

**Notes on 'Equity, Evaluation, and International Cooperation: In Pursuit of Proximate Peers in an African City' by Gabriela Y. Carolini**

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**EQUITY, EVALUATION,  
AND INTERNATIONAL  
COOPERATION**

*In Pursuit of Proximate Peers in an African City*

CRITICAL FRONTIERS OF THEORY, RESEARCH, AND POLICY  
IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES



# Introduction

- Development with proximate peers, not just other “Southern Nations” is the key for equitable development in distribution, procedural, and epistemic (knowledge) justice

## Hierarchies in the South

### 1.1

- Is the south even a thing?
- Disparities between richer south countries like Brazil, China
- Almost reproducing north south connections

### 1.2

- The label of “south” oversimplifies what is needed for effective cooperation
- There are other factors beyond geopolitical reference that matter for learning and knowledge production

### 1.3

- Hierarchies over Heterarchies
- Problematic mentorship relations that do not enhance learning like proximate peer relationships

### 1.4 International Cooperation in the planning of a modern African city

- “city as engine” narratives that prioritize the African city as having to meet Northern urbanist standards and see cities as the center of potential growth of GDP
- Planning African cities with Northern ideals is wrongheaded
- This “master plan” to get cities urbanized Dubai style implies continued financial dependence on international partnerships
- International projects struggle to solve the issues earlier in 1.4
- Water and sanitation projects are mostly funded by World Bank, and are not always more money → more access to water
- Calls to end colonialism and independence have given way to neoliberal economic comradeship
- Natural resource extraction and land commodification in service of the market are some of the most significant efforts for making SSC.
- The aim of this book is less to inspect the promotion of SSC and the concerns about China, but instead about questions of How cooperations “landing” is shaped, by who, and how it should be evaluated

# **“We Don’t Refuse Money” The crowding-in of International Footprints**

## **2.1 Comparative Commitments**

- Mozambican elites were less concerned with capacity building projects and more with the ability to secure capital investments of what they wanted
- China investment in Africa is increasing, while investment from developed countries and Brazil, India, and South Africa stagnates
- Both investors (china and developed countries) behave similarly; developed countries do not make up for their lower contributions with ethics
  - concern about commercial self interest overblown for both china and old donors?

## **2.2 New Marketplace for Aid, Trade, and Investments**

- Foreign investment, southern and not, has BOOMED given Mozambique's discovery of oil offshore (one factor)
- High income countries still dominate foreign investment into mozambique, but trade is dominated more by developing economies,
  - Trade dominance can be explained by SSC on infrastructure projects
- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) well outpaces official development assistance
- Private investment has concentrated around energy
- Southern economies have been notable players in Mozambique

## **2.3 Shaky ground with SA, Brazil, INDIA**

- Southern economies are creating infrastructure for investment in Africa; a southern Donor class
- Brazil has done a LOT in Mozambique, some good, but there is a strong dependence on Brazilian expertise and experiences
  - Also Brazilian private sector has taken root in Africa; can be abusive (esp. Vale)
- What does the widening of the partnership base mean for people on the ground level?

## **2.4 Local Governance and Development’s Urban Footprint**

- Mozambique has been compliant with donor requests to a fault, fearing donor flight
- Local governments are often not involved in the planning or development of investment
- How does a government’s social contract to its people fare under pressure from its financial contracts with its debtors, who are uninterested in involving local governments
  - This reality challenges the narrative of solidarity, equity, and capacity-building typically advanced in international cooperation

# Turbidity in Water and Sanitation Cooperation

## 3.1 Of water and Waste

## 3.2 Mobilizing Waste Pickers in Decentralized Cooperation w Brazil

- Have found success in partnering with NGOS and local stakeholders for improving community level sanitation outside of the rich part of Maputo
- Still difficult in solid waste management
- Partnership with the city of Guarulhos; city level roots; to take care of solid waste.
  - Lots of good happening between Guarulhos and Maputo, but lot of the work being headed by NGOS and international orgs, not local govs
  - Tried to replicate waste picker cooperatives in Maputo, was not working super well
  - Struggled because the waste pickers were different in Mozambique than in Brazil; a specialized approach was needed
  - Also lack of political support for the initiative that there was in Brazil, Mozambique with a neoliberal technical approach, wanting to educate about producing less waste. Do not see waste pickers as part of the solution to solid waste challenges
  - Define “decentralized cooperation”
  - The waste site at Hulene remains open; solid waste cooperation fell through

