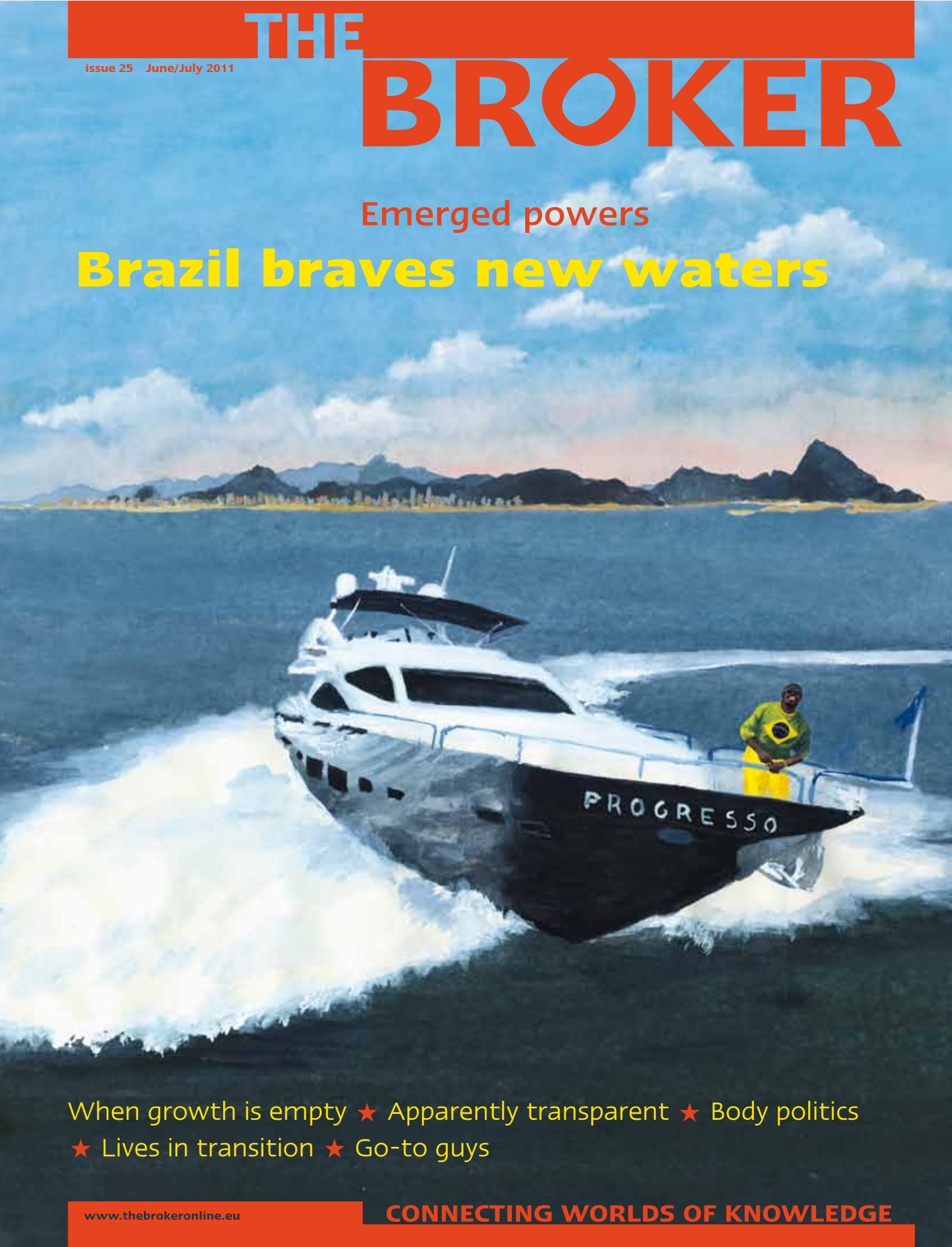
issue 25 June/July 2011

THE BROKER

Emerged powers

Brazil braves new waters



When growth is empty ★ Apparently transparent ★ Body politics ★ Lives in transition ★ Go-to guys

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CONNECTING WORLDS OF KNOWLEDGE

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THE BROKER

***The Broker*, issue 25 June/July 2011**

The Broker offers knowledge of global development issues. *The Broker* contributes to evidence-based policy making and action by encouraging exchanges between knowledge producers and development professionals. *The Broker* is a reliable source of information for all those concerned with development and globalization, especially in the fields of inclusive economies, global food security, global development strategies, human security and social change.

The Broker is published bimonthly, and also features a website with many additional resources, online debates and blogs (**www.thebrokeronline.eu**) and an email newsletter.

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Issue 26 will be available in September 2011.

Making waves

Frans Bieckmann
Editor in chief
editor@thebrokeronline.eu

Issue 25 of *The Broker* is a milestone. A fitting moment to look back at four years of pioneering journalism. More importantly, *The Broker* is at a crossroads, about to embark on an exciting new venture. This month we are launching an entirely new website at www.thebrokeronline.eu.

The Broker – short for its original working title, the Global Development Knowledge Broker – began four years ago as a 16-page bimonthly magazine. Our aim was to present solid knowledge in the field of globalization and development. In an easily accessible style, backed by well-sourced overviews of cutting-edge academic and policy discussions.

A lot has changed since. We have gradually found an editorial scope and format that we are comfortable with. Our interdisciplinary approach helped us create a niche that brokers between different policy sectors and communities within the vast area of globalization and development. We expanded the magazine with more pages, new sections and special reports. We experimented with innovative themes, such as civic-driven change, complexity theory and global public goods.

Our intention was to stir up the devitalized development sector by providing alternatives for more effective policy making and more critically engaged political action. A constant, throughout, has been our strict and thorough editing and review process, which may have surprised some of our authors, but which we believe is why we have earned the 'quality stamp' that has become our hallmark.

The Broker has had an online presence from the very start. Initially, our website was merely a reflection of the printed magazine: we published longer versions of the articles on line, with extra boxes, footnotes and links for further reading. Two years ago we started blogging. It was ad hoc and experimental at first, the idea being to 'let a hundred flowers blossom'.

We also hosted some very well-attended online debates, such as the one on *Less Pretension, More Ambition*, the report by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR). Our blogs from conferences in different parts of the world featured guest bloggers and videos. And our website kept growing and growing, until it threatened to collapse under its own weight. We have hosted a great deal of interesting information on our website, and still do, but sometimes even we were unable to locate it.

That's why we have been working hard these past few months on a completely new website. It is not only technically new, with a new design, but above all it is a website that enables us to implement a completely fresh editorial approach. From now on, the website will be *The Broker's* guiding force, and the print versions of our magazine will be a reflection of it.

The website is much better suited to *The Broker's* aims: creating networks, exchanging knowledge and establishing links between articles, discussions, sectors and communities. We will place specific reading suggestions on every website page, as well as references to related content and isolated discussions. This will be brought about by the use of advanced software, but above all through the active intervention of experienced editors.

One of the website's important innovations is that it – and therefore also *The Broker's* editorial policy – will be divided into themes. For now, we will focus on five main themes: inclusive economics (including sustainable development), human security, global food security, social change and global development strategies. *The Broker* is also working on a series of international partner networks based on specific themes (more about our partner plan in issue 26). We intend to use this initiative to consolidate the work and expertise of knowledge institutes and knowledge networks around the world and to enhance the exchange of knowledge between them. *The Broker* will be fulfilling its role as an independent intermediary in these networks in the literal sense of the word.

We are going to put more energy into conference reports, online debates and blogs. For example, we will continue to pursue a discussion instigated a few years ago about what should happen in 2015, after the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals expires. We will be examining the role that Europe should play in a rapidly changing world. And in the near future, *The Broker* will be actively monitoring the process leading up to the Rio+20 conference in May 2012.

Twenty years after sustainable development became a serious agenda item, it is in dire need of a boost: politically speaking, the environment is clearly still fighting an uphill battle – indeed, the issue has not been convincingly linked to other major issues, such as development and justice. *The Broker* will publish special reports and organize special events on these issues and related projects.

And finally, *The Broker* will continue to publish its series. An example is the new series, published for the first time in issue 24, that kicked off with an article about Turkey. The series explores the foreign policies of various emerging – or emerged as we call them – powers in the world. This issue focuses on Brazil. Lula da Silva, former president of Brazil, and his successor Dilma Rousseff, have been confidently braving the stormy waters of world politics. Much more so than hesitant Europe, which cannot seem to decide on how to handle the changing relationship with its African, Caribbean and Pacific partners. Check out our special report 'The old man and the seas' for more details.

The Broker is at a crossroads. We proudly look back on what we have accomplished over the last four years. But we also intend to borrow some of that Brazilian self-confidence as we chart new waters. We hope to make more waves in the future. ■

Towards an inclusive economics

When growth is empty

The pursuit of endless growth and the ensuing global financial crisis have eroded public trust in economic policy. As a result, an increasing number of economists are advocating a more inclusive global economy.

summary

- The global financial crisis has exposed the weaknesses of the liberalized economic system and resulted in calls for a more inclusive global economy.
- Leading economists, such as Amartya Sen, are stressing the need for ethics and morality, and culture and context, to be reintroduced into economics.
- Human well-being rather than material welfare should, they argue, be the central goal of economic performance and social progress.
- Any new measure of economic performance needs to also assess the value of social provisioning – goods produced by unpaid economic activities, such as household and community production, and unpaid goods and services.

The recent financial crisis has exposed the weaknesses of the market-driven approach to social and economic policy. Not surprisingly, the failure of the liberalized, efficiency-driven system has policy makers around the world looking for new ways of organizing their social economies. For decades, economists from different schools of thought have been calling for the global economic system to be revised, but often in isolation from one another. The financial crisis, however, seems to have united economists and philosophers in an effort to promote a more inclusive global economy.

The financial crisis has also convinced many economists to go back to the drawing board. Orthodox economists from the neoclassical school, whose ideas rest on the assumption that there is perfect market equilibrium, fear that the strength of the discipline will be put at risk. But many others, including leading economists such as Amartya Sen, Joseph Stiglitz, Dani Rodrik, Jeffrey Sachs and Paul Krugman, argue that ethics and morality, and culture and context, need to be reintroduced into economics.

New way of thinking

Paul Krugman, 2008 Nobel laureate in economics, gave his *New York Times* article from 2 September 2009 the heading 'How Did Economists Get It So Wrong?' He argued that economists had failed to predict the global economic crisis because they were 'mistaking beauty for truth' in their mathematical models. The economics profession had been blind to 'the very possibility of catastrophic failures in a market economy'.

