

Beyond lip service on mutual learning: The potential of CSO and think-tank partnerships for transforming Rising Powers' contributions to sustainable development

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Introduction¹

As the introduction to this report puts it, “partnership’ has become a buzzword in the global arena.” Given this context, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), which was launched in late 2011 and held its first High-Level Meeting in Mexico City in April 2014, should have been ideally positioned to make a difference. In particular, the GPEDC held out the promise of significant progress in two key areas of partnership. The first was between the donors (mainly Northern countries) aligned with the OECD-DAC, and the ‘Rising Power’ exponents of South-South Cooperation.² The second was between governments and non-state actors in both the North and South – with the latter including both civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector.

However, the GPEDC has, to date, largely failed to fulfil its promise in both these areas. In this chapter, we will briefly outline how and why this has proved to be the case, drawing on desk research and on participant observation at the Mexico City High-Level Meeting. We will then go on to suggest that the GPEDC has instead succeeded in opening up space for another kind of partnership, which could in turn help to bridge the gaps that it has thus far failed to overcome between the North and South, and between governments and civil society groups from the South. This new kind of partnership links civil

society organisations based in Rising Power countries with think-tanks and other academic actors from those countries and from the global North. We conclude by highlighting some of the potential contributions that such partnerships could make in a post-2015 era, where the principle of universality will challenge donor-recipient dichotomies and where knowledge exchange will be as important as financial flows in achieving effective development cooperation.

From Busan to Mexico

The GPEDC emerged from the 2011 Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, whose final declaration saw a range of commitments that seemed to hold genuine promise for efforts to make the rhetoric of mutual learning and multi-stakeholder partnership a reality. These included a significant new emphasis on the importance of South-South Cooperation (SSC), a greatly increased profile for private sector engagement, and much positive language about the importance of civil society. There was also a significant enough role for CSOs in the process leading to the adoption of the Busan Outcome Document for it to be interpreted by the broad-based CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) as recognition of civil society representatives as ‘full and equal participants.’³

However, by the time of the Mexico meeting, it was clear that of these three key areas — SSC, the role of the private sector and engagement

with civil society — only the second had seen significant progress, and even here it was taking a narrower shape than the post-Busan optimism had suggested. The presence of a few handpicked African entrepreneurs failed to disguise the heavily Northern-corporate feel of the private-sector presence at the Mexico City High-Level Meeting (HLM). Among the business delegates, the vast majority were not local small and medium enterprise (SME) champions seeking recognition of SMEs' key roles in job creation, or national Chambers of Commerce explaining how they were encouraging their members to pay their taxes in order to fund social programmes. Nor were they Chinese or Turkish businesses sharing what they had learned about investing in contexts considered too poor or high-risk by Northern companies.

Instead, most of the HLM seats were filled by executives from US and Europe-based corporations. For many of these corporations, 'development' is about corporate social responsibility (CSR), the investment climate, and official aid programmes. All too often, CSR is seen as a strategy for securing competitive advantage over rival firms from Rising Power countries, the investment climate is taken to mean low taxes and light-touch regulation, and aid programmes are seen as opportunities to gain access to cheap finance and service delivery contracts from 'business-friendly' Northern donors.

Philanthropic foundations also enjoyed high-level presence at the GPEDC, having been invited to participate formally in discussions of the development compact for the first time. An increased focus on engaging with a more diverse actors, combined with strictures in the funding environment and foundations' often generous funding, no doubt contributed to their presence. Still, this was heavily Northern-dominated, and therefore under-representative of foundations

from Rising Power countries such as India or Brazil. It is worth noting however that the OECD-sponsored Global Network of Foundations Working for Development⁴ has made a concerted effort to reach out to foundations in the rising powers.⁵

Unlike private-sector (or philanthropic) engagement, the role of civil society in effective development was not deemed important enough to merit a specific plenary session in Mexico City. This made a mockery of the commitment to 'full and equal' participation. But with hardening anti-NGO attitudes among many governments in the South, declining aid budgets, and a turn towards the private sector among many governments in the North — on top of existing North-South divisions within civil society itself — CSOs were unable to build sufficiently strong alliances to reverse the situation. At the Mexico HLM, delegates from the CPDE were reduced to staging a protest over the unbalanced treatment, wherein they donned Mexican wrestler masks to assert, "we don't want to have to struggle for our place at this table."