## 3.3 All the right parts: Trilateral Cooperation with Brazil in Chamanculo

- Chamanculo an important historical neighborhood; Brazil and Italy combine to try and upgrade
- On the ground, more actors were involved
  - City Govt
  - residents
  - Brazil ABC (cooperation agency), ministry of city, Caixa development bank
  - italian Ministry of foreign affairs
  - Italian NGO AVSI
  - Cities Alliance—World Bank and UN Habitat
- AVSI had helped upgrade slums in Brazil; wanted to work off that experience
- Residents were showing signs of development fatigue in 2010, when the trilateral project started 5 years after local interventions had begun
  - but trilateral project increased hopes
- Trilateral project had social and physical team
- still immediately ran into problems
  - Residents feared resettlement was being forced on them; was true to an extent
  - Local leaders were not immediately integrated into the decision making process either; huge delays resulted
  - also funding issues; brazil backed out kinda
  - 5 years after, planning work began for real

### 3.4 A Bridge that Carries Water? SSC with China

- Proposed bridge would carry water to rural areas?
- Bridge plans and floods in other areas lead to plans of displacement and gentrification
- Plan to develop KaTembe at the expense of those living who were displaced out of their homes for bridge to be built
- also expensive to cross the bridge
- Why did China provide a loan?
  - seemed difficult to repay too, 725 million
  - They outsourced political entanglements to local stakeholders
  - china distances itself from the local politics
    - atypical relative to other international actors
  - Made no effort to provide capacity building or learning, but provided most money BY FAR
  - perhaps not surprising, then, that the material result was quick, but the procedural and cognitive goals were entirely lacking
  - Very capitalistic approach

### 3.5 Multi level Discord with Spanish Partners

- Some in the local gov (CMM) wanted to upgrade the neighborhood to remove ppl and source income from the area
- CMM also originally ignored the neighborhood, with more emphasis on Chamanculo
- But originally partnership with Barcelona was good, were trying to upgrade neighborhood, not replace it
- Engineers w/o Borders left committee bc CMM not committed to minimizing resettlements
- CMM destroyed an almost completed drainage system after EWB left
- EWB not perfect; did not listen to advice from local experts on parts of its drainage systems

### 3.6 Contrasting Cultures and Habits with Japan

- Heavy different cultural factors in this project
  - Not necessarily feasible to implement Japanese style recycling already in Mozambique, where it was harder to get to that level from what they were at
  - Different work rhythms as well
  - Japanese longer day habits as well
  - Eventually there was mutual appreciation for Japanese methods, and some capacity building was taken as a result
  - However, implementation of the 3R project was not fully successful; some felt it was too early, but education on the importance of 3Rs had begun

### 3.7 From Material toward Cognitive Equities on the Ground

- Turbidity refers to not clear classifications between partner orgs—many different actors played roles in the processes
- Carolini reads the overlap not as a win, but as a concern, as because of lack of coordination even when there was overlap, and disregard for needs of the locals
- No more solidarity or equity for the people regardless of which nations were sponsoring the project.
- What was important was the makeup of teams, their commitment to embeddedness in local organizations, and their attention to relationship building at the every day level to see how macro level claims translated onto the ground—regardless of the geographic origins of the partners.