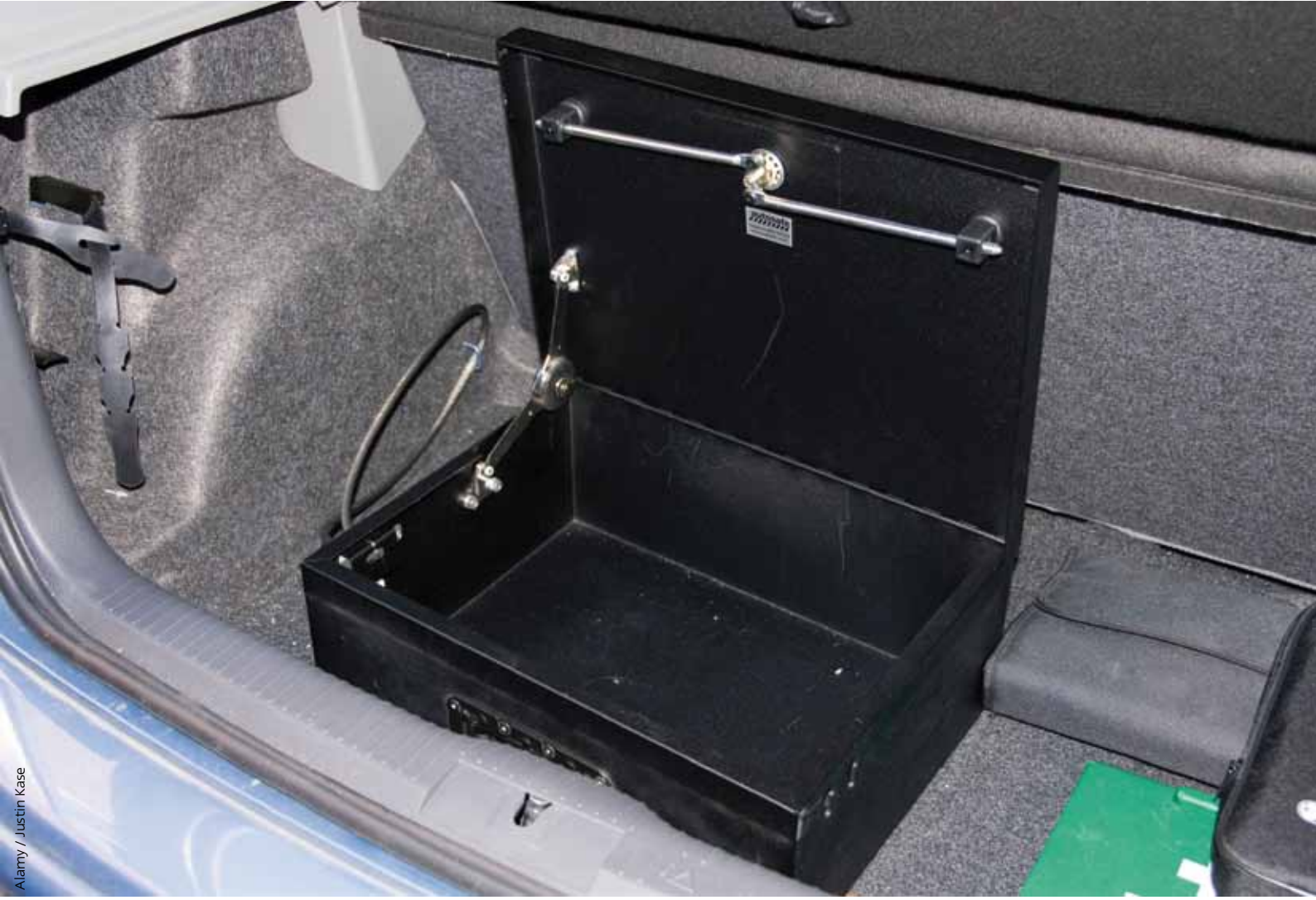
This critique stands out as one coming from the heart of the discipline itself. It follows a longer series of self-reflections in works by development economists, such as Stiglitz's 2002 book *Globalization and Its Discontents*, and Rodrik's 2004 book *Rethinking Growth Policies in the Developing World*. They warned against the pitfalls of economic development 'blueprints'.

Sen, ethical guide for many development economists, has urged for the re-evaluation of the ethics of economics and a revision of its underlying concepts from a more inclusive perspective, most recently in *The Idea of Justice*, published in 2009. Likewise, US economist Sachs stresses in his 2010 article 'Rethinking Macroeconomics', published in issue 18 of *The Broker*, 'that future prosperity will require basic reforms in global macroeconomic governance [and] new ways of thinking'.

These calls for a more inclusive economics and a rethinking of the field's underlying concepts also found voice in a landmark report, *The Growth Report: Strategies for Sustained Growth and Inclusive Development*, published in 2008 by the Commission on Growth and Development (CGD).

The report states that 'growth strategies cannot succeed without a commitment to equality of opportunity, giving everyone a fair chance to enjoy the fruits of growth.' Inclusive growth should be achieved through policies that stimulate productivity in combination with new employment opportunities. Persistent inequalities, argues Ravi Kanbur,

By **Nicky Pouw**, development economist and researcher at the Governance for Inclusive Development research group, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.



Alamy / Justin Kase

one of the report's contributors, should be addressed from the outset as they tend to undermine the sustainability of economic growth. But it is difficult to pinpoint the market-based economic model's sore spot because social relations are not reflected in economic models. By the same token, economic analysis does not factor in exclusionary practices.

Attempts to re-think economic policy making were also made in the 2009 report by the Stiglitz Commission. The report went a step further than the CGD report by proposing a more encompassing welfare concept and suggesting that economic accounting frameworks be reconsidered. The Stiglitz Commission's report re-ignited the debate on the limits of growth and the related measures of economic performance among economists in the worlds of academia and policy making.

It is highly unlikely, however, that a new measure will be enough to steer economists away from the perpetual growth mantra. Economists need to urgently scrutinize the field's underlying concepts and lay the foundations for a more inclusive economics framework.

The perils of growth

The standard neoliberal recipe of stable capital markets, privatization and liberalization, combined since the 1990s with donor-led national poverty reduction programmes, has yielded precious little. But progress has been made in some former low-income countries. The growing middle classes of India and China attest to a rise in average per capita income and improved food security. This progress appears to be mainly the result of economic policies that have little to do with the Washington Consensus.

Indeed, governments in countries such as India and China have chosen to pursue their own development strategies. Targeted, government-controlled reform policies – including high savings and government investments, together with foreign direct investment – have fuelled growth in concentrated areas in these countries. Average incomes have also grown in these countries, thanks to more recent policies that stimulate migration and remittances, social spending, industrial relocation to poorer areas and investment in agricultural production.

Some regions in China and India have benefited more than others, however, with far-reaching consequences for those that have ended up with the short end of the stick. The latter have suffered irreversible losses of livelihood and natural resources. There has been massive displacement of minority groups searching for income opportunities. Social services in cities, unable to keep pace with the rate of urbanization, are inadequate. This is widening the inequality gap.

High growth figures in countries such as China and India generally downplay inequality and environmental damage as inevitable by-products of economic success. Increased productivity and employment opportunities do increase welfare on the whole, but they alone do not have the power >

to reduce inequality or ensure environmental sustainability. Growth, of any kind, frees sorely needed money for investment. What to invest in, remains subject to the will of those in power.

Building blocks of inclusive economics

Those who advocate inclusive economics do so on the basis of the realization that two key changes have taken place in economies worldwide. This is the conclusion of the Stiglitz Commission's 2009 report, *The Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress Revisited*.

First, the authors take into account the changing structure of national economies worldwide. New sectors are emerging, such as highly specialized private medical and financial services. And old sectors, such as manufacturing, are either disappearing or are being relocated. The relationship between paid and unpaid economic activities, and between the formal and informal economy, is changing.

New national accounting tools are needed to capture the estimated values of scarce resources for which there is no market or market price, such as household goods and services. For example, the output of education and medical services, provided by the government, has always been badly measured. Likewise, the economic value of non-market goods and services is difficult to measure in monetary terms. The United Nations Statistics Division is seeking ways to integrate values of household production and the informal economy into systems of national accounting.

Second, the authors recognize the changing social values assigned to economic performance and our legacy to future generations. Social justice, democracy in a broad sense, environmental sustainability and real opportunities for the poor are gradually becoming central issues in the global public media. The Stiglitz Commission's report is only one example of the call for a more pragmatic, reality-based approach to economics and an increased focus on the ethics of growth.

We are all agents of well-being

A more inclusive perspective in economics has to ensure that people are part of the equation again, in the tradition of Hungarian political economist Karl Polanyi and social economists such as Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg. It must recognize that, ultimately, people's decisions steer the 'invisible hand' balancing the economy. Indeed, real people, with different interests and operating at different levels of power, make economic decisions about the consumption, production *and* distribution of scarce resources, and they, in turn, are affected by decisions made by others.

This double movement in economics deserves more attention. The phrase was coined by Polanyi in his seminal work *The Great Transformation*, published in 1944. It originally referred to the rising market society and government response to this in the form of social protection. The concept has renewed significance in light of today's global economies because though free competition in the global market may stimulate growth, some people are undesirably affected by economic growth and need protection.

In economics people are ascribed *agency*, the capability to solve economic problems. Individual characteristics, social identity, power relations and institutional contexts influence people's capabilities, and thus their agency. Moreover, economic agents perform multiple roles. They can be producers, consumers, distributors or recipients in the market and public domain. A broader definition of the economy would capture the economic realities of people on the ground. It would also shed more light on the socially and politically determined roles of economic agents.

In the most common definition of the economy, the market allocates scarce resources. Polanyi's definition, however, can be described as a process in which economic agents allocate these resources to other economic agents. This broader definition includes factors beyond the market, such as the state and individuals. It also sheds light on the state's role in redistributing public goods and services, as well as exchanges in kind by households, communities and other groups of people. The fact that market exchange is not the only determinant of well-being is one of the things that characterizes inclusive economics.

Well-being, not welfare

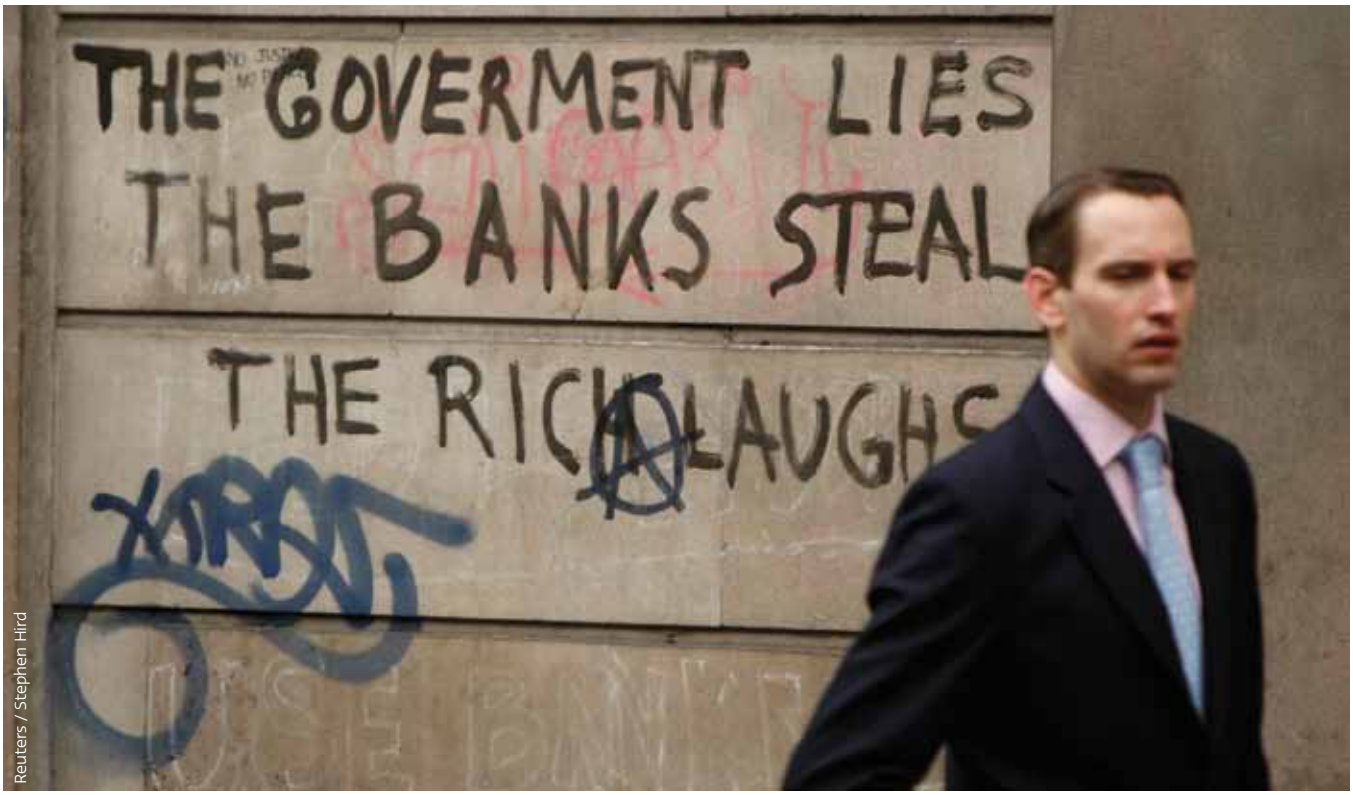
Human well-being should be the central goal of economic performance and social progress, and not welfare, which comes down to how someone is faring economically. This premise builds on the broader definitions of poverty, which have been debated ever since Peter Townsend developed his 'basic needs' approach in the late 1970s.

