One Prologue

1. This book was originally conceived as the final product of a collaborative research programme called IKM Emergent which, sought to understand the use of knowledge in the field of international aid and development. The programme, as a funded entity, came to an end in 2012. A lot has happened since. Some of the concerns we had then, which led us to argue for a different approach, have become realised as bad dreams, if not nightmares. In the main text, we offer our understanding of how the poor framing and use of knowledge may have contributed to such processes, not just in our field, which was the subject of our programme, but more broadly. The current social, political, economic and ecological crises and the failures of global elites to offer any effective response only emphasise the insufficiency of current knowledge practice and the need to articulate and enact a new approach. The intervening years have also allowed us to learn more about and from others working in similar directions, both in thought and practice.

2. We think IKM Emergent, as a group of people as well as a body of work, remains a good starting point for this current work. I was the instigator and co-director of the programme and am, in terms of words written, the main author of this book and will write in the first person where accurate. However, the programme was always a collaborative and distributed affair. Sarah Cummings became the co-director of the programme, has edited the book and made significant contributions to it. Even when managing IKM Emergent, we acted more as managing editors than principal investigators. Thus, for much of the book we will write as a plural 'we', forged by our own collaboration, the input made by others at the time and by the involvement of programme participants in planning, editing and

commenting on what has been written. Any factual errors, of course, are mine.

3. One feature of our understanding of knowledge, which we will discuss later (x.y), is that it can have both objective and subjective components. Everyone who became involved in IKM Emergent did so on the basis of a largely shared critique which saw the knowledge dynamics within the international development sector as being seriously problematic. Over time, we developed a wider analysis of the problems and a number of approaches which we thought would help address them. However, we all came to our original critique through our own experiences working in different ways, roles and places within or about the sector. That is why this is only one of the many possible prologues for this work. Originally, we thought that it would be possible to reconcile these many experiences, encompassing as they did differences of gender, race, location and education into some common approach to development which could speak for all. One early lesson was that this is neither possible nor, necessarily, desirable. There can be heartfelt common understanding but there are always areas of difference. This was true even of the relatively like-minded (and similarly aged) people North and South who participated in IKM Emergent. It was even more so as we all, again North and South, tried to explain our work to colleagues and neighbours immersed in their own realities. The task is thus not to create a single perspective which accommodates all, but to respect, challenge and equitably negotiate difference. This, we believe applies both to global and local discourses. This leads us to recognise that, despite the range of participation in IKM Emergent, it was constructed, led and is described now from a predominantly North European perspective. Likewise, its arguments are primarily aimed at pressing issues of Northern societies, not least their relationships with the rest of the world. This does not mean that they cannot be

informed by, share much with or be used in debates elsewhere in the world, similarly rooted in their own contexts.

4. As with its people, the programme itself had features which were specific to its context and history. This prologue aims to give an account of these formative experiences in relation to me and my life, as just one of the actors involved, and to the story of the programme itself. This historical narrative serves as a companion to the argument of the rest of the book. I believe the two to be related because work for social change is located in a constantly shifting context shaped by politics, culture, opportunities, constraints and not simply new technologies but also technological choices. All these factors, and how we and the groups we are part of respond to them, shape both our own lives and the social realities in which we live. One feature of this work, for all the shared experiences of events and commonality of conclusions, is that it would look and sound different if described by any of the other participants.

Personal Background

5. My name is Mike Powell. I was born in London into a privileged, middle-class background. I had a pretty conventional life until becoming caught up in the cultural maelstrom that, as in many other places but perhaps especially in London, was the late sixties. I still got to university where, in my first year, I was a naïve but enthusiastic participant in the occupation of a set of faculty buildings. In a foreshadowing of future intellectual journeys, we were protesting at constraints on how we could study and at the university's promotion and grading of what we perceived as ideologically constructed knowledge hierarchies. My subject was history, where I became interested – as both student and activist - in the past and present relationships between Europe and the rest of the world. On graduation, believing that participating in processes of change was

likely to be more useful and more educational than studying them, I looked for a practical role I could play. I chose primary health as an area of great need and one where the social, technical and political all overlapped. I moved to Sheffield to train as a nurse and then worked through much of the 1980s in a series of development and humanitarian jobs for Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Brazil, Mozambique, Sudan and Kenya[1]. This gave me experiences of integration in locally managed health services, of immersion within local societies, of dependencies on the help and goodwill of colleagues and neighbours, all of which offered a grounded perspective of development in practice. Such local experiences are increasingly rare amongst senior staff in the Northern offices of development organisations and research institutes today[2].

