New Development Encounters: China and Brazil in African Agriculture

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Abstract There is currently much talk of the role of the 'rising powers' in Africa, and whether their engagements represent a 'new paradigm' in development cooperation. This article introduces this *IDS Bulletin* and examines Brazilian and Chinese agricultural development cooperation in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. A wide variety of forms of support are seen, involving different financial modalities, including aid, concessional loans, trade deals and commercial investment. Our focus is on the 'encounters' that occur during negotiations and the intersection of wider framing discourses with practices on the ground in particular projects. Brazilian and Chinese domestic political dynamics, competing social imaginaries and histories of agrarian change all shape development cooperation. Meanwhile, African governments are not just passive recipients; they exert agency in negotiations, trading off different players. Outcomes depend on the particular context, and the new aid and investment scene in African agriculture is highly varied, presenting opportunities as well as challenges for the future.

1 Introduction

There is currently much talk of the role of the 'rising powers' and 'emerging donors' in Africa, and whether this presents a 'new paradigm' in development cooperation (Mawdsley 2012; Brautigam 2009; Alden 2007). The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) grouping of countries recently met in Durban to discuss new approaches to development, and committed to the launch of a BRICS development bank.[1] New aid relations, centred on a new global geopolitics, and ushering in new South–South cooperation, were celebrated.

Such discussions also featured prominently in the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF4), held in South Korea at the end of 2011, an event that will be remembered as the first time traditional and non-traditional donors[2] sat together, as providers of development cooperation, to agree on best practices for delivering assistance to poor countries. Although the Forum did not produce universal standards on aid effectiveness, but rather differential commitments for traditional and non-traditional donors, it reflected the world's 'shifting geopolitical realities' (Glennie 2011) by recognising the increasingly significant role played by South–South cooperation and the need to move beyond the narrow focus on aid and consider development finance more broadly.

Whether these new players offer a 'new paradigm' (Woods 2008), in contrast to the conventional OECD-DAC countries' approach, is open to question, of course. Beyond the rhetorical claims by either side, we need to dig deeper into the actual practices of aid development assistance, trade and investment to see what is new and different, and what is not.

The presence of the rising powers in Africa has been the focus of much attention and a great deal of negative reporting, although a more nuanced and balanced view is now emerging, as research on the topic builds up. Most analysis focuses on China (Africa Research Institute 2012; Alden and Chichava 2012; Brautigam 2009; Rotberg 2008; Alden 2007), while a thorough review of the experience of other rising powers like Brazil is still in short supply. Furthermore, much recent work on 'the BRICS in Africa' has emphasised the macro-geopolitical dimensions, as these new players engage in areas dominated in the past by Western donors and companies. This often gives a very general, aggregate picture focusing on the

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broad patterns of aid, trade and development finance, with relatively little examination of the emerging relationships in particular sectoral areas, including agriculture (although see Brautigam 2009).

African agricultural policymakers are increasingly looking to the BRICS countries not only as investors and suppliers of technology, but also as sources of examples to be emulated, whether in large-scale commercial farming or in mass mobilisation to boost smallholder productivity. Well-established cooperation links have long supported a flow of African agricultural development specialists to Brasília, Delhi or Beijing. However, this flow has accelerated dramatically in recent years as the BRICS – and their supporters within the global agriculture policy community – intensify their efforts to promote their agricultural development 'models' as holding the key to unlocking Africa's agricultural potential.

But what are the realities that lie behind these 'models' within the BRICS countries themselves? What domestic political economy drivers lie behind new international policies aimed at exporting them? What is the political economy of this new engagement in African settings, coming as it does on long histories of colonial and post-colonial development intervention? How should Africa approach these new engagements: with open arms, or with sceptical caution?

This *IDS Bulletin* hopes to begin to answer these questions, by focusing on both China and Brazil and developing a comparative insight into the different modalities, practices and politics of engagement by these two 'rising powers' in African agriculture. By looking at different country experiences – in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe – we can get an insight into the country-level dynamics at play. By concentrating on agriculture – and looking at a range of interventions including training, technology transfer, concessional lending and corporate investment – we can begin to get an insight into the diverse forms that this new form of 'development cooperation' takes in a strategic sector. By considering Brazil and China's own domestic experiences of agricultural development, we can also better understand the genesis of the 'models' on offer, and assess the potential for their adaptation to African contexts.

2 Four country cases

Our four African country cases offer interesting and contrasting insights. Ghana has recently risen to the status of a 'middle-income' country with impressive economic growth, supported by a strong mining sector and recent petroleum discoveries. In the context of economic liberalisation since the 1980s, there has been long-standing government support for international agri-business and agri-business linkages with smallholders engaged in export production. In-flows of foreign capital into the agricultural sector have seen certain export-based agricultural commodities boom in recent years, with a number of both local and multinational agri-businesses reaping the profits (Amanor, this *IDS Bulletin*).

Ethiopia has also seen impressive economic growth figures in recent years, but from a low base, and with still extreme poverty dominating. However, again, agriculture has been important, with the growth of commercial floriculture, for example, having been a major success story, at least in terms of aggregate growth statistics (Kelsall 2013). Ethiopia has not followed the standard model of neoliberal reform however, and instead has followed a more state-directed strategy, mobilising state-controlled private sector and government support in favour of focused investments, including large-scale land deals (Lavers 2012). A developmental state is envisaged, modelled on the East Asian experience, with external investment being carefully channelled and controlled (Alemu and Scoones, this *IDS Bulletin*).