The 'basic needs' concept, in turn, inspired the Human Development Index in the late 1980s. Most economists in favour of inclusive economics also argue for an even more comprehensive measure of well-being than this index, as promoted by the United Nations and Sen. More recently, Allister McGregor, professor at the Institute for Development Studies in the United Kingdom, has promoted an approach to development centred on well-being.

Well-being consists of material wealth, social relationships (including environmental) and psychological security. Well-being, and how it is perceived, is rooted in culture. Together, these three dimensions determine a person's value system and economic choices.

Well-being also has a distinct social dimension. Social well-being emerges out of a negotiation process in which people give up part of their individual well-being for the greater social good. Economic policies promoting equality and sustainability should therefore not focus only on increasing the average level of welfare. They should also focus on the marginalized and give them a voice in this negotiation process.

In neoclassical economics, social welfare is the sum total of individual welfare augmented by individual consumption. In other words, when individuals receive higher incomes and increase their consumption, average welfare increases. The



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means for achieving higher income and growth easily become an end in themselves when other dimensions of well-being are discarded.

The recent crisis, however, has shown that when growth reaches a certain point, it can become 'empty' growth. Empty growth no longer represents an increase in real value, as subprime mortgages in the United States have illustrated. Indeed, it undermines the stability of real growth and burdens people with (more) risk and uncertainty. Structural inequities in the social, political or economic system mean that some feel this burden more than others.

The recent crisis has also eroded public trust in financial markets. The pursuit of endless growth has created risk, uncertainty and a lack of trust. So more growth needs to be complemented by something else – for example technological improvements to increase real value. This implies the need for social investment (in education or human capabilities, since knowledge fuels technological change).

Governments must therefore encourage public debate and include the excluded. The excluded deserve the opportunity to defend their well-being and demand investments in their capabilities so they can address priorities in their lives. This is a point repeatedly made by leading economists, such as Sen in *The Idea of Justice* and the Stiglitz Commission in its 2009 report. However, a broader welfare concept in itself will not shed light on the origins of social inclusion and exclusion. We need to look beyond the market and the state to understand how social relationships shape economic decisions.

Social provisioning

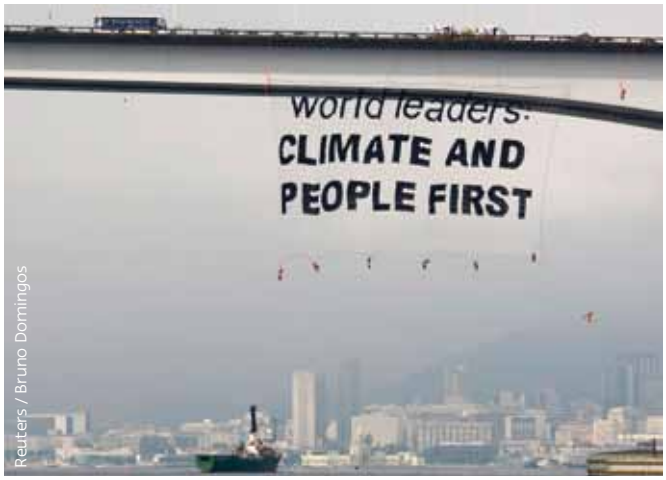
It is not only the market or the state that generates human well-being. Social provisioning – a term often used to distinguish between goods generated by unpaid economic activities and goods provided by the market or state – also contributes to human well-being. Think, for example, of household and community production, and the distribution of unpaid goods and services. These activities fall outside the scope of standard neoclassical economics because households and communities are primarily seen as 'consumers'.

Examples are cooking a meal, taking care of the sick and elderly, cooperating to work on each other's land, voluntary community work to maintain green areas or roads, and support arrangements. The social ties between people provide an organized social setting in which people cooperate, provide care and organize support to generate individual and social well-being.

Informal arrangements in these social settings determine who controls and has access to scarce resources and capital input. These resources are often shared. Fishing communities along the southern coast of India may share the same fishing grounds. People's social identity determines access and ownership of these fishing grounds in the absence of formal market and government regulations. Individual families may even choose to go temporarily poor during the lean season by diminishing their daily fish catch to sustain fish stocks and their way of living.

Self-fulfilment and reciprocity lead people to engage in social provisioning, not just individual gain. Community membership, as the fishing example illustrates, is regarded as the most important asset. These kinds of economic decisions can only be understood if economic value is interpreted from a broader perspective of well-being.

Social provisioning can strengthen social cohesion and psychological well-being. Many participatory poverty studies see the lack of cooperation between members of rural >



Reuters / Bruno Domingos

communities as a sign of 'poverty', when poverty is defined according to the perspective of local people themselves.

A more inclusive economics needs to do the following:

- Make social provisioning visible in the economic system, alongside state and market provisioning
- Regard contributions to well-being in its multiple dimensions
- Look into interrelationships and trade-offs between the market and non-market domains

The economic value of socially and state provided goods and services is hard to measure. There is no ready market price for these inputs and outputs. Other measures need to be designed to assess their value so they can be included in economic analyses. Monetary and non-monetary measures should be used to estimate these interrelationships, and the cultural values of non-market activities need to be explored in more detail.

Economic performance

The above notions of well-being and social provisioning automatically alter the way we think about economic performance. Economic performance entails more than just the rate of economic growth. It is rooted in the combined set-up of state, market and social provisioning activities. The performance of any economy should also be thought of in terms of its ability to enhance social equity and the sustainable use of its resources.

How scarce resources are used is no longer just about efficiency. It is also a question of social equity and environmental sustainability. In other words, 'efficiency' is itself subjective. Take, for example, people's notions of how much time or space is needed to live well, or new indicators, such as the 'quality of life' indicator. Economic analyses should use these factors as well, and not only monetary indicators.

Deepa Narayan, project leader of *Moving Out of Poverty*, a 15-country World Bank study, reports that in India the role of local governance is vital in enabling people to climb up the 'ladder of life'. She has constructed a 'mobility of the poor' index based on a large database of life histories. These histories tell the stories of people who have either climbed out of poverty, fallen into poverty or whose situation has remained stagnant over a 10-year period. She then asked them which factors helped them to move out of poverty. Local democracy and family support were cited as the most valuable factors to make lasting progress in life.

Another example using non-monetary indicators in economic analyses is that of economists joining forces with ecologists. The Swedish ecologist Johan Rockström and his multidisciplinary team of researchers have identified nine planetary boundaries in ecological systems. If human activity goes beyond any of these boundaries, it will cause irreversible loss to these systems.

In order to sustain global freshwater resources for future human well-being, for example, countries would have to choose an economic growth path that keeps us within the proposed planetary boundary of 4,000 km^3 usage of water per year. Given the rate of 2,600 km^3 under present economic activity, this is still within the safety zone. However, the United Nation's world population growth estimates anticipate a rise from 6.9 billion people in 2010 to 9.1 billion in 2050.

Needless to say, this will put more pressure on freshwater resources. Economic growth and its related human activities is one of the key variables impacting climate change and water use. So it stands to reason that we will run out of fresh water at some point if countries continue to grow economically at the current pace. It is the poor and marginalized in particular that are currently deprived of access to safe drinking water.

From a well-being perspective, investments in individual capabilities as well as physical and social infrastructure could mitigate such risks. Likewise, this perspective sees investments in environmental sustainability as an investment in future well-being, unlike the neoclassical growth theory, which views them as an expense.

Sen argued in 2000 that economic growth should become instrumental in achieving human well-being, rather than an end in itself. The expansion of people's freedom to choose is a virtue in its own right. However, the real choices that people have are undermined by more powerful economic agents, which control social, political and economic institutions.

Sen therefore recently broadened the discussion on economic growth to include social justice concerns in *The Idea of Justice*. The question economists should now ask is whether a society wants growth at all costs? One answer is to develop a more inclusive economics framework, and not only new proposals for generating growth, new employment policies and new ways of measuring performance. It is not enough for economists to simply build better models. They need to collaborate with historians, geographers, philosophers and others in order to make sound ethical choices about how they economy should be organized. ■

The author would like to thank Allister McGregor, Esther-Mirjam Sent and Robert Went for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

On the website

***The Broker's* new 'Current global affairs' blog provides a window for reflection on topical news events. There is a lively discussion about the uprisings in the Middle East. Other new blogs question the relevance of capacity development and discuss emerging powers of the 21st century. *The Broker* also blogged from the World Conference on Humanitarian Studies in Boston, USA.**

Food security and climate change

African voices are being added to the online discussion on food security. John Ilukor, of Makerere University in Uganda, writes that 'as we invest in technology, how do we communicate or ensure that the technology meets the end users's needs? How do we communicate to policy makers and make them own the new scientific knowledge especially in context of Africa?'

The communication between scientists and policy makers seems to be one of the main points of concern expressed by bloggers from Africa. Khalil Elahee of the University of Mauritius has a solution: 'There must be a new breed of what can be called ''project leaders''. Such professionals can act as more than an interface between knowledge and action. They will be responsible for making things happen.'

Mea culpas are in order

Crethi Plethi

The social sciences proved unable to predict the recent uprisings in the Middle East. In their article on the current global affairs blog, Paul Aarts and Stephan de Vries of the University of Amsterdam, argue that although social scientists should adapt their theories and paradigms to changing realities, they should refrain from making predictions. 'Regarding the Middle East,' they write, 'it is necessary for experts to keep adjusting their theories and to keep analyzing the situation as it unfolds: not as the new "revolutionary" fad but as a continuity of past events.'

This statement became the starting point for an online discussion. 'The entire point of political science is to predict future events,' one blogger commented. Another one added that 'social scientists and experts should sit in the front row to observe and analyse the current changes, and indeed they should be modest and careful in their claims of what they see. Mea culpas would be in order if they forsake this task; not when theories may be proven wrong tomorrow.'

Turkey as emerged power

The article about Turkey in our 'Emerged powers' series (see issue 24) generated several outspoken online comments. Svante Cornell, research director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute of Johns Hopkins University in Washington DC, believes the article did not take into account the new foreign policy of taking sides in conflicts. 'Turkey as a mediator was true in 2008; today, it is increasingly taking sides, and systematically so with political Islamic causes,' he writes. 'Only the ideological factor can explain these shifts in policy.' But another participant writes that 'other issues, such as religion, are there to divert attention from more serious problems'. Although Arab capital is welcome, 'breaking ties with the USA or EU will not happen'.

Turkey is also discussed alongside Brazil in the new emerging powers blog in relation to their peacekeeping and mediation efforts. Other topics covered are the impact of China's foreign policy in the Asian region, and the foreign policy changes facing South Africa as an emerged power. 'The new world is multi-polar but it is far from being multilateral', writes Mariano Aguirre, director of NOREF in Oslo, Norway. 'We live in times of a return to hard realism where states seek a pure national interest, coinciding with explorative attempts at Kantian multilateralism. It is a strange mix, but one that reflects the complex reality of visions and approaches.'

Debating capacity development

Andvaranaut

Capacity development refers to a concept and method that has been looking for ways to connect different kinds of knowledge for many years now. But how relevant has capacity development really been? Allan Kaplan, co-director of The Proteus Initiative, writes that development specialists cannot build or develop capacity 'as we think we do, or wish to – by constructing, implementing, inputting in order to achieve an outcome'. The reality is too complex for capacity to be achieved by 'adding one skill, one piece of information, one input and outcome, onto another'.

Roger Henke, who worked for the NGO ICCO, counters Jan Ubels' view (SNV) that to improve current capacity development practices, or what Ubels calls giving attention to 'multi-level' and 'multi-actor dimensions' and professionalization, is not worthwhile. 'I do not believe,' says Henke, 'that such improvements are going to deal with the capacity development fatigue.' Volker Hauck of ECDPM signals a lack of willingness to get capacity development right in relation with the aid effectiveness discussion. He wonders whether capacity development will survive after the Busan summit.