Much of the 'buzz' at the HLM centred on whether it would be attended by the Rising Power countries whose growing importance in development cooperation was finally formally recognised by the OECD at Busan, cementing a process which started with the third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra in 2008. A delegation from China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), which is responsible for development cooperation, was expected in Mexico City. However, their participation ended up being cancelled at the last minute, leading to a flurry of questions as to who should take the blame for this failure to 'bring China on board.' The head of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency did attend, but took every opportunity to

announce that he was there only as an observer, since Brazil was not a ‘member’ of the GPEDC. India’s Development Partnership Administration had never committed to participating in the Mexico meeting. Among the other BRICS, South Africa’s participation was more low-key than expected. By contrast Russia was more assertive than the organisers must have hoped. Given rising tensions over the country’s role in Ukraine, when the Russian representative made a point of extolling his country’s cooperation with its CIS neighbours as an example of how the principles of the GPEDC were being applied in practice, it must have been a source of embarrassment rather than pride.

The failure to achieve meaningful participation by key Rising Power countries in the Mexico HLM seemed to suggest that the GPEDC did not after all represent a new paradigm in development cooperation policy-making. Yet in 2011, much of the rhetoric around Busan had implied that the traditional donors now understood that the shift to a multi-polar world with a rising ‘global South’ meant that the balance of power was no longer concentrated in the North. Development cooperation was no longer about ‘effective aid’; the influence of the Paris Declaration was waning and the days of advocating for a homogeneous DAC-led development landscape were over. In this context, the news that key Rising Power countries like China, India and Brazil had ‘signed up’ to the Busan process was greeted with euphoria by those who hoped for a smooth transition to a new international aid order in which, as the Busan Outcome Document put it, ‘we now all form an integral part of a new and more inclusive development agenda.’²⁶

However, the euphoria proved both misplaced and short-lived. The gulf in understanding as to what ‘signing up’ actually meant was simply too

great. The traditional donors chose to interpret their success at ‘getting the BRICS on board’ as meaning that DAC hegemony was no longer threatened. They could revert to business as usual, dominating the process by which the rules governing all forms of development cooperation would be laid down. By contrast, the Rising Powers focused on the fact that they had only agreed to follow certain principles on a voluntary basis, a non-binding adherence which in no way altered their longstanding insistence on the fundamentally different nature of North-South aid and South-South development cooperation.

The post-Busan context was marked by intensifying geopolitical competition, including around key development issues such as the reform of the Bretton Woods institutions and the roles played by Northern and Rising Power countries in Africa. A lack of meaningful dialogue at the political level made it harder to create significant space for building mutual understanding at the technical level. Some attempts were made to follow up on pioneering efforts such as the ‘China-DAC Study Group,’²⁷ and traditional donors such as Germany, Japan, the US and the UK sought to intensify ‘triangular cooperation’ and establish experience-sharing arrangements with Rising Powers’ development cooperation agencies. However, at the highest levels, the leading Northern donors failed to convince anyone that they actually understood how much the development landscape had shifted, or that they recognised the need to change their own attitudes and behaviour if the commitment to mutual learning was to progress beyond lip-service.

In particular, many traditional donors continued to downplay the value of the increasingly coherent UN effort to establish a global governance architecture for development cooperation,

through the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) and now the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). They made unfavourable comparisons between the UN and the OECD, contrasting the former's cumbersome structures and emphasis on political posturing with the latter's efficient bureaucracy and problem-solving approach. CSOs shared some of these critical perspectives on the UN, and valued some of the achievements of the HLPF process, where the Working Party for Aid Effectiveness provided a space for CSOs to influence development cooperation from a different perspective. Civil society groups brought focus on issues such as sustainable development effectiveness, the root causes of poverty, and the realization of human rights, through successful CSO-led initiatives such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative.⁸ It was noted that this would not have been possible within the government-led UN process, where CSOs' presence is still marginal.