6. In the late eighties I returned to Sheffield and worked with local co-operative businesses in support of what was called 'regeneration', although it involved many similar dynamics to the 'development' field. This offered me the perspective of 'development' in my own society and of how the surrounding political and policy context could constrain or allow space in which new practice could grow. Working with under-resourced small groups in an economically depressed area in the midst of a recession also gave a hard education in economic realities. One response, emerging in Sheffield as in many other parts of the world, was to embrace the political and economic potential of greater information exchange and

[1] Note: I wrote some of this experience up as a draft chapter for a book about Oxfam and Mozambique which never materialised - https://drupal.ikmemergent.net/oxfam_in_mozambique%3A_early_years (accessed August 2019)

[2] Note: Mark Duffield, a professor of development politics at Bristol and a former colleague at Oxfam has described a similar impact of the growing distance between researchers and the researched in 'From immersion to simulation: remote methodologies and the decline of area studies', Review of African Political Economy, 41:Sup 1, 2014 https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2014.976366 (accessed August 2019)

networking between local actors as, collectively and separately, they sought to navigate between the political and financial strategies of more powerful players. In this, the technological innovation of the time created new opportunities[3]. I set up the Open Information Project, one of the first virtual networks for local community and voluntary organisations in the UK. Subsequently, I worked with colleagues in the local council and other public services on the OTIS project which sought to demonstrate the value of virtual, curated, open space as a public resource for social inclusion, dialogue and information exchange within the city[4].

7. This work in Sheffield informed and was helped by occasional consultancies related to international development. One of these, involved setting up a monitoring and evaluation system for the Arid Lands Information Network, which, at that time, was a network of community development workers and related support services operating across 'drylands' Africa from Senegal to Tanzania[5]. At this time, in the early 90s, few of its members were on-line. People wrote questions and answers to a network bulletin which was then printed and circulated, they wrote and posted letters to each other, travelled

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[3] Note: Writing now, in an era of the seemingly unassailable financial and informational power of a handful of global technology companies, it is hard to remember that much of the development and use of ICT for communications (rather than data) purposes was pioneered by groups in the third sector, and especially those working internationally, including in Senegal, Kenya ,South Africa and Brazil. See, for example, Lane,G. 1990, *'Communications for Progress - Guide to International E-mail'* Catholic Institute for International Relations. Through Sheffield networks, I was able to participate in community networking events at European and Global level, including the first Global Community Network meeting which was held in Barcelona in 2000 and was striking both for the high level of participation from the global South, including some who became involved in IKM Emergent, and the general absence of International NGOs, something discussed more in x.y.z

[4] Note: Powell, M. & Millward, A. 2008 *'City Information Architecture: a case study of OTIS (Opening the Information Society Project) in Sheffield, UK.'* in Aurigi, A & De Cindio, F. (Eds.), '*Augmented Urban Spaces: Articulating the Physical and Electronic City'* Ashgate.

[5] Note: It is now a Kenya based NGO working effectively and with updated technology on the same issues across East Africa - https://alin.net/ (accessed September 2019).

to workshops or on knowledge exchange visits. The experience clearly illustrated that the 'information revolution' that people were starting to talk about owed as much to a readiness to communicate on a peer-to-peer basis with sympathetic strangers as it did to the technology. It also reinforced my previous understanding of the richness of development innovation at local level and the often poor communication between such grass roots perspectives and those agencies which aim to help through their external interventions. This and other experiences led me to write a book, 'Information Management for Development Organisations', which was first published by Oxfam in 1998[6].

UNRISD and IKM Emergent

8. All of which put me in a good place to pursue the opportunity to take over the co-ordination of a research programme, 'The Social Impact of Information Technology', which had been initiated by the Mexican sociologist Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). This programme, had started with a conference in 1998 which identified a number of emerging issues of social change related to new Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and the new patterns of communication, such as networks, which they helped facilitate. Following the conference discussions, the programme commissioned a detailed study of their use in Senegal[7] and also a range of studies on the implications of new communications patterns for human rights[8].

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[6] Note: Mike Powell, 1998 &2003 (2nd Edition), *'Information Management for Development Organisations'* Oxfam

[7] Note: reference plus MA thesis if poss

[8] Note: Note: Bruce Girard & Sean O Siocrhu (eds), 2003, '*Communicating in the Information Society*', UNRISD, Geneva

9. I did little more than help with the final touches to this part of the programme's work. The question was how to take it forward, in particular in the context of a forthcoming UN sponsored 'Global Summit of the Information Society'. I started by contacting Cees Hamelink, who had contributed a paper on research priorities to the original conference[9]. We met in the café of the Carrefour supermarket in Thonon-les-Bains and, in a couple of hours, sketched out an understanding of our subject and ideas for taking it forward which formed the basis of the rest of our work with UNRISD and contributed to the thinking behind IKM Emergent and this current book. If our overall aim here is to suggest ways that intellectual labour can better contribute to positive social change, revisiting the work with UNRISD reminds me of why we thought such a task necessary. It is perhaps worth explaining a bit about the situation we encountered then and what we (at that stage myself and my colleagues on the UNRISD programme) tried to do about it.