By **Evert-jan Quak**, web editor.

The Lula legacy

Brazil braves new waters

Brazil's new-found status as an economic power and conflict mediator has led some to question its motives. President Dilma Rousseff will have to find ways to deflect accusations of self-interest and regional hegemony.

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Dilma Rousseff's victory in Brazil's presidential election last October and her swearing-in ceremony on 1 January 2011 were followed intensely by the news media, foreign ministries, multinational corporations and intergovernmental organizations around the world.

The fact that President Rousseff is the first woman to preside over the largest Latin American country was not the main motive behind such sustained interest. Realpolitik was.

Over the last two decades and in particular since left-wing President Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva entered Brasilia's presidential palace in 2003, Brazil has become an economic powerhouse and a major diplomatic actor on the international scene. It is a country, writes *New York Times* correspondent Alexei Barrionuevo, 'full of swagger, eager to flex more of its newfound wealth and influence at home and abroad'.

Brazil matters

Brazil is Latin America's giant with 200 million inhabitants and a land area of 8.5 million square kilometres. It is the world's eighth-largest economic power and fourth-largest food exporter with an enormous potential for increasing agricultural production. Its expansion has been based not only on agriculture and minerals but also on a growing sector of heavy and high-tech industries, and it has discovered massive oil reserves 150 miles off its southern coast.

In the eyes of the world, Brazil matters. Most analysts know that any major change of direction in Brasilia might affect economic, diplomatic and political interests beyond Brazil's traditional South American sphere of influence.

By **Jean-Paul Marthoz**, professor of international journalism at the Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium, foreign affairs columnist for *Le Soir* and senior advisor to the Committee to Protect Journalists, New York, USA.

summary

- Brazil has become an economic powerhouse and a major actor on the international diplomatic stage since the 1990s.
- Economically, it has strengthened relations with the United States and the European Union, and formed coalitions with Russia, India, China and others.
- Brazil's new-found status has led it to assume a more proactive international role: mediating in Latin American conflicts, enhancing its presence in Africa, and testing its peacekeeping and conflict-resolution capacity in Haiti and the Middle East.
- But Brazil's new-found status has also raised suspicions that it is acting in its own. This is a legacy that newly elected president, Dilma Rousseff, will have to dispel.

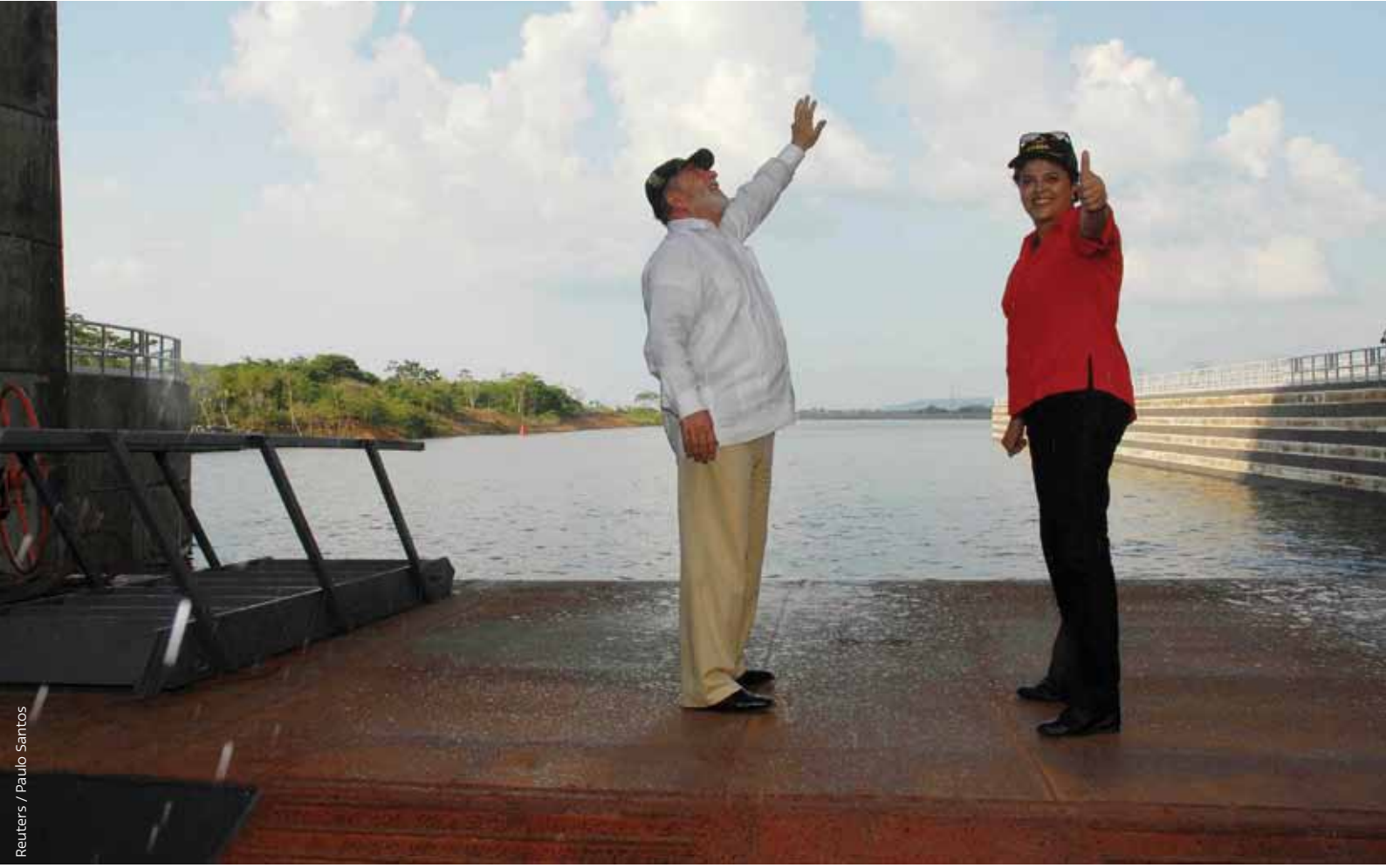
Dilma Rousseff was Lula's protégée under his two previous administrations. As a minister of energy and then a chief of staff, she has shaped and shared the government's major policies. Continuity is a keyword in her vocabulary.

In 2003, Lula did not upset the apple cart either. He based his own policies on the economic and social reforms introduced by his centre-right predecessor Fernando Henrique Cardoso and adopted – to the dismay of his left-wing supporters – a strict and conventional economic and financial policy.

In this shrewd exercise of 'change in continuity' he also developed an activist foreign policy in order to maximize Brazil's position in the world economy and on the diplomatic stage. As the president who travelled abroad the most in his country's history, he resorted to presidential diplomacy but also to the renowned competence of the foreign ministry, the guardian of Brazil's traditional foreign interests.

This approach was initially tested during the 2003 World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations in Cancun when Brazil boldly took the lead of a coalition of Southern countries to oppose EU and US farm subsidies and demand better access for their agricultural products in Northern markets.

However, contrary to more radical Southern leaders, such as Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Lula did not pretend



Reuters / Paulo Santos

Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff and her predecessor, Lula da Silva, during a visit to the massive Tucuruí Dam on the Tocantins River, a major tributary of the Amazon, November 2010.

to break with or radically change the international system. His objective was to bend its rules in favour of the South and more specifically in favour of Brazilian national interests.

Joining the new global game

Brazil's main point was that the institutions of global governance created in the wake of the Second World War were no longer representative of the new state of the world. Therefore, Lula argued, they should be adapted, in particular by making room at their top echelons for leaders of the new emerging countries of the South.

To that end, the Brazilian foreign ministry developed a diplomatic strategy aimed at increasing the country's presence in intergovernmental institutions. Brazil launched a campaign to reform the United Nations so that it could become a permanent member of its Security Council. It also submitted its own candidate to chair the WTO.

Although these two attempts ultimately failed, they gave a sense of Brazil's ambitions. No longer content with being the first among its Latin American neighbours, it wanted to join the new global game.

This conviction led Brazil to assume a more proactive international role: mediating in Latin American conflicts, enhancing its presence in Africa, and testing its peacekeeping and conflict-resolution capacity in Haiti and the Middle East.

Brazil also moved to shape a new international order by helping to build two new coalitions with like-minded 'emerging powers'. The BRIC group (Brazil, Russia, India and China) and IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa), although expressing disparate interests and lacking a real common strategy, were used as new international forums in which Brazilian diplomacy could push its economic and political priorities.

To reach these goals Lula followed Brazil's traditional foreign affairs principles of non-intervention, multilateralism and peaceful resolution of conflicts that had been conceived in the early 1900s by the legendary 'father of Brazilian diplomacy', José Paranhos, Baron of Rio Branco .

President Lula gave a new impetus to these principles by offering Brazil's good offices in civil crises affecting neighbouring states. Brazil mediated in Bolivia between left-wing President Evo Morales and his conservative and autonomist opponents in the wealthy eastern departments – without succeeding, however, in finding a definite solution to the issues at stake. In 2004, the Brazilian army took the lead in MINUSTAH, the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti.

Wooing the big boys

Brazil, however, gave the highest priority to confirming and building strong and predictable relations with leading international powers, in particular the United States, China and the European Union.

Traditionally, Brasilia has tried not to antagonize the United States, but rather establish a cordial relationship with the so-called 'Northern colossus'. Although the two countries have regularly diverged on substantive issues, such as climate change, the Iraq invasion, the Colombian conflict and >

international trade, Brazil has generally avoided playing the 'anti-American card'. In 2007, Lula signed a partnership on biofuels research and production with George W. Bush, and during his mandate he generally helped mitigate tensions between Washington, and Venezuela and Bolivia.

Also in 2007, Brazil signed a strategic partnership agreement with the European Union, putting the country high up on the EU political and economic map – in the same league as the United States, India and Russia.

China, however, has been the key actor in Brazil's economy in recent years. A major importer of natural resources, and a major investor, it became Brazil's biggest trading partner in 2010, replacing the United States.

At the outset, Brazil welcomed what was presented as the birth of a 'Brasilia-Beijing axis'. However, more recently Brazil has begun to worry about China, seeing it as a competitor for Brazilian industries as much as a partner. 'China is the microcosm for the future of Brazil, all the good and bad,' said Marcel Fortuna Biato, Lula's foreign policy advisor. 'And like the rest of the world, we are trying to fashion a response.'

Zero problems diplomacy

To enhance its global profile, Brazil has also pushed for economic and diplomatic pre-eminence in South America. Striving for a 'zero problems with neighbours' situation, it has tried to stay away from Latin America's ideological front lines.

It has maintained respectful relations with Colombia, although it considers its neighbour excessively aligned with the United States and sees its drug-fed, long-festering armed conflict as a source of instability in the Andean and Amazonian regions, two areas deemed strategic by the Brazilian military establishment.

Despite his shows of left-wing solidarity with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Lula has endeavoured to contain him by 'embracing him' and reducing the impact of his policies in South America, especially in Bolivia, where Brazilian companies have made significant investments.

Brazil also invested in regional integration. In the 1990s and early 2000s, it struggled to develop the Mercosul, the free-trade agreement between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and recently Venezuela. However, after the process stalled, Brazil looked for broader regional horizons.

In 2000, the Initiative for Regional infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) was launched in Brasilia. In 2008, Brazil initiated the creation of the Union of South American Nations. In 2009, it helped form the South American Defence Council that mediated in the Venezuela-Colombia conflict. And in 2010, it backed the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, a new Latin American organization including Cuba and excluding the United States and Canada.

Although these initiatives are 'still more of an aspiration than a practical goal,' as Latin America expert Peter Hakim observes, they testify to Brazil's regional ambitions and its will to 'guide' the continent in directions that reinforce its influence locally and globally.

Hard and soft power

Brazil has been using its hard power, especially its strong economy and its powerful multinational companies, to enhance its global role. Brazil has changed from a borrower to a lender at the International Monetary Fund, offering US$10 billion at the 2009 G-20 summit to fight the global economic crisis.

