# Making Good on Donors' Desire to Do Development Differently

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**Abstract**

Foreign aid donors are increasingly focused on changing the way their organizations function. This discourse has focused on desired qualities, including greater knowledge of local contextual realities, appropriate adaptation to context, and greater flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. We argue that more attention needs to be devoted to the achievement of these qualities, and turn to contingency theory to identify some under-exploited ways to 'do development differently'. The qualities sought by donors are emergent properties of complex organizational systems, and will only be achieved through a micro-level and interlinked focus on the 'nuts and bolts' of organization.

# 1. Introduction

That the organization of foreign aid matters to development intervention success is not a new idea. Albert Hirschman and Judith Tendler made this point as early as the 1960s and 1970s, respectively; as Tendler put it, "I ascribe problem results to an organizational, rather than a historic, determinism."[1] In the decades since, attention to organizations in, and the organization of, the development industry has only increased.[2]

Development practitioners are increasingly moving in the direction academic scholars have long signaled.[3] Between June and September 2016 alone at least five publications on "adaptive management" or "adaptive aid" were issued by large international nonprofits and think tanks.[4] Aid organizations themselves have begun to focus on internal organizational changes in an effort to enhance flexibility and adaptiveness; DFID's Smart Rules and USAID's Local Systems Framework, to name but two of many examples, are attempts at internal organizational reform to facilitate greater adaptation to local context.[5] The World Bank's 2015 World Development Report – arguably the Bank's flagship document – contains an entire chapter on adaptive design and adaptive interventions.[6] Whether by necessity or design, policymakers are beginning to focus on the organizational features of aid delivery as key determinants of aid success and failure.

This paper attempts to kick-start a conversation across traditional boundaries separating theory and practice to widen the menu of options at the disposal of donors when searching for organisational solutions in development. One community of practice aimed at changing development agencies for the better has united under the banner of Doing Development Differently by focusing on locally defined problems to be tackled through iteration, learning, and adaptation".[7] We link this DDD approach to contingency theory—the name given to management approaches that place a premium on how contextual factors shape organisations.[8] By definition, contingency theories cannot offer a single set of principles or grand theory of management; the best organisational approach depends on fit with the environment within which organisations must achieve their aims. To truly do development differently, we argue, requires serious thinking about mainstreaming "contingent ways of working" inside development agencies.

In other words, management scholarship has the potential to propel new directions for donor agency[9] reform and enhance the search for greater effectiveness and performance.In section 2, we argue that contingency theory in particular provides insights for considering when and how organizations can better respond to their environmental context. In section 3, we push the logic of contingency theory further by suggesting that development organizations will only be able to accomplish their desired macro-level organizational transformations by focusing on linked micro-level organizational behaviours. We then present the barriers that currently preclude individuals within the organization from acting in a manner supportive of these organizational reforms (section 4). Overall, the article seeks to move beyond invocations of the need to "be adaptive" and reflect on how organizations might achieve these ends with reference to existing theories of management. This can hopefully avoid the movement championing 'doing development differently' becoming nothing more than a missed opportunity.

## 2. Doing Development Differently: Old Wine in New Bottles?

Aid agencies are increasingly seeking to move from a focus on grand theories and universal prescription, abandoning a 'contextless' approach to modern public management reform often derided for being incompatible with sensitivity to local realities.[10] The management literature has long understood the organizational tension between standardized approaches – what in the context of international development is sometimes called "best practice" or "blueprint" thinking – and the ability to respond to local realities.[11] Those arguing that there is no "right" answer, and thus that organizations will do better by making decisions contingent on the features of the situation, are known as contingency theorists.[12]

As a growing movement of development practitioners have collectively aligned themselves against the tendency to masterplan development, the range of ideas for how development organisations must change has also grown. This community has expanded to include actors inside bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, civil society, foundations, and academic institutions.[13] Indeed, there are presently so many strands of thinking aligned with the ideas within 'Doing Development Differently' that two development bloggers recently compared and contrasted nuances in overlapping efforts.[14]

Amongst these efforts, we perceive three shared claims however: 1) Donor agencies need to focus on better **understanding the local contexts** in which they operate; 2) Donor interventions need to be **adapted** or tailored to local contexts based on features of the context during project design; 3) As contexts change, so must donor interventions change; organizations must be **flexible** enough to allow re-adaptation in response to exogenous shocks and the feedback from intervention performance.[15] None of these claims are particularly new; however, they share considerable continuity with contingency theory. What is more novel is the traction these ideas have gained amongst practitioners, as the selection of quotations below highlights.