10. The context was that of a dominant narrative of an emerging 'information society' to which all the major institutions of the development support industry and its donor governments subscribed and towards which all other governments were, via such mechanisms as the UN convened world summit, expected to align themselves. Several features of the narrative resembled those of other global development policy initiatives, before and after. First, there was a plethora of positive claims of benefits for all, of inclusion, of the potential for poorer countries to 'leapfrog' stages of development or, at the least, of absolute commitment to prevent any 'digital divide'. Next, there was only one vision of progress on offer, in this case 'an information society', along with an assumption that the use of new

[9] Note: Hamelink, Cees 1997 'New Information Technologies, Social Development and Cultural Change', UNRISD Discussion Paper No 86

ICT in the Global North would form the model for what happened elsewhere. This in turn presumed that in order to participate effectively, other countries needed to buy in technology and associated expertise from the same Global North. Above all, there was a narrative that the whole process was driven by the technologies themselves, not by the new patterns of communication which people used them for, nor those that others may have wished to promote. As such the agency for change was ascribed to ICT and not to the choices people made, an absurdly apolitical framing for discussions which had substantial economic, commercial and developmental implications.

11. The fact that this narrative possessed little relation to reality was of only limited comfort. First, the digital and data divides not only materialised but have, along with their organisational and financial consequences, widened exponentially ever since. Second, the fact that it became, for a time, an 'official' narrative, agreed by the UN, the EU and the G8 amongst others, meant that it had powerful and real effects on what funding was available and on which choices were deemed worthy of support. This effect spilled over into the realm of research. There was a mass of aspirational assertions, often put out by people with vested interests in selling ICT, there was the evidence of the often super-impressive commercial performance of a handful of global tech companies, and a limited, more ambiguous literature on the impact of ICT on more general business performance in the Global North. By 2002, there was still very little empirical research on actual social change that could be associated with ICT and even less focused on such change in the Global South. What research existed was also spread over a wide range of academic disciplines with few connections in its conceptual bases, terminologies, methods or communications channels. This meant that even where there was evidence which challenged the

dominant narrative, it was dispersed, poorly articulated and hard to find. Critical research might be being done, but in no sense was it being applied.

12. Our work in UNRISD took us through a process of first developing this analysis and then developing proposals to address the issues identified. A workshop was held in Geneva in September 2003 involving academics from various disciplines, researchers working in civil society and specialists from donor and multilateral agencies[10]. From that a set of arguments and proposals for how further study of 'informational developments' could contribute to development research and policy formation were drafted[11]. As well as envisaging the commissioning of further empirical work from the Global South and developing more appropriate indicators for measuring localised informational changes at a global scale, our proposals had three core elements. Although targeted at the specific questions of the proposed research, these addressed common and continuing challenges of transdisciplinary work for what was supposed to be applied development research.

13. The first was the framing of the subject. As already discussed, debates about information related change were being dominated by the most dramatic and most widely publicised technological and commercial developments. Far less attention was given to slower, but possibly more significant underlying changes or to geographic and cultural variations. Even where it was, the impact was dissipated by the great range of subject areas to which it applied and the way each study only addressed part of the issues in part. There needed to be some overarching concept which offered a clarity of description

[10] Note: UNRISD Reference

[11] Note: Upload and explain drafts

without being in any way prescriptive or exclusive. I suggested 'new information processes' but Cees had already written about 'Informational Developments', so we went with that. The term offered sufficient scope to include researchers in different disciplines and locations, whilst also creating a common area of focus in which research from multiple perspectives could be assembled and discussed.

14. A second element was an emphasis on mapping the territory of the research. Most research starts with a review of existing literature, but this exercise is usually applied to a particular research question rather than to an entire field. We thought that for a UN institute, seeking to track relevant research on a global scale, this mapping needed to be far more extensive. We also recognised that the pace of change in the field outstripped the existing model for commissioning, performing, reviewing and publishing academic research. In this context, 'applied research' required the continuous review of all sources of evidence, so as to be able to identify emerging issues and make an intelligent response in real time[12]. This in turn meant building relationships with business and with civil society in order to learn from their first-hand experience of change, as well as engaging with them as potential users of research output. The dynamics of such interactions and the type of output and future plans they produced implied a revisioning of the role, organisation and means of assessing an institute of applied research.

[12] Note: This recognition was based in part by my experience in a pilot distance learning MA in Information Technology and Management, which I undertook in Sheffield in the late 90s. Several of the modules were led by people actively engaged in multi-media companies, business consultancy etc. Comparing notes with colleagues studying on the taught course at the same university, I discovered that, whilst I was missing out on some background about the building blocks of ICT, such as the logical structures of data bases, my course was studying the use and management of far more current ICT applications, whilst some of those studied on the other course were already obsolete.

15. The third element had both technical and philosophical aspects. Any researcher needs to choose which tools (artefacts) will help them do the best job on any piece of work. In recent years, many such tools are based on new ICT, with decisions on which to use often needing to be taken before post-hoc assessments of their value have been undertaken. For that reason our programme, as well as recognising a need for new ICT tools in research, sought to develop processes for critical appraisal of new tools or, where appropriate, to develop our own in order to ensure that the tools we used were consistent with our research aims and with supporting the mesh of relationships that we needed to achieve them. This in turn had implications for our role as researchers. We, as researchers of informational change who were using new ICT in the process, would inevitably be part of the change we were seeking to study. We thus recognised, learning from many years of feminist and other actor-led research, that any aspiration to the complete detachment of the researcher from the subject was, in these circumstances as in many others, neither honest nor possible.