Brazilian businessmen are present on all continents, in public works, the energy sector, telecommunications, aeronautics and agriculture. They have clinched contracts in Latin America, Africa and the Arab world, from Libya to Iraq.

Brazil has also tried to sell itself as a benevolent power, however. It has given its humanitarian, peacekeeping and mediation initiatives a high profile. Brazilian blue helmets are present in countries such as Haiti, Liberia, the Central African Republic, Ivory Coast and East Timor.

It has promoted its image as a 'new development assistance provider' in the context of a South-South cooperation strategy and has developed multiple aid projects, especially in the agricultural and health sectors, through its Agência Brasileira de Cooperação, in Latin America and the Caribbean, Portuguese-speaking Africa and East Timor.

Brazil has also publicized its internal social and economic achievements as proof of its international goodwill. Indeed, under Presidents Cardoso and Lula, Brazil has succeeded in shaking two of Latin America's traditional failings: erratic economic governance and extreme poverty.

Between 2002 and 2010, Philippe Boulet-Gercourt euphorically writes, 'the poverty rate has decreased from 35% of the population to 21%, the annual growth rate has averaged more than 5%, the foreign exchange reserves have topped US$250 billion.'

The system put in place has lifted 13 million Brazilians out of poverty and 12 million out of extreme poverty. The government's social welfare programme, Bolsa Família, provides cash to poor families if they send their children to school and ensure they are vaccinated. Although the programme has been applied in other countries, it has been particularly well presented by the Lula government as an inspiration for developing countries.

In fact, in the last decade Brazil has played in two fields at the same time. Lula has spoken at both Porto Alegre World Social Forums and at Davos global business pow-wows. He has tried to present himself both as a member of the big world league of major industrial powers and as a spokesperson for the South. Not always successfully: he was booed at Porto Alegre at the fifth forum, for example, for policies that some attendees felt were too conservative.

Ambiguous games

Assuming the role of an intermediary power, however, has not always been easy. While Brazil expected everyone to praise its benevolence, the country has often been suspected of playing ambiguous games.

Brazil is home to the one of the planet's largest ecosystems, the Amazon forest, and although the country is the eighth-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, it has taken the lead in the development of renewable energy. Its policies, however,

Marco Aurélio Garcia, special foreign policy advisor to Brazil's president, Dilma Rousseff, and to former president Lula da Silva: expanding Brazil's international influence is not always as easy as it looks.

have been subject to major objections. After an initially positive response, its biofuels strategy, especially the development of ethanol production in developing countries, has been criticized particularly by environmentalists and sectors concerned with global food insecurity.

Poorer countries have not always been convinced by Brazil's pretension to defend the interests of the South against the United States or the European Union. This is especially so in agriculture, where Brazil dances essentially to the tune of its powerful agribusiness industry. African cotton producers, for instance, have criticized Brazil for neglecting their interests and those of traditional peasants.

In Latin America, despite Brasilia's insistence that it harbours no hegemonic intentions, many countries express some concern about a 'rising power' that tends to consider its neighbours as less than equals.

Brazil's Latin American 'sister republics' failed, for instance, to support its bid for a permanent seat at the UN security council. Countries with regional ambitions such as Mexico and Argentina or smaller neighbours such as Bolivia, Paraguay or Uruguay resent at times Brazil's diplomatic influence and economic encroachments. IIRSA, and in particular its ambition to connect Brazil's ports and agricultural heartland with the Pacific coast, has been seen as a project that will most benefit Brazil.

Lula met some tough questioning abroad, despite being credited with an 80% popularity rating in Brazil at the end of his second term. 'Brazil has become one of the most obstructionist countries regarding human rights,' said José Miguel Vivanco, director of the Americas division of Human Rights Watch, in an interview with Radio Netherlands Worldwide on 4 September 2010. He believes Brazil is pursuing a South-South strategy that considers the theme of human rights as a liability.

Indeed, Lula has systematically forsaken one of the major ingredients of soft power in his whirlwind tours around the world: democracy promotion and human rights. The former trade union leader and left-wing activist might have benefited from international solidarity under the Brazilian military dictatorship that ruled until 1985, but he also completely sidelined human rights in his foreign policy endeavours mainly by referring to Brazil's traditional policy of national sovereignty and non-intervention in other countries' affairs.

Lula ordered Brazilian diplomats in the United Nations not to condemn autocratic regimes like Myanmar, Sudan and North Korea. He openly schmoozed with Libyan strongman Muammar Qaddafi and Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and embraced the Castro regime. His failure to significantly improve Brazil's internal human rights record, and in particular reduce police violence and corruption, has also damaged Brazil's international image.

Lula's initiatives have also been met with failure. His offer of good offices to help Colombia solve a 50-year-old armed insurgency was rebuffed. In 2009 he failed in his efforts to restore Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, who had been unseated by the army. In 2010, he was scolded by the US administration when he joined Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu to mediate on the Iranian nuclear issue.

Come home, Brazil

Dilma Rousseff is aware that she will have to correct some of her predecessor's approaches and carefully choose her foreign policy priorities. The new president seems to listen to those observers that have warned Brazil against hubris and suggested, as Peter Hakim writes, that 'the nation's accomplishments and potential have been exaggerated and its weaknesses underplayed.' She knows that she will have to confront major challenges in a highly competitive world economic environment.

Although the real test of Brazil's emergence as a serious and responsible world power will be in the fields of the economy and of diplomacy, three highly symbolic deadlines are on the horizon that will put the country in the international limelight: the Rio+20 environmental summit in 2012, the Football World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016.

Quite a few observers, however, are predicting that the new president will mark a pause in Brazil's international activism, adopt a 'come home, Brazil' approach focused on solving major internal structural weaknesses and social dilemmas that were not addressed under the two previous administrations as a result of the implementation of a mainstream economic development model, in particular poor education, insufficient infrastructure, weak rule of law, acute levels of corruption, social inequality, violence and rampant ecological degradation.

'To substantially deepen its investments in its people, on which its new social contract is based,' writes Julia Sweig, 'Brazil may well have to lower its near-term sights regarding global leadership.' ■

The author would like to thank Fabio de Castro and Kees Konings for their helpful comments on this article.

Does accountability deliver?

Apparently transparent

Transparency and accountability initiatives aim to combat corruption and inefficiency, and improve how aid is channelled. How effective are these initiatives, and how can their impact be measured?

summary

- Transparency and accountability initiatives (TAIs) aim to increase development effectiveness, improve the quality of governance and empower poor citizens.
- Measuring the impact of these initiatives, however, is not straightforward.
- More robust evidence of the impact of transparency and accountability initiatives is needed to ensure their survival, especially in the current climate of shrinking aid spending.
- The state of evidence could be improved by developing impact assessment approaches pioneered in other fields that are sensitive to complexity.

Transparency and accountability initiatives (TAIs) have taken democratization, governance, aid and development circles by storm. They have flooded into the void that existed between citizen-side efforts to promote participation and voice, and state-side efforts to promote development effectiveness and democratic governance.

Developmentalists hold that accountability will mend the leaky pipes of corrupt and inefficient service delivery, and channel aid more effectively. As a consequence, development initiatives will produce greater, more visible and sustainable results. Democracy scholars and proponents hold that democracy now needs to deliver on its promises – including better living standards – and new forms of democratic accountability can help in this.

Traditional inadequacies

Traditional political accountability suffers from inadequacies such as administrative bottlenecks, weak incentives and corruption. They limit the effectiveness of state-led mechanisms, particularly for poor people. Myriad multi-stakeholder, citizen-led and 'social accountability' approaches have emerged in response. Citizens, communities and social organizations have bottom-up monitoring systems, citizen report cards, social audits, grassroots analysis and research, public hearings and complaints mechanisms. Led by *social* actors rather than traditional *political* ones, this social accountability is still deeply political in terms of stakes and impacts.

Social and citizen-led accountability moved to centre stage when the World Development Report 2004 identified service delivery failures – in education, health, sanitation and energy provision – as accountability failures. For example, primary education facilities, often under-funded, were found to suffer additionally from teachers being poorly motivated and often absent or ineffective at their jobs. Increased public spending on primary education would achieve little in school systems mired in corruption and political patronage, where teachers' salaries continued to be too low, paid late or not at all. The report advocated direct interaction between service users and providers to address these problems, instead of the 'long route' of elected representatives and public officials seeking accountability from providers on users' behalf.

The rise of transparency and accountability

Broadly, TAIs seek to achieve one or more of the following impacts:

- Increase development effectiveness – the 'developmental outcomes' case
- Improve the quality of governance – the 'democratic outcomes' case
- Empower poor citizens – the 'empowerment' case

In the service delivery field, many accountability initiatives hinge on getting governments and service providers to publicize information or make their budgets transparent. One example is the famous Indian people's organization MKSS, which has inspired many modern social accountability initiatives, in India and abroad, via its mass campaigning, and its naming and shaming of corrupt officials.

The field has thus overlapped with simultaneous developments in the access-to-information field, which was

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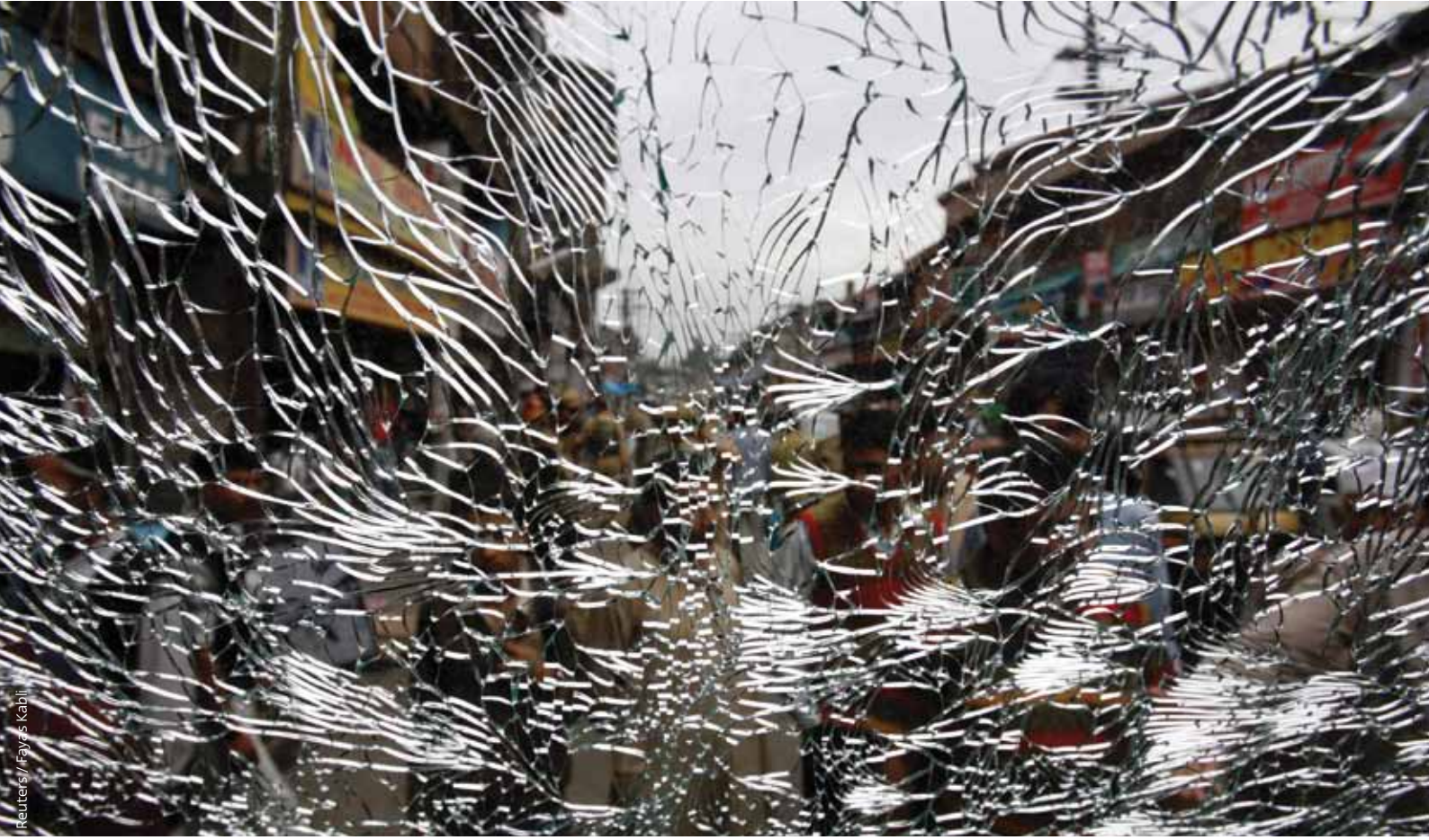


Reuters/Fayas Kabli

already a burgeoning area of – often legal – advocacy linked to social mobilization. It merges too with budget accountability work, which has evolved prolifically since the mid-1990s.