Mozambique again has seen impressive economic growth, backed in particular by mining and aluminium smelting, but also with growth in some agricultural commodities. The government argues that there is massive underutilisation of land in the country and real potential for commercial expansion. Attracting foreign investment in all sectors has been a priority, and has been managed by a political elite eager to benefit (*cf* Burr *et al.* 2011; do Rosário 2012). Western donor aid has played its part, offering budget support to the central exchequer for a poverty reduction-focused policy framework, while at the same time pushing for market liberalisation. But, as government leadership becomes more assertive and state intervention in agriculture regains favour, relations with Western

donors have become less amicable, making the 'rising powers' increasingly appealing partners for a growth-oriented, state-led development model (Chichava *et al.*, this *IDS Bulletin*).

Zimbabwe has seen a rapid economic recovery since the formation of the Government of National Unity in 2009, and the stabilisation of the economy. However, the country suffered extreme economic collapse during the 2000s, and had to manage the consequences of economic and diplomatic sanctions from Western countries. With the withdrawal of aid, and perhaps more significantly international credit lines, the government was forced to seek alternative assistance as part of its 'Look East' policy. China provided substantial support, and through connections in all sectors, most notably mining, but also agriculture, has become deeply involved at the core of Zimbabwe's economy. With the radical land reform of 2000, Zimbabwe's agricultural sector was completely reconfigured, and new forms of support were required for the 150,000 new farm households in land reform areas. Again, with Western donors continuing to object to the land reform, the government sought assistance from elsewhere, and deals with both Brazil (for tractors) and China (for tobacco) have been struck. The commercial support to tobacco outgrowing from the Chinese company, Tian Ze, has assisted with a massive and rapid turnaround in this key commodity, with new farmers being significant producers, contributing substantially to the export economy (Mukwereza, this *IDS Bulletin*).

Thus, across the four countries we can see different forms of engagement by China and Brazil, depending on the context, needs and priorities. In this *IDS Bulletin* we examine a range of 'development encounters' which take place under the umbrella of 'development cooperation'; a term that allows a broader definition than that simply ascribed to 'aid' or 'official development assistance' under OECD-DAC definitions. The articles that follow offer insights into the motivations, interests and political positioning of the huge diversity of actors involved in such development encounters. These can include technical cooperation, in-kind donations, monetary grants, concessional lending, as well as personnel exchanges and investment, all set in the context of broader diplomatic as well as economic interactions. As we show below, both China and Brazil use broad definitions of 'cooperation' and reject being labelled as donors, preferring to be instead portrayed as partners in a horizontal and mutually beneficial relationship. Exactly how such engagements are framed and by whom, and what narratives and practices define these interventions is the focus of the section that follows.

3 Narratives and practices of engagement

There are perhaps two main and highly contrasting narratives that frame the way the 'rising powers' are seen in relation to Africa (*cf* Alden 2007).

The first is the view that these new engagements reflect a new form of colonialism, centred on rapacious resource grabs, with tied aid linked to the expansion of commercial opportunities for the rising powers. These aid, trade and investment agreements in turn fuel debt and create dependencies, resulting in the exploitation of weak African states, unable to negotiate better terms. Despite the high-sounding rhetoric, Africa, yet again, is being used to provide resources to growing economies elsewhere in a 'sub-imperial' relationship (Bond 2013), and receives limited benefits, beyond those often appropriated by elites through corrupt practices.

The second narrative offers a more positive perspective. This sees the new development cooperation paradigm offering new forms and styles of partnership, centred on sharing and mutual benefit, framed by a vision of South–South cooperation and solidarity. Africa, it is argued, can learn from the experiences of China, Brazil, India and others, as these countries have recently transformed into growing economies with reduced poverty levels. This vision therefore recasts the old post-colonial aid relationships which have held Africa back, and so moves beyond the policy-based conditionalities that have restricted African development in the past decades.

The 'new coloniser' and 'South–South partnership' narratives of course are gross simplifications. Neither hold up to careful scrutiny in practice, but both are deployed at different times by different actors to support particular stances and actions. There are of course many shades of grey between such stark positions, and potential alternative framings that

do not get such exposure. Some indeed question all the fuss being made, and suggest that, in terms of overall importance, development cooperation relationships with the 'rising powers' are small, and they will soon be aligned with those of existing donors and investment partners, as part of overarching global agreements and coordination mechanisms.

This *IDS Bulletin* illustrates that, while offering rhetorical power and gaining some purchase in wider debates, simple overarching narratives are highly debatable. On the one hand, there is no single Chinese, Brazilian or African position. China and Brazil, for example, have very different interests and priorities, and within these countries there are intense contests between different approaches, reflecting domestic political dynamics. On the other hand, Africa's 55 countries are hugely diverse, and any new development encounter arrives on the back of a very complex agrarian history and political economy. For example, the dominance of a smallholder sector or the possibilities of extending large-scale commercial agriculture will depend on histories of colonial expropriation, tenure regimes and land control, as well as government policies. Thus, depending on the context, arguably similar interventions – whether a commercial agricultural scheme or a technical training – will have very different consequences.