16. Our proposals sought to rethink the role of a development-oriented centre of applied research, to make it more current, more aware of and better connected to the real-life situations it sought to inform. It is noticeable that, in the subsequent fifteen years, many such centres have moved in these directions, albeit usually, in our opinion, not far enough. At the time, they were welcomed by Thandika Mkandawire and Peter Utting, the director and deputy director of UNRISD, but, sadly and for reasons never explained to us, not by the board.

17. That left me, and those I had come to know and respect in the process, back at square one. I returned to consultancy on information

and knowledge management in development organisations. I quickly recognised similar issues of the uncritical adoption of ICT by them and the negative impact this had on the breadth of their sources of information, the quality of decision making and the overall effect of their work on the communities they aimed to help. I began to wonder if the development sector itself could not offer an illustration of the opportunities and dangers of new knowledge dynamics which the UNRISD proposals had aimed to study at the levels of societies more generally. More so than in the previous effort, there were active international networks – especially Knowledge Management for Development (KM4Dev) and the Information Management Working Group of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) – many of whose members were keen to collaborate in working on such issues. Henk Molenaar, an official in DGIS, the development arm of the Royal Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who had participated in the UNRISD workshop, thought that the questions we were raising about the actual use of development knowledge were relevant to debates about the organisation and uptake of research which were underway in his ministry. I therefore gathered my ideas together in an article published in Development in Practice journal[13] and used that as the basis to interest others in developing a new plan of action, IKM Emergent.

18. The products of the programme and of those who worked with it are all available on-line and are frequently referred to throughout the main text. We also documented the changes of the context and direction of the programme through its life in a series of

[13] Note: 'Which knowledge? Whose reality? An overview of knowledge used in the development sector', Development in Practice, 16:6, 2006

annual and final reports[14]. Here, we offer a brief outline of the programme's story and of some of its distinctive features.

19. Most development research programmes identify - or accept the selection of by a funder - a relevant issue, research it and then attempt, with varying degrees of effort or success, to communicate the findings to those actors in the sector who might want to make use of them within their existing working practices. Our aim was different. It was to look at all aspects of 'knowledge and development' within the sector. We wanted to see what knowledge was valued, where it came from, how it was handled, exchanged and used, with what tools and through what human and organisational processes. Whilst seeking to understand and learn from past experience, we wanted to look critically at existing practice but, as importantly, to explore and test other possible approaches for the future. As the aim was to take a holistic look at the whole field: what we came to call the development knowledge ecology, we did not feel equipped, at the outset, to set boundaries: to rule any elements in or out. However, this meant that the range and volume of material which could form part of such a study was far greater than we could possibly cover. This in turn required us to choose topics at different levels and locations, which, between them, represented a broad range of knowledge work in the sector. The programme could not claim to be comprehensive – nor, as we will see, did its theory of knowledge allow the possibility of it ever being complete – but it could claim to be illustrative, evidencing the inter-relationships and significance of a wide range of knowledge related processes across the sector. It was also designed to be open to continuous

[14] Note: Links to the programme outputs and to its internal documents including annual reports, evaluations and responses to them can be found at https://drupal.ikmemergent.net/documents and about the programme's initial organisation at https://drupal.ikmemergent.net/Structure (both accessed October 2019)

development through the subsequent addition of other additional lines of enquiry by ourselves or others.

20. The programme was developed through an open process of sharing draft ideas with interested individuals and with relevant networks. Their responses brought in not simply new ideas but also new participants. Whilst some people known either from their writing or through past collaborations were invited to join, the majority of people who ended up doing some work for the programme had not been previously known to the organisers. By the start of the actual programme, three working groups had been created, 'Discourses, Dialogue and Translation', 'IKM Labs', which was concerned with digital and other artefacts used in development work, and 'The Management of Knowledge'. Each working group commissioned its own work, some from members of the group, some from outsiders, within pre-set budget limits. These multiple small pieces of work were designed to collectively contribute to an understanding of the bigger picture. The working groups met annually to review progress and develop new lines of enquiry. Two whole programme meetings did the same and attempted to draw out the emerging lessons from the work. Work drew to some form of conclusion on nearly all the lines of enquiry that the programme initiated. Sadly, a line of work on the visibility of African intellectuals within the development sector ended due to the ill-health of its organiser. An attempt to explore how international development work was perceived by diasporan youth in the UK proved to be too poorly defined to be packaged in any meaningful way. Had they been forthcoming, these would have both added to the overall picture but, as we will explain in the main text, the experience helped teach us that no study of an ecology can ever be complete.