TAIs have spread even further more recently. They have reached the extractives sector, where methods like accountability rankings and indices have been borrowed from the access-to-information and budget fields.

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, for instance, is a coalition of companies, investors, governments, and local and international civil society actors. Launched in 2002, it sets standards for disclosure and transparency on extraction and export revenues, and monitors compliance. Publish What you Pay is a global civil society network that campaigns and advocates for disclosure of similar information, to ensure that revenues from oil, gas and mining activities benefit local populations, not only companies.

In development aid, there are long-standing concerns about the fundamental inequality of aid relations, which tends to make them opaque and unaccountable. NGOs have sought to use partnership protocols and accountability standards to address these concerns. Donors have emphasized 'mutual accountability' in their general commitment to enhancing aid effectiveness – although lately the emphasis lies heavily on the accountability of recipients and intermediaries to official funders.

The latest expression of accountability concerns in the aid sector is a wave of ICT-based aid transparency initiatives. Features of this ICT transparency wave are now seeping into the climate change field, as alarm grows about huge international public funds pouring into mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries without an adequate, purpose-built architecture in place.

Beyond the buzz

Yet as they become mainstream, accountability and transparency risk losing their meaning and becoming buzzwords. There are signs that their political edge is becoming blunted and their democracy-deepening potential neglected as they are applied in pursuit of narrowly conceived developmental outcomes. A stress on demonstrable outcomes in the form of efficient service delivery has diverted attention from how citizen voice and participation could have shaped policy design and priority setting in the first place. A focus on the tools threatens to eclipse the vital issues of context and relationships, leading to the mechanistic application of gadgets and kits at the expense of examining power relations between actors.

After a decade of the spread of TAIs, donors, practitioners and researchers are asking what all this accountability and transparency activity and expenditure are achieving.

Are TAIs proving effective in terms of achieving their stated goals, such as providing service users with relevant information, or shaming extractive industries into paying their taxes? Beyond these immediate effects, are they achieving further-reaching, 'second-order' impacts, such as material benefits in people's lives? Are they helping to establish democracies, which serve their poor constituents better, or to empower citizens by making their voices heard?

What methods are useful for assessing this? How do early assumptions about connections between participation, transparency and accountability look in the light of a decade's experience? Do citizen-led TAIs work effectively with state actors? Do they manage to change state institutions, and if so, which and how? >

What we can say

What we can say about TAIs is that evidence shows that under some conditions, some TAIs create opportunities for citizens and states to interact constructively, contributing to greater state responsiveness to citizens' needs, better budget utilization, improved service delivery and more empowered citizens (see box).

But there is a lot that we *cannot* say, on the basis of existing evidence, about the impact of TAIs. Overall, the type and quality of evidence is uneven, piecemeal and scattered. Many studies focus on just a few initiatives. As yet there is a dearth of rigorous 'meta' or secondary reviews that look across a range of evidence to draw broader, more solid conclusions from specific cases. Many TAIs are just too new for any conclusions to be drawn about sustained impact. Most studies focus on the effectiveness of the initiative itself – without showing links from the initiative to broader developmental, democratic or empowerment aims.

None of these observations constitute arguments *against* transparency and accountability (T&A) work. But they do show that more robust evidence is needed to make the case for T&A convincingly. This is vital for its survival now that evidence-based policy and results-based management have pervaded the development sector, and in the post-financial crisis context of shrinking aid spending.

How can we enhance the demonstrable impact of T&A work? Three major challenges come into focus for researchers and practitioners.

At a glance: positive impact of TAIs

Participatory budgeting initiatives, as well as improving public services and re-directing resources to poor communities, have strengthened democratic processes in some cases.

In Brazil, the Participatory Budget model has expanded from the Workers' Party-controlled city of Porto Alegre to about 12 major cities and between 250 and 2500 localities, mainly in Brazil, but also in Latin America and scores of European municipalities. Studies show that participatory budgeting can increase access to a range of public services and redirect public spending towards poor neighbourhoods. Other research shows that participatory budget processes have helped in some cases to democratize existing civil society associations and spawn new ones, enhancing representation of the formerly excluded. They have also increased transparency and accountability while reducing political clientelism and manipulation.

India's Right to Information (RTI) campaign led to new legislation and widespread mobilization and empowerment of constituencies to use information for development purposes.

A 'People's Assessment' was conducted to assess the impact of the RTI law. The assessment drew on the submission of 800 test cases of freedom of information requests, the analysis of 25,000 past requests, and interviews and focus groups with some 35,000 people. To the key question 'Did getting the information asked for meet with the intended objective?', 40% of rural and 60% of urban respondents replied that their objectives were fully met.

This and other assessments of the law's impact have revealed some inconsistent application of the law from state to state, but also some good practices such as a National RTI Helpline and the use of video conferencing to enable remotely located parties to participate in RTI hearings. The mere fact that this mass 'People's Assessment' could be conducted indicates that the movement to secure this new law has built an informed, empowered citizenry alive to the potential of information disclosure.

Aid accountability mechanisms adopted by Northern-based international development NGOs can lead to sharing of power with Southern partner organizations and their constituents.

Aims, claims and theories of change

The first challenge arises from the fact that in TAIs, aims vary, working assumptions are obscure and untested, and theories of change are rarely adequately spelt out.

To discuss the impact of TAIs, or what they have achieved, we need to be clear about their aims. Did they seek development? Deeper democracy? Empowerment?

TAIs often leave unclear whether the immediate outcome was an end in itself, or seen as a means to an end. Some initiatives take it as a given that transparent aid data will lead seamlessly to more accountable and more effective aid. The most common buried, untested assumption by far is that transparent, accessible information will generate accountable policies, budgets and state behaviour.

Any TAI is just an intermediate step in pursuit of the desired impact. However, how exactly that impact is to be achieved – or the 'theory of change' – is often left unsaid. Most TAIs miss any realistic appraisal of how inputs might translate into the desired outcomes.

Take the case of an African NGO that wants government spending to be fairer to rural populations. It pursues this aim by lobbying for budget proposals to be published on government websites. The causal pathway that could lead from the lobbying (the input) to the outcome (changed budget allocation and execution) is something like this:

- The budget proposal document is eventually published – that is, the transparency initiative has been effective, but it has not yet had its desired impact
- Concerned organizations, citizens, parliamentarians and journalists access it online
- They put pressure on the finance ministry's executive and budget office to change current budget allocation patterns
- The budget office responds to the diverse pressures and changes budget allocations
- The resulting budget proposal is executed with more spent on rural and marginalized populations

None of the steps in a causal chain is a foregone conclusion. All involve assumptions and risks. The NGO could mitigate some of these, for example, by forming alliances with organizations that focus on social mobilization in villages. The NGO might report to its INGO funder that the budget proposal is now available online. That might prove the effectiveness of the NGO's lobbying, but not its impact: for that, a very different strategy would be required, almost certainly involving additional stakeholders.

Reuters / Bogdan Cristel

Not the next logframe

All in all, few initiatives are set up so that they can provide concrete evidence of having advanced their ultimate aims.

There is a difficulty here. Theories of change are not 'the next logframe', today's must-have accessory that qualifies development initiatives as fundable and workable. The very language of theories of change is alien and off-putting to many of the people working in development. To realists who see their assumptions constantly calling for revision as non-linear, complex realities unfold around them, a theory of change – or of anything – may sound too fixed and restrictive.

But at a basic level, a failure to spell out assumptions of how one expects change to happen can inhibit an initiative's effectiveness by limiting its focus. It can also make impact assessment elusive or impossible: against what would we assess impact and explain its attainment or non-attainment? And, as practitioners know, the collective articulation of a theory of change between all involved actors offers invaluable opportunities for negotiation and contestation around the proposed change effort. This helps to deliver a more relevant, feasible and sustainable process.

How do we know what we know?

Assessing the impact of complex, multi-actor change processes is difficult in any field. The relatively young field of T&A work is no exception. Assessing TAIs' impact means facing up to a range of methodological challenges.

To start with, the available evidence is limited in quantity and uneven in quality. Observations of correlation are all too often mistaken for causal connections. The effects of single factors are easier to pinpoint and trace than the interaction of several factors, yet this interaction is often the key that unlocks outcomes. Formulating manageable indicators to capture concepts such as 'empowerment' or 'denser democratic engagement' is a struggle for even the most incisive thinkers and practitioners.

The state of the evidence could be improved by developing impact assessment approaches pioneered in other fields that are sensitive to complexity and draw on combined methods. Untapped potential in user-centred and participatory approaches could be explored further. More baselines could be used, such as contextual 'outset analysis' rather than slavish logframe compliance. Comparative in-depth research across contexts and across TAIs can be conducted within multi-case studies. The capacities of researchers and practitioners can be strengthened for developing and building on innovative approaches.

Donors and practitioners of accountability and transparency work could ask these questions early on:

- Does the intervention or initiative articulate a clear causal pathway? Does it disentangle common assumptions about the links between transparency, accountability and participation?
- If adapting, or replicating 'successful' applications of tools or approaches to other settings, does it take into account the reasons for their success in the original context?
- Does the strategy take into account complex, contextual factors, including capacities and incentives on both citizen and state sides of the equation?
- Does the design contemplate how impact will be assessed? Does it build in methods of analysis appropriate to the purpose of the impact assessment?
- Does it include methods for tracking change over time?


Reuters / Baz Ratner

Beyond the state-citizen dichotomy

Despite the unevenness of the evidence base and its limitations, there are common factors that shape the impact of TAIs. These show that TAIs are not only mechanisms or instruments, but relationships, involving power dynamics and patterns of behaviour and attitudes across both the state and society sides of the governance equation.

On the 'citizen voice' or demand side, one key factor is the capability of citizens and their organizations to use the information that has been made transparent. The Indian RTI law would be much less effective if the process of securing it had not involved awareness-raising and the mobilization of vast masses of citizens.

Also key is the extent to which TAIs are linked to broader forms of collective action and mobilization. The World Bank Inspection Panel, an internal accountability mechanism for preventing and redressing harm against people affected by Bank-funded projects, owes its successes partly to NGOs, social movements and campaigners outside the Bank. They provide crucial demand, support and public visibility for the Inspection Panels' interventions.

A final key citizen-side factor is the degree to which accountability, transparency and participation are embedded throughout all stages of the policy cycle, from how decisions get made to whether and how they are implemented – although these links are not yet well-enough understood.

On the 'state' or supply side, important determinants are the level of democratization or amount of space for accountability demands to be made. Others are the degree of political will from inside the state to engage with TAIs and the broader political economy. This includes legal frameworks, incentives and sanctions which affect public officials' behaviour. The success of participatory budgeting in Brazil owes much to the post-dictatorship governance context, which offers abundant, legally enshrined opportunities for citizens to engage with the state.

The most interesting current work delves into the interaction of the citizen and state sides. It explores how norms and cultures of accountability get changed on all sides, through cross-cutting coalitions of actors.

Jonathan Fox, in his 2007 book *Accountability Politics*, argues that 'constructing accountability involves challenging the state, but also transforms the state'. He illustrates this by showing how successive state anti-poverty programmes aimed at Mexico's rural poor allowed the socially and politically marginalized to develop autonomous collective action. In some regions, this succeeded in shifting the power balance between state and society. Essential elements proved to be the mobilization of masses and the building of coalitions between the social actors and allies within the state.