## Looking for Learning in Cooperation Projects

### 4.1 Learning and Epistemic Equity at the Project Level

- LEARNING is super important; inefficiencies are not tied to just corruption, duh!
- Learning may not be efficient, but is necessary
- Presumption of universality in the value of learning is harmful
  - In determining what is a best practice; learning is subjugated relative to accountability
  - Learning ultimately promoted as relevant is what the evaluator, not the practitioner, decides is relevant
  - Place based learning is valuable
- Learning focused policies acknowledge the continuity of knowledge aggregation
- Emphasis on outcome indicators, in contrast, prioritizes achievements over reflections
- Learning
  - Learning by doing is best when the knowledge is dependent on context, uncertain or not understood well
  - in the reverse, learning by planning works well
  - if it's not understood well, not factual; more tacit, CONTEXT is important
  - If we accept that knowledge is more tacit as context is more heavily weighted, learning would best arise when project partners have shared contextual knowledge
    - EX: the science of water or sanitation can be easily conveyed by any project partners, but for things like project management and decision making, partners with shared contextual experiences would understand and foster the kind of tacit knowledge that are relevant for effective project implementation
    - Which shared experiences matter?
    - metacognition??
  - The idea that the teacher and the learner need not be static roles
  - Learning transaction's quality depends on the relations and openness of counterparties to one another's knowledge systems
    - this openness often not displayed in development interventions

- “Epistemic Injustice is essentially institutionalized in development projects when higher income donors define modernization and evaluate improvements as objective standards”
  - SSC partners in practice still harbor mentor-mentee relations
  - Ideal learning environment for organizations in which both parties value each others’ experience and expertise
- Following experiences measured by learning and the room afforded to it, and proximities that mattered to project professionals

## 4.2 Looking for Learning on the ground

### 4.2.1 Learning as Adaptation

- Examples from the Japan 3R experiment
- Openness for both the Japanese to accept the Mozambican expertise, and vice versa
- Openness to adapt for what the project needed, and to understand the needs and desires of the other sides
- ADAPTABILITY

### 4.2.2 Learning as Reconceptualization

- Reconceptualizing what you need in order to achieve an objective
  - And being able to apply what happened in another place, but cater it to your specific needs
- Southern Solidarity is also useful; one of many factors. But alone it is not enough

### 4.2.3 Learning as Imagination

- High levels of knowledge—conceptual, procedural, metacognitive, but NOT technical
- the inspiration/imagination aspect?
- The idea of Reproduction, not Replication
  - not trying to copy, trying to reapply
- The benefits of cross collaboration is being able to be inspired by something in a city and say hey, I want that too
- In the Brazil Chamanculo example, there was not much technical exchange, though, which made it difficult

### 4.2.4 Learning as Navigation

- The value of having decision makers, like the EWB, on the GROUND on the project
  - helpful for technical learning
  - a hierarchical framework still did not work though
- Value of being open to suggestions and not being arrogant, not making final decisions until all stakeholders had been contacted
- EWB lost faith in AMDEC as a local expert and switched to another group
  - Their ability to choose who to work with highlighted a hierarchical situation

- The managers struggled to learn from each other; due to the politics described above
- the people on the ground benefited the most

#### 4.3 Parsing out Proximities that matter

##### 4.3.1 Project Governance: peer Relationships and Heterarchies over Hierarchies

- Importance of people on the ground level being informed of the project; not just being given a project. they have to have a role in deciding what needs to happen
- Equivalency between the staff of both teams was also critical
- Presence of counterparts, not hierarchy, was important
- The personal component was also critical

##### 4.3.2 Local Embeddedness

- Physical presence, sharing the same offices, interacting closely; that is critical
- The partner doesn't need expertise on the local situation; the locals have that already. What they need is the ability to engage effectively and efficiently in daily actions
- Language is also critical

##### 4.3.3 Theories of Practice: Professionals and their work rationales

- attitudes toward work are important
- individual professional's own work rationales were super important
- personality was also key

#### 4.4 Learning in the Aggregate

- Aggregation of all the experiences, not just one offs
- taking experiences and forming their own projects

Do these labels (SSC, etc) matter, or do we just need to adhere to the proximities that matter