21. At the outset, the working groups tended to draw up terms of reference for the intended research and put them out for tender in a conventional way. We found this attracted people who were content to do perfectly adequate work, but entirely within existing norms and boundaries. As time progressed, we realised that we needed people who were interested in exploring subjects in new ways and that a capacity to innovate might often be more important than alignment with terms of reference. We thus tried to involve such people in the programme deliberations until such a time as we found something they wanted to do. Even then, it was often not clear what the end product would be, so that terms of reference became projected itineraries in which future direction (and budget) would be agreed at various waypoints further down the track. We not only discovered the – perhaps obvious but largely absent from mainstream work experience - truth that people were more productive if they were doing something that they really wanted to do, but also that real freedom to determine how to work is a rare and much appreciated phenomenon. On several occasions we used our funds to pay for additional features of much larger research programmes, which had not been deemed important by their main funders. This enabled extra and creative work to be done, whilst allowing IKM Emergent to benefit from the content of and the connection to these larger programmes.

22. At our first meeting, Cees had suggested a rule of 'no gurus'. By that he wanted to encourage an open-minded, respectful and collective discourse within the programme, a process which could be undermined by self-centred individuals demanding attention to their own work. This is important. The programme increasingly came to understand the creation, sharing and use of knowledge as a predominantly social, albeit often contested and competitive, process. This being so, and as discussed in relation to the

programme evaluation below, the issue of how to create conditions and equip participants to make the process as productive as possible becomes central. However, the tension between the social and the individual is not always binary. People have different preferences and capabilities in how they work. Many are understandably passionate about what they are doing. These sensibilities aside, the stage of the development of a research idea, the specific mechanics of its realisation and the level of interest that exists in it amongst related communities of research or practice may all affect how collectively oriented a piece of work can be. Our own conclusion was that we should in future give greater emphasis to the collective nature of any programme, but also establish some related individual research fellowships to allow people to engage in different ways if appropriate.

23. The programme was designed as an iterative process from the start, but the extent of iteration both in the development of content and the management of the programme surprised us. The programme had been called IKM Emergent because, again unusually for research in the sector, we proposed a research model based on seeking solutions for newly identified or emerging issues, rather than post-hoc evidence collection and analysis. However, as evidenced by our changing method of commissioning work and explored at length in the main text, the concept of working within an emergent paradigm gradually became an overarching feature of the programme as a whole.

24. As is common in development support programmes, IKM Emergent needed to set and monitor indicators of progress and to be evaluated by people who were not involved in the programme itself. Usually this takes place near the end of a programme, supposedly to inform similar work in future, or sometimes as part of a major review

at half term. In our case, the method, practice and value of such monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was one of the subject areas we wished to investigate. For our own work, we chose to experiment with a system of continuous feedback. A small evaluation team spent a little time over a long period, speaking to people working for and with the programme and providing feedback to its steering group and directors. As such, they did become participants in the programme but retained an autonomous role. This aspect of the evaluation was found very useful, although it was noticeable that whilst participants were happy to talk to the evaluators, their use and documentation of self-reflection on the experience of their own work was less than had been hoped. The team also produced interim and final evaluation reports, which were less well received, at least by the directors[15]. The issue was primarily that of what was being evaluated and of competing visions of the programme. We stuck by the original concept of the programme, as expressed in its founding documents, which was to conduct relevant research and actively communicate about it with interested parties. To us, the highly interactive way we went about this was primarily a question of the most effective means to our end. Our own self-assessment was generally positive with regard to the production of work but more critical of our record of communicating about it, at least beyond the organisations and networks more directly associated with the programme. The evaluators focused more on the social production of knowledge and on the programme as a means of creating optimum conditions for it to flourish. Thus, for them, the way of working and the interaction between the many programme participants were the most interesting features of the programme and inseparable from any impact it might have. With hindsight, we would agree that the impact

[15] Note: The evaluations were always intended to be public and they, and our responses to them, are available on the Programme Documents page

of the programme on the people who were involved either in its work or its oversight was both greater and, through their practice and communication with their own networks, probably of more significance than we had ever originally imagined[16]. In future, this could be a more explicit feature of programme design, although funders would need greater understanding of the potential value of such non-linear and largely unpredictable impact.

25. The programme was funded by DGIS. As indicated above, the issues it raised overlapped with debates within the ministry about the links between research, policy and knowledge management. These debates reflected the new knowledge dynamics we explore in this book but, as would be the case in any large organisation, were also subject to internal dynamics, which we never fully understood. We had the sense that the decision on whether or not to support our programme formed part of the outcome of the wider debate. For us, the debate was unusually open. Some officials disagreed with our approach but, rather than this leading to hidden backroom deals, we were invited to come and present our arguments. Finally, I was invited to a meeting with Caroline Wiedenhorf, the director of research, at which two young female entrants to her department questioned the programme in what appeared, however amicable, to be a good cop, bad cop routine, whilst the director listened. One accepted the need for better knowledge of the local contexts in which development was supposed to take place and asked pertinent questions about the methodologies we proposed to achieve this. The other agreed in theory but thought that we were being naive in believing that local voices could ever be brought meaningfully to bear

[16] Note: This was brought home to us by a piece of work in which programme participants Hannah Beardon and Daniel Guijarro interviewed a number of their colleagues - https://drupal.ikmemergent.net/File:1201-IKM_PBC_draft1.1.pdf (accessed October 2019)

on development policy discussions taking place in entirely different contexts.