This *IDS Bulletin* is the first major output of a new project – China and Brazil in African Agriculture (CBAA) – funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council and part of the Future Agricultures Consortium's (FAC) programme of work.[3] Building on a mapping exercise, looking at what is going on where, our work focuses on the interactions that occur in particular aid and investment projects. All such engagements occur through negotiation, and are played out in practice through everyday interactions in projects, in businesses, in planning meetings and so on. Our work is interested in these 'knowledge encounters', where different cultural assumptions, forms of expertise and experience are confronted. From the colonial era, and through the post-colonial development encounter, African policymakers and technical experts have learned to negotiate around issues of technology transfer, economic reform or loan agreements. It is not as if 'Africa' is a passive recipient of such intervention: agency is expressed, often very effectively through combinations of assertive positioning and more hidden resistance. The form this takes, as the cases presented in this *IDS Bulletin* show, is enormously variable.

The same applies to these new encounters. But with new players, carrying with them different discourses and practices, rooted in their own recent development experiences, new learning has to take place, and the room for manoeuvre by African states is potentially increased (Kragelund 2008). Different players can be traded off against each other, depending on what is on offer, and the conditions attached. Both China and Brazil, at different times and through different routes, promote smallholder and large-scale agriculture, both offer support for infrastructural development and financing, and both are eager to see their own companies engage in African agriculture. Traditional Western donors, while couching their aid programmes in humanitarian objectives, are also keen to promote their own agri-business enterprises, technological options and value chains. While there are clear commonalities in the operation of globalised capital, and its support by states, from whatever provenance, the degree to which options are controlled, for example through intellectual property regimes, varies. Thus, depending on the form of engagement, opportunities for negotiation and the development of locally attuned solutions also differ.

Thus to understand these new encounters in development cooperation, we have to get to grips with the macro-narratives and how they are deployed and to what purpose, as well as the micro-dynamics on the ground. We must therefore consider the cultural, social and political relations at play, as well as the wider political economy that structures such engagements, asking whose interests are being served, and who wins and who loses.

4 Investing in agriculture

Why then the focus on agriculture? Both China and Brazil have identified agriculture as central to their new development cooperation efforts in Africa. A number of rationales are presented, both explicitly and implicitly.

First is the availability of agricultural land. Africa is seen – often highly inaccurately – as a

continent where land is plentiful, and open for more intensive use. The 'idle' or 'underutilised' land discourse has framed much of the current interest in large-scale commercial land investments in Africa (sometimes dubbed 'land grabs') (Nalepa and Bauer 2012), with the World Bank identifying particular countries which are deemed to have land surplus, with sufficient productive land (Deininger *et al.* 2011). Yet too often such assessments forget the fact that land is used, and held by different groups, even if not for agricultural production, and so is not 'free' or 'available' for investment (White *et al.* 2012). Yet, by comparison to some countries, land resources are available, soils are good and the tropical climate ideal for agriculture, and so, with the assistance and encouragement of national governments such areas are being targeted to supply food, fuel or feed. The extent of such land investments however is much disputed, and despite the large numbers sometimes quoted, the actual amount of land being acquired for land investments by rising powers is relatively modest (Scoones *et al.* forthcoming).

Second is the ecological dimension. Here the argument centres on the claim that African agroecologies are similar to those elsewhere at similar latitudes, and therefore transfer of technologies or agronomic practices should be easy. This argument is prominent in Brazilian cooperation discourse. The imagery is clear: an ecological similarity allows for a linear transfer, and an extension of the Brazilian success story in taming and transforming a challenging ecology into productive agriculture for Africa. For example, the much celebrated transformation of the Brazilian *Cerrado* through a combination of soil management techniques and mechanised agriculture (Hosono and Hongo 2012) is seen as a model for the 'Guinea savanna' zone of Africa, which, through a liberal interpretation of the similarities, the World Bank argues stretches in a huge arc from West to East to Southern Africa (Morris and Larson 2009).

Third is the business dimension, where the argument is made that Africa holds a unique comparative advantage, with cheap, available land, low labour costs and relatively good access to markets. Infrastructure investments – corridors, roads, ports and so on – must go with any agricultural investment to ensure maximum market advantage and lowering of transport costs. But in the long run, even in the currently more remote parts of the continent, African economic advantages are seen in contrast to the distant frontiers of the Amazon in Brazil or the further reaches of China. This argument is made even more pertinent, given the growing demand for agricultural produce within Africa. Africa's economic growth has been much commented upon (*The Economist* 2013). While driven by commodity booms, including in land and agricultural products, but also of course in minerals (Morris *et al.* 2011), it is fuelling demand, which is reinforced by a process of urbanisation, and a growing middle class (although see Potts 2012). The market advantages of agricultural investments in Africa are also increased when the preferential trade deals, with Europe in particular but also North America, are taken into account. Restrictions on Brazilian imports, for example, in European and North American markets can be got round through investment in Africa, it is argued (Amanor, this *IDS Bulletin*).

Fourth is the emergence of a new dualism in agriculture, and an emphasis on large-scale agriculture (Collier 2008). As the cases in this *IDS Bulletin* show, many African governments have revived an emphasis on large-scale, mechanised agriculture to promote growth, particularly in foreign exchange generating exports, largely dropped from policy agendas since the 1970s with the failure of large-scale state farms. Large-scale farms have not been a focus of support by Western donors in the last decades, except in the context of outgrower schemes and value chain development (Kirsten and Sartorius 2002). Indeed, agriculture was largely ignored as part of such aid programmes for over 20 years; although when it tentatively returned in the mid-2000s, the emphasis has mostly been on smallholder agriculture, through pan-African initiatives such as the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).[4] Yet, despite such efforts, smallholder farming has increasingly lost its political and economic prominence in many contexts. In addition to policy neglect, this was assisted by the conditionalities of structural adjustment that opened up markets, privatised parastatals and agricultural services and facilitated the creation of regulations that limited market participation, allowing agri-business in Africa to gain greater

influence (Amanor 2005). The experiences of Brazil and China in large-scale, mechanised agriculture are therefore of much interest to African governments and business elites, especially if support comes with private investment, soft loans, transfers of high-end equipment and technical support; aspects largely absent in most Western aid programmes in recent years.

Finally is the emphasis on aspects of investment beyond agriculture. To get agriculture moving requires a wider investment in infrastructure, financing, research and capacity. Again, with the tight conditionalities and the narrow focus of most Western aid programmes, such investments have diminished. Structural adjustment programmes from the 1980s devastated state capacities in agricultural research and extension, and the basic support infrastructure in most African countries is very weak (Scoones *et al.* 2005). Although supported by still reasonably well-funded international research, through the CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) and alliances with NGOs and others, national capacities are limited. The same applies to infrastructural investments which, although some support through the World Bank, the African Development Bank and others is flowing towards large-scale 'growth corridor' initiatives, the overall levels remain small in relation to need. Financing equally remains tied to tight conditionalities, making the China Exim Bank loans (Export-Import Bank of China) very attractive to cash-strapped governments. Thus, offers of support from the likes of China and Brazil are often enthusiastically embraced, and seen as complementing the support of Western donors in important ways, and allowing finance and technical support to come behind ambitious growth-oriented agricultural strategies.

Across these five dimensions, agriculture is seen as a major priority for aid, trade and investment in Africa by China and Brazil, although in different ways, and with different rationales. But to understand Chinese and Brazilian engagements in agriculture in Africa more completely, we also need to appreciate how development cooperation in agriculture is seen from Chinese and Brazilian standpoints, and how this is framed by domestic economic and political considerations. The following two sections offer a brief overview, before we outline some of the themes that define such engagements.

5 China in Africa

China has long had engagements in Africa, with development-focused interactions dating back to the 1960s, and engagements in trade and politics dating back much earlier (Tan-Mullins *et al.* 2010; Large 2008; McCormick 2008; Mohan and Power 2008; Alden 2007). Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), its earliest relationships were conditioned by political solidarity with African states in the period leading up to and immediately after independence. As a counter to what were seen as Western imperial interventions or the alliances struck by the Soviet Union, Chinese relations were very much tied up with a rhetoric of socialist solidarity and alliances with liberation movements, many of whom became the ruling parties of newly independent nations (Ismael 1971). Prestige projects such as the Tazara railway from Lusaka to Dar es Salaam became the hallmark of such engagements (Yu 1980), and Zhou Enlai's landmark speech in Ghana in 1963 spoke of the eight principles of Chinese aid that were to set it apart from traditional donors thereafter (Brautigam 2009). These included equality, mutual benefit, respect for sovereignty and many of the other elements that remain a part of China's cooperation programmes today.

Although most early engagements focused on infrastructure and the placement of experts, agricultural development programmes formed an important bargaining chip offered by both the PRC and Taiwan in their political jostling for diplomatic recognition in Africa (Brautigam 1998, 2009). Even after the PRC had won Taiwan's UN representation and seat on the permanent security council in 1971, their agricultural programmes continued to compete with Taiwan's equivalent, named 'Operation Vanguard', until the late 1990s (Brautigam and Tang 2009). A number of states fluctuated back and forth in the 1980s and 1990s, but by the early 2000s, most countries in Africa had established diplomatic relations with the PRC, with the only four states still outstanding in 2013 (Burkina Faso, Gambia, São Tomé e Príncipe and Swaziland). The PRC's new, firmer relationships with Africa were enshrined with the first meeting of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in October 2000.

As bilateral trade between China and Africa has grown substantially since the 1990s (Kaplinsky

and Morris 2009b), new engagements have also been sought (Power and Mohan 2010; Tull 2006). A significant part of this has focused on 'resource diplomacy' (Power *et al.* 2012; Carmody *et al.* 2012; Carmody and Taylor 2010), given China's increased demand for natural resources to fuel its growing economy. This has resulted in sometimes uneasy alliances, but also important accommodations (Corkin 2011a). In 2012, Sino-African trade reached its highest levels yet, at almost US$200 billion according to official Chinese sources (Yang 2013). This trade derives partly from the movement of many Chinese entrepreneurs to Africa, creating a huge and influential network of traders in the Chinese diaspora (Park 2010; Mohan and Tan-Mullins 2009; Brautigam 2003), as well as African traders going to China. In addition, there are substantial investments by Chinese companies, often linked to particular Chinese regions (MOFCOM 2012; Gu 2009). Such quasi-private companies are heavily supported by the Chinese state, in financial, political and logistical terms.

Jakobson (2009) provides a classification of Chinese actors, including: officials representing the Chinese state, government departments and the state-owned Export-Import Bank of China; large, successful companies, whether state-operated or privately owned; small and medium enterprises; well-connected 'middle-men', including private businessmen and diaspora traders; and Chinese migrant labourers. Increasingly these include actors interested in agriculture, including agri-processing (see Amanor on Ghana, this *IDS Bulletin*) and larger-scale production operations (Chichava *et al.* on Mozambique, this *IDS Bulletin*), as well as smaller-scale operations run by the Chinese diaspora.

The role of Chinese financing, across sectors, has been particularly important. China is awash with surplus capital, and needs to diversify away from US dollar holdings. This has encouraged investment in fixed capital, including major infrastructure investments in Africa through the China Development Bank. Such commercial loans can also be complemented by 20–30-year concessional loans from the Export-Import Bank of China. This is a state-financed concessional programme, with a development cooperation mandate, and with strong links to the powerful Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM). Exim bank loans have provided important and growing finance to Africa, with relatively few strings attached; at least compared to commercial or Western-controlled development banks (Grimm *et al.* 2011; Corkin 2011b). While fears exist that such loans will create a new phase of indebtedness in Africa, if used strategically and flexibly African policymakers argue that they have been essential in providing finance in key areas, allowing recovery and growth.

While China does not talk of development 'aid', there is a distinct area of development cooperation which represents direct government-to-government transfer of resources governed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and often discussed within FOCAC. This high-level forum has provided an important political space for Chinese–African relationships, starting in 2000 with a major event in Beijing, and being followed by four summits since then, every three years. An increasing number of high-level diplomatic exchanges have occurred too, most notably including the new Chinese president's visit to three African countries on his first trip abroad as head of state (March 2013).[5] As Lila Buckley (this *IDS Bulletin*) explains, these new relationships are overseen by numerous agencies and take multiple forms, with aid, trade and investment clearly very much intertwined.

Currently, commercial and state-backed loans make up the highest levels of funding flows from China. Recent estimates state China's Export-Import Bank alone lent roughly US$67.2 billion to sub-Saharan Africa between 2001 and 2010 (a sum higher than that of the World Bank),[6] whereas highest predictions on Chinese aid disbursements between 1949 and 2006 have been estimated to value US$5.6 billion (Davies 2006). Nevertheless, such aid packages are important as they are often made up of grants unencumbered with complex conditionalities, evaluation frameworks and governance requirements. While regarded as a 'social gift to friends',[7] some level of reciprocity is naturally expected (*cf* Eyben 2009), and so it is the wider package of development cooperation – grants, concessional loans, large-scale commercial loans and investments, as well as investments by small-scale private entrepreneurs – that must be seen in the round.

One of the most high-profile development cooperation agreements relating to Africa recently has been the establishment of 20

Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centres (Hu 2012; Brautigam and Tang 2012). These centres are aimed to profile Chinese technology through a partnership agreement with African governments. They involve the building of a new research and demonstration centre, often on the campus of the existing national research institute, and the staffing and financing of all operations for three years. The centres are run by quasi-private companies on behalf of the Chinese state, and involve intensive training activities, alongside research and technology importation and demonstration. Chichava *et al.*, Alemu and Scoones, and Mukwereza (this *IDS Bulletin*) discuss the establishment of such centres for Mozambique, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe respectively. At the UN High Level Meeting on the MDGs in 2010, China pledged to establish a further 30 such centres in developing countries, as well as dispatch 3,000 more agricultural experts and invite 5,000 agricultural personnel from those countries (GOC 2011).

While formal 'aid' flows (as defined by the OECD-DAC) remain relatively small, the overall impact of Chinese engagements in the agricultural sector, counting in trade, investment and financing, is substantial and growing (Alden 2013). Financial figures are hard to come by and difficult to verify, largely due to the fact that the Chinese state does not readily publish aid data. Moreover, roughly 80 per cent of Chinese FDI passes through Hong Kong, the Cayman Islands, and the British Virgin Islands, making it hard to track when it ends up in other regions or sectors (Li and Zheng 2012: 147). However, China's Ministry of Information does reveal that the Chinese state had supported 221 agricultural projects in other developing countries by 2009 (GOC 2011).

How is this Chinese engagement with African agriculture framed? One strong line of argument made by nearly all Chinese commentators is the importance of agriculture in the Chinese economic transformation. The figure that China feeds 20 per cent of the world's population on roughly 10 per cent of the world's arable land, is repeated again and again (Li *et al.* 2012: 3; Wang 2010; Brautigam 2009: 234). This, it is argued, has been possible through a very particular Chinese path of agrarian transformation, based on intensification using labour and appropriate technologies over the course of centuries (Li *et al.* 2012). In a case study conducted by the China Agricultural University, they found Chinese smallholder farmers were able to accrue gross incomes of US$2,286 per hectare of rice cultivation compared with Liberia which stands at US$635 (Li *et al.* 2012: 193). It was shown that some variables such as hired labour costs were roughly the same in both countries, but that the qualities and quantities of China's capital and technological inputs per hectare made the difference. While being careful not to claim that such experiences can be transferred wholesale, Li Xiaoyun and others (2012) argue convincingly that such experiences can be useful bases for sharing and learning between China and Africa, as African agriculture seeks to intensify and commercialise, given the need to increase food security and market-based returns.

While the narrative that smallholder-led agrarian transformation is central holds much sway in the wider discussion of agricultural cooperation in Africa, the Chinese experience of large-scale farming also runs alongside this. The consolidation of clusters of small-scale farms in northern China and the creation of massive large-scale mechanised grain-producing farms is seen by some as an alternative model (Li *et al.* 2012), despite the social, economic and ecological challenges such operations have faced (Buckley, this *IDS Bulletin*). Indeed, some of the quasi-private companies that have taken on the Chinese Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centres (ATDCs) across Africa, such as Minoble in Zimbabwe (Mukwereza, this *IDS Bulletin*) have their commercial operations centred on such farms, with technologies more geared towards large-scale farming operations, than the classic small-scale farm enterprises so celebrated in the smallholder success narrative.

Thus, in the Chinese vision of agriculture for Africa, competing narratives of Chinese agricultural success exist side-by-side, both appropriated by Chinese officials at different points. What happens on the ground of course depends on who gets involved and who finances what. And despite the rhetoric of mutual learning and political solidarity, commercial interests are never far from the centre of the engagement.

6 Brazil in Africa

Tensions between competing visions of agriculture domestically, and different interpretations of agrarian histories and politics,

are equally characteristic of the Brazilian engagements in international development and frame the nature of cooperation and investment activities in Africa, as Cabral *et al.* and Pierri (this *IDS Bulletin*) explain.

The rhetoric of Brazilian engagement in Africa, particularly as promoted by former President, Lula da Silva, is very much framed in terms of 'mutual benefit' and 'solidarity diplomacy'. South–South cooperation is central, as Brazil attempts to reshape diplomatic world order. All sorts of 'social imaginaries' are deployed (see below), including the values of solidarity based on a common history of colonialism and the slave trade, the perceptions of similarity through shared ancestries, language (in Lusophone countries), and commitment to liberation and democracy. For example, Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff speaking at the 3rd Africa–South America Summit (ASA) in Equatorial Guinea, in February 2013, remarked:

> Long gone are the days when we [Africa and South America] were part of a distant, silent or silenced, and troublesome periphery… Brazil and Africa not only have a common cultural, social and historical root, from the point of view of our nation… characteristics of Brazilian agriculture are also present here in Africa to the extent that our soils share similarities, our climate shares similarities…[8]

A particularly resonant social imaginary pertains to agriculture, centred on the conquest, taming and transformation of the frontier areas of Brazil, and perhaps especially the savanna areas of the *Cerrado*. Now the centre of massive agri-business-led commercial production of soya bean in particular, a well-rehearsed narrative relates the expansion of such agriculture and the transformation of a previously backward area into the core of the Brazilian agricultural economy. This transformation took place through the migration of entrepreneurial and skilled farmers from the south of Brazil, and the application of home-grown Brazilian technologies to improve soils and boost production (Hosono and Hongo 2012). This story is now portrayed as a model for Africa, and, despite the Brazilian critiques, of which there are many (*cf* Oliveira 2005; Mazzetto Silva 2009), the idea has taken hold not only within Brazilian technical cooperation, and especially parts of the technical agency Embrapa,[9] but also among external experts, media commentators and African policymakers (*The Economist* 2010).

The agri-business vision of large-scale commercial agriculture is also central to the biofuels story. Ethanol production based on the expansion of sugar cane cultivation has again become one of the well-known Brazilian 'success stories'. Brazilian technologies, developed by Embrapa, have been central to this, and Brazilian sugar cane and ethanol production companies are some of the most successful in the world, with increasing ambitions in Africa, as explained by Alemu and Scoones (this *IDS Bulletin*) for Ethiopia.

Yet the agri-business framing of Brazilian domestic agricultural policy is internally highly contested, and this is in turn reflected in development cooperation with Africa. Questions are raised, for example, about the environmental impacts of large-scale agriculture, arguing for lower input ecological systems of agriculture. Others point to the implications for equity, including issues of labour rights, of the concentrations of capital in a few large businesses, and the impacts on local economies. Still others raise questions about the long-term economic viability of such operations, based as they are on fossil-fuel dependent mechanised agriculture, and long-distance transport to markets (Wilkinson *et al.* 2012; Altieri and Toledo 2011). Similar issues are raised in respect of cane-based ethanol production for biofuel, with critics pointing to the massive subsidies and state support for such agri-business operations, and contrasting the ethanol strategy with the more decentralised, locally controlled production of biodiesel (Wilkinson and Herrera 2010).

As Cabral *et al.* (this *IDS Bulletin*) point out, the decentralised nature of technical cooperation – whereby specialised Brazilian institutions engage directly in cooperation activities – means that there are numerous actors involved in agricultural development cooperation in Brazil. They count over 20 institutions, holding a range of positions in this debate. Without a coherent, overarching policy framework, and with no firm, mandated direction for development cooperation (claimed to be consistent with a demand-driven rationale), beyond the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC),[10] diverse strands of development

cooperation emerge, framed by different domestic political concerns, and informed by contrasting narratives and interests.

Two main axes are identified, associated with the two main agriculture and rural development ministries in Brazil. First, is the agri-business strand, supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply (MAPA), alongside its semi-autonomous research corporation, Embrapa, Brazil's core agricultural research agency. Connections between 'technical cooperation' and business interests are increasingly visible, particularly in the Nacala corridor in northern Mozambique, where the technical cooperation programme ProSavana is paving the way for private investments in agri-business by Brazilian and Japanese companies (Chichava *et al.*, this *IDS Bulletin*).

Second, is the 'family farming' perspective promoted by the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), the ministry also responsible for overseeing land reform settlements, in many ways in opposition to the agri-business lobby. This narrative was significantly strengthened during Lula da Silva's administration and eventually added into the international cooperation framework at a landmark event – the Brazil–Africa Dialogue on Food Security, the Fight Against Hunger and Rural Development – hosted by the president himself in 2010.[11] The More Food Africa programme (recently re-labelled More Food International) is thus far the MDA's main cooperation initiative in Africa, promising to increase productivity and improve food security by enhancing small farmers' access to machinery, including tractors, in countries like Ghana and Zimbabwe (Amanor, Mukwereza and Pierri, this *IDS Bulletin*).

While the Brazilian idea of 'small-scale' family farming may differ quite radically from what is found in these African countries (Pierri, this *IDS Bulletin*), its focus is definitely less on the expansion of large-scale commercial operations with the support of Brazilian agri-business and technology, and so sits in a sometimes uneasy tension with other Brazilian engagements. Brazilian politicians argue that both are central to the Brazilian way of doing agriculture and rural development, and so Africa can benefit from both, but of course this suggests the replication of a dualistic Brazilian model of agrarian structure and support in an African context (Cabral *et al.* and Pierri, this *IDS Bulletin*).

The dualism is challenged within Brazil by social movements and civil society organisations associated with agrarian reform (such as the MST, the landless rural workers' movement) and ecological agriculture (such as the AS-PTA)[12] agendas. The influence of such actors in Brazilian engagements in Africa is increasingly noticeable, as for example in the exchange facilitated by Via Campesina between the MST and Mozambique's National Peasants' Union (UNAC).[13]

While Brazilian development cooperation in Africa pales into insignificance alongside Chinese engagements (Cabral *et al.*, this *IDS Bulletin*), Brazilian involvement in agriculture is certainly growing; and is rapidly expanding beyond the narrow grouping of Lusophone countries where Brazilian expertise and commerce has traditionally been present. It is taking a diversity of forms, including large-scale agri-business investments, promotion of low-carbon agricultural technologies, support for smallholder production (with new subsidised technologies promoting agricultural mechanisation and input industries) and food production programmes linked to school feeding programmes. As a platform for the expansion of Brazilian commercial operations, often in trilateral or multilateral arrangements as in Mozambique's ProSavana project, such cooperation agreements in Africa may well become increasingly significant. Equally, unlike for China, civil society engagement may also help shape critique and alternatives, as new networks are established between Brazilian and African players.

7 New development encounters: five key questions

Across this huge diversity of development cooperation activities, labelled variously under aid, trade and investment, and usually combinations of each, what are some of the key features that define how they play out in practice? As already noted, there is no singular form of Chinese and Brazilian engagement in Africa, and each intervention is, in important respects, different. Competing visions, reflecting domestic political differences, become mirrored in the development encounter, and competing interests and perspectives are continuously being negotiated. This cannot be reduced to a static

notion of 'transfer' – of money, expertise, machinery or policy – but one of 'encounter', where knowledge framings and their politics are constantly being negotiated. Here we outline five that are central to the discussions in the articles that follow, and our CBAA research programme more generally.

7.1 What is the political-economic context for these development encounters?

New development partnerships with China and Brazil are being built in relation to particular needs, challenges and demands. These must be in understood in terms of the particular contexts and histories of 'recipient' countries.

As discussed earlier, and as elaborated in more depth by Kojo Amanor (this *IDS Bulletin*) in his critique of South–South cooperation framings, the types of intervention we are seeing today must be understood in terms of the longer-term transformations of national agrarian political economies through economic reform and market liberalisation, both in Africa, but also in China and Brazil. Such reforms have opened up the opportunities for agri-business, particularly if this is facilitated by aid programmes. While for a (short) period, Western aid has, at least rhetorically, eschewed 'tied aid', linked to commercial opportunities, this imperative has declined, particularly as 'support for the private sector' and 'business-led growth' has become more central to the development mantra.[14] In this sense, in the post-adjustment period of liberalised economies, with the emphasis on growth, the political economy of aid and investment is increasingly intertwined. Amanor argues China and Brazil are therefore not so different to Western countries, and all compete within a market-based, global economy for the potential riches to be found in the newly liberalised, vibrant economies on the African continent. The difference perhaps is that the model of capitalism offered by China and Brazil is underpinned by strong state intervention, an approach welcomed by many African governments, only now recovering from the effects of structural adjustment.

Thus, in his article on Ghana, Amanor (this *IDS Bulletin*) argues that Chinese and Brazilian investments must be seen in the light of this particular history of liberalisation, and the South–South cooperation gloss should not deflect us from a more hard-nosed political economy analysis. In the same way, technical cooperation should be seen in historical perspective. In his other article on South–South cooperation, Amanor (this *IDS Bulletin*) outlines how, through the support given by US foundations from the 1960s, and the extensive international networking in scientific cooperation through the CGIAR, scholarship programmes in US and European universities, and networks built through disciplinary and other professional associations, there is a remarkable overlap between US, European, Brazilian and even Chinese technical expertise networks in Africa.

This suggests that the interventions from China or Brazil are less new than sometimes supposed, and more a continuation of the networks of support, and associated framings, that have existed since the 1960s and the promulgation of a 'green revolution' in Africa. Professional elites in Africa are very much part of these networks, have studied in the same universities, are members of the same professional associations and have worked in the same international institutes. While formerly Soviet, and to some extent Chinese, educational support offered a different trajectory for previous generations, there is a greater homogeneity in elite scientific networks today, resulting in a greater convergence in scientific and technical advice, although perhaps some divergences, for example around positions on intellectual property rights.

7.2 What relationships are being built on?

Engagements in Africa are, as we have noted, not entirely new. They build on often long-term relationships, shaped in previous eras by political elites. Chinese support for liberation struggles, and close associations with new political elites in post-independent African countries, have influenced relationships since; especially where the same person has remained in power for many years, as in President Mugabe in Zimbabwe for instance.

The struggle against colonialism, and the resistance to the depredations of Western capital and its shadow, the aid industry, is central to the rhetorical underpinnings of the relationships. Of course, more pragmatically, the real discussions are about money, investments, and financing deals, but these can be dressed up and legitimised in other ways.