### *Understanding Local Context*

*"Most [aid] organizations are now willing to concede that attempting to operate in complex, challenging, and diverse national contexts does require at least some concerted efforts to understand the local political economy of reform – that is, who are the winners and losers and who holds the balance of power in such processes."*

-World Bank World Development Report 2017, p. 271.

To adapt or flexibly respond to context, an organization needs to have the capacity to understand context. Not all organizational interventions require a deep understanding of context; however, the delivery of development interventions is clearly one where contextual knowledge is critical.[16] When environments are unstable or the course of events unpredictable, more will need to be decided contingently at the local level.[17] Delivery of development interventions is clearly a context where this is the case – given the number of interacting elements and feedback loops that make predictions difficult and consequences uncertain, complexity theories are often elicited to describe the environmental contexts of development interventions.[18] When tasks cannot be routinized – done in standard, pre-defined ways – contingency theory tells us more control needs to rest in the hands of agents, rather than managers.[19] Sensitivity to and awareness of local realities put a premium on

understanding and gathering information, and making design and management contingent on the knowledge obtained.

### Adapting Interventions to Local Realities

*"Delivering results and addressing the underlying causes of poverty and conflict requires programmes that can adapt to and influence the local context."*
                                                    -DFID Smart Rules: Better Programme Delivery, p. 3.

Merely understanding context is not sufficient for a donor to work contingently, however. Donors need to make use of the information they gather to adapt their projects to the realities they face. "Best practice" strategies are in tension with organisational adaptation to specifics not primarily in the *gathering* of contextual information but in its *use*. Unlike approaches that seek models emerging from objective scientific investigation and valid in multiple contexts,[20] contingency theory stresses the importance of solutions that 'best fit' a singular context. The process of 'fitting' an organisation to circumstances can occur in at least three ways: natural selection based on environmental conditions exerting pressures on organisations (like when biological systems evolve); mutual interaction between organisation and the environment (like the sun, rain and soil all result in crop yields); and an emergent systems approach whereby multiple contingencies are addressed in a simultaneous manner (like an interdependent social network).[21] Contingency theories implicitly underpin the emerging focus on "best fit" rather than "best practice" – at actually adjusting interventions to respond to clearly identified problems.

### Flexibility

*"Principle 8: Embed Flexibility. We need to design and manage all of our interventions – be it technical assistance, localized aid, policy reform, or another arrangement – in ways that allow adjustments in the face of shocks or in response to learning"*
                                                    – USAID Local Systems Framework, p. 10.

If the course of an intervention is unpredictable, then the process of adaptation to context needs be continuous throughout the life of the project, rather than merely at its inception.[22] As contexts change, organisations must be able to redirect themselves and feedback to changing circumstances and opportunistic moments. The key term here is "iterative" – as in, trying something, learning from it, and then having another go. To in fact "iteratively adapt" requires an organization that has the flexibility to make adjustments as circumstances change. Flexibility involves seizing opportunities, recognising dead ends, encouraging innovation, and changing direction when necessary. This is why the very foundations of contingency theory stress that responding to an uncertainty works best with fewer formal rules and structure and more empowered sub-organizational decision-making (i.e. decentralization of decision authority).[23]

For a development agency to better understand local context, adapt programs to those contexts, and flexibly alter interventions as needed requires changing what development agency staff do in practice on a daily basis. We believe that the answer to how organizations can achieve the changes they desire ultimately lies within the organizations themselves. To take on board the lessons of contingency theory – to work contingently – requires development agencies to look to their own internal processes. The next section argues that to actually achieve organizational adaptation and flexibility in response to local contexts requires agencies to move to different models of managing and motivating individuals.