## Recognizing Potentials

### 5.1 If Solidarity and Equity were Real

- We should be building economies around complementary southern concepts that eschew growth in favor of distribution, larger economies in the South are seeking modes of economic growth and hierarchical development in line with practices from the North, unchallenging Western ideals
- Tension between rhetoric of equity and its application in practice
- Is the primary concern of SSC technical cooperation more financial and political?
  - EX: South African constitution emphasizes collectivism; it's foreign policy is based on economic diplomacy that builds SA's regional authority



- Diplomacy centered on “equity”, but its in prime status for international organizations’ to flex their muscle in southern Africa
- Brazil fought leftist organization and ideology in regional cooperation in favor of its own leadership in the region
  - Brazil not challenging the orthodox international development structures
  - Funding projects that address concerns under current—not alternative—economic norms and trade rules
- Contradictions regarding solidarity and power imbalances
- China in particular is challenging the nations who power the global north, but not the way in which they rule
- in SSC, are they picking the right pairs? not arbitrarily, but intentionally, based on proximities

## 5.2 Hierarchical Orthodoxy by International Design in SSC

- GWOPA water program; mentor/mentee relationships
- Brazil case study
  - Brazilian water utilities ALWAYS the mentors

## 5.3 Examining Materiality and Proximities in Place

### 5.3.1 Heterarchy over Hierarchy, Again

- Staff saw equivalencies in their counterparts
- Unidirectional flow of knowledge

It is not the GEOPOLITICAL, but other aspects (explained above) that make or break the relationship!!!

### 5.3.2 The Value of the visit

- Not a long term stay like in Maputo; but visits were KEY
- also inspirational aspect

### 5.3.3 Theories of Professional Practice

- professional viewpoints shaped by partners' cultures and epistemic backgrounds, and this translated into the workplace.

## 5.4 Questioning Hierarchies

- Does the organizational forms and presumptive roles of the partners matter as much as geopolitical and technical similarities?
- Yes, but why does the hierarchy persist?

# The Governmentality of Evaluation

## 6.1 Lags in Evaluation

- Generally, equity concerns do not form part of evaluations
- Instead, central concern is accountability, and financial and temporal efficiency of implementation
- Time for outreach of evaluative exercises are often not treated as essential
- Why does a belief in evaluation like this stay?

## 6.2 Constructing a Rational Culture

- Culture of efficiency has motivated the prioritization of universalist, not pluralist, rationality in the industry

### 6.2.1 Domestic Frontier

- US and UK tried and failed extreme methods of tracking government spending
- ended up spending WAY too much on watching how much the government spent; huge failure and overreach
- This ideology spread into international development, though

### 6.2.2 Making the World a Better Place

- Cost nitpicking and such was the framework of the neoliberal techniques in public administration that are the hallmarks of New Public Management (NPM)
- NPM domestically arose in rich countries as a response to the idea of big government
- in developing countries, NPM came as a condition of aid, particularly from OECD
- Austerity → new lens on efficiency
- Donors began wanting recipient countries to provide project evaluations, entrenching NPM

## 6.3 Evaluations Governmentality

- OECD became focused on demonstrating that development interventions caused specific outcomes
- Funders favor the types of project that can be evaluated for impact

### 6.3.1 Explicit Politics of Evaluation

- Things can be hidden, things can be used for strategic purposes
- Does evidence produced through evaluation really provide a counterweight to political manipulation?
- Evaluation can either subvert or support political interests
  - Dependent on what the donors want, NOT the quality of the evidence

### 6.3.2 The Implicit Politics of Evaluation

- Evaluation seen as a tool to demand more results
- projects using evaluations were more efficient financially and in terms of timeliness; but these were the only factors measured
- near ubiquity of Randomized Control Trials among funders, when you can't even implement that practically in many instances
- problems with RCTS
  - Impact metrics seeing a projects worth for the funding nation; NOT the beneficiaries
  - Bias toward things that can be measured with RCTS, rat race to compete with that
  - who learns and what is learned seems to escape critical review
- There is no method to measure if something has been learned or is equitable. no RCT, i mean.