26. Fortunately, our arguments prevailed and we got to work. As the working groups got to grips with the full possibilities of exploring their remits, they very quickly came up with new ideas and plans. Generally, in the sector, early changes to plans and budgets are not welcome and I was quite concerned as I had my first meeting after the programme start with the DGIS official with responsibility for it. I could not have been more pleasantly surprised. As I tried to explain the new plans, she read the first line of our proposal back at me. "*IKM Emergent is an iterative programme*", she quoted, '*So go on and iterate'*. A few months later, her replacement approved an initial evaluation report setting out a distinctive approach saying, '*I have read the report with interest and appreciate very much the efforts undertaken by both the evaluator and the IKM team and partners to divert from conventional evaluation methods and tools.'*[17]

27. However, the rapid turnover of our contact persons within DGIS turned out to be a sign of continuing shifts in the organisation's internal debates about its research practice. Gradually the people on secondment from development practice or research organisations, who had direct professional experience of the issues we were raising, became fewer. Instead we dealt more with full time civil servants. Relationships were generally good. One originally sceptical individual even signed up to a PhD in Complexity Management as a result of his exposure to the programme. However, our connection to strategic debates about knowledge policy and practice within the ministry withered and our requests to feed back our work to those

[17] Note: Letter ref DCO/OC-474/08 from DGIS to Dr Thomas Lawo, Executive Director of EADI , 2008.

responsible for knowledge and its management in DGIS, one of the original objectives of the programme, went unanswered.

28. Finally, as we programme drew to a close, we gained a new contact person at the ministry who had no interest in or understanding of the programme. For a number of reasons, which had all been explained and accepted at the time, the programme was running behind schedule and we had asked for, and had verbal approval, for a budget neutral extension. This she refused to confirm. More seriously, she also refused to honour the formally agreed budget and arrangements for ongoing communication about the programme as a whole. Despite the written request of the chair of our steering group, she refused to provide any reasoned explanation for her decision in the context of its contribution to development policy and management. We were instead told that she could not approve a continuation of the programme because its final evaluation did not meet her expectations of a quantitative, measurement-led document. The fact that the evaluation approach we had chosen had been explicitly welcomed and endorsed by one of her predecessors was ignored. There was some bureaucratic channel to appeal her decision, which we could have spent the final months of the programme following. We chose instead to use the time to finish as much of the work as possible. This included almost all the outstanding research streams but did not allow for reflection on their findings or for much collective development of conclusions about the programme overall. It also removed the budget for any proper end-of-project communication[18] to either the more than 500

[18] Note: this probably includes an earlier and, no doubt, very different version of this book, which would have been resourced to be completed by a certain deadline near the time. The many subsequent delays in its development are, of course, down to us, although the lack of resources has played a significant part.

development actors signed up to our various lists, the many other agencies, who had taken part in the programme's events or the development research and policy communities more widely.

29. This was of course a very disappointing end to what had been a positive relationship. It is in fact extremely unusual for a Dutch government body to deliberately ignore its contractual obligations. Perhaps the person involved did not realise that this was what she was doing. Perhaps she correctly calculated that a small research association was unlikely to sue a sovereign government (and a possible source of future funds) over a relatively small sum of money. We have no idea if this was a conspiracy rather than a cock-up, but it was highly frustrating that no connections were made between our work and two other initiatives relating to development knowledge in the Netherlands to which we were ready and prepared to offer directly relevant support.

30. The first was a book-length report by the National Scientific Council for Government Policy into the future of development aid in the Netherlands, which had been published during the course of the programme [19]. This concluded that, whilst there was likely to be a declining requirement for traditional poverty related aid on a state to state basis, the need for high quality interventions on global challenges, such as migration or the environment, was likely to grow. The Netherlands, and in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, needed to develop its capacity to contribute to global debates on such challenges and to their solutions. In this, the need to understand the complexity of the challenges and the diversity of disciplinary and philosophical knowledges that should be applied to them were both

[19] Note: Pieter van Lieshout et al, 2010, 'Less Pretension, More Ambition: development policy in times of globalization', Amsterdam University Press

highlighted, along with some specific recommendations for the re-organisation of work in the ministry. The report was formally accepted by the government in the Dutch parliament, but its specific recommendations were not adopted and, from the outside, it is unclear what, if anything, changed. We had had a very positive meeting with the author of this report at which the potential of IKM Emergent to contribute to the development of more diverse and more open knowledge processes recommended by the report was clear. Instead, it seems that the potential for change was ignored in an apparent effort to bury what might have been perceived as unwanted external interference. There were no consequences for the perpetrators of this sleight of hand. The National Scientific Council for Government Policy does not seem to have any mechanism for following up what has happened with their reports after their acceptance.