### 3. From Individual Workers to Organizational Results: Autonomy, Motivation, and Trust

This section explores the conditions for development agencies to work contingently by examining the role played by employee motivation, autonomy, and trust. We argue that these agent-level factors are critical in allowing contingent ways of working to emerge within an organization. This is because contingent ways of working cannot be dictated from above by fiat.[24] Contingent ways of working need to be coaxed, not commanded as they will emerge into development agency practice only if properly enabled, fostered, and nurtured at the level of individuals. One could think of contingent approaches then as an emergent property of a complex organizational system.[25]

*Autonomy: the value of freedom and discretion*

Autonomy is freedom from external control and influence and can exist at a variety of organisational levels.[26] There is good reason to think autonomy at both the organisational and individual levels facilitate contingent ways of working in development organisations. In situations of uncertainty, contingency theory suggests relatively more authority should lie in the hands of field offices – the 'street-level bureaucrats' of development.[27] These will be the organisational actors closest to the coalface of implementation. Evidence from both aid agencies and developing country governments supports this conclusion, suggesting greater autonomy helps project adaptability and flexibility. For example, a study of Nigerian civil servants highlights that the more complex a project, the more delivery benefits from greater autonomy. This is because more complex tasks need more 'on-the-ground' adjustment.[28] Limited autonomy constrains the ability of aid organisations to gather local information and adapt to changing circumstances.[29] In contrast, greater autonomy is also associated with greater job satisfaction, innovation, opportunities for learning and greater commitment to the organisation and lower employee turnover.[30] This echoes findings from the broader public management literature that decentralised authority is associated with better performance.[31]

Organisational design decisions that reduce the need for compliance and increase agents' freedom to act are likely to have substantial benefits for contingent ways of working where agents can be trusted and are sufficiently motivated. Contextual knowledge is best gathered by autonomous agents. Autonomous agents will be better able to initially adapt projects to local contexts and design in the organizational flexibility that will allow iteration, re-adaptation of projects as environments change.

Autonomy is not a 'silver bullet', of course. Increasing autonomy should be done with care and in full consideration of the complex organisational effects to be had from shifting any single lever. More autonomous agents are more capable of acting badly as a result of reduced constraints.[32] More autonomy without appropriately tailored measurement regimes may decrease effectiveness, leading agents to "hit the target but miss the point".[33] More autonomy means, almost by definition, a diminution of central control. As such, the effects of more autonomy depend critically on what motivates agents, and the degree of trust organizations can and do have in their agents.

*Motivation: agents connected to their work are more effective*

Giving more autonomy to agents raises the question: Who are the agents and what might we expect them to do with greater operating slack?[34] If agents and organisations are given greater autonomy but fail to change their behaviour, there is no reason to expect improved performance. Indeed, if this autonomy is used in unproductive ways, more autonomy is likely to decrease organizational performance.

Development agencies need motivated agents to gather contextual knowledge, to steer flexibly and to adapt to changing circumstances. Motivation may be even more critical for public sector employees than it is for private sector employees because public sector agencies often lack summary performance metrics across different tasks and must report to multiple stakeholders; both these phenomena are often true of foreign aid. In public sector environments, motivation is even more critical, with success depending to a greater degree on the agents' own goals and motivation.[35]

Happier and more motivated agents are more likely to put autonomy to good use, to make use of flexibility built into organisational design, to gather contextual information and to make use of it accordingly. There is a substantial literature that begins with the observation that while bureaucrats sometimes shirk, manipulate and steal, they also frequently do their jobs well and earnestly *despite* the absence of monitoring or financial incentives.[36] In the language of public management, many employees seem to exhibit public service motivation – a genuine belief in what they are doing which motivates their day-to-day activities.[37] Humanitarian and international organization employees are more mission-oriented than average.[38] Individuals electing a career in aid organizations often do so precisely because they care about their organizations' goals.

