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From Social Assessment to Empowerment to Social Sustainability - The World Bank's Shifting Approach to Social Development 1996-2011

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Preface

The study of global social policy has been growing since the 1990s, reflecting what Deacon called the “socialization of global politics”, but the scope and substance of global social policy still is not clear and in need of research. This paper by Timotheus Brunotte contributes to this research desideratum. The World Bank is well chosen for an investigation of the scope and substance of global social policy. Since the World Bank sees its business not only in giving loans but also as being a “knowledge bank”, looking into “social development” as a major concept at the interface of development and social policy (in the World Bank and beyond), as done by Brunotte, makes sense. Among the social policy related terms of global politics, Social Development is indeed, as claimed by the author, the most elusive and needs clarification. A “history of ideas” approach to Social Development would also have been valuable but Brunotte uses a more ambitious, theoretically based perspective that turns the role of Social Development in global politics into a problem of explanation: Applying a sociology of knowledge approach, Brunotte inquires whether Social Development constitutes a “policy paradigm” according to P. Hall, that is, a coherent set of ideas with relevance for policy makers, and if so, if and how the paradigm has changed during the period under consideration (“paradigm shift”, P. Hall).

In the introduction the author sets out the problem of explanation in a lucid way. Among the three key terms within the World Bank (social welfare, social protection, Social Development; following A. Hall 2007), Social Development is least clearly defined. “Social Development” has been used in global politics since the 1950s but with very diverse meanings. Apart from A. Hall, only J. Midgley and A. Vetterlein have investigated the issue more closely. Brunotte criticizes Vetterlein’s article for underestimating the fragmentation of the World Bank’s social policy agenda and the weak standing of Social Development within the Bank. In empirical part, the author analyses the concept of Social Development 1996-2011, drawing on the three programmatic documents that expounded the concept (1997, 2005, 2011), analyzing in each case the level of ideas and the level of practices, instruments and organizational structure.

The analysis exposes the limitations of Social Development as the weakest “social” concept within the World Bank: Social Development has continued to have a bad reputation within the Bank, and the feasibility of its strategies is questioned; the meaning of Social Development remained diffuse, with topics and vocabulary eventually merging with the social protection agenda of the 2000s; and Social Development, so Brunotte argues, has lost its earlier emancipatory sting. All in all, the social agenda of the World Bank has remained segmented; Social Development has not acquired the status of an overarching integrating formula of social policies within the Bank, in contrast to the integrative meaning attributed to Social Development by J. Midgley and the 1995 Copenhagen Social Summit. For the author it remains an open question to what extent the “’soft’ dimensions of development” enshrined in the concept of Social Development may feed into the “econocentric language” of the Bank’s mainstream.

Brunotte identifies three stages of the development of Social Development and attendant problems. This has not been done before, even if A. Hall’s article of 2007 provided the basis of the analysis. Conclusions for global social policy at large can be drawn: 1. To a degree, global social policy has acquired a relatively consistent paradigmatic structure (more than a loose web of ideas), with distinct problem definitions, goals, instruments and practices and an overall coherence. This has been shown at least with regard to the concept of Social Development. 2. However, the paradigmatic structure remains insecure and partially diffuse, and changes quickly. 3. Unlike national social policy in Western countries which describe themselves as “welfare states”, a similar overarching concept of social policy is lacking in the global sphere. Several concepts co-exist, as exemplified by the three strands of the social policy agenda of the World Bank. One concept that could qualify as an overarching concept, Social Development, remains diffuse and has not grown into an overarching role. 4.The concept of Social Development brings in a sociological and anthropological perspective missing in the dominant economic approaches to development policy. Regarding epistemic communities, Brunotte's analysis suggests that social-scientific (in contrast to economic) knowledge remains weak in global social policy. But terms like (economic, environmental and social) sustainability incorporate the social as a condition of successful development. 5. Social Development leads back to the ideational origins of social policy in 19th century, to the distinction between state and society (Hegel, L. v. Stein; in modern terms functional differentiation). The "social" was juxtaposed with the "economic", and social policy was seen as a condition of the new market economy (Polanyi 1944), denoting non-economic and non-political institutions and social relations that matter for societal change. 6. Social Development, by its very name, links social policy and development. The problems of the concept of Social Development identified by Brunotte, therefore, reflect problems of conceptualizing "social policy in development contexts" (Gough et al. 2004), which continues to be a major challenge for social policy analysis.

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Abstract

Social development is arguably the most elusive and vague of the three concepts of social policy employed by the World Bank. Current research on global social policy, of which the Bank is an ever-important actor, seems to lack a comprehensive study into its ideational configuration. Therefore, I analyse three key documents on social development ranging from 1996 to 2011 and, drawing from the work of Peter Hall, ask to what extent it can be understood as a policy paradigm. This allows me to dissect the concept into single ideational elements with distinct functions and to highlight how it has shifted significantly over the course of 15 years.

List of abbreviations

CCT	Conditional cash transfer
CDD	Community driven development
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA	International Development Association
MCIPR	2011 Mid-Cycle Implementation Progress Report
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
SDS	2005 Social Development Strategy
SDV	Social Development Department
TGR	1996 Task Group Report on Social Development
WDR	World Development Report
WSSD	1995 World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen

Introduction

‘Our dream is a world free of poverty’—this ambitious statement greets everybody at the entrance to the World Bank’s headquarters in Washington, D.C. Ever since Robert S. McNamara introduced the World Bank to the challenge of poverty during his presidency, the themes of development policy and social policy are interwoven. Although technically dating back to the late 1960s, the Bank’s[1] involvement in social policy has only recently been labelled this way. The organization lacked—one could argue that it is still lacking—a systematic agenda integrating its social policy efforts. Dissecting three distinctive threads of social policy, Anthony Hall offers the explanation that this reluctance stems from the specific historical and organizational contexts in which social topics have been introduced to the Bank’s work (Hall 2007: 151–2). External criticism, internal heterogeneity, and several reorganizations have had an essential impact on the degree of tripartite fragmentation—showing itself on the levels of concept, organization, and operation (Hall 2007: 165–6). Everything ‘social’ within the Bank’s activities can be traced to three themes of social policy: social welfare, social protection, and social development, with the latter being the topic of this paper. To varying degrees, each of these is properly institutionalized, drawing from different ideational backgrounds and resulting in specific sets of practices and projects. Social welfare[2] covers traditional areas of social service provision like education and health. Social protection focuses on providing for those in need, as well as managing risks by applying safety nets. While the first two are firmly established and well defined, the theme of social development is not (*World Bank* 2005a: xiii–xix).

Although this is mostly the case due to the Bank’s history, the term itself is not the easiest to grasp because it is common currency in several fields of both practice and academia, containing a multitude of meanings (see Midgley 1995: 28–36). Since the 1950s social development has had its place in the discourse on development policy, but again its definition varies significantly depending on both the context and perspective of actors applying it. One of the most influential events shaping the discourse on social development was the 1995 Copenhagen World Summit on Social Development (WSSD). Its declaration, signed by 117 heads of state, comprised ten commitments to a people-centred

[1] The terms ‘World Bank’ and ‘Bank’ are being used interchangeably throughout this paper. They refer to the IBRD and the IDA. Together they form the World Bank, but are not synonymous with the wider organizational body of the World Bank Group, which incorporates a total of five organizations.

[2] While the Bank now calls this area of work ‘human development’, I retain Anthony Hall’s terminology.

development process and stressed the importance of considering both economic and social aspects of development in order for it to be successful and sustainable. The need to promote human rights, social protection, empowerment, and equality featured prominently, among other things (*United Nations* 1995).

In his latest attempt to synthesize the discourse's common core, James Midgley suggests social development to be 'a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole within the context of a dynamic multi-faceted development process' (Midgley 2014: 13). This would imply that social development describes an overarching social agenda with social welfare and social protection as its subordinate instruments (Midgley 2014: 15–16). A glance at the Bank's internal organization and some of its conceptual work reveals that this is not the case. While cross-references between prominent strategy papers have increased recently, an exhaustive strategy integrating the three efforts has not been published yet. Instead, the Social Development Department (SDV) has picked up a rather loose set of tasks comprising work on participation, gender, inclusion, and conflict prevention—to name but a few. The Bank's first social development strategy states that it 'means transforming institutions to empower people' (*World Bank* 2005b: 1), according to both Anthony Hall and Antje Vetterlein, this differs from social welfare and social protection. While these are mostly about 'deliverable goods and services' (Hall 2007: 165), firmly rooted within the economic understanding of human capital, social development aims at changing the social patterns of society, often transcending the Bank's 'technocratic approach to development' (Vetterlein 2007: 520), resulting in concepts that are not the easiest to operationalize—and to define, a task which this thesis seeks to accomplish.

Therefore, this paper focuses solely on the conceptual career of social development within the World Bank since it allows for a more in-depth analysis appropriate to the scope of a BA-thesis. Drawing from the notion of policy paradigms, popularized by Peter Hall, I ask to what extent social development has evolved into a basic kind of policy paradigm (Hall 1993). According to Hall, policy paradigms are instructive and interpretative sets of ideas, influencing both perceptions and actions of actors in a given policy field. This demands at least a certain degree of coherence and comprehensibility—something the Bank's concept of social development appears to be lacking at first glance (Hall 2007: 163; Vetterlein 2007: 517). The approach of dissecting the given concept into single elements, potentially matching the ideas constituting a policy paradigm, is to examine it systematically and to provide a ground for highlighting the ideational shifts that occurred over the course of fifteen years.

Furthermore, I seek to contribute to the research on global social policy as it has been outlined by Bob Deacon, who highlighted the influence of global actors like the World Bank on social policy at the national level and their ability to shape global discourses (Deacon et al. 1997). Although numerous academic careers have been spent on scrutinizing the Bank's activity since its founding in 1944, the topic of social development is far from being exhausted. Anthony Hall and Antje Vetterlein provide the only accounts of covering it in greater detail, while missing the latest turn the agenda has taken since publication of the first Social Development Strategy in 2005 (*World Bank* 2011b). Also, Vetterlein's work is symptomatic for the problems of classifying the Bank's approach to social development in a wider context. Whereas Midgley's macro-perspective mostly ignores both thinking and practice at the Bank, Vetterlein frequently uses the term 'social (development) policies' (Vetterlein 2007: 513) to avoid clarification of the potential multitude of approaches of social policy and how they relate to each other. Asking how social policy relates to economic development and development in general, she identified three discursive stages since the 1980s as social policy moved from 'by-product' to being instrumental to economic development and finally to 'something that is defined as the core of development itself' (Vetterlein 2007: 518). I argue that this wide perspective led her to interpret the 2005 Social Development Strategy as the aforementioned process's point of culmination, underestimating the issue of a fragmented social agenda and social development staff's somewhat weak standing in the Bank's hierarchy (*World Bank* 2005a: 73; Hall 2007: 163). In the end, this meant that her prediction about social policy's future at the Bank differed fundamentally from Anthony Hall's (Hall 2007: 169–70; Vetterlein 2007: 529).

Therefore, by analysing three leading documents on social development spanning 15 years, I seek to provide a detailed account of this rather specialized social policy effort, a task that I deem necessary in order to investigate the bigger picture of social policy at the Bank. Also, by shedding light on one of the more 'unorthodox' efforts of the Bank (Vetterlein 2007: 526), this thesis serves to emphasize the observation that the Bank is not as 'intellectually […] monolithic' as some of its critics claim it to be (Vetterlein 2007: 529; Bèland and Orenstein 2013: 125–6).

This paper is structured as follows. In Chapter I) I tentatively develop a conceptual framework for later use. Several problems need to be addressed before the notion of policy paradigms can be applied as an analytical tool, since the matter of this paper differs significantly from Hall's original application. The most pressing concern is that Hall used the term to describe an ideational structure affecting multiple actors in a specific field, whereas I am trying to take an in-depth look at a single actor. Examining recent literature using this concept, I seek to arrive at a solution which lets me keep the term 'policy paradigm'.

Chapter II) discusses the World Bank's ongoing importance in the fields of development policy and global social policy. Bob Deacon's famous claim of the 'globalization of social policy and socialization of global politics' (Deacon et al. 1997: 1) during the 1990s applies especially well to the World Bank. The decade saw a far-reaching (re-)emergence of social topics on the Bank's agenda and elsewhere (Vetterlein 2007: 527). Eventually, since its immense budget adds leverage to promote certain ideas and policies (Freistein and Koch 2014: 1), attention must be paid to all ongoing ideational processes inside this international organization.

In Chapter III) I briefly address the concepts of social welfare and social protection as they are conceived and operationalized by the Bank, in order to better contextualize the evolution of social development and to showcase how it differs from other social policy approaches.

Having shaped an analytical tool, I apply it in Chapter IV) to three leading Bank documents on social development, ranging from 1996 to 2011 (*World Bank* 1997; *World Bank* 2005b; *World Bank* 2011b). The leading questions are how the concept of social development at the Bank has ideationally evolved in three stages and to what extent it can be understood as a policy paradigm. The chapter's tripartite character is also anticipated in this thesis's title—each of the three documents on social development is characterized by a certain key term. With a few exceptions, all the relevant vocabulary has been in use since the 1996 report on social development. One of the benefits of the theoretical framework of policy paradigms is the ability to pinpoint shifts in the arrangement of ideas, how they move to the foreground or change their relation to each other. Besides, since the World Bank does not only engage in policy thinking, attention must also be paid to the way the concept of social development expresses itself in the Bank's organization and operation.

I) Theoretical framework

This chapter deals with the concept of policy paradigms. It was conceived by Peter Hall in his classical article which introduced a new approach to better understand the impact ideas can have on policymaking. Besides providing a theoretical model for explaining policy change, it can also be utilized to dissect ideational structures into single ideas and to understand the different roles these ideas are playing. First, I will take a detailed look at Hall's original notion. Since the context of application is different in several ways, I will secondly review recent literature working with the concept of policy paradigms, to arrive at an understanding which can be applied to the concept of social development at the Bank.

I.1) Hall's original policy paradigm

Drawing from Thomas Kuhn's work on scientific paradigms, Hall introduced the idea of policy paradigms in 1993 to enrich the model of social learning which sought to explain changes in policy on the national level (Hall 1993). As an empirical case he chose the field of economic policymaking in the UK from 1970 to 1989. He then distinguished three levels on which changes could occur: 'the overarching goals that guide policy in a particular field, the techniques or policy instruments used to attain those goals, and the precise settings of these instruments' (Hall 1993: 278). While changes on the lower two levels, instruments and their settings, matched the interpretation of the social learning model as the results of past experience and experimentation, Hall claimed changes on the highest level to be something different altogether, namely a 'paradigm shift' (Hall 1993: 279). In the given case, it was the shift from Keynesianism to monetarism. Changes like that go beyond the scope of social learning because 'not only did the policy prescriptions of monetarists diverge from those of the Keynesians, they were also based on a fundamentally different conception of how the economy itself worked' (Hall 1993: 284). According to Hall:

> Policymakers customarily work within a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing. Like a *Gestalt*, this framework is embedded in the very terminology through which policymakers communicate about their work, and it is influential precisely because so much of it is taken for granted and unamenable to scrutiny as a whole. (Hall 1993: 279)

Thus, both Keynesianism and monetarism serve as examples of policy paradigms, since they supply actors on the field of economic policy with interpretative and instructive ideas.

Once a new paradigm succeeds an old one and gets established through governmental power, it becomes dominant in the way that it guides at least the majority of actors in a given field of policy.

These implications, derived from the original empiric case, make it difficult to apply Hall's notion to the case of social development. First, as Chapter II) will elaborate, the World Bank can be understood as an actor in the global field of development policy. Lacking a power centre comparable to the nation state's government, it is hard to imagine a field of global policy to allow the dominance of a single paradigm. Secondly, and even more problematic, I am looking at a concept evolving within an actor. This goes far beyond the scope of the original case made by Hall. What follows is a brief examination of a few modifications Moritz von Gliszczynski applied to the concept of policy paradigms.

I.2) Modifications suggested by von Gliszczynski

Before investigating social cash transfers and the idea of social protection in a global perspective, von Gliszczynski also had to deal with shifting the idea of paradigms from the national to the global level. To solve this problem of the global level being configured differently and thus complicating the institutionalization of paradigms, he highlighted several of Hall's original passages about the possibility of paradigms taking on different forms according to different contexts. Both the intensity of required technical knowledge and the characteristics of British bureaucracy enabled Keynesianism and monetarism to be such distinct examples of policy paradigms. Hall himself concluded that 'only in some cases, then, will it be appropriate to speak of a fully elaborated policy paradigm. In others, the web of ideas affecting the direction of policy will be looser and subject to more frequent variations' (Hall 1993: 291; see also von Gliszczynski 2013: 95–7).This allows for analytical application elsewhere, since policy paradigms—or webs of ideas—need to be more flexible and open in order to work globally.

Drawing from a multitude of scholars applying ideational approaches to policy research, von Gliszczynski suggests adding two more types of ideas to Hall's original concept—'problem definitions' and 'frames'. First, he states 'that definitions of social problems are a specific element of paradigms that translates them into policy by identifying issues which conflict with the underlying conception of social structures' (von Gliszczynski 2013: 19–20).

Although Hall already mentioned 'the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing' (Hall 1993: 279), he did not elaborate it. I follow von Gliszczynski in stressing the importance of problem definitions. They can be understood as entry-points to a paradigm, before action can be taken problems require to be constructed socially. Also, goals are sometimes simply reverse phrasings of problem definitions and they predetermine to a certain degree the range of applicable instruments. For example, if the problem of poverty is defined purely in economic terms as a lack of income, issues of social exclusion and stigmatization will probably be ignored and not targeted. Secondly, 'specific elements of a paradigm become frames as soon as they are utilized to legitimize or de-legitimize a policy idea' (von Gliszczynski 2013: 20). Frames play a vital role in establishing a bond between their paradigm and related ideational structures or universally held norms and values. Providing an argumentative advantage, 'they anticipate what potential opponents could say to undermine the support for specific policy alternatives. From this perspective, frames have a preventive component, in the sense that those involved in policy debates frequently mobilize them in order to shield their policy proposals from criticism' (Bèland 2005: 11). For example, going back to Hall's empirical case, Margaret Thatcher framed monetarist economic policy and the ensuing retrenchment of the welfare state by appealing to the tradition of liberal individualism supposedly prevalent in the British society (Schmidt 2002: 171; 174–5).

While this allowed to flesh out the ideas contained within policy paradigms, one problem has not been solved yet.

I.3) A single actor concept of policy paradigms

Following Hall, policy paradigms are frameworks of ideas affecting a multitude of actors, whereas I seek to trace a framework evolving inside an actor. So, what eventually qualifies a set of policy ideas to become a policy paradigm? I suggest that there are at least two dimensions of conceptualizing policy paradigms. One has been outlined already, a perspective which sees paradigms mainly as wielding a varying degree of interpretative and instructive authority to influence a majority of actors in a field of policy. Clearly, due to the decisions made to narrow this BA-thesis, this would disqualify the notion of social development right from the start. I will work with the more basic dimension, partly due to von Gliszczynski who made a sound argument about adding two new types of ideas to the framework called paradigm. For further use in this thesis, I rely on the understanding of a paradigm as a specific type of ideational structure which consists of a set of different ideas that fulfil genuinely distinct functions, disregarding the extent to which it is being shared among actors. Figuratively speaking, I am interested in the glasses someone wears, not the model's popularity. The approach of following a single ideational thread within an international organization was partly inspired by Daniel Bèland and Mitchell Orenstein. They discussed the case of pension privatization in order to make a point about the openness of international organizations to various ideas and their impact on policy (Bèland and Orenstein 2013).

To conclude this chapter and to arrive at a feasible analytical tool for the purpose of this thesis, I tentatively define policy paradigms to be sets of ideas, capable of supplying actors in a policy field with interpretative and instructive measures and thus influencing the course of policy. They consist of four distinct types of ideas.

Problem definitions (i) are basic understandings of issues which need to be addressed by policy. They are of great importance, since even small changes of what is deemed to be a problem can drastically alter the range of policy instruments that are appropriate. In the case of development policy, these definitions could explain why development is necessary in the first place, or what factors impede development. Goals (ii) can sometimes simply be reverse phrasings of problem definitions and convey some sort of vision that is to be achieved. If development is a process, it will lead somewhere. Instruments (iii) are conceptions of the tools used to address problems and to reach goals. They are the least abstract ideas. For example, a common type of instrument in the World Bank's working is policy-based lending, which ties loans to policy reform in the client country and relies on the popular assumption that developing countries suffer from flawed or inappropriate policies. Finally, frames (iv) are ideas used to legitimize a paradigm and the instruments it suggests. They establish a link to related paradigms and ideas or appeal to universally held norms and values. For example, the idea of unalienable human rights could serve to legitimize a development policy that transcends the traditional concept of development as economic progress.

Thus, having modified Peter Hall's original notion of policy paradigms, this analytical tool allows me to investigate the somewhat diffuse and vague concept of social development presented by the World Bank, especially by distinguishing the various ideas it is made of.

II) Providing capital and promoting ideas—the World Bank and global social policy

Before I apply the conceptual framework of policy paradigms to the case of social development, this chapter discusses the relevance of the Bank in two closely related fields of policy. Thus, it seeks to highlight the necessity to carefully consider all ideational processes within such an important international organization.

Whether the gains of development 'trickle-down' or 'trickle-up', the Bank's agenda always had an impact on social themes since 'economic policies, by default or design, also influence the distribution of resources and power' (*World Bank* 1997: 11). Thus, since the Bank's attention shifted to poverty for the first time in the late 1960s, its practices of development and social policy were linked. At that time and for two more decades, promotion of economic development and poverty alleviation were not just goals in themselves, but also followed a strong geopolitical rationale of the western world facing communism, despite the Bank's mandate of political neutrality (Maier-Rigaud 2009: 94). According to Bob Deacon, partly due to the collapse of communism, the 1990s became a pivotal period of change. The process of globalization reached a new level of quality, spreading capitalism as the single principle of economic organization. This was accompanied by increasingly global concerns about regulating its social implications, leading Deacon to formulate his twofold thesis of the 'socialization of global politics' and the 'globalization of social policy' (Deacon et al. 1997: 1–5). First, it means that the 1990s saw a process of social topics increasingly emerging on the global agenda, as expressed, for example, at the WSSD. With the cold war's end, the traditionally dominating theme of world politics, military security, gave room to the matter of globalization with its economic, as well as subsequently social and environmental, issues. Secondly, the thesis signifies the growing impact of the global level on national social policy. This is illustrated both by the pressure of competition that globalization exerts on established social policy systems, and by global actors' influence on developing countries. Consequently, while introducing a research agenda on global social policy, Deacon stressed the need to better understand the shaping impact of global actors like the World Bank, the IMF, or the ILO and other organizational bodies of the UN family.

The Bank's special relevance to anyone researching global social policy stems mostly from the prime position it has achieved in the field of development policy. It engages directly in policymaking via its role as a lending bank. The Bank's operational portfolio covers generally two forms of loans. Investment loans help to finance certain projects like building infrastructure, service provision, or improvements to a client's educational system. 'Development policy loans, by contrast, are deemed to support medium-term policy and institutional reforms. It is not money tied to projects, but to policy reforms' (Maier-Rigaud 2009: 125). This leads the Bank's practice to regularly conflict with its original mandate of political neutrality. It is noteworthy however that potentially any assumption about the interrelationship between economic, political, and social factors of development carries this issue with it, be it structural adjustment or social development. Nonetheless, the Bank's services are in high demand, as of fiscal year 2013, the Bank's new commitments are worth $31.5 billion (*World Bank* 2013: 48–9).

On top of its lending activity, the Bank also actively engages in the production and distribution of knowledge, making it an agenda-setting agency. The annually published World Development Report (WDR) and a variety of sector strategies are only the most visible forms of conveying concepts and ideas about successful development and related policy fields. Furthermore, the World Bank Institute is heavily involved in the training of practitioners as well as in the design of analytical tools for measuring development progress. During James D. Wolfensohn's presidency, the Bank established a matching self-perception as a 'knowledge bank', further fortifying its advisory approach (Maier-Rigaud 2009: 129–32). In light of his thesis, Bob Deacon sees all international organizations relevant to global social policy as participating in the production and dissemination of ideas (Deacon 2007: 24), but the Bank's operational portfolio adds significant leverage to the conveyance of certain ideas, working as a 'lubricant' (Freistein and Koch 2014: 1). In fact, the Bank's influence can also be approximated by the amount of—often critical—attention, it receives. Together with memories of the ill-fated era of structural adjustment, this evokes the image of a monolithic actor, mostly shaped by neoliberal thinking. But—at least at times—the Bank fails to conform to this image. One of these cases is its highly fragmented social policy agenda that has evolved in a piecemeal fashion, bearing the marks of different climates of development thinking, organizational segmentation, and adaptation to external critics. Although social protection seems to be rising to paradigmatic dominance in the Bank and elsewhere (e.g. von Gliszczynski 2013; *World Bank* 2012; Hall 2007: 153), I follow Daniel Béland and Mitchell A. Orenstein in stressing that

> International organizations are not consistent over time in their policy preference because they are not subservient to a single interest group or state, but rather open systems, vulnerable to a wide

> variety of influences and experts committed to competing social policy ideas and paradigms. (Béland and Orenstein 2013: 128)

This leads me to argue that it is a fruitful task to follow every ideational thread in such an important international organization, despite social development clearly not taking centre stage in the Bank's discourse at the moment.

III) Threads of social policy at the Bank—social welfare and social protection

Here, other aspects of the Bank's activities on the field of social policy are briefly explored. Most importantly, this serves as contextualization in order to better understand the potential otherness presented by social development. As stated above, I follow Anthony Hall in assuming that three broad areas of social policy practice and thinking take place at the Bank. Besides social development, which will be treated in the next chapter, social welfare and social protection can be identified.

Social welfare arguably has the oldest tradition within Bank operations, dating back into the late 1960s, when Robert S. McNamara tasked the organization with alleviating poverty for the first time. Since its beginnings it revolved mainly around providing basic welfare services in the areas of health, nutrition, and education, being understood as an investment into the poor. Thus, by drawing from the ideational background of human capital theory and modernization theory, it could be interpreted as a contribution to the overall focus on economic growth. This link allowed the concept of social welfare to survive the changing climates of economic theory, while it played a prominent role under McNamara, it was not dropped completely even at the height of monetarist advised structural adjustment (Hall 2007: 153–6). Now, it features as the Bank's operational theme of 'human development', housed in the organizational body of the Human Development Network, which it shares with social protection. Conceptually, it is currently outlined in two sector strategies. 'Healthy Development: The World Bank Strategy for Health, Nutrition, & Population Results' identifies ever-present challenges like pandemics, population growth, and malnutrition, but also ones that are newly emerging like integrating and harmonizing the changing international aid community regarding health issues (*World Bank* 2007: 4).

For example, while ‘single-priority-disease programs’ (*World Bank* 2007: 17) are on the rise, the Bank sees its own task at improving national health systems in order to better support those programmes in the first place. ‘Learning for All: Investment in People’s Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development’ is the Bank’s current strategy for the educational sector. First of all, previous success in providing access to education shifts attention to its quality, thus the Bank distinguishes between schooling and learning. Also, changing demographical and technological circumstances are taken into account. ‘The new strategy focuses on learning for a simple reason: growth, development, and poverty reduction depend on the knowledge and skills that people acquire, not the number of years that they sit in a classroom’ (*World Bank* 2011a: 3). While the Bank acknowledges access to education as a basic human right, both sector strategies strongly emphasize their effect on economic growth. As of fiscal year 2013, social welfare amounts for $4.348 billion, ranking third on the Bank’s lending by theme (*World Bank* 2013: 54–5).

Social protection covers the Bank’s activities ‘to protect the weak and vulnerable’ (Hall 2007: 157). It encompasses areas like labour market policy, safety nets, pensions, and insurances. The understanding that the poor are especially vulnerable to a variety of risks and shocks draws from the experience the Bank made with the detrimental side-effects of structural adjustment. According to Hall, safety nets like conditional cash transfers (CCTs) enjoy increasing popularity at the Bank and elsewhere.[3] CCTs provide benefits to individuals or households when certain conditionalities are met, like school attendance or regular medical examinations. A prominent example, in which the Bank is involved, is the Brazilian *Bolsa Família* programme. Among other factors, Hall links the popularity of CCTs at the Bank to their financial size, ‘since professional success is judged at least in part by financial turnover’ (Hall 2007: 159). In 2001, the Bank introduced its first strategy paper for the newly established social protection sector, called ‘From Safety Net to Springboard’ (*World Bank* 2001). At its heart is the ‘Social Risk Management Framework’, which outlines a strategy of addressing risks by reducing them in the first place, mitigating their impact, and coping with risks by applying instruments of social protection (Maier-Rigaud 2009: 118–20). In 2012, the follow-up strategy ‘The World Bank 2012–2022 Social Protection and Labor Strategy: Resilience, Equity, and Opportunity’ was published, now covering the newly found social protection and labour sector (*World Bank* 2012). As of fiscal year 2013, the theme of ‘social protection and risk management’ amounts to a

[3] For an exceptionally extensive study into the global emergence of social cash transfers (of which CCTs are a subtype) as instruments of social protection, see von Gliszczynski (2013).

lending volume of $3.956 billion, closely following human development in size (*World Bank* 2013: 54–5).

Anthony Hall concludes that both social welfare as an investment in human capital and social protection as a way of managing risks and vulnerabilities form the mainstream of social policy as it is perceived at the Bank (Hall 2007: 165). This was possible, since both perspectives were firmly placed within the overarching focus of fighting poverty by means of economic growth. This impression is fortified by a comparison of the Bank's lending volume by themes of social policy since 1993.

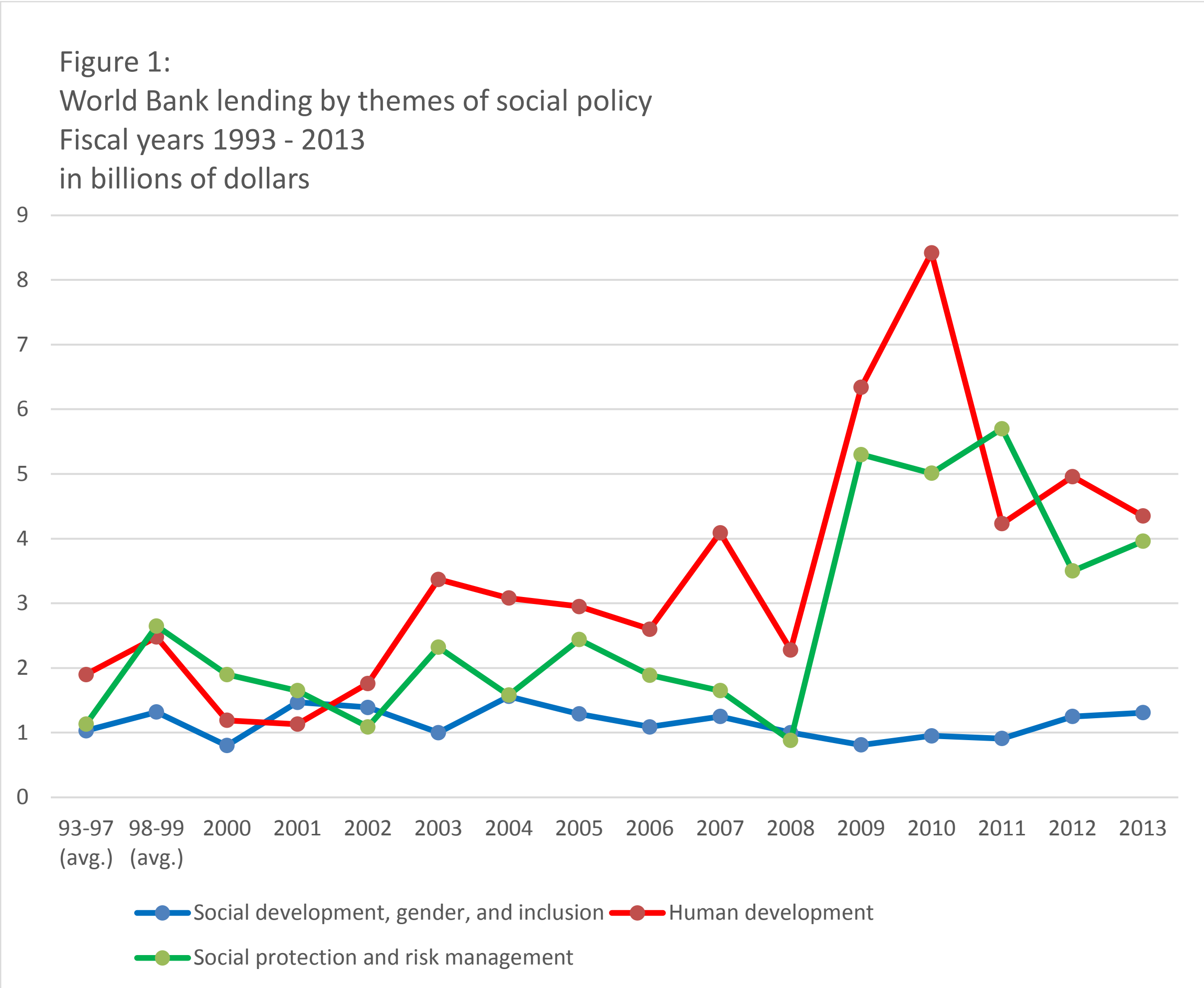

Figure 1:
World Bank lending by themes of social policy
Fiscal years 1993 - 2013
in billions of dollars

Source: Own illustration based on the Bank's annual reports, available online at: www.worldbank.org/annualreport.

Figure 1 shows the rise of human development as well as social protection and risk management lending in the wake of the recent global economic crisis. In 2010, new Bank commitments reached an all-time high of $58.75 billion. Interestingly, lending for the themes of social development, gender, and inclusion rather steadily oscillates between roughly $1 billion and $1.5 billion, seemingly detached from any major event—be it a global crisis, the Bank's reorganizations, or the publications of strategic landmarks.

IV) Social development as a policy paradigm?

This chapter deals with the evolution of the concept of social development within the World Bank. I chose three leading documents, because they resemble key junctures in the concept's history. The first one, 'Social Development and Results on the Ground: Task Group Report', from 1996, brought social development to the Bank's mainstream and led to the formation of the SDV in 1997 (*World Bank* 1997). The next significant watershed was reached in 2005. 'Empowering People by Transforming Institutions: Social Development in World Bank Operations' was the first comprehensive strategic approach to social development by making progress in defining the cause in a precise fashion and pinpointing areas of Bank activities related to it (*World Bank* 2005b). The last document taken into consideration is the 'World Bank Social Development Strategy Mid-Cycle Implementation Progress Report' from 2011 which sums up several advances made since 2005 and modifies the given definition of social development (*World Bank* 2011b).[4]

The analysis focuses on the understanding of social development in these three documents and is structured as follows. First, I look for given definitions and the relation the concept has with other broad themes of development or Bank activities. Secondly, I check the document for examples of the organizational and operational application of social development. Each analysis is concluded by an assessment of the extent to which the concept resembles a policy paradigm as outlined in Chapter I). I tentatively defined it as a complex set of ideas—be it an elaborate paradigm or a loose web of ideas—that is at least potentially able to shape an actor's perceptions and actions in a field of policy. This is achieved by containing four distinctive types of ideas: goals, problem definitions, instruments, and frames.

[4] Because of the frequency by which the three documents will be mentioned from this chapter onwards, I abbreviate the 1996 Task Group Report with TGR, the 2005 Social Development Strategy with SDS, and the 2011 Mid-Cycle Implementation Progress Report with MCIPR in order to improve the readability.

IV.1) The Task Group Report—a vague direction

This report (TGR) was the result of a task group requested by former Bank president James D. Wolfensohn. Their job was to assess Bank efforts and progress on the theme of social development in order to develop a more systematic approach (*World Bank* 1997: 8). According to Gloria Davis, co-author of the report and first director of the SDV, some of these topics had a long standing history and dated back into the early 1970s. At that time, the first sociologists and anthropologists were hired by the Bank in order to advise their economics-based colleagues on social matters. These pioneering social scientists—Davis among them—were concerned with tasks and themes such as social analysis of the diverse social circumstances of projects, 'participation […] of intended beneficiaries', and 'marginal and disadvantaged groups […] adversely affected by development projects' (*World Bank* 2004: 1–3).

<u>Given definitions</u>

This is where the TGR picks up the thread of social development, starting with definitions of the vocabulary it is going to use. Interestingly, even the term 'social' seems in need of definition:

> It can refer to education and health (the social sectors) or to poverty reduction and policies to benefit the poor and disadvantaged (social welfare). It can also refer to the relationships and institutions within a society (social capital) or to the historical and institutional conditions that affect project and policy outcomes (the social context of development). [...] To date, the Bank has spent considerable time on the first two meanings; in this report more attention is paid to the third and fourth. This report focuses more on societies, somewhat less on individuals. (*World Bank* 1997: 9)

This passage highlights where social development staff seeks to make an effect and how this is differing from previously established applications of the prefix 'social'. The most striking example of the struggles in this early phase of broadly establishing social development is the attempt to define the term itself. The authors acknowledge the difficulties they had in writing this report (*World Bank* 1997: 1). They refer to the multitude of possible definitions along the dividing line between positive and normative interpretations and mention the WSSD with its far-reaching commitments as an example for the latter. According to the report, this was a cause of disagreement among its authors, since some of them saw the summit's results as 'both an emerging international consensus and a testable set of hypotheses about the social correlates of sustainable economic and social development' and thus demanding the Bank's attention, whereas others thought of it as clearly going beyond the Bank's original mandate (*World Bank* 1997: 9–10). This lead to the report's definition of social development:

> People are the ends and means of development. […] Relationships, cultures, and institutions constitute a society's social capital. While much has been done to analyze and invest in physical and human capital, and to manage natural capital more wisely, more is needed to understand and strengthen the social capital on which development also depends. People, institutions, and societies are diverse. In order to ensure that projects and policies are feasible and effective, we need to understand the social, cultural, and institutional context in which they are carried out. (*World Bank* 1997: 10)

Besides reiterating the WSSD's claim about the people-centeredness of development, this definition focuses on the task of social assessment[5] and highlights the future need to better understand the social implications of development. But, apart from naming several underpinnings in the broadest terms possible it does not offer much to flesh out the characteristics of the actual process of social development. This vagueness recurs also in the document's executive summary where it says:

> Social development featured prominently in Mr. Wolfensohn's speech at the Annual Meetings on October 1, 1996. Mr. Wolfensohn stated that there is 'a need for a broader, more integrated approach to development—a new paradigm if you will.' He noted that 'social, cultural, and institutional factors are the key to success and sustainability […] without appropriate social underpinnings, it is difficult for development to succeed and virtually impossible for it to be sustained'. (*World Bank* 1997: 3–4)

Noticeable is the establishment of a conditional link between the ideas of social development and sustainable development. Having emerged in 18th century forestry, the term sustainability has been placed centrally in the development discourse by the 1987 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development and the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. Interestingly, the realm of development policy quickly allowed an understanding of sustainability that emphasizes the interdependence of ecological, social, and economic issues (McNeill 2006; Scoones 2010).

<u>Organizational and operational context</u>

Despite these definitional shortcomings, several matters are being emphasized repeatedly throughout the TGR. First and foremost, the need to mainstream social assessment and analysis throughout the Bank's work in order to consider social aspects of development in

[5] Bank documents often use both the terms 'social analysis' and 'social assessment' in similar contexts of analyzing/assessing social circumstances of Bank activities and their potential impact. While I suggest the distinction to be inconsistent at times, 'assessment' seems to relate to the project level and 'analysis' to the sector or country level.

an integrated and comprehensive fashion, since ‘the Bank’s operational approach to social policy and social development has evolved in a piecemeal manner and is not systematic’ (*World Bank* 1997: 18). Such considerations of social aspects regard, for example, issues of resettlement and gender-sensitive and participatory projects. This is accompanied by the call for more research to better understand the vital role of social dimensions in development processes. Both of these objectives signify demands for more appropriately skilled staff and additional financial resources. ‘While work on social issues is not confined to social specialists, it is significant that there are currently only about 100 such specialists throughout the institution’ (*World Bank* 1997: 31). In this light, the report also serves to raise awareness about the newly perceived importance of social matters as well as about the imperative of improving social scientists’ standing in the Bank. Therefore, one of the authors’ recommendations to the Bank’s management is to ‘state clearly to internal and external audiences the importance it attaches to an integrated approach to development that embraces social concerns’ (*World Bank* 1997: 23). Also noteworthy is one of the recommendations which the executive summary stated as being endorsed by the president and senior management: ‘A proposal should be prepared for a 1999 WDR on social development’ (*World Bank* 1997: 3). A look at the WDRs history reveals that these plans have been dropped, according to a follow-up paper social development staff ‘collaborated’ on the poverty-themed WDR for 2000 (*World Bank* 1998: 22).

Chapter conclusion

What conclusions can be drawn from the examination of the TGR? At first glance it offers useful insights into the position of minority that social specialists held in the Bank during the 1990s. In this perspective it is a call for attention to everything ‘social’ that goes beyond the traditional Bank activities related to the ‘social sectors’ and ‘social welfare’ (*World Bank* 1997: 9). But what exactly goes beyond? The document stresses social development as a necessary correlate to economic development and as an essential component of sustainable development, but fails to fill the notion with any precise meaning. Reading between the lines reveals an aspect that could potentially pose as a problem definition in the sense of a policy paradigm:

> Poor people live in countries where the policy and institutional framework is not conducive to rapid broad-based economic growth and to the investments in human and social capital that are needed to make significant inroads into poverty. […] Poor countries, which often have weak policy frameworks and development problems that lie beyond the purview of narrowly construed economic development models. (*World Bank 1997*: 7)

But, the report does not elaborate the possible idea of flawed institutional frameworks and the difference social development could make. Also, apart from the Bank's overarching goals of poverty reduction and sustainable development, it does not have any genuine goals—if it is at all conceived as some kind of process, potentially leading somewhere. The authors' debate surrounding the WSSD and the resulting compromise of ignoring normative content that could possibly conflict with the Bank's mandate further prevented the definition of anything that 'ought to be' (*World Bank* 1997: 9). The case of instruments suggests that when it comes down to actual projects, social development is about adding or offering 'social' expertise to the various stages of projects by means of social assessment. Another finding that actually relates to the instruments of social development is the success that has already been had with participatory approaches. 'Participatory' in this sense means involving local population and NGOs in the stages of project design, implementation, and evaluation (*World Bank* 1997: 16). Furthermore, the link to the idea of sustainable development could serve as a frame, since the theme of sustainability seems to garner universal or at least wide spread acclaim, having entered the main stage of development discourse prior to social development.

But in the end, all attempts to interpret the given notion of social development as fulfilling any elements of a policy paradigm are highly speculative and eventually futile. This is mainly because the presented concept of social development lacks meaningful coherence. Ideas in a policy paradigm need to relate to each other. Several points can be made about ideas given in the report resembling features of a paradigm, but they just do not add up, since they are lacking a clear underlying rationale. The demand for comprehensive social assessment throughout the Bank's projects and participatory procedures reflects an instructive set of ideas. But, equally important is an interpretative vision that highlights problems, sketches out objectives, and offers solid legitimization. If this concept was to be spread, it would need to be convincing. Instead, the report gives account of all the loose ends rallying under the flag of social development. This impression is fortified by Gloria Davis' treatment of the Social Development Network's history from 1973 to 2002.[6] It implies that the prevalent notion of social development was mainly attached to the semi-formal organizational body of social scientists working in the Bank—and not to any actual conceptual background. Davis acknowledges that 'in the absence of a distinctive paradigm for development, the new network endorsed and encouraged a wide spectrum of

[6] Davis is regularly calling the SDV 'network', whereas I prefer the term 'department', since in Bank terminology a network seems to be an organizational body of a higher order, containing several departments.

approaches to social issues […] Each of these elements has been both a source of strength and of weakness' (*World Bank* 2004: v).

IV.2) The Social Development Strategy—gathering coherence

The preceding chapter suggested that the common meaning of the term social development in the World Bank—at least during the mid-1990s—revolved around the scattered contributions made to the Bank's operations by a small team of social specialists. Accordingly, the Bank's Operations Evaluation Department reviewed activities related to social development in preparation of the 2005 strategy (SDS) and concluded that 'social development does not have a single, broadly agreed definition, and is often characterized by what it does, rather than by what it is' (*World Bank* 2005a: xiii–xiv). This impression is also fortified by Anthony Hall who deemed that the SDS 'represents an attempt to provide some coherence to this agenda' (Hall 2007: 153, 161–6). Nine years have passed since the Task Group Report aimed at mainstreaming the consideration of development's social dimensions and bringing more attention to the social specialists' work. The strategy paper's foreword states that it 'does not set out a new conceptual agenda but presents a plan to implement the existing agenda more completely and effectively' (*World Bank* 2005b: v), therefore the SDV implies to have made substantial progress. This is to be examined in the ensuing analysis.

<u>Given definitions</u>

The SDS's introduction reiterates the Bank's partly new overarching objectives of reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and fighting poverty by promoting economic growth. But for growth 'to be pro-poor and sustainable' (*World Bank* 2005b: 1) several identified problems need to be addressed.

> Patterns of structural inequalities often exclude people, such as those in rural areas, women, youth, people with disabilities, and other historically disadvantaged groups. […] Many of these social groups have been unable to tap into prosperity that others enjoy, often because they are unable to hold those in power accountable. Lack of inclusion and accountability can cause disruptions that discourage investment, reduce growth and threaten the cohesiveness of societies. To reach the MDGs, we must break this vicious cycle. (*World Bank* 2005b: 1)

Therefore it states that 'with the goal of empowering poor and marginalized women and men, social development is a process of transforming institutions for greater inclusion, cohesion and accountability' (*World Bank* 2005b: vi). 'Institutions' are understood in broad terms, being ‘the set of formal and informal rules, norms and values that operate within societies’ (*World Bank* 2005b: 1). Inclusion, cohesion, and accountability are referred to as ‘operational principles’, orienting the Bank’s work. The principles’ meanings are also elaborated: inclusion is about allowing people to equally ‘contribute to social and economic progress and share in its rewards’, cohesion promotes cooperation and stability, and accountability means transparent decision-making and responsiveness to ‘the public interest in an effective, efficient and fair way’ (*World Bank* 2005b: 2). The paper also claims that the principles match several other frameworks from development practice as well as academia. The first to mention is Amartya Sen’s concept of ‘assets and capabilities’, which emphasizes the importance of institutions in enabling a person to develop capabilities and thus achieving freedom and well-being. Secondly, in Robert Chamber’s notion of ‘sustainable livelihoods’ institutions resemble the processing link between ‘physical, financial, human, natural and social’ (*World Bank* 2005b: 2) assets and well-being. The last to mention is Japan’s approach to development assistance, which centres on human security, comprising both empowerment and protection. Apart from this conceptual accordance, the strategy is also placed in the context of the global discourse on social development as it is embodied in global and regional summits and commitments, namely the WSSD, the MDGs, and the 2004 Social Charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. ‘The World Bank aligns itself with this global consensus that social development matters to reach the MDGs’ (*World Bank* 2005b: 6). Furthermore, the SDS mentions pieces of empirical evidence on how ‘social development promotes better growth, better projects and better quality of life’ (*World Bank* 2005b: 3). Eventually, it claims social development to not only improve the Bank’s effectiveness, but to have ‘deep intrinsic value’ (*World Bank* 2005b: 5).

Organizational and operational context

The 1997 major Bank reorganization, called ‘Strategic Compact’, gave birth to the SDV which advanced the mainstreaming of considering social aspects of development throughout the Bank as foreshadowed by the TGR. Interestingly, the new SDS reiterates the report’s acknowledgement that ‘the Bank has not been sufficiently systematic in its attention to social development’ (*World Bank* 2005b: vi). In order to overcome this problem, four tasks are identified which mostly match the recommendations made in 1996. Still, more work is needed to better integrate attention to social development in Bank operations in an ‘upstream’ fashion and, by doing so, to ‘lower the long-term costs of addressing social development in each lending operation’ (*World Bank* 2005b: 9). Also, social analysis, especially by participatory means, needs more focus, as well as the Bank's knowledge base and its partnerships. Most of this was already an issue nine years ago, the attempt to lower costs by paying more attention to social development at earlier stages and on higher levels is however something new. The term 'upstream' is used in order to accomplish this trick, it features prominently in a characterization of the new strategy which is supposed to be 'an integrated, multi-sectoral, upstream approach' (*World Bank* 2005b: vi). Accordingly, three strategic priorities are coined and translated into the catchphrases 'more macro […] better projects […] better grounding' (*World Bank* 2005b: 9). An interesting aspect, which did not appear directly in the old report but now gets articulated clearly several times, is the issue of social development related staff being perceived as 'policing' their economically focused colleagues and thus impeding their work by adopting a 'do no harm' mentality (*World Bank* 2005b: 8, 9, 18). Despite this sign of a somewhat bad reputation, which Anthony Hall further fortifies (Hall 2007: 164), no element of the strategy is designed to address it directly.

The SDS elaborates several actual activities for which the SDV is responsible. Broadly, two kinds of so called 'business lines' can be distinguished: mainstreaming and portfolio. The former encompasses social analysis, participatory approaches and the social safeguards on 'indigenous people and involuntary resettlement' *(World Bank* 2005b: 15)*.* Mainstreaming already featured in the 1996 report and expresses the necessity of always paying attention to certain social aspects during every Bank operation. Finally, the SDV's formation in 1997 allowed for a portfolio to go beyond the task of mainstreaming and to pursue projects on its own and to collaborate on others. This includes 'conflict prevention and reconstruction', as well as 'inclusion and accountability projects' (*World Bank* 2005b: 15). But the most prominent portfolio activity is community driven development (CDD), which seeks to raise participation to an all new level. This bottom-up development practice is meant to carry out small-sized local projects, for example in the area of water supply, and to strengthen local relationships and institutions in a desirable fashion by giving authority over the entirety of a project, its budgeting, decision-making, design, implementation, and evaluation, to community groups. It must be stressed that the concept has not been invented by the SDV but it is one of its steady advocates. Despite being perceived as a key instrument, the CDD approach has sparked increasing concerns about how the ambitious goal of empowerment through transformation translates into project reality. While some call it a 'naïve application of complex contextual concepts' (World Bank 2004: 1), others suggest:

> That the comparative advantage of the World Bank […] may lie in implementing development hardware, not instigating social change, at least not as currently delivered through CDD. Changing social norms and community dynamics is important but arguably incredibly difficult. This evaluation of what has become one of the standard approaches for trying to influence social norms and community dynamics suggests that there is much that we, as outsiders, do not yet know about how to do this effectively. (Casey et al. 2013: 40)

Also noteworthy is, that the existence of a portfolio does not necessarily imply a significant amount of completely self-administrated projects. Actually and most commonly, the SDV collaborates on projects. According to Anthony Hall, this lack of 'ownership' also results in severe political weakness within the Bank (Hall 2007: 163).

Chapter conclusion

Although the SDS itself acknowledges the need for additional efforts on organizational and operational grounds, the conceptual progress that has been made since 1996 is significant. Now, social development is defined properly, rather than claiming a vague importance of social dimensions to development. By understanding it as a transformative process of changing social institutions to the better, the Bank seems to have arrived at what James Midgley deems to be the common core of social development (Midgley 2014: 13). It is further strengthened by identifying necessary characteristics of institutions which need to be inclusive, cohesive, and accountable in order to promote the empowerment of marginalized poor and other 'historically disadvantaged groups' (*World Bank* 2005b: 1). Thus, social development has made important steps towards a somewhat coherent policy paradigm. I have already suggested that problem definitions are entry-points to paradigms, since they help actors perceive areas in need of action and at least predetermine a certain range of goals as well as instruments. Compared to the TGR, the SDS does not demand too much reading between the lines and following faint hints. It openly claims client societies to have flawed institutional frameworks that generally impede growth but specifically deny disadvantaged groups the chance to participate in development by being exclusive, lacking cohesion and transparency. This problem definition also emphasizes that the poor and other disadvantaged groups matter not only as beneficiaries of development, but also as agents of progress: 'Growth depends on efficient use of resources. If institutions systematically exclude certain groups from economic opportunities, so that people are unemployed, or discriminated against, the result is wasted resources and reduced growth' (*World Bank* 2005b: 3). Therefore, the strategy defines social development as a process of change, with the goal of empowerment. The benefits of social groups being equally empowered to participate in development are tripartite. Besides promoting growth and the Bank's project effectiveness, empowerment is also understood as contributing to the general quality of life and being a worthy objective on its own.

> It matters, in and of itself: people are better off if they are empowered. In fact, many poor people define poverty in terms of powerlessness. Recognition of social development's intrinsic value implies recognition that across nations, cultures, and social systems, there are ethical principles that are virtually universal—such as respect for human dignity, nondiscrimination, equity and solidarity. (*World Bank* 2005b: 5)

Of course, social development is also seen as working towards the Bank's overarching goals of reducing poverty and reaching the MDGs. In this case, it is understood as an essential ingredient, complementing growth and economic development in order to be sustainable. I argue that these overarching goals should be clearly distinguished from the more specific goal of empowerment. The concept of policy paradigms allows for identifying ideas as frames which function as means of legitimization. They serve as rhetoric tools, linking a paradigm to universally held values and convictions. This is necessary since paradigms—often conveying a distinct perspective on a given matter—compete for support. Having in mind the bad reputation social development practitioners seem to have with their economically focused colleagues, I suggest that any appeal to the Bank's traditional goal of poverty alleviation by means of economic growth can be, in fact, understood as a frame. Furthermore, I argue that the case of social development's standing within the Bank and, in turn, the Bank's standing in the global discourse, allows for a specification of the concept of frames by ways of distinguishing two directions of framing—'inward' and 'outward', catering to the different 'demands' of different audiences. After all, the need for justification is two-fold, since the Bank itself is regularly confronted with criticism of ignoring development's social implications. Therefore, departing from the doubtful TGR, the SDS is firmly placed within the 'global consensus' on social development (*World Bank* 2005b: 5–7). Also noteworthy is the framing association that has been established with recent scientific approaches of development. Most prominently it relates to the work on capabilities done by Armatya Sen, the 1998 laureate of the Nobel Prize in Economics. Regarding the paradigm's ideas of instruments, the social development strategy can draw from the insights of the TGR. Just like empowerment enables and encourages participation in the overall economic and social process, social development highlights the instrumental value of participatory approaches to Bank projects. Thus, enriching various Bank activities with participatory elements and considering social aspects like inclusion, cohesion, and accountability comprises the aforementioned business line of mainstreaming. On top of that, the SDV manages a small project portfolio of its own, with CDD at its heart.

Concluding the analysis of the 2005 strategy on social development, I suggest that it actually has evolved into a workable paradigm. Moving onwards from the 1996 report, the Bank's concept of social development now offers both interpretative and instructive ideas which are closely linked together. By transcending the narrow fiscal perspective on poverty and other forms of inequality, it defines the problem of dysfunctional institutions that systematically exclude people from gaining from—and contributing to—development. The derived goal of empowerment recognizes the poor and other disadvantaged groups to be equally important agents of growth—and members of society. Considering possible instruments, the model of CDD has been attached to social development. Apart from that, a set of tools is being used to tackle the seemingly ever-present task of integrating insights on social development into the Bank's other activities and raising awareness of its necessity. Another significant advance since 1996 has been made in order to frame social development. It is rooted in prominent theoretical work on poverty and development and appeals to several international commitments. But most importantly, the theme of empowerment and transformation transcend the Bank's dominant vocabulary of economics and poverty alleviation in a fashion which I tentatively suggest to call 'politically-emancipatory' by openly evoking the image of substantial social change. Overall, the document seeks to set out an ambitious course of action, notwithstanding its potentially questionable feasibility and resonance within the Bank.

IV.3) The Mid-Cycle Implementation Progress Report–making adjustments

The last document targeted for analysis is the 2011 Mid-Cycle Implementation Progress Report (MCIPR), which set out to review the Bank's recent activities on the matter of social development and to update the strategy. Although the overall performance is deemed to be positive, the MCIPR sees room for improvement on several issues and applies modifications due to the past experience as well as to external and internal changes (*World Bank* 2011b).

<u>Given definitions</u>

While the MCIPR states that the understanding of social development as it was sketched out in 2005 remains valid in broad terms, several clear modifications and shifts in vocabulary and accentuation can be identified. The document recognizes multiple external factors of change, some of them are rather new, whereas others increasingly demand attention. The most prominent one has been the recent crisis of the global economy.

> The last few years have seen exceptional volatility in markets important to the poor. The succession of food price, fuel price and financial crises has created a series of fluctuations in prices, growth rates, financial flows, employment and exports. Vulnerable individuals, households and communities have suffered profound material and non-material impacts. […] Arguments suggesting that the poor are relatively immune from shocks originating in the global economy because they operate at its margins are not supported by the evidence. (*World Bank* 2011b: 17)

It is also acknowledged that the SDS did not address the issue of climate change and its social implications at all. While most efforts in light of this challenge regard infrastructure and economy, the MCIPR urges to consider the impact on vulnerable people and local communities' chances of adaptation as well (*World Bank* 2011b: 18). Another issue the document sees as establishing itself on the global agenda increasingly is the matter of fragility and violence threatening states and societies. Although the Bank already engages in activities addressing this issue at the state-level by building capacities and restoring administrative functions, more attention must be paid to the dynamics of fragility on the local level. 'Understanding and responding to fragility will therefore become a […] priority for the Bank's work on social development and a focus for a lot of interventions, in particular within the CDD portfolio, that emphasizes cohesion and bottom-up state building' (*World Bank* 2011b: 19).

From these overall challenges that can be classified as crises, shocks, and risks, the Bank derives 'resilience' as the fourth key aspect of social development:

> With respect to the conceptual principles that define social development, the review suggests that the concept of social resilience be included in the conceptual and operational framework for social sustainability, alongside inclusion, cohesion and accountability. Resilient institutions reduce vulnerability and enable communities to organize and confront a range of negative trends and shocks whether economic, political, or environmental. Therefore, in an increasingly globalized world that is subject to repeated shocks [...], this dynamic notion of resilience is critical for ensuring the social sustainability of development. While it was implicitly related in the other three principles, the severity of recent global shocks and crises require this fourth principle to be given special emphasis. It is also directly linked to the Bank's overall strategic priority of managing risks and preparing for crises. (*World Bank* 2011b: 23)

I chose to cite this passage in its full length since it illustrates a shift both in vocabulary and its accentuation, prevalent in the MCIPR and differing from the SDS. Although the notion of sustainability and related formulations already featured in the previous document, it now appears much more often and more prominent. In fact, the above cited passage demonstrates that the term ‘social sustainability’ seems to have effectively replaced the term empowerment, which used to be the goal of social development. Empowerment did not disappear completely, it is applied in more specific formulations, mainly attached to ‘economic opportunities’ (*World Bank* 2011b: 20, 27), but it ceased to play a part in defining social development. Furthermore, social sustainability even is employed in circumstances where the term social development has been used previously. I suggest that both terms are used almost interchangeably. This illustrates the steep rise in importance of social sustainability, an issue that will be discussed in greater detail later on. On top of that, the document rather covertly departs from the term ‘transformation’, previously linked to empowerment and used prominently to characterize the process-like trait of social development. Only a minor passage covers this issue directly: ‘A key theme emerging from this work is that the “impact trajectory” of projects which seek to create social transformations is unlikely to be linear or easy to measure over the short term’ (*World Bank* 2011b: 11–12).

<u>Organizational and operational context</u>

Between publishing the SDS and the MCIPR, the Bank saw yet another reorganization in 2006. Before, the SDV was based within the Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network, together with the departments on environment and rural development. The reorganization merged this with the Infrastructure Network in order to form the new Sustainable Development Network. According to the MCIPR, this facilitates collaboration on ‘the “triple bottom line” of sustainability—economic, environmental, and social’ (*World Bank* 2011b: 21). While the 2011 report comes to a positive conclusion about the achievements since 2005 regarding the three strategic priorities of ‘more macro’, ‘better projects’, and ‘better grounding’, it acknowledges that results varied in terms of quality. The most constraining factor has been the SDV’s capacity to address its workload. This is highlighted by the fact, that a social development specialist ‘skilled in involuntary resettlement issues covers on average 12 projects triggering the policy. For indigenous peoples’ issues, the regional average ratio is 1:11. In this context, the ability to comprehensively mainstream inclusion, cohesion, and accountability […] has been constrained’ (*World Bank* 2011b: 14–15). Due to the lack in capacities, the MCIPR introduces a fourth strategic priority, labelled a '"more effective family" for social development' (*World Bank* 2011b: 32).

The document also allows for insights into budget-related matters of social development.[7] In January 2011, the SDV's active stand-alone portfolio amounted to $2.72 billion, an increase of $0.82 billion since 2005. This lead to 33 projects in the responsibility of the Social Development Sector Board. To put this into perspective: at the same time a total of 383 active projects worth $29.14 billion contained social development themes. The document further states, that CDD projects hold the majority of the stand-alone portfolio (*World Bank* 2011b: 10).

Chapter conclusion

Although the report's executive summary claims 'that the vision and framework of the 2005 Strategy remains valid' (*World Bank* 2011b: xiii), major changes have indeed taken place. Some of them were made overtly via adding content to the understanding of social development, such as resilience, or emphasizing new goals like social sustainability. But more important modifications have been made by covertly ignoring or playing down aspects which have featured centrally in the task of defining the original vision, like the notions of empowerment and transformation. Can social development in this state still pose as a policy paradigm? While the SDS was remarkably clear on many aspects, its follow-up seems to adopt a rather familiar kind of fuzziness, starting with the important task of defining problems. Instead of identifying flawed institutions that systematically exclude altogether or disadvantage certain groups at participating in development and thus formulating the need to transform these institutions, the new framework simply seeks to promote positive institutions. 'Development is socially sustainable when it promotes inclusive, cohesive, resilient and accountable institutions' (*World Bank* 2011b*:* 25). By claiming to 'promote' institutions, rules, and norms with beneficial qualities, the Bank lessens the previously clear imperative of 'transformation', a process of change between two states that differ in a categorical—not gradual—sense. I argue that the use of 'promoting' is not only a case of softening the phrasing but more importantly of shifting away from any clear problem definition, since the latter identifies 'issues which conflict with the underlying conception of social structures' (von Gliszczynski 2013: 19–20). Instead, a new area of defining problems has opened up, namely risks and vulnerabilities emanating

[7] Unfortunately, the SDV does not publish exhaustive annual information on its financial matters.

especially from the global economy's volatility and domestic political instability and violence. The aforementioned institutions now enable groups and local communities to withstand shocks and adapt to changing circumstances.

The set of instruments attached to social development have experienced unsurprisingly little change. Mainstreaming is still as necessary as always and approaches of CDD increasingly dominate the project portfolio. Regarding the goals of social development, another clear shift can be found. While I suggested that the idea of sustainability was placed in the ideational background of the 2005 strategy, employed as a frame, it now takes the top spot. Social sustainability apparently replaced empowerment as the goal of social development. In several instances it seems to be used interchangeably with social development, even more lessening the latter's underlying meaning of a transformative process of change, which was prevalent in the SDS as well as in the common core of social development approaches, according to James Midgley. Another task the previous strategy accomplished was to firmly frame the social development agenda, especially by calling upon conceptual work that has been done outside the Bank and a supposedly prevalent global consensus. This has changed as well, since one of the most important points of reference is a background document called 'New World, New World Bank Group: (I) Post-Crisis Directions' that outlines five overall strategic priorities in order to overcome poverty and reach the MDGs, the fifth being called 'Manage Risk and Prepare for Crises' (*World Bank* 2010: 25). Also, the document elaborates several issues on which the agenda overlaps with a wide range of other sectors' strategy papers. By adding resilience and emphasizing cohesion, social sustainability is strongly aligned with the Bank's increasing focus on addressing risks and vulnerabilities, as it has also been outlined by the Social Protection and Labor Sector Strategy. Furthermore, it is apparent how key topics and essential vocabulary, like mitigation of risks, adaption to shocks, and vulnerability as a key characteristic of poverty, merged with that of the social protection agenda. This comes as no surprise, considering the mainstream success that has been achieved by this social policy effort. While outward framing has decreased significantly, inward framing has intensified, especially catering for internal audiences that must have been somewhat sceptical of the last strategy's far-reaching commitment to social change.

Overall, the MCIPR presents in several ways an essential departure from the 2005 strategy, one that the report itself does not acknowledge. The given concept fulfils the basic requirements of a policy paradigm, although it cannot be understood as a continuation. The omission of the key topics of empowerment and transformation, which I deem to be central to the previous understanding of social development, alters its appearance drastically. The prevalent tone is more down-to-earth, with the new goal of social sustainability primarily evoking the image of a healthy, stable, and resilient foundation on which future development efforts can build upon. While critics may claim that simply one buzzword has succeeded another, I tentatively suggest that empowerment and transformation have been dropped for their interpretative openness, deliberately on the verge of overt social change and an intrinsic politically-emancipatory dimension. Having in mind the next three years of the assessment cycle (*World Bank* 2011b: v), I expect any upcoming strategy to further divert from the vision of 2005.

The next chapter concludes this thesis by recapping the main findings and synthesizing them into an overall assessment of the shifts the idea of social development has experienced over the course of fifteen years.

Conclusion

The task of this BA-thesis was to scrutinize a rather elusive perspective on social policy applied at the World Bank. Among the approaches to social policy, social development clearly is the least established within the Bank, while social welfare and social protection are located at the core of mainstream social policy. In order to analyse the concept's evolution, I decided to study three key Bank documents on social development, each representing a major shift in the agenda, ranging from 1996 to 2011. Theoretically, this thesis relied on Peter Hall's work on policy paradigms and some modifications introduced to it by Moritz von Gliszczynski. Its background is the understanding of ideational structures' shaping impact on policymaking. As Chapter I) elaborated, a policy paradigm shapes an actor's perceptions and actions in a policy field by providing interpretative and instructive capacities. For this reason, it contains four types of ideas, each fulfilling a distinct function. These are: problem definitions (i), socially constructed ideas of issues in need of policy action, goals (ii) that are to be achieved, instruments (iii) conveying ideas of how to reach the latter, and finally frames (iv) that generate legitimization by appealing to related ideational structures or universally held values. Asking to what extent the concept of social development, as outlined in the three documents, resembles a policy paradigm, allowed me to examine it systematically, to distinguish the ideational elements it is made of, and to highlight how these have shifted over fifteen years. Like Chapter II) suggested, the Bank holds a prime spot among its fellow international organizations by producing and disseminating ideas about development and inextricably related policy fields, and by wielding an unparalleled budget to emphasize its perspective. But at times, this perspective is highly fragmented. Due to the Bank's history of a piecemeal expansion and diversification of its social policy agenda, related efforts have not been integrated under the flag of what James Midgley calls social development, or what has been envisioned at the WSSD. Instead, the term has been attributed to a loose set of activities, lacking an underlying rationale. The brief glance that Chapter III) took at social welfare and social protection, revealed that these do possess a clear rationale. Being understood as investments in human capital and as necessary systems of risk management and targeted interventions, they have been successfully framed as an important factor conducive to economic growth, which remains to be the Bank's favourite means to the ends of development and poverty alleviation.

Chapter IV) began to examine the three documents and to assess, whether the presented notion of social development could pose as a policy paradigm. The 1996 Task Group Report illustrated the approach's thin conceptual foundation. It mainly revolved around the necessity of better understanding social capital, investing into it, and its centrality to successful development. This way, it sat itself apart from the Bank's traditional use of the term 'social'. Key staff activities were about carrying out social assessments and adding participatory procedures to the project cycle. Besides these ideas of instruments, the document named several ideas that featured prominently later on, but it failed to link them up in a precise fashion, following a clear vision. Figuratively speaking, the concept of social development as of 1996 only told practitioners how to do things. Unfortunately, it failed to tell them what to tackle, where to get, and why they should be doing it.

The 2005 Social Development Strategy provided a concept that has gathered a significant amount of coherence since 1996. It offered an elaborated problem definition that was only hinted at before. Fundamentally flawed institutional frameworks keep the poor and other disadvantaged groups, like women, the elderly, and rural populations from contributing to development—and gaining from it. The strategy also provided an example of how close a paradigm's goals rely on its problem definitions. Inappropriate institutions need to be transformed to be inclusive, cohesive, and accountable—this in turn serves to empower people to actively participate in the process of development and elsewhere. The instruments conceived and applied in order to achieve social development have also diversified, due to the SDV's own budget allowing it to manage projects on its own, although it still engages mostly in providing expertise on the social factors of development and carrying out social assessments. Furthermore, the strategy advocated the increasingly popular project approach of CDD. On top of that, it also went a long way in order to frame the idea of social development. It was emphasized how Bank projects benefit from accordance with the social development agenda and how it is an essential effort in order to reach the Bank's overarching goals. It was also stated how the issue of empowerment has an value on its own, how the strategy is placed within a global consensus as embodied in the WSSD, the MDGs, and other commitments, and how well it accords with prominent theoretical work like that of Armartya Sen. This way, the document catered both to internal sceptics of its far-reaching social implications and to external critics, questioning the latter's sincerity. It is also noteworthy that a few problematic issues remained unresolved. First, the SDS acknowledged social development staff to have a somewhat bad reputation, highlighting the ideological heterogeneity of the Bank's staff. Secondly, the ambitious targets of CDD have led to severe criticism of its feasibility. Despite these caveats, I argued that the concept of social development laid down in the 2005 strategy eventually fulfils the requirements of a policy paradigm as conceived in Chapter I). It made a strong case for tackling the complex nature of dysfunctional institutional patterns that thwart development efforts in general and specifically exclude certain groups from development gains. On top of that, by advocating the topics of empowerment and transformation it sat itself clearly apart from common Bank vocabulary, seemingly deliberately on the verge of an interpretation that I suggested to call politically-emancipatory.

The 2011 Mid-Cycle Implementation Progress Report's objective was to assess the performance of the SDS and to propose updates for the next three years. Despite claiming that the previous document stays valid, the MCIPR introduced a range of modifications in both overt and covert ways. Its entry points into overhauling the strategy were shifts on the global agenda, like the growing impact of climate change, fragility and state failure, and the global economy's volatility as illustrated by the latest recession. Resulting risks and shocks—to which the poor are especially vulnerable—posed as the new problem definitions. Because of this, resilience was added as a fourth operational principle. By promoting beneficial institutions, social sustainability is to be created, allowing the poor to withstand and adapt to risks and shocks. On top of that, social sustainability was not just presented as an important goal but often replaced the term social development altogether. Covertly left out were the once central terms of empowerment and transformation. While the instrumental portfolio was left unchanged and the commitment to CDD renewed, the efforts of framing have shifted from outward to inward framing. I suggested that inward framing means catering for internal audiences, specifically for the majority of staff approaching development from an economic viewpoint and who thus must have been slightly unsettled by the SDS. Therefore, concordances with other sector strategies and the Post-Crisis Directions were stressed. Interestingly, several topics and essential vocabulary have merged with that of the social protection agenda. Overall, the concept of social development as conceived in the MCIPR can technically still be understood as a policy paradigm, but departed essentially from the previous strategy. Whereas the old document had an ambitiously progressive undertone, almost deliberately on the verge of a political interpretation of empowerment and change, the MCIPR was kept down-to-earth, as illustrated by the key term social sustainability. On top of that, because its publication will be followed by three more years of implementation assessment, I tentatively suggested the social development agenda to move even further away from its original position of 2005 and possibly, to be replaced by the notion of social sustainability altogether.

The preceding analysis finally allows me to highlight how several ideational elements of the social development concept have shifted over the course of fifteen years. The notions of social capital, institutions, and relationships have been at the heart of social development since 1996. The idea that dysfunctional or inappropriate institutions thwart development and exclude certain groups has grown steadily, resulting in the problem definition of the SDS. The MCIPR however dropped the component of dysfunctionality, solely advocating the promotion of beneficial institutions. Social assessment and analysis and participation of local population have been with social development right from the start, as ideas of instruments. From the SDS onwards, CDD has been used to raise the aspect of participation to an all new level. The SDS also introduced the notion of transformation of the above-mentioned institutions. This way, the goal of empowerment of the poor and disadvantaged was to be achieved. Both ideas, that contributed to the SDS's undertone of embracing overt social change, have almost completely vanished from the MCIPR. The theme of sustainability and its variants was present since the TGR, although somewhat in the background, employed for framing purposes. When the topics of risks, shocks, and vulnerability took centre stage in the global development discourse, social sustainability was placed in the foreground as the goal of social development, succeeding the previous buzzword of empowerment. Also, risks and shocks were newly introduced to the concept of social development as problem definitions in the MCIPR.

Finally, it is an open question whether the notion of social sustainability and some of the vocabulary borrowed from the social protection agenda enables the concerns for the ‘soft’ dimensions of development to be translated into the seemingly ever econocentric language of the Bank’s discursive mainstream.

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