Whatever the justification for these criticisms, they ignored the fundamental importance of the UN's political legitimacy as a site of symbolic equality between nations and a space where the South could be heard. As an analysis by the Brazil-based BRICS Policy Center puts it: although Southern development cooperation provider countries differ in their views of the GPEDC, they share a belief in the legitimacy of the UN. "Some countries characterize the GPEDC as 'old wine in new bottles' while others identify it as the right forum for standardizing principles on SSC [...] however, all SSC providers favour UN-led processes in the multilateral fora, where discussions on SSC experiences and practices should ultimately take place,"⁹ according to the analysis. The North's failure to show that it understood this meant that some Rising Powers could invoke their Southern credentials as a justification for intensifying their support for

the DCF while withholding it from the GPEDC, accusing the latter of trying to usurp the political legitimacy that rightfully belonged to the UN.

Successful diplomacy by OECD-member 'Rising Powers' such as Korea and the HLM's host nation, Mexico, ensured that several key UN figures — including the Secretary-General — did attend the Mexico City meeting. However, this now appears to have been an exercise in papering over cracks that remain as wide as ever. Despite a concerted GPEDC effort to engage with the DCF around its meeting in July 2014, the UN responded with little more than an offer of informal dialogue between the two fora. This, in turn, allowed many key Rising Powers to continue citing the GPEDC's lack of formal UN legitimacy as a reason for avoiding engagement. The world of intergovernmental negotiations on development cooperation has thus been left with two flawed spaces, with the GPEDC being described in a German Development Institute briefing as "relatively effective, but not legitimate" and the DCF as "legitimate, but with limited effectiveness."¹⁰

What the Mexico HLM did achieve

The Mexico City High-Level Meeting was unable to overcome this North-South divide in intergovernmental debates on development cooperation – though this is hardly surprising given the geopolitical context. It is increasingly clear that any politically viable intergovernmental negotiation will need to have the stamp of UN legitimacy, which has thus far been withheld from the GPEDC. We would argue, however, that the fact that it has been excluded from the field of government-to-government negotiations over binding global policy commitments may paradoxically enhance the GPEDC's ability to

make a worthwhile contribution. This is because of the way that development cooperation is changing — and in particular because of the growing importance of multi-directional knowledge exchange and multi-stakeholder partnerships involving non-state actors, a field in which it is beginning to show that it has significant potential.

We base this reflection on our observation of the way in which the Mexico City HLM was able to create a rich range of opportunities for sharing experiences and forging new partnerships. These were found not in the set-piece plenaries but rather in the dozens of parallel self-organised ‘Focus Sessions,’ many of which were used to launch ‘voluntary initiatives’ that were subsequently incorporated into the HLM’s final communiqué. The result was a remarkable burst of energy, creativity and optimism about the potential for innovative and effective multi-stakeholder partnerships in development cooperation. The Focus Sessions allowed new alliances to be built, whilst also providing a space for voluntary initiatives that had been launched at Accra or Busan to showcase the work that had been done over a number of years. While the intergovernmental debates remain characterised by geopolitical deadlock and tired platitudes, some important changes are clearly taking place beneath the surface. The Mexico City HLM’s achievement was to create a platform for exploring the shape that some of these changes might take in future.

This achievement was due to a combination of the Mexican government’s skillful hosting, the financial support of traditional donors such as the UK, and the fresh perspectives brought by a range of actors who were prepared to think beyond the limited frameworks of the aid effectiveness debate. Some of these fresh perspectives came from the groups who had been specifically

courted by the GPEDC, including the private sector and leading middle-income countries such as the host nation, Mexico. Some came from groups who had not been on the GPEDC’s radar but saw the Mexico meeting as an opportunity to claim some space to set out their ideas. Meanwhile, others came from groups who had long been associated with the separate worlds of North-South aid and South-South Cooperation — some had been working together on creating an enabling environment for the transition from aid to development effectiveness since Accra or Busan,¹¹ and there were also those who had simply decided to think differently about how development cooperation might move forward to 2015 and beyond, rather than remaining trapped within the same mindsets that had contributed to the political impasse.