The motivational mix of employees depends in part on recruitment and selection processes.[39] Motivation also depends on what happens after recruitment and within the internal organisational environments that employees experience.[40] Organisational design choices that allow employees greater connection to the impact of their work are associated with more pro-social behaviour, such as greater voluntary effort.[41] Too much monitoring or red tape can crowd out pro-social motivation; for example, organisations can make choices about monitoring and compliance that reduce staff motivation.[42] Demotivated agents may be more likely to exit roles, or to switch to organisations where job design allows for more fulfilling work. Motivation, then, can be an indirect product of organisational design choices around autonomy, recruitment and monitoring. World Bank project success has been shown to depend more on the unobservable features of the individuals leading projects than on many of the observable features of the project or environment.[43]

The best way to reform aid agencies to work in contingent ways depends critically on the particulars of the agents – who they are and what drives, or can be made to drive, their performance. Where agents are, or can be, intrinsically motivated to accomplish the organisation's goals, extrinsic motivators and monitoring will be less necessary. Reform attempts that fail to think through agent motivation are unlikely to realise their full potential.

*Trust: an alternative to formal accountability*

Monitoring donor staff with metrics and punishing poor performers through sanctions – carrots and sticks based on performance – is difficult in development organizations. This is because environmental unpredictability can change goalposts quickly and information gaps between headquarters and country-level realities can be large. The difficulty in monitoring and sanctioning staff makes trust a requisite for working contingently. This includes trust in the judgments, perceptions, and actions of field personnel, trust by management that staff will use autonomy appropriately, and trust between staff to facilitate the collective understanding necessary to work contingently.

Employees' trust of their organisations, employees' trust of one another, and trust by political authorisers are all associated with better organisational performance.[44] There is evidence that trust can be a virtuous cycle under certain conditions, with a trusting relationship between service providers and those monitoring services motivating better performance, as well as further trust.[45] Other drivers of trust include organisational stability;[46] more empowered employees;[47] and a range of human resource practices like the fairness of performance appraisal and compensation, career development opportunities and perceived autonomy.[48]

In contrast, contracting and accounting practices that treat employees as if they are likely to misbehave can diminish trust.[49] |To foster trust requires the ability to select and motivate agents who share the goals of the organisation and have the capacity to implement what needs doing.[50] Legislative 'micromanagement' of organisations and control practices can breed distrust.[51] As one former civil servant put it, "Trust is about trusting people … if you require people to demonstrate that they are complying with your diktat (however well-meaning or flexible that diktat is), then you are not trusting them."[52]

While it may be difficult to directly engineer trust, an organisation that lacks it will find operating effectively in complicated and uncertain environments difficult. Understanding and adapting to changing local circumstances requires trust by political authorisers and agency headquarters in the capacities of field-level staff. To work contingently, development organisations need to trust agents in the field to do so.

### Engineering Contingent Ways of Working by Focusing on Agents

Contingency theory can inform the way policymakers think about the "how" of organizational reform. Working contingently emerges from an organizational system, and thus is less a specifically identifiable feature than a property of the whole organization. This does not mean that organizations need to simply wait for contingent ways of working to emerge, however. Table 1 links the agent-level concepts articulated above with the contingent ways of working aid organizations increasingly seek. To discuss how organizations must change without focusing on the nuts and bolts of the organization is to engage in a kind of reverse "fallacy of composition" where one infers something is true of the whole because it is true of some, or even all, parts. There can be no change in the "organization" without change in some constituent element of the organization.

This is not to suggest that altering an organization so it can work contingently is easy; far from it. The next section will present some of the barriers that stand between many aid agencies embracing of contingent ways of working.

**Table 1: Advancing contingent ways of working through a focus on agents**

| Concept | Contingent ways of working | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | **Contextual knowledge** | **Adaptability** | **Flexibility** |
| Autonomy | • By giving agents the ability to make use of such knowledge encourages its gathering | • Allows for adaptation to local contexts which is more rapid and based upon better knowledge of context | • Less rigid hierarchy allows agents to respond to observable but unverifiable features of context |
| Motivation | • Only motivated agents can and will gather contextual knowledge when their efforts cannot be monitored | • Where context can be assessed only by field agents, only motivated agents will be able to adapt programmes appropriately | • Motivated agents will work harder to ensure projects are flexible to changing needs and circumstances |
| Trust | • Contextual knowledge derives from trusting staff when monitoring not possible | • Trust required for field staff to lead adaptation, which will be required where relevant features of context not transmittable to HQ | • Agents who feel trust from organization, and organizations that are trusted by authorizers, more likely to have and use available flexibility |

**4. What Gets in the Way: Potential Barriers to Better Internal Ways of Working**

The prospective policy entrepreneur trying to change systems inside an aid agency faces a number of potential barriers, some of which are under the agency's control and some of which are not. This section highlights a few of these barriers.