These observations about the importance of interfaces between states and citizens is consistent with much current thinking in governance. This thinking urges paying more attention to 'accountability coalitions' and networked approaches, changing norms and cultures of accountability in the state, private sector and civil society. It also advocates establishing links between the local, national, regional and transnational. It stresses the need to bring politics back in, by unpacking power and 'political will' and exploring accountability in relation to political parties, elections and regimes.

After all, increasing accountability is about changing the balance of power between states and citizens.

More demonstrable impact

The evidence base is weak, but that does not mean that TAIs are not significant. The accountability and transparency community needs to work to enhance both the evidence available and the impact it has.

The synergies between transparency, accountability and participation could be understood and exploited better. We need to consider more carefully whether TAIs 'travel well' across context, method and issue.

Cutting-edge governance thinking, especially on networked governance and the interaction of the various levels from local to international, needs to be ploughed into the accountability and transparency field. And we must move beyond working on both sides of the governance equation in isolation, to building, strengthening and thickening the interfaces between state accountability agents and citizen accountability seekers.

Tammie O'Neil, Marta Foresti and Alan Hudson, authors of the 2007 report *Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability*, conclude that uncertainty about the impact of accountability initiatives is but 'a sub-set of uncertainty about the relationship between democracy and development'. Notwithstanding the humbling uncertainties of social and political change, we now have some 'known knowns' and some 'known unknowns' for the accountability field. Concerted investment in knowledge and impact assessment in the accountability and transparency field is crucial if its promise is to be delivered. ■

The author would like to thank John Gaventa, fellow of the Participation, Power and Social Change Team, for his helpful comments on this article.

The gender-development gap

Body politics

Deborah Eade reviews four publications in search of answers to the question why the field of development has been unable to understand human sexuality and body politics.

The international development industry formally committed itself to empowering women and mainstreaming gender equality at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The gender-development gap looks pretty much the same fifteen years on, notwithstanding debates on how to 'measure' empowerment or where 'the poorest billion' reside.

The litany is familiar: women and girls account for 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty. Women perform 66% of the world's working hours but are over-represented in low-paid employment in the informal economy – and almost exclusively in the unpaid care economy.

Men own 99% of the world's property and overwhelmingly occupy the top jobs. At least 385,000 women die each year solely because of the female role in biological reproduction. Four out of five parliamentary seats worldwide are held by men, while four out of five refugees are women or children.

What's more, 30% of the world's women will be raped, beaten, sexually coerced, trafficked or otherwise abused in their lifetime, almost exclusively by men. Violence against women kills more women aged between 15 and 44 years than malaria, war, traffic deaths and cancer combined.

Victims and heroines

Two contrasting narratives emerge from these numbers. The first is of women as downtrodden victims of patriarchy. They are underpaid, undervalued and under-represented, incapable of self-determination and defined by limitless 'unmet needs'.

This narrative explains why the few Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in which women feature explicitly include getting more girls into education, more women into paid employment, more women to survive pregnancy and childbirth, more women to use contraception and more women into parliament. More is better – with the exception of female (though not male) fertility, which needs to be slashed. Women who do not have children, or are beyond reproductive age, do not much feature in the MDGs. And there is complete silence on male sexuality except in relation to HIV and AIDS.

- *Gender Myths and Feminist Fables: The Struggle for Interpretive Power in Gender and Development*, ed. by Andrea Cornwall, Elizabeth Harrison and Ann Whitehead, Wiley-Blackwell, 2008, 184 pp.
- *Development with a Body: Sexuality, Human Rights and Development*, ed. by Andrea Cornwall, Sonia Corrêa and Susie Jolly, Zed Books, 2008, 257 pp.
- *Sexuality and Development*, ed. by Andrea Cornwall and Susie Jolly, *Development* 52(1), March 2009, 1-131 pp.
- *Body Politics in Development: Critical Debates in Gender and Development*, by Wendy Harcourt, Zed Books, 2009, 226 pp.

The second narrative is of women already holding up more than half the sky – a collective Mother Courage, working round the clock, maintaining their families often single-handedly. They are morally upright (they repay their loans and put their children first), concerned with sustaining the environment and building peace, the pillar of their communities. In short, unsung heroines who deserve to be 'lifted out of poverty'.

A vision of gender equality – that is, equality between women and men – underlies both 'heroines and victims' narratives, as the editors of the 2008 collection of essays, *Gender Myths and Feminist Fables*, refer to it. Yet despite its early promise, the Gender and Development (GAD) project does not seem to have achieved remarkably more than the original Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD) approaches of the 1970s that it claimed to surpass. Gender inequality and gender power relations remain deeply entrenched.

Two major reasons stand out for this failure according to the authors reviewed here. The first is that GAD is essentially a bureaucratic response to an issue that requires >

By **Deborah Eade**, editor in chief of the journal *Development in Practice* until 2010 and co-author of *The Oxfam Handbook of Development and Relief* and *Capacity Building: A People-centred Approach to Development*.

nothing less than a radical Southern feminist politics that would transform *all* expressions of power and inequality.

In this view, concepts such as gender, empowerment and gender mainstreaming are deliberately feminist-lite so as not to upset the development applecart. Perhaps the new profession of 'gender expert', armed with all kinds of gender planning tools, mainstreaming checklists and empowerment tape measures, serves largely to satisfy the need of aid agencies to be seen to mean business, and thus to stay in business.

The second, and more significant, reason is that the exclusive focus of GAD on the women-men binary omits so much that we must now reconsider its use and usefulness. It is here that books such as *Development with a Body, Body Politics in Development* and the special issue of *Development* on sexuality and development offer important insights.

The hetero norm

The core message is that the conventional GAD discourse of equality between heterosexual women and men is based on 'limiting dichotomies that constrain us all,' as Giuseppe Campuzano writes in his essay 'Gender, Identity and *Travesti* Rights' in *Development with a Body*. He goes on to say that 'applying the principle of gender relativity would result in a healthier and wiser development, one in which people can claim their rights to combine genders, to transit and to choose.'

The opening essay of this volume tells us that 'efforts to institutionalize "gender" in development have sought to address the pervasive inequalities experienced by women in gender and sex orders the world over. But, paradoxically, they have often done so through the reinforcement of binary notions of gender and the substitution of one set of stereotypes for another, rather than challenging stereotyping itself'.

The notion that sex is a biological given (and therefore immutable) while gender is social and cultural (and therefore evolves and can be altered) has become so embedded in conventional development discourse that it may seem rash to question it.

Wendy Harcourt, however, argues in her 2009 book *Body Politics in Development* that it is feminism and not GAD that reveals 'biology as a social construct like any other'. She argues that 'rather than thinking about gender as a biologically determined division between male and female, it is more helpful to see it as a fluid construct that provides the social inscriptions that enable us to identify, learn and live as male or female.'

The heteronormative assumptions that are hardwired into development policy and practice ignore other expressions of human sexuality, according to most of the contributors to the edited volumes highlighted here. These assumptions also deny pleasure or 'other affective dimensions of human relationships', as the editors of *Development with a Body* write.

These assumptions and the practices that flow from them also undermine the notion that human rights are universal and inalienable. Amy Lind's article 'Challenging Heteronormativity in the Global Development Industry' in the special issue of *Development* argues for research-based practice that can 'liberate us all from repressive gendered and sexual scripts, rather than assume that heterosexuality is inevitable, omnipresent, merely "western" or an imperialist imposition'. Lind also advocates placing 'lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, and otherwise non-normative lives at the centre of rights-based development frameworks'.

Reproductive and non-reproductive rights

The strenuous effort required just to keep afloat the concept of 'reproductive rights' agreed at the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development attests to the powerful undertow that threatens to sweep sexual rights out to sea. For all of the writers reviewed here, the fact that the development discourse ignores (non-reproductive) sex and sexuality is a real problem that damages real people.

The thinly disguised disapproval of 'the undeserving poor' doing anything simply for their own pleasure pervades the development industry. The poor are supposed to focus on 'lifting themselves out of poverty', not on spending their time enjoying themselves, watching *telenovelas*, drinking or having sex.

It is therefore not surprising that development agencies continue to focus on the female reproductive system rather than sexual and reproductive health and rights – including the right to pleasure and emotional fulfilment – of all human beings.

Policing women's role in biological reproduction safely de-links this from non-reproductive sex and sexual pleasure, as the editors of *Development with a Body* argue. It also provides a convenient supply of MDG-type 'targets' that show how many dangers have been mitigated or averted. How many births, for example, are attended by 'qualified' medical practitioners in hospitals? How many women use modern contraception, or are sterilized? How many children survive beyond the age of five, or the age at which girls marry and give birth?

The prevalence of sexually-transmitted infections, the spread or decline of female genital cutting – these and many other things fit the current obsession with counting.

Numbers may be fine as far as they go, but they cannot explain our intimate behaviour, nor how we experience the motivating power of fear or pleasure. In the words of the notice that Albert Einstein kept on his wall: 'Not everything that counts can be counted; not everything that can be counted counts.'

Gender relativity

Many of the contributors therefore call for an understanding of 'gender relativity', a continuum from female to male, with various permutations along the way. This means acknowledging that human sexuality is far more varied and more fluid than the GAD discourse admits.

In fact, not everyone's gender identity corresponds to their biological sex. Campuzano points out that the anatomy of some 4% of human beings is ambiguous – so they may decide to adopt a male or female social gender, or to transit


Alamy / LEDPIX

back and forth across genders – even if this does mean that they get the worst of both.

Many cultures regard opposing gender qualities as a necessary part of an integral whole. Some Amerindian and South Asian communities accord those who embody both sexes a special spiritual or artistic status. For the development project to assume that all human beings are unambiguously either male or female, and that non-heterosexual behaviour is essentially deviant, therefore results in its collusion in exclusionary practices in relation to gender identities and sexual behaviours.

Non-heterosexual people are routinely excluded and may have to conceal their sexuality to avoid discrimination – for instance in finding a job, getting accommodation, taking out health insurance, or becoming a parent or legal guardian. They may be unable to visit their partner in hospital, attend their funeral or grieve openly. Concealment may take the form of entering into a 'conventional' relationship, 'choosing' celibacy over sexual or emotional fulfilment, leading a double life or living on the margins as sex workers and 'entertainers'.

There have been horrific cases of homophobic thugs bullying, gang raping and murdering 'sexual dissenters', or even people they suspect of being gay, lesbian or transgender. Worse still, male homosexuality carries a jail sentence in 93 countries, and the death penalty in seven of them.

In terms of behaviours, work on HIV and AIDS has, if nothing else, brought to light some previously concealed aspects of sexual practices – men who have sex with men but who do not identify with being 'gay', and female sexual promiscuity, for example. It has also required a pragmatic rather than a moralistic attitude towards non-marital sex.

What's normal?

The publications reviewed here argue that understanding human sexuality and body politics, and getting beyond gender binaries, would profoundly change the social and economic policies of mainstream development. This is not simply about 'taking gender and sexual diversity into account' as yet another tick in a box followed by business as usual. It is about getting beyond simplistic assumptions about how human beings identify themselves and relate to each other, and therefore beyond one-dimensional labelling.

To give one example, most of us experience some form of disability in the course of our lives – this is living relativity in practice. It does not mean, however, that we wish to be defined as 'disabled', characterized solely by our deviation from those presumed to be 'able-bodied'.

Violence is incompatible with rights-based development, yet in most societies, people who are not clearly heterosexual (as well as millions of women who are) experience various types of abuse and repression. How can development agencies tackle exclusion while acting on the assumption that a 'normal' household revolves around reproductive heterosexual relationships, headed by a male patriarch?

