris.

Bellina, S., H. Magro and V. de Villemeur (eds.) (2008), *La Gouvernance Démocratique: Un Nouveau Paradigme pour le Développement?* Karthala, Paris.

Chataigner, J.-M. (2008), "Quelle boîte à outils pour la gouvernance démocratique?", in S. Bellina, H. Magro and V. de Villemeur (eds.) *La Gouvernance Démocratique: Un Nouveau Paradigme pour le Développement?*, Karthala, Paris.

Committee 21 (n.d.), "The guiding principles of constructive dialogue with stakeholders", Committee 21 website, www.comite21.org/le-projet-dialogue-parties-prenantes.html.

Danone Ecosysteme (n.d.), *Co-creation at Danone. A Practical Guide Towards Co-Creation*, Danone Ecosysteme, http://ecosysteme.danone.com/guide_cocreation/.

Delevoye, J.-P. "Métamorphoses du politique", in IRG (L'Institut de recherche et débat sur la gouvernance), *Tous Responsables? Chroniques de la Gouvernance 2015*, ECLM, Paris.

Faber, E. and J. Naidoo (2014), *Innover par la Mobilisation desAacteurs: 10 Propositions pour une Nouvelle Approche du Développement*, Orientation Report, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development.

FACTS Reports (n.d.), "About FACTS Reports", FACTS Reports website, http://factsreports.revues.org/102.

FMA (n.d.), Forum Multi-acteurs sur la Gouvernance au Mali Facebook page, https://fr-fr.facebook.com/pages/Forum-Multi-acteurs-sur-la-Gouvernance-au-Mali/388496677894725.

Grdr (n.d.), "Processus participatif multi-acteurs de formulation d'une stratégie migratoire régionale", Grdr website, www.grdr.org/Processus-participatif-multi,997.html.

IRG (2013), *Analyse Transversale: Capitalisation du Programme Société Civile et Participation (2010-2013) du Comité Français pour la Solidarité Internationale*, IRG, Paris.

Meisel, N. and J. Ould Aoudia (2008), "La gouvernance dans tous ses états: Economie politique d'un processus endogène" in S. Bellina, H. Magro and V. de Villemeur (eds.) *La Gouvernance Démocratique: Un Nouveau Paradigme pour le Développement?*, Karthala, Paris.

OECD (2010), *The State's Legitimacy in Fragile Situations. Unpacking Complexity*, Conflict and Fragility, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264083882-en.

RESOLIS (n.d.) RESOLIS website, http://resolis.org/uk.

Rouillé d'Orfeuil, Henri (2014), "Pour une mémoire du développement, des savoirs et des innovations populaires (Introduction)", in *Nourrir les Villes, Défi de l'Agriculture Familiale. Des Innovations Locales et Paysannes en Afrique de l'Ouest*, CFSI/Fondation de France, p. 14-23, www.fondationdefrance.org/Soutenir-les-agricultures-familiales/Actualites/Publication-Nourrir-les-villes-defi-de-l-agriculture-familiale-en-Afrique-de-l-Ouest.

Van Zyl, A. (2015), "Initier et soutenir les exigences citoyennes en matière de responsabilité budgétaire des gouvernements : quand l'enseignement vient du terrain", in IRG, *Tous Responsables? Chroniques de la Gouvernance 2015*, ECLM, Paris, p. 195-204.

Vincent, N. (2015), "Le social business, un nouveau modèle de développement durable?", *Question de Développement*, 22, March 2015. www.afd.fr/webdav/site/afd/shared/PUBLICATIONS/RECHERCHE/Scientifiques/Question-developpement/22-question-developpement.pdf.