*Accountability Practices*

The need to account can distort the focus of a development organisation away from the field, with deleterious consequences for contingent ways of working. In development agencies this accounting commonly takes the form of results measurement and reporting systems. Former USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios has argued that time spent on compliance distracts from local-level information gathering that limits USAID's flexibility and adaptability; he has called this "obsessive measurement disorder".[53] This is not only a USAID problem. In a study of 11 development agencies Holzapfel argues that results measurement and reporting distract frontline civil servants from field-related concerns.[54]

When an agent's job includes performing tasks that are both measurable and unmeasurable, measuring performance may lead to agent underinvestment in time and effort in the unmeasurable task.[55] This can disincentivise contingent ways of working because measuring context sensitivity, adaptability and flexibility is fraught with challenges. Where we can measure the right things for employees whose performance is tractable to summary statistics of performance, measurement may be valuable. Where these conditions are absent, measurement regimes focused on evaluation and control can distort incentives and performance, reducing local information gathering and limiting adaptation.

This does not mean abandoning performance measurement; much depends on the 'why' of measurement. Table 2 identifies eight purposes that public managers have for measuring performance.[56] If performance measurement is intended as a tool of evaluation, control, motivation and promotion, it may struggle in uncertain environments where data gathering is difficult and gaming relatively easy. By contrast performance measurement focused on learning rather than control can be a critical vehicle for driving improved performance over time. Performance measurement is unlikely to be the best solution for promoting contingent ways of working when measurement is for control and evaluation purposes.

**Table 2: Eight purposes public managers have for measuring performance**

| Purpose | Public manager's question that the performance measure can help answer |
|---|---|
| Evaluate | How well is my public agency performing? |
| Control | How can I ensure my subordinates are doing the right thing? |
| Budget | On what programmes, people or projects should be agency spend the public's money? |
| Motivate | How can I motivate line staff, middle managers, non- and for-profit collaborators, stakeholders and citizens to do the things necessary to improve performance? |
| Promote | How can I convince political superiors, legislators, stakeholders, journalists and citizens that my agency is doing a good job? |
| Celebrate | What accomplishments are worthy of the important organisational ritual of celebrating success? |
| Learn | Why is what working or not working? |
| Improve | What exactly should who do differently to improve performance? |

Source: Adapted from Behn 2003[57]

*Trying to Engineer Change with Small, Incremental Changes to Organizational Practices*

There have been, as noted above, some laudable efforts at change inside donor agencies. For example, DFID's Smart Rules are explicit in their attempt to increase staff discretion and scope for judgement. One of the open questions is whether these incremental changes can lead to contingent ways of working in practice.[58] It may require a more fundamental change of multiple elements of human resources, recruitment, promotion, and compensation systems to shift agents from their current ways to more contingent ways of working. Neither of the two most explicit donor reforms which might be described as encouraging contingent ways of working - DFID's Smart Rules nor USAID's Local Systems Framework - touch directly on performance measurement systems.[59] Failing to consider performance incentives for staff and the role they play in agents' behaviour may limit the ultimate success of these reforms.

Tackling multiple aspects of organisational life simultaneously can change the degree to which an organization is able to work contingently. For example, more autonomy is likely to facilitate contingent ways of working. However, achieving more autonomy is not simply about formally changing decision structures. If more autonomy comes to aid agencies in the absence of more holistic thinking about agents' incentives and performance management, more autonomy may only have a limited positive – or even a negative – effect on performance.

*Political Authorizing Environments*

Political environments can directly limit the exercise of autonomy.[60] More politically constrained organisations tend to give less discretion to their field-level personnel.[61] Less autonomous organisations have less autonomous agents. This means that political authorizing environments can unintentionally limit aid agencies' ability to operate contingently via constraints they place on *de jure* or *de facto* organizational autonomy.

More fundamentally, political authorizers may not actually *care* if aid interventions are successful. Ultimately, aid's "clients" are domestic stakeholders rather than those located overseas.[62] At some level, it makes sense that an MP or member of congress is more concerned with a member of his district than that of a distant country he may not be able to identify on a map. But we believe the generalization from this to constraints on what agents do in the field is often made with undue haste. Politics is absolutely a constraint for aid agencies, limiting what they can do. But rarely have members of national legislatures actually specified internal ways of working within aid organizations. Moreover, development agency dialogue with authorizers can alter authorizers' understanding of agencies and thus *de facto* constraints.[63] Future development agency engagement efforts might usefully focus on 'strategic discretion' and 'structured flexibility' – concepts that can accommodate contingency without necessarily sacrificing accountability, donor control and strategic engagement.[64]

## 5. Conclusion

Donors and development practitioners are now focusing on internal organizational processes, explicitly linking such changes to expected organizational results. A great deal of attention is paid to what direction that policy will take; substantially less is spent on how donor organisational reform will be achieved. This paper takes an instrumental approach anchored in public management theory, asking not if these are the appropriate goals but how donors might better achieve the organizational reform outcomes they articulate.

The commitment to work adaptively and flexibly, or engage more fully in context, requires consideration of how these features might be designed within donor agencies. We argue that donors can achieve more of what they want by looking back to contingency theory. Thinking systematically about autonomy, employee motivation, and trust is a critical building block for turning management's desire for greater adaptation and flexibility into reality.

Development practitioners exist within a sector that has long focused on standardization and best practices, on finding universal technical solutions to development challenges. This tradition implicitly centralizes control in the hands of senior decision makers who can design and direct these solutions. It is also often implicit in managerial approaches that seek the public sector to emulate the corporate sector and embrace market logics. And yet, working contingently cannot be directed from above using central command and control nor is it about simply letting managers manage unhindered. The head of a development agency can no more instruct her agency to "be adaptive" than she can enjoin her agency to "be more effective" or "stop making mistakes". A fundamental rethink is needed about where decision making power needs to reside in order to achieve the changes to which development agencies aspire.

Difficulties in practically operationalizing and mainstreaming contingent ways of working may be one reason appeals for 'doing development differently' have not always resulted in effective implementation.[65] Changing single features of an organisation without focusing on its relationship to micro-level factors like trust, motivation and performance management can reduce the ability to work contingently. As such, while any given organization's path to change will be different, to encourage the organization towards contingency requires simultaneous attention to multiple elements. Effectively getting

organisations to change will require creating space for thinking systematically and holistically about the 'black box' of the organisation and the individuals within.

## Notes

[1] Hirschman, *Development Projects Observed*; and Tendler, *Inside Foreign Aid*. In the 1980's Robert Chambers (e.g. Putting the Last First) prominently made this point as well, inasmuch as he focused on the systematic biases of aid organizations due to features of their internal management and incentives.

[2] Van Der Heijden, "The Reconciliation of NGO Autonomy"; Edwards and Hulme, "Too Close for Comfort?"; Ebrahim, "Accountability in Practice"; Bebbington, "Donor-NGO Relations and Representations"; Morfit, "AIDS Is Money"; Easterly, "The Cartel of Good Intentions"; Israel, *Institutional Development*; and Levy, *Working With the Grain*.

[3] See e.g. Brinkerhoff, "State Fragility and Failure"; Engel, "The Not-so-Great Aid Debate"; Eyben, "Hiding Relations"; Read, Taithe, and MacGinty, "Data Hubris?"; and Vähämäki, "The Results Agenda."

[4] These include a collaboration of Mercycorps & IRC (ADAPT), a collaboration of the Overseas Development Institute & The Asia Foundation (with support from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), Bond (a UK-based network of nonprofits), USAID, and DFID. Derbyshire and Donovan, "Adaptive Programming in Practice"; Denney, Harris, and Wild, "How Do You Make Aid Programmes Truly Adaptive?"; Bond, "Adaptive Management"; and ADAPT, "Adapting Aid"; Dexis, "Evidence Base for Collaborating."

[5] DFID, "Smart Rules: Better Programme Delivery"; and USAID, "Local Systems".

[6] World Bank, "World Development Report 2015."

[7] Algoso and Hudson, "Where Have We Got to."

[8] Burns and Stalker, 1961; Drazin and van de Ven, 1985; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Perrow, 1967; Sauser et al., 2009

[9] By donor agencies, we are referring to governmental organisations that provide external financial and technical inputs for the purposes of global development.

[10] Booth, "Politically Smart Support"; and Gulrajani, "Transcending the Great Foreign Aid Debate." These debates are most prominent in the literature around New Public Management. See e.g. Haque, "The Contextless Nature of Public Administration,"; Hood, "A Public Management for All Seasons?"

[11] See e.g. Pritchett and Woolcock, "Solutions When the Solution Is the Problem".

[12] E.g. Burns and Stalker, *The Management of Innovation*; Lawrence and Lorsch, *Organization and Environment*; Perrow, "A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Organizations"; Morgan, *Images of Organization*; Sauser, Reilly, and Shenhar, "Why Projects Fail?"; and Van de Ven and Drazin, "Alternative Forms of Fit."

[13] Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock, *Building State Capability*; Bain, Booth, and Wild, "Doing Development Differently at the World Bank"; Dexis, "Evidence Base for Collaborating"; Derbyshire and Donovan, "Adaptive Programming in Practice"; Faustino and Booth, "Development Entrepreneurship"; Green, "What Is Adaptive Aid?"; and Bond, "Adaptive Management."

[14] Algoso and Hudson, "Where Have We Got to."

[15] The debate between "best practices" and this counter-movement, then, in many ways parallels a historic tension in management scholarship. See e.g. Fisher, "Contingency Theory"; and Weill and Olson, "An Assessment of the   Contingency Theory."

[16] Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock, "Escaping Capability Traps"; and Israel, *Institutional Development*.

[17] Sauser, Reilly, and Shenhar, "Why Projects Fail?"

[18] Ramalingam, *Aid on the Edge of Chaos*.

[19] Perrow, "A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Organizations."

[20] Overman and Boyd, "Best Practice Research and Post-Bureaucratic Reform."

[21] Van de Ven and Drazin, "Alternative Forms of Fit in Contingency Theory."

[22] The desire for flexible response to the unexpected is also explicitly part of donor planning; e.g. "We need to design and manage all of our interventions – be it technical assistance, localized aid, policy reform, or another arrangement – in ways that allow adjustments in the face of shocks or in response to learning." USAID, "Local Systems," 10.

[23] Lawrence and Lorsch, *Organization and Environment*.

[24] See Shutt "Towards an Alternative Peradigm" on the flawed assumption that organizations can be fixed by instruction from management.

[25] For complex systems in a development context see e.g. Ramalingam, *Aid on the Edge of Chaos*; and USAID, "Local Systems."

[26] Among other relations, an agency can be more or less autonomous *vis-à-vis* its political authorizing environment; an organisational unit can be more or less autonomous *vis-à-vis* headquarters; an individual agent can be more or less autonomous *vis-à-vis* supervisors.

[27] The term 'street-level bureaucrat' is most closely associated with Michael Lipsky and refers to an organisational representative who interacts directly with citizens 'on the ground' or 'in the field'. Examples include welfare case workers, teachers and donor field representatives. Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*.

[28] Rasul and Rogger, "Management of Bureaucrats and Public Service Delivery."

[29] Honig, "When Reporting Undermines Performance"

[30] Galletta, Portoghese, and Battistelli, "Intrinsic Motivation, Job Autonomy and Turnover Intention in the Italian Healthcare"; and Spector, "Perceived Control by Employees." Bernstein, "The Transparency Paradox," 181–216; Hurley and Hult, "Innovation, Learning"; and Nonaka and Lewin, "Dynamic Theory Knowledge of Organizational Creation."

[31] Moynihan and Pandey, "Testing How Management Matters."

[32] Tirole, "The Internal Organization of Government."

[33] Blau, *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy*; and Hood, "Gaming in Targetworld."

[34] See e.g. Le Grand, *Motivation, Agency, and Public Policy*.

[35] Dewatripont, Jewitt, and Tirole, "The Economics of Career Concerns" and Dixit "Incentives and Organizations in the Public Sector".