Among these groups, we will focus on two that we believe have much to contribute to the kind of innovative partnerships that will be needed to make the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals a reality: civil society organisations, from Rising Power countries that are increasingly active in development cooperation; and think-tanks and other academic actors both from those countries and from the global North.

Beyond government-to-government: CSOs and think-tanks as actors in South-South Cooperation

South-South Cooperation (SSC) is almost invariably discussed as a government-to-government relationship. Civil society organisations engaging with both the GPEDC’s and the UN’s work on SSC have tended to concentrate their efforts on ensuring the transparency and accountability of such

relationships.¹² This engagement has been stronger at the international level, where it benefits from Northern donor support through structures such as the CPDE (and its predecessor BetterAid), than domestically, where governments tend to be reluctant to discuss their SSC activities with civil society. As one important recent study argues, “to date, it appears to be the case that there is very little dialogue with domestic CSOs in most South–South aid-providing countries.”¹³

Exceptions do exist, such as the multi-stakeholder Forum on India’s Development Cooperation and the formal civil society dialogue platform on development cooperation policy created by the Government of Mexico.¹⁴ In general, however, CSOs have struggled to engage systematically with their countries’ SSC activities, caught as they are between differing interests: the need to focus scarce resources on domestic challenges of poverty, sustainability and inequality; and governments’ tendency to treat SSC as part of the traditionally closed field of foreign policy.

Despite this lack of dialogue with their governments, some CSOs from Southern countries have themselves been developing their own forms of SSC for many years, through solidarity-based relationships with counterpart organisations and communities elsewhere in the South. These relationships have been supported by actors ranging from Northern NGOs to UN agencies to global social movement networks. They have involved processes that — while by no means free of practical problems and power imbalances — often come closer to modelling the horizontal dialogue and mutual learning that should characterise SSC than the government-to-government exchanges promoted by Rising Powers’ official development cooperation programmes.

In the run-up to the Mexico City meeting, the authors were part of a team of researchers and

civil society activists from the UK, Mexico, India and Brazil that carried out a number of case studies of ‘CSO-led South-South Cooperation’. These studies (documented in written and video formats on a project-specific website, cso-ssc.org) demonstrate the depth and breadth of this form of SSC. The cases range from farmer-to-farmer links between Mexico and Haiti and between Brazil and Mozambique, to experience-sharing on democratic local governance among NGOs from India, Bangladesh and Cambodia, to the spread of slum-dwellers’ self-help and organisational techniques from India to South Africa and beyond. They provide excellent examples of the Busan principles in practice, especially the principle of inclusive development partnerships.¹⁵

The key findings from our case study synthesis were shared by team members from India and Brazil at a Focus Session during the Mexico HLM. The same Focus Session also discussed the role of business actors from middle-income countries, and of think-tanks that are becoming increasingly significant players in the Rising Powers’ development cooperation policy landscape. While business was a major theme at the HLM, as already noted, the private sector representation was dominated by Northern corporations, who vastly outnumbered the business delegates from middle-income countries. In the case of think-tanks, it was the whole sector that had been left out: unlike the BRICS club of leading Rising Powers, which has both a Think-Tank Council and a fully-fledged Academic Forum, the GPEDC’s architecture does not recognise academia as a stakeholder group, relegating Northern and Southern think-tanks alike to the margins of its debates.

The Mexico HLM provided the potential for academia’s participation in the GPEDC, with the Mexican Agency for International Development

Cooperation (AMEXICD) stating its interest in engaging with academia as one of the GPEDC's constituencies. Academics from a varied political and academic spectrum in the North and South were also present at the July 2014 ECOSOC Fourth Biennial Development Cooperation Forum in New York.

While there has long been a flourishing field of research on aid and development in the global North, South-South Cooperation is an under-researched field in the Rising Power countries themselves. These countries have historically lacked anything resembling an 'aid industry' that could support consultancy-based research. Their academic research on development processes has tended to focus on national trajectories rather than international comparisons.