31. If any of the knowledge implications of the report were acted upon, it was through a policy document submitted to the parliament by the ministry in 2011[20]. This called for the establishment of knowledge platforms based around the five strategic priorities of the Dutch aid programme. These, as a result of what we understood to be continuing disputes within the ministry and between it and other government research bodies, became the responsibility not of the ministry but of the development arm of the National Research Organisation (NOW/WOTRO). Although the language used to describe them – interactive, iterative, multi-stakeholder etc. – was very similar to ours, no use, that we are aware of, was made between these programmes and the extensive work that IKM Emergent, funded by the same ministry, had done on these issues. Nor did we receive any response for a briefing paper we produced on the new

[20] Note: Kennisbrief and IKM response

policy. Instead, each of the five platforms started from scratch and plotted its own course and, to begin with at least, seemed quite academic in focus, limited in geographic coverage and not very interactive. Subsequently, they have developed considerably but even a very positive evaluation in early 2017[21] described them as still '*finding their feet*' particularly in relation to the path from knowledge creation to use. It also reported problems in the relations between the platforms and those officials in the ministry whose work the platforms are supposed to inform, problems which sounded depressingly familiar.

32. So, on the one hand there are widely perceived problems related to the creation of relevant knowledge and its practical application to development. On the other there is, both in research institutes, such as UNRISD, and large bureaucratic organisations, such as DGIS, resistance to any solutions to these problems which challenge existing hierarchies or work norms. Probably for different reasons, neither are prepared to make the compromises to bridge the gaps between the human experiences of struggling with underdevelopment, knowledge as a formally codified product and the management of information flows and knowledge exchanges needed to respond to new challenges or enact desired changes. The role of long-established concepts of knowledge and the power issues that surround them in this continuing failure will be examined at length in the main text. But there are also direct questions for those who are well paid to resolve these issues on behalf of the publics who elect their politicians and pay the wages. A long standing and essentially sympathetic commentator on the Dutch aid system, Frans Bieckmann, described DGIS as follows:

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[21] Note: Ellen Lammers and Daniëlle de Winter, 'The Gold Standard: Exploring the added value of the Dutch knowledge platforms', Amsterdam, February 2017

' It is not so much a conspiracy or bad intentions on the part of specific individuals, but the internal dynamics of an inward-looking organization in which rivalry, egos, career ambitions, substantive and ideological differences, and personal hobby horses have created a bureaucratic jungle in which there is no scope, and none is created, for visions and strategic choices based on the bigger picture.'[22]

It is perhaps not surprising that a group of well-meaning outsiders, encouraging people to look again at some of their most profound assumptions about the work they were doing, were not well received. It is possible that the young woman entrant to the ministry, who thought that it would be impossible to articulate the experiences of the millions of aid recipients to decision makers in a Europe based ministry in any meaningful way, was right. But her youthful cynicism is disturbing. Very real challenges – to peace, health, prosperity and progress across the globe – remain. They will not be resolved by diktat. So how can the organisations that exist to promote human development on a global scale, or who serve the governments which share similar aims, develop the capacity to understand these new challenges and respond to them? Her response at least begged the question, *'if not IKM Emergent, then what?'*

Influences

33. The above aims to outline the professional and intellectual journeys that led to this current effort to document our work. They were made possible not just by the institutional support attracted over time but also by people. Some I have come across through

[22] Note: Frans Bieckmann 'Dutch development policy lacks an alternative economic vision' The Broker Online, May 29, 2013

reading or listening, whilst with others I have been able to engage more directly. The list is too long to remember at a single time, but I think it important to try and acknowledge the greatest influences. This is not just a courtesy, but a recognition that intellectual labour is never all our own work nor solely a matter for ourselves. We are nourished, formed (and mis-formed) by our forebears and by the work of others and this in turn shapes the influence of our own work and what we can pass on. The following have helped my own development in relation to some of the key subject areas of this book.

34. One of the positive trends over my lifetime has been the extension of women's rights and the, far from complete, struggle against patriarchal power. In the main, any understanding of this that I may have attained has grown through countless experiences, personal and professional, and reflections on them with friends and colleagues over many years. This was all influenced by my original introduction to women's liberation, as its ideas and demands swept across my university. The door was pushed open by a small number of courageous and super-articulate women, not least Judy Kimble[23], who created space for a great many more, women and men, to explore further. In my own subject area, Sheila Rowbotham didn't just re-define the concept of women's history virtually from scratch. In the process, with colleagues such as Sally Alexander, she also pioneered collaborative and self-reflective research methodologies, which could also be applied to other areas where the researcher could not but be personally implicated in the interpretations of research findings, such as development.

[23] Note: Judy died of cancer at 34. This obituary covers her nascent academic career but only hints at her power as an activist and communicator - https://lucas.leeds.ac.uk/tribute/dr-judy-kimble/ (accessed October 2019)