### 6.4 Cultivating a Learning Culture and Equity through Evaluations

- Prioritarianism as an effective rejection of CBA/RCT
  - the priority is to benefit the worst off
- Must ask why projects work, how, and for WHOM

#### 6.4.1 Justice at the Project Level: Tracking Benefit Distribution and Procedural Fairness

- Prioritarianism incorporated in projects
- Projects that begin with co-design or co-production
- All participants must have independence and voice
- Need heuristic and situated discourse (contextually driven and evolving) to bring considerations about equity and justice in the early stages of development and later in its evaluation.
- "Justice does not negate efficiency as a goal but rather asks to what end efficiency applies"
  - Efficiency can exist in spite of not maximizing a cost benefit ratio
- What we need to measure as well as material benefits are the beneficiaries and their "ranking" of need.
- Project bearers need to bring "situated" judgment to bear in projects, concerning themselves with the context and understanding the values of those to whom the project is important/
- Important to balance distributive and procedural equity with epistemic equity, to ensure conditions are improved by those affected
  - consider diverse epistemologies and specific values of people affected

#### 6.4.2 Epistemic Equity: Valuing Learning and Different ways of Knowing in Projects

- Orthodox evaluation boosts orthodox development strategies

- Need to address testimonial and hermeneutical injustice in epistemology
  - testimonial: prejudice devalues people's contributions
  - hermeneutical: people's backgrounds means they lack the confidence to participate
  - Recognizing and alleviating these injustices is key to creating space for learning in the co-design of projects and their evaluation
  - This is NOT the norm in international partnerships

## Approximating Proximate Peer Partnerships

- Question of SSC vs other methods is irrelevant; it's the details that matter
- The type of partnership (North, South, etc) not a predictor of success
- Heterarchical structures allow the freedom to work and learn for both beneficiaries and foreigners
- But still need to promote distributive, procedural, and epistemic equity
  - Project evaluation is a tool with potential, but used properly
  - Procedure alone cannot guarantee all stakeholders' views equally considered
    - Procedure can and has been used as a smokescreen
  - We need an emphasis on distributive justice, that prioritizes the distribution of material benefits to obtain epistemic justice and institutionalize effective methods for procedural justice
  - Place based thinking and prioritarianism help start somewhere (deciding distributive justice is hard, but needs to be done).
  - Situated judgment brings contextually informed ethics into practice
    - situated meaning somebody familiar with the situation, with the locality
- Interesting final paragraph from book (direct excerpt):
  - *While city managers can be more explicit about the kinds of international partnership that they have found to be productive and the kinds of cooperation project they would welcome, such positioning is delimited by financial needs and the autonomy of power afforded to them by national or state governments. As such, my own final thoughts and recommendations aim instead at the bilateral and multilateral partners claiming interest in advancing equity and infrastructural improvements through cooperation projects in cities like Maputo. Pay attention to whether hierarchy or heterarchy is institutionalized in the governance of cooperation projects supported—this matters for promoting all types of learning, but especially high-level knowledge production. In the co-design and evaluation of projects, give attention to the spatial distribution of benefits and how this translates across categories of prioritized communities, as defined by those communities themselves. Further, give space for reflective assessments by international and domestic staff about the kinds of knowledge and experience they valued. Avoid big, autonomous footprints within the cities where you work. Instead, embed and find ways of co-locating. Finally, advance practitioners who understand and value flexibility, and who recognize the epistemic value and knowledge they too will gain from interaction with project partners located at “beneficiary” sites. When such principles of project co-design and evaluation are combined and incorporated into international cooperation, let the community of practitioners and researchers then reassess, revise, and refine as necessary. As Nhachuchane from AMDEC noted, “We’re not going to cross paths just once.” Barcelona seems to understand this with its institutionalized budgetary commitment to cooperation work at the subnational level. International cooperation and movement toward equity on the ground therein will require iteration. Here I have argued that this commitment best translates among proximate, not necessarily “Southern,” peers.*