However, this gap is rapidly being filled by a new wave of think-tank activity, including both recently established institutions such as Brazil's BRICS Policy Center (BPC), and longer-established players such as the South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA) and India's Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS). In addition, policy-oriented research institutes that have traditionally focused on domestic challenges have begun to set up units dedicated to research on SSC, including Brazil's Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA), which publishes the official reports on Brazilian development cooperation, and China Agricultural University, which now hosts the China International Development Research Network (CIDRN).

At the Mexico HLM, representatives from several of these organisations came together to launch a significant new initiative, the Network of Southern Think-Tanks (NeST). Convened by RIS

(India), SAIIA (South Africa) and IPEA (Brazil), and supported by China's CIDRN and Mexico's Instituto Mora, this new network is committed to ensuring more systematic sharing of ideas, instruments and data among specialists in SSC who are based in Rising Power countries. It may, in time, turn into the embryo of a structure that can provide SSC with the same kinds of systematic experience-sharing, technical guidance and peer review that the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has come to provide for Northern donors.

The bridging role of think-tanks: Opening up possibilities for new partnerships

Given the political impasse and polarisation between Rising Powers and Northern donors after Busan, it is very significant that the NeST initiative was launched at the Mexico HLM. Despite their academic autonomy, many of the key think-tanks in the network are actually part of Rising Power governments: IPEA, for example, is attached to the Strategic Affairs Secretariat of the Brazilian Presidency, while RIS is a branch of India's Ministry of External Affairs. Thus, while these countries may have insisted that they were not signing up to the GPEDC, the active participation in the Mexico City HLM of the government think-tanks, which help to shape the Rising Powers' development cooperation policies, suggests that their governments see significant value in a more indirect but nonetheless highly strategic engagement at the technical level.¹⁶

Significantly, the NeST founding group invited two think-tanks from Northern donor countries — the German Development Institute (DIE) and our own organisation, the UK-based Institute

of Development Studies (IDS) — to participate as observers in its inaugural meeting. This signalled an interest in South-North dialogue, which holds great promise for the future — not least because it was initiated by Southern institutions themselves, instead of one of the many multilateral and bilateral agencies that have been trying to position themselves as brokers between North and South. In the delicate politics of North-South dialogue, the technical and the political can never be fully separated; the issue of political ownership of the space where technical dialogue takes place is a critical determinant of the likelihood that such dialogue will actually succeed in promoting mutual learning.

Another initiative launched at the Mexico HLM that also holds promise for North-South dialogue is a network that sets out to play a double bridging role: connecting think-tanks working on development cooperation policy in North and South; and promoting mutual understanding between civil society organisations and think-tanks. This is the Future International Cooperation Policy Network (FICPN), which was recorded in the HLM Communiqué as a Voluntary Initiative dedicated to “helping to generate, map and articulate future international cooperation that can underpin a flourishing global society”.¹⁷ FICPN’s membership includes development policy research institutes and NGOs from OECD and BRICS countries. It is guided by an Advisory Council that includes civil society leaders from India and Brazil as well as African and Chinese think-tank directors, academics from South Africa, Argentina and Germany, and former senior OECD officials. This diverse membership is united by a shared commitment to mutual learning across the divides between North and South and between state and civil society, and also by another key aspect of FICPN’s agenda: promoting dialogue

between civil society organisations and think-tanks. Furthermore, the Network seeks to anchor its work in robust and rigorous research, which ensures that the ‘multi’ in multi-stakeholder and multi-directional learning is indeed representative and enabling of a ‘flourishing global society’ that contributes to improved developmental outcomes on a global level.

The importance of dialogue between CSOs and think-tanks was highlighted by a series of collaborative studies in the BRICS countries to understand the domestic and international dynamics of Rising Powers’ changing roles in international development.¹⁸ On one hand, CSOs repeatedly told the research teams that they desperately needed academic support to make sense of the complex world of development cooperation policy; on the other hand, researchers realised that there was a wealth of CSO-led South-South Cooperation experiences that were not being documented or even discussed in academic debates on SSC, or indeed by government actors engaged in SSC policies and programmes.