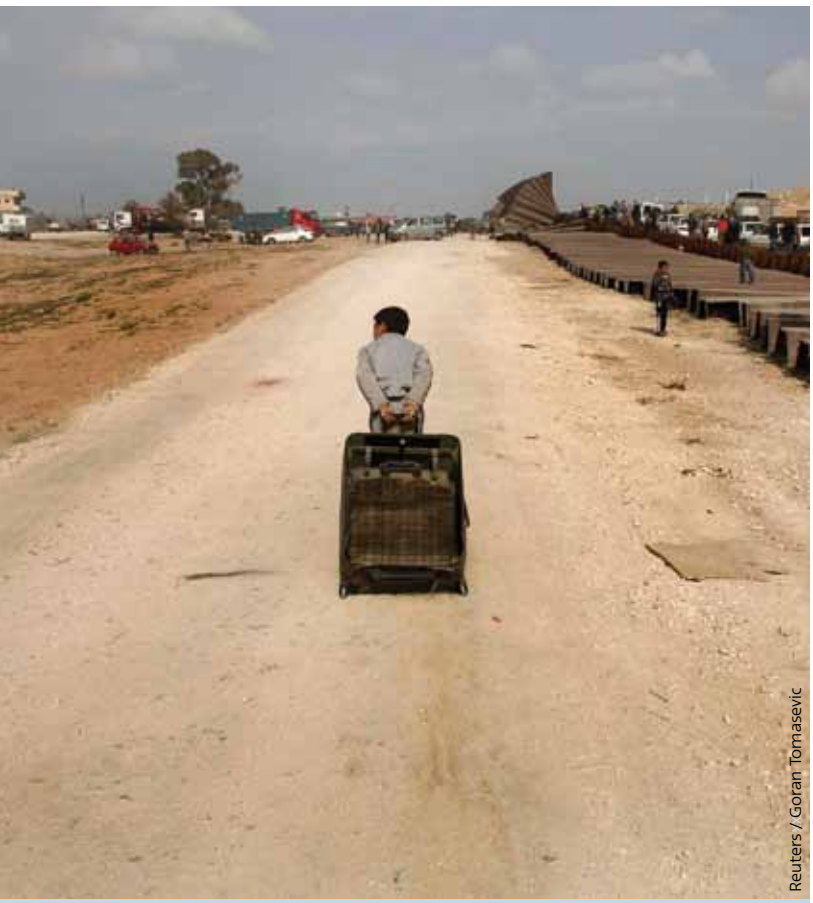
And if an enlightened definition of poverty includes the denial of rights and freedoms, then anti-poverty efforts cannot simply opt out of WHO-defined sexual rights. Think of the right to choose a partner, have or not have children, bodily integrity, sexual and reproductive healthcare services, among others.

Henry Armas argues in his essay in *Development with a Body*, 'A Democracy of Sexuality', that 'our work for inclusion and the realization of the rights of excluded people cannot be complete if we fail to consider sexual rights as a necessary element that affects many other domains of development work.'

Integrating the sexual rights and health of all into efforts to tackle poverty, exclusion and the denial of human rights will reveal hitherto hidden and perhaps disconcerting dimensions of power and oppression. It will also assert the legitimacy of pleasure, dissolve the harmful divide between private and public, personal and political, and in so doing make the primary goal of development to enhance human rights and well-being. ■

Lives in transition

The recent revolution brought long-awaited change to Egypt. But the Egyptian human rights movement needs to address the country's social, political and religious divides and take up the plight of the many refugees living in Cairo. Gasser Abdel-Razek, country director of the Africa and Middle East Refugee Assistance in Egypt, talks about the challenges facing human rights organizations in Egypt in these times of political uncertainty.



Reuters / Goran Tomasevic

Gasser Abdel-Razek is a human rights activist who has been involved with human rights movements in Egypt and the Arab world for the past 17 years. In 1999, he was one of the founders of the Hisham Mubarak Law Centre. He worked as advocacy director of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, acting director for regional relations at Human Rights Watch and Middle East media officer at Oxfam GB. He currently is the country director of the Africa and Middle East Refugee Assistance (AMERA) in Egypt.
Interview by **Ellen Lammers**

AMERA provides pro bono legal aid and advocates for the rights of refugees living in Cairo. Has the revolution of the past few months affected their lives?
Refugees are generally wary of political change because it introduces even more unknowns into their already insecure lives. Fortunately, refugees weren't targeted during the days of the revolution. No attacks against them were recorded, either by Mubarak loyalists or by the revolutionaries.

The already meagre support system available to refugees in Cairo did come to a complete standstill, however. UNHCR shut down its offices, and its international staff was flown out of the country. This sends a terrible message to refugees. There was no information, not even a hotline for them to contact.

AMERA also had to close down temporarily. Our office is located 700 metres from Tahrir Square and 100 metres from the British Embassy. Not only was it dangerous for our staff, but also unsafe for refugees to make a trip across the city to the fortified place we were in. Egypt hosts the fifth-largest urban refugee population in the world. But most of the tens of thousands of Sudanese, Somali, Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in Cairo have no formal legal status. This makes them very vulnerable to harassment and abuse.

The Egyptian revolution is as a massive encouragement for the country's human rights movement, but the changes bring new challenges too. What does that mean for your work?
The challenges, indeed, are plenty. First of all, the current performance of the military police is appalling. Very recently, a major general admitted on CNN to conducting virginity tests on women prisoners. Under Mubarak we would have found a way to make a case against such violations, but the military are beyond anyone's reach. This situation is worse than our worst nightmare.

Eventually, however, the military will go back to the barracks, and the real challenge lies with the new government that comes through the ballot box. There are so many questions that Egyptians need to answer. What do we want

this country to look like? What minimum of human rights will be enshrined in the new constitution? How do we restructure the police force and guarantee the necessary checks and balances to make impossible the human rights violations of the past?

Luckily we do not need to start from scratch. We can learn from other countries that have gone through similar major transformations. Egyptian civil society organizations are already exchanging lessons and ideas with organizations from countries such as Chile, South Africa and Indonesia, and Eastern European countries. We are waiting for the same to happen at the level of the transitional government.

What will refugees have to gain from these changes?
To be honest, there will be no major improvements in the lives of refugees in the short term. After 30 years of autocracy it will be hard enough to prioritize the pressing issues of Egypt's national population, let alone those of refugees. But it is my strong conviction that refugee rights should be on the human rights agenda – not as a separate issue, but central to the work of the Egyptian human rights movement. If you want to work towards a tolerant society, securing refugee rights is part and parcel of the package.

Many donors, foreign governments, NGOs and citizen movements show interest in our country's transition and the process of democratization. We have received dozens of visiting officials who want to discuss the fate of refugees. But they only talk about the refugees currently on the Libyan border. Not a word about the urban refugees who have been here for years and years, and who we know are going to stay for many more years to come. Now is a chance to pay attention to the legal, economic and social integration of these people into our society, to help them have a decent life in our country.

What role can research play in these efforts?
Research can help us gain a better understanding of how Egyptians perceive refugees and how they think about them. This is very necessary. Day in and day out, our staff at AMERA listen to stories of racism, xenophobia and different forms of violence against refugees. But none of this has been properly documented, let alone studied. Yet this problem should be studied in its historical context.

For many hundreds of years Egypt was known as a tolerant place. You have a problem with your chief or king? Run to Cairo and you will be safe! It is no coincidence that Egypt was one of the very last Arab countries with a Jewish community, most of whom didn't leave in 1948. Similarly, Egypt has been a safe haven for artists and freedom fighters, such as Kwame Nkrumah and his children, who grew up here and were granted nationality.

But that Egypt is no longer. Today, Egypt divides itself into rich and poor, Muslims and Copts, people from the Delta and from Upper Egypt, Bedouins and Nubians. The proverbial melting pot has ceased to exist. And yet many Egyptians still think of themselves as tolerant. They think making fun of refugees' dark skin is funny. Arrogance, ignorance and political corruption have isolated Egypt from its African role. But there is no academic work that supports or explains this change.

A better understanding of how and why society changed would be helpful to NGOs that work on intolerance and sectarianism in our society. It may also help our future political leaders to realize that an open and welcoming refugee policy is part of a progressive foreign policy that befits Egypt in the 21st century.

What other research project could be useful to AMERA's work in particular?
I would advocate for research that investigates migration routes to and from Egypt, for instance through Sinai, and starts tracing these routes. This information is important for uncovering human trafficking. We need to get a much better idea of what is really going on in this criminal business. At AMERA we are not qualified to identify trafficking victims, but our intuition tells us we see many of them in our office. Eritreans in particular. There are indications that increasingly they are taken to the Gulf states to work as housemaids or in other poorly paid and exploitative jobs. Research into this hypersensitive issue is very difficult, but very urgent too. ■

Go-to guys

I do not consider myself expert on development assistance, but perhaps I am something of an expert on international security.

The current Dutch government, consisting as it does of a centre-right coalition supported by Geert Wilders' anti-Islam Party for Freedom, has put development assistance under immense pressure. In fact, it is questioning the very purpose of development assistance. It is more interested in economic diplomacy and national export interests than in the intrinsic goal of development cooperation.

Let me look then, on a whim of hyperrealism, for an argument that might appeal to this cabinet. It may be a bad argument in the eyes of some, but nonetheless one that this cabinet probably has more ears for than the voice of idealism.

Wikileaks can lend us a helping hand in this endeavour.

It published the parting cable, dated 22 August 2005, of American ambassador to the Netherlands, Clifford Sobel. His cable clearly explains why the United States considers Dutch development assistance so significant and why the Dutch are ultimately called the 'go-to guys' of Europe, even though the Netherlands is such a small country. It is unlikely that the United States sees it any differently now, six years later.

This is not to say that the United States does not endorse the intrinsic goals of development assistance, but in their view it has strategic importance too. Americans see the Dutch as almost a superpower in the area of development assistance. Sobel's parting cable calls the Netherlands one of 'the world's leading aid donors', a 'top donor of unearmarked assistance to UN humanitarian programs'.

Sobel goes on to say that the public-private partnership model embraced by the Netherlands – think, for example, of the USAID involvement in the Heineken HIV/AIDS treatment and education programme in Rwanda – 'has been particularly successful'. Indeed, the model has been adopted by the World Bank.

'Dutch creativity and credibility in development,' Sobel says, 'makes them good partners for future joint initiatives with the US.' And in terms of 'experience and insights,' the Dutch are the choice partners 'to help shift global aid efforts in the direction of sustainable long-term development'.

It strikes the ambassador that these assets have enabled the Netherlands to solidify their access to Africa.

Whether the Dutch feel comfortable with this role or not is one thing, but to Americans they are 'credible partners' in a broader strategic agenda. Other passages in the Wikileaks cable attest to this.

Sobel points out, for example, that the Netherlands is 'the fourth-largest provider of assistance to Africa world-wide'. The ambassador observes (though do not forget the cable dates from 2005) that the Dutch parliament expressed clear support for peace missions in Africa.

Americans consider the notion of *security* as part of a broader definition of development a tremendous find, because phrased in this way it mentally prepares other countries to establish a security presence as well. 'Senior Dutch military officials,' writes Sobel, 'say they are considering expanding their military presence in Africa to include Burundi, Rwanda, Eastern Congo, Botswana, Zambia, and Ivory Coast, adding new "eyes and ears" on the ground.'

The Netherlands also wants to 'coordinate their actions with the US and other allies,' according to Sobel's cable. These kinds of moves are significant in two ways. They should 'provide a secure environment for what is already one of the most ambitious assistance programmes in the world ... while the focus on security as an aspect of development provides an attractive justification for potential European partners'. Dutch credibility has made the Netherlands a 'clearinghouse', as Sobel puts it. If that is how the Dutch see it, then others countries can use them as an excuse.

This mixture of military-strategic and development interests could give rise to second thoughts. It might even be considered undesirable, but it is a fact of life.

The marriage between security and development assistance is similar to a question raised recently by the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers. 'Should the business sector be allowed to make a profit from development assistance?'

The confederation answered with a clear 'yes'. Should security profit from development assistance? One could argue that this question deserves more of a 'yes' than the first. So let the Netherlands, on this basis, remain a credible partner. The security-development assistance tandem is one of the few areas where the Netherlands is not on the asking side but on the supplying side: the go-to guys. ■

By **Ko Colijn**, special professor of global security issues at Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands.