

Mind the Gap

Bridging the Divide between Cooperation Providers

BEATA CICHOCKA · RACHAEL CALLEJA · SARA CASADEVALL BELLÉS · EMMA MAWDSLEY

Abstract

Despite the increasing imperative for cross-provider collaboration, the quest for a truly “global” development paradigm remains elusive, marked by persistent divides between different types of development providers’ normative frameworks, models, experiences, capacities, and institutional allegiances. This paper explores the potential role of countries to act as bridges across these varying institutional, normative, or technical “distances” between providers. We begin by examining why, when, and under what conditions countries choose to act as bridges, given their differing capacities, credibility, knowledge, and willingness to act in the role. We then identify some common types and illustrative examples of bridging countries, including “dual donors,” “development experience” bridges, “political” bridges, and “geographic or cultural” bridges, and explore some of the most common types of actions that they can undertake. While all of these actions—whether joint project implementation, hosting forums, brokering agreements, or contributing to the creation of more inclusive norms and multilateral spaces—require some level of both political and technical commitment, they vary in terms of the level of ambition and mutual trust required to undertake action and therefore provide a broad range of options suited to a variety of contexts, agendas, and actors wishing to play a bridging role. Following a brief examination of the benefits and risks associated with bridging, the paper concludes with some policy recommendations for bridging countries that wish to approach this ambitious challenge more strategically.