Given the closeness to government of many key development policy think-tanks in Rising Power countries, better dialogue between CSOs and those think-tanks could also help to bridge the gap between state and civil society actors. This is an essential step towards more inclusive policy debate in contexts that (as noted above) may be hostile to the notion of CSOs having a voice on what are often considered to be strategic foreign policy issues. Eventually, the realisation that many CSOs have valuable South-South Cooperation experience of their own — as well as recognition of the roles they have often played domestically, in producing the development innovations that the Rising Powers

are now seeking to share internationally — could help to create a more enabling environment for civil society involvement in government-to-government SSC activities.

Towards multi-directional learning?

The potential for new partnerships between CSOs and think-tanks across North and South is not only significant because the mutual understanding built up through such partnerships may help to overcome the mistrust that marks so many relationships in the new multi-polar world of development cooperation. It is also important because of the nature of the development challenges and goals that the world is likely to set for itself in the post-2015 period.

Realising the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals will require much more than national policy commitments in the South and aid commitments from the North. The acceptance of the principle of universality means that every country, North and South, will need to look to its own domestic as well as international commitments, and, in the process, realise that it may have something to learn as well as something to teach. This was the message that Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto gave to the GPEDC, when he emphasised in his opening speech at the HLM that “not all countries have the financial resources to support other nations, but all have experiences and successful policy examples that they could share beyond their borders.”

Financial resource flows will of course remain extremely important, but the post-2015 world will be one in which knowledge flows — whether North-South, South-South or South-North — become an increasingly essential resource for meeting complex sustainable development challenges. This may ease the tension felt by

middle-income countries, such as Mexico and Brazil, who feel undue pressure from northern donors to step up to the plate after years of being recipients of aid. The move towards a greater focus on multi-directional learning means the south can participate with a different – but valuable all the same – currency, which can also contribute to the increasing developmental challenges faced by northern countries (e.g. with rising inequality, overstretched health systems, ageing populations etc.). However this may not be enough to mitigate the dwindling resource flows from north to south, and will force civil society organisations and think-tanks alike to be nimble in how they negotiate the changing funding landscape.

There are many challenges facing the consolidation of partnerships between CSOs and think-tanks, ranging from their different ideas about what kinds of evidence matter most for policy, to their different relationships with government, reflected in the reluctance of groupings like the BRICS to create formal spaces for dialogue with civil society alongside their academic and business fora. CSOs have also been critical of the extent to which governments’ current SSC practices are actually promoting inclusive and sustainable development.¹⁹ Nonetheless, in this world of multi-directional learning, such partnerships could potentially play a key role. CSOs have the ability to identify pressing issues of social justice and sustainability and develop innovative responses to these challenges. Think-tanks have the ability to turn CSO experiences into evidence for policymakers, while making opaque policy processes intelligible for CSOs seeking entry points for their advocacy work.

Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay, Director of PRIA, an Indian NGO which has been very active in debates on South-South Cooperation, has

Challenges of CSO Engagement in SSC21	Key Enablers for a CSO Partnership Policy in SSC22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reluctance of government to recognise CSO-led SSC reflects the state of CSO-State relations • Legal and policy frameworks in many developing countries are challenging, with increasingly restrictive regulatory environments • Development cooperation is generally considered as part of foreign policy, and governments tend to be much less open to dialogue with CSOs • Despite growing investment in SSC by MIC governments, very few have funding windows to support CSO-led initiatives • There is a lack of analytical documentation and review of CSO-led SSC practices • In the post-Busan and post-Mexico contexts, Southern CSOs are also redefining their relationships with Northern INGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and define the inclusion of CSOs in official policies for SSC • Facilitate and create an enabling legal and policy environment for development cooperation with CSOs • Invest in strengthening the knowledge and capacities of CSOs in both partner countries and providing countries • Build an environment of trust through iterative transactions (e.g. programmatic relationships) and mutual transparency and accountability • Create space for policy dialogue and learning between CSOs and the institutions involved in SSC

highlighted the challenges and enabling factors for CSO engagement in Rising Powers’ development cooperation, summarised in the table below:20

The GPEDC bills itself as being about “the ‘how’ of the next global development framework.”23 Getting the ‘how’ right means understanding what works and why. Armed with this understanding, mechanisms such as South-South Cooperation can focus on sharing lessons derived from one context in ways that make sense for other contexts, rather than simply exporting one-size-fits-all packages in the style that has all too often been the case for North-South aid.

The GPEDC has shown that it has the potential to serve as an enabling space for reflecting on the knowledge of CSOs and think-tank analysis on both the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of development. They can build together to turn such exchanges into a more mainstream feature of development cooperation, creating incentives to overcome the differences of political positioning, technical language and institutional culture that still obstruct

many potential CSO-think-tank partnerships.

Under the leadership of countries such as Mexico, which have shown the willingness and ability to engage with and learn from North and South alike, the GPEDC also has the potential to grow as a space for North-South mutual learning — provided it can leave behind the doomed struggle to impose frameworks on the Rising Powers and compete with the UN in terms of political legitimacy. Until the political landscape has thawed to the point where intergovernmental technical exchanges can blossom, North-South think-tank partnerships will provide an important, potential way forward for promoting this mutual learning.

The experience of the Mexico HLM demonstrated that these kinds of partnership involving CSOs and think-tanks — two groups of actors that have been relatively neglected by the GPEDC thus far — may hold the key to unlocking the contribution of the Rising Powers to the transformation of development cooperation for the post-2015 era. The essence of this contribution is not financial,

significant as this may be in some areas; instead, it is a combination of these countries' capacity for technical innovation in meeting development challenges and their clear political principles (if not always their consistent practice) regarding the two-way nature of the horizontal processes through which these experiences should be shared. These are the essential ingredients of successful mutual learning for sustainable development.

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Endnotes

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2 In this context, Rising Powers is used to denote countries such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), which are frequently described as 'emerging economies', together with Mexico, Turkey, Colombia, and Indonesia.

3 See <http://cso-effectiveness.org/busan-partnership-for-effective,190>.

4 <http://www.oecd.org/site/netfwd/>

5 Thus far, the Brazilian Instituto Ayrton Senna seems to be the only foundation from a BRICS country that has signed up.

6 Busan Outcome Document, section 14. See http://effectivecooperation.org/files/OUTCOME_DOCUMENT_-_FINAL_EN2.pdf

7 Li and Carey 2014: 12)

8 <http://cso-effectiveness.org/4th-high-level-forum-on-aid,080>

9 Assunção and Esteves 2014: 8.

10 Janus et al. 2014: 2.

11 For an insight on the earlier processes from a participant civil society perspective in this process see http://cso-effectiveness.org/IMG/pdf/csos_on_the_road_from_accra_to_busan_final.pdf

12 Additional material on the implications of the principles of SSC and lessons for development effectiveness for SSC practice can be found on the Reality of Aid global network website: http://www.realityofaid.org/?roa_report=south-south-development-cooperation-a-challenge-to-the-aid-system

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- 13 Tomlinson 2013: 110.
- 14 Poskitt and Shankland 2014: 5.
- 15 Poskitt and Shankland 2014: 6.
- 16 This is not dissimilar to the efforts to separate the technical from the political in the transition from aid effectiveness to effective development cooperation.
- 17 Voluntary Initiative 20 of the Mexico High Level Meeting Communiqué (see http://effectivecooperation.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/ENG_Final-ConsensusMexicoHLMCommunique.pdf).
- 18 See <http://www.ids.ac.uk/risingpowers> for more information on these studies.
- 19 One term employed in the Sustainable Development Goals narrative is “shared but differentiated responsibilities”. We have posited that where North-South cooperation has traditionally been about resource sharing, South-South cooperation is about knowledge sharing (Carey, 2014). However, current practices of SSC raise important questions regarding the extent to which SSC promotes or contributes to sustainable development, not just in terms of financial sustainability generated by mutually beneficial trade and investments, but also institutional and environmental sustainability (Bandyopadhyay, 2014).
- 20 Bandyopadhyay, 2014
- 21 Bandyopadhyay, 2014
- 22 Bandyopadhyay, 2014
- 23 See <http://effectivecooperation.org/hlm2014/>.