[36] DiIulio, "Principled Agents"; Kaufman, *The Forest Ranger*; and Tendler, *Good Government in the Tropics*.

[37] Perry and Wise, "Bases of The Motivational Public Service," 367–73. The private sector management literature is undergoing a somewhat parallel realisation 25 years after public service motivation rose to prominence. See Grant *Give and Take*.

[38] Hafliger and Hug, "International Organizations, Their Empoloyees and Volunteers, and Their Values"; Anderfuhren-Biget, Hafliger, and Hug, "The Values of Staff in International Organizations"; and UN International Civil Service Commission, "Results of the Global Staff Survey."

[39] Leisink and Steijn, "Recruitment, Attraction, and Selection."

[40] Grant, "Relational Job Design."

[41] Gagne, "The Role of Autonomy Support."

[42] Belle and Ongaro, "NPM, Administrative Reforms and Public Service Motivation"; Moynihan and Pandey, "The Role of Organizations in Fostering Public Service Motivation"; and Giauque, Anderfuhren-Biget, and Varone, "Stress and Turnover Intents in International Organizations."

[43] Denizer, Kaufmann, and Kraay, "Good Countries or Good Projects?"

[44] Behn, "The Big Questions of Public Management"; Gould-Williams, "The Importance of HR Practices"; and McGuire, "Collaborative Public Management."

[45] Tendler and Freedheim, "Trust in a Rent-Seeking World."

[46] O'Toole and Meier, "Plus ca Change."

47     Laschinger and Finegan, "Using Empowerment to Build Trust."

48     Cho and Poister, "Human Resource Management Practices."

49     Seal and Vincent-Jones, "Accounting and Trust."

50     Mansbridge, "A Contingency Theory of Accountability"; and Mansbridge, "A 'Selection Model' of Political Representation."

51     Behn, "The Big Questions of Public Management"; and Lorenz, "Universities, Neoliberalism, and New Public Management."

52     https://disidealist.wordpress.com/2014/11/18/trust-and-teachers/. This reflection echoes Mansbridge "A Contingency Theory of Accountability", 55: "Sanction-based accountability is most appropriate in contexts of justified distrust. Yet it also creates distrust, which then undermines the foundation of trust-based accountability."

53     Natsios, "The Clash of the Counter-Bureaucracy and Development."

54     Holzapfel, "Boosting or Hindering Aid Effectiveness?".  See also Vähämäki, "The Results Agenda in Swedish Development Cooperation."

55     In the language of economics, this is a "multitask problem". Gray and Hood, "Editorial: Public Management by Numbers"; and Holmstrom and Milgrom, "Multitask Principal-Agent Analyses."

56     Behn, "Why Measure Performance?"

57     Behn, "Why Measure Performance?", 588.

58     The House of Commons International Development Committee (IDC) asked the same question in a recent parliamentary report, suggesting there may be impediments to autonomy in practice because, to quote one senior DFID official "many in DFID have – unfortunately – simply been conditioned now to look for rules ...  So it's the culture now, not the rules, which are part of the problem" International Development Committee, "Department for International Development's Performance in 2013-2014."

59     While USAID's Local Systems Framework discusses the detrimental impact on local systems strengthening of focusing on outputs and outcomes, it stops at the water's edge of performance measurement as it relates to staff. To be fair, an analysis of USAID's systems co-authored by a USAID employee notes the importance of staff incentives as a barrier to change, suggesting concern for these issues within USAID. Brinkerhoff and Jacobstein, "Systems Thinking and Institutional Performance."

60     Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*; Brehm and Gates, *Working, Shirking, and Sabotage*; Huber and Shipan, *Deliberate Discretion.*

61     Honig, "When Reporting Undermines Performance"

62     Easterly, "The Cartel of Good Intentions."

63     Shah, "Interview with Rajiv Shah".

     Brinkerhoff and Ingle, "Integrating Blueprint and Process"; and Gulrajani, "Organising for Donor Effectiveness."

65     Copestake and Williams, "Political Economy Analysis"; and Yanguas and Hulme, "Barriers to Political Analysis in Aid Bureaucracies."

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