35. I guess I was introduced to Africa by Kwesi Badu, a Ghanaian friend who was studying in the UK and who, as well as talking about his time as a 'pioneer' (that is youth member) of Kwame Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party, was happy to share his encyclopedic knowledge of African and black American music. Without such grounding, I may not have recognised what I was reading when I picked up a copy of Transition magazine and read about the revolution in Guinea Bissau, on the cusp of its victory, and the political thought of its recently assassinated leader, Amilcar Cabral. That piece of serendipity transformed what I studied in my final year at university and what I wanted to do afterwards. It also led to the start of a relationship with Basil Davidson, a non-academic writer and activist, whose earlier books on African history had essentially created the subject, as far as its recognition in Europe, North America and even, in academic terms, large parts of Africa were concerned[24]. Through his introductions, I was able to visit Bissau in 1976 where I had the privilege of interviewing Mario de Andrade, an Angolan poet who was a leading figure in the struggle against Portuguese colonialism, and Carmen Pereira, veteran of the liberation war and leader of the national women's organisation. Years of subsequent work in politically contested parts of Africa and the coincidence of my UK base, Sheffield, being also home to the Review of African Political Economy, led me to get to know members of its editorial collective and, eventually, to join it as one of its few non-academic members. This provided an invaluable and different perspective on Africa from that prevalent in my development work. The necessary conversation

[24] Note: Not everyone agreed. Hugh Trevor Roper, then Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford University, responded by declaring '"*Perhaps in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But, at present there is none: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness….",* BBC interview 1965, quoted by Kwame Anthony Appiah in the New York Review of Books, December 17, 1998

between the two is one to which I hope this current work will contribute.

36. With regard to health, I now recognise that I was lucky to do my nursing training during the last days of a practice-based on hands-on work, focused on the observation of patients and a responsibility for meeting their needs. This was subject to, but still had some autonomy from, the orders of often aloof doctors and the convenience of hospital managers. As I moved to specialise in rural primary health, I received encouragement and help first from David Morley, director of the International Institute of Child Health and then, with specific relevance to Mozambique where she had also worked, Pam Zinkin. I had a variety of experiences in my actual work, but times spent under the direction of Drs Carlos Alberto Braga and Sinesio Talhari in Brazil and Igor Vaz in Mozambique were educational, productive and satisfying.

37. 'Development', as will be discussed later, always seeks to present a benign public face as it claims to make the world a better place. Far too often, sometimes by self-interested design, sometimes through unanticipated outcomes, it makes it worse. Basil Davidson was particularly sceptical about the host of good intentions that 'development' organisations had presented to him and made me read an article by the American anthropologist turned advocate for farmer's rights, Adrian Adams[25]. The book she subsequently wrote with her husband, a former merchant seaman and member of the Free French Army who had returned to help with the development of his home village, remains one of the few really long term histories of the interaction of a particular place with the outside world and all its

[25] Note: https://www.theguardian.com/news/2000/aug/11/guardianobituaries (accessed October 2019)

intrusive forces[26]. It should be required reading for anyone working in the sector but is, in fact, virtually unknown. My own efforts to work in ways which supported and strengthened local initiatives were helped by many critical conversations with two university friends, Julian Quan and Nick Meadows[27], who were themselves trying to chart the same course. I was also lucky to experience the creative but self-critical culture which existed at Oxfam when I first joined it, as the organisation made genuine, if sometimes awkward, attempts to work with awareness of gender and in solidarity with its Southern partners.

38. Finally, I wish to thank all those who have supported and participated in the current project. As indicated above, our work was not always without dispute, but it was generally creative, good-natured and fun. Too many have been involved to thank everyone here, but I would like to mention those that came to the initial UNRISD workshop and then continued to offer guidance and support throughout, namely Cees Hamelink, Robin Mansell and Kemly Camacho. The practical support of our secretariat at the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) was also essential. Historically, it had largely worked through its institutional members and was perhaps a bit surprised when a few of us individual members asked if we could use its structures to 'associate' with each other. However, following a few initial cultural re-alignments, EADI stepped up to the plate very well. We are also pleased by the increasing attention the association is now giving to

[26] Reference to book and my review

[27] Note: Julian, I am pleased to say, still works in the field, based at the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Greenwich. Nick, who made a substantial contribution to my previous book, was killed in a plane crash in Sudan, whilst working for Oxfam in 2003.

the issues we discuss here, not least in its recent book to which we were very happy to contribute[28].

39. I hope that writing this all down does not seem self-indulgent. One of the themes of the book is how knowledge gets recognised and passed on. In the process, some knowledge becomes part of the mainstream canon while other, often those more critical of dominant approaches, disappear. Many of my key references are absent from current dialogue and even out of print. This includes most of the work of Cabral himself, very little of which is recognised by even those parts of Anglophone discourse most directly concerned with the subjects he wrote about, but also that of Adrian Adams, Waldron, Appfel-Marglin and many others. I am of course aware that this work may join the list. It is, in fact, quite possible that 'countervailing' knowledge will become even less visible. As far as I am aware, reading lists are not yet selected by algorithms but, when they are, they may well choose to exclude work which questions their own role and value.

40. IKM Emergent was sometimes accused of being arrogant in its dissatisfaction with and rejection of certain current norms in our sector. However, everyone involved had been working in some way in or about development for many years. It was our own practice as well as those of our colleagues and institutions that we were trying to improve. This book is a further contribution to the process. If we insist on the importance of the issues we raise, we do not see ourselves as having a prescriptive role in providing answers. What follows is an invitation to join a dialogue, not an attempt to conclude it.

[28] Note: EADI book