Brazil makes great play of its cultural, historical and linguistic affinities in Africa, as already discussed. The international diplomatic initiatives by former President Lula da Silva provided a platform for these arguments, and on multiple visits the importance of solidarity, mutual learning and South–South cooperation was emphasised. However, such rhetoric is starting to look like an entry point for a more concrete discussion about commercial opportunities for Brazilian businesses, a theme central to his less flamboyant successor in the presidency, Dilma Rousseff (Costa Leite forthcoming).

Of course, in the context of the global discussion of the 'rising powers' and the positioning of the BRICS as a bloc, part of the G20, allied to the G77, and often invited into the inner circle at the G8, Brazilian and Chinese diplomacy sees alliances with Africa as key, pushing for a place at the high table. Brazil's nomination for the UN FAO Director General post was clearly assisted by African alliances (Pierri, this *IDS Bulletin*), as is continued African support for the 'One China' policy or China's positions at the UN. African aid and investment are very much part of these high-level diplomatic manoeuvres, although played out in very different styles by Brazil and China.

7.3 What perceptions and political interests underlie these development encounters?

As we have discussed earlier, new development cooperation engagements in Africa are fundamentally shaped by historical experiences and domestic debates and politics. Particular 'social imaginaries' – the set of values, institutions, and symbols common to a particular social group and society – can be very powerful in framing narratives of intervention (Taylor 2004). These may derive from particular stories of success and certain culturally informed perceptions of history, ecology and 'progress' in development. Imaginaries often juxtapose a vision of 'modernity' and 'development' with one of backwardness and need, and so project a view of what the future should be. It is not as if such imaginaries are untrue or somehow illegitimate, but the point is that they become powerful in particular settings, defining identities and positions, and so narratives of what to do. This has an impact on development cooperation, in the ways we have already described for Brazil and China, just as they do for the UK, the USA or elsewhere.

By identifying such social imaginaries, and locating them in situated historical experiences, we are able to understand how particular visions are portrayed and pushed. But they may not be singular: different imaginaries, and so policy narratives, may compete with each other, reflecting divided political positions, and different cultural and social identifications. This is certainly the case in relation to visions of agriculture pushed by both China and Brazil (Chichava *et al.*, this *IDS Bulletin*). Different narratives exist, contrasting large-scale, mechanised commercial agriculture with smallholder, local, family-oriented farming in both cases. And with each come different 'models' of what successful agriculture should be, who farmers are, and what an appropriate reordered ecology should look like to encompass such a landscape vision. As background assumptions, informed by powerful cultural symbols and resonant metaphors, these are in turn translated into the negotiations around cooperation and investment activity in Africa.

7.4 How are negotiations on agreements carried out?

Our focus on the 'development encounter' emphasises the knowledges and practices involved in negotiation processes (*cf* Lewis and Mosse 2006; Mosse 2005; Long and Long 1992). Such negotiations may well be between unequal parties, with gradients of power skewed in one direction. They may be heavily constrained by structural features of the relationship embedded in unequal international relations and power structures. But nevertheless these are not passive encounters, where agency cannot be expressed and articulated.

Indeed a growing literature emphasises the importance of 'African agency' (Mohan and Lampert 2013; Brown 2012), whereby states are able to gain advantage, despite unequal power relationships through exercising influence. There is always some room for manoeuvre, and in such encounters, both parties need each other to some extent (Carmody and Taylor 2010). This perspective challenges the idea that the 'rising powers' are always the 'drivers', Asian or otherwise (*cf* Kaplinsky and Morris 2009a). Such perspectives, often focusing on economic relationships shaped by trade, sometimes forget that relationships are conditioned by political negotiations, and so social and political agency.

To understand how such negotiations are played out, we must first look at how needs and

priorities from both parties are framed, and assess the political configuration of interests involved. In bilateral negotiations between states, there are always multiple interests at play, as states are far from homogeneous entities. The same applies to capital. It makes a big difference when considering a large, well-connected multinational firm, a state-controlled firm based in a Chinese province or a small-scale migrant business entrepreneur. Unpacking the diverse interests of capital is essential if we are to understand the contours of the negotiation (Gu 2009, 2011).

Thus in relation to the four country cases discussed in this *IDS Bulletin*, what are the dynamics at play? In the aftermath of a major land reform and diplomatic and economic isolation by the Western community, the Zimbabwean state was in urgent need of assistance outside the standard Western aid framework. This has provided opportunities for both Brazil and China, as Mukwereza (this *IDS Bulletin*) describes, allowing Zimbabwe to subvert 'sanctions' imposed by the West, but also providing opportunities for Brazilian and Chinese business at the same time.

In the Ghanaian and Mozambican cases (Amanor, and Chichava *et al.*, this *IDS Bulletin*), the need to promote agri-business growth was central to government policy, and aligned to national elite interests. A liberalised, pro-market policy promoted by Western interests provided a firm basis for investment by China and Brazil in both countries, supported by the bilateral 'aid' elements of their cooperation programmes. Again there was mutual advantage at play, with state and commercial elites benefiting locally from investments by external agri-businesses, who were able to establish themselves under preferential terms.

As Alemu and Scoones (this *IDS Bulletin*) observe for the case of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian state has exerted substantial agency in trading off different aid and investment opportunities, in order to pursue its 'developmental state' objectives. Aiming to follow the lead of East Asian countries, Ethiopia has followed what Kelsall (2013, following Crook 1989) terms 'developmental patrimonialism', whereby close personal control by state and party elites, and involving quasi-private commercial entities, have directed, channelled and controlled investments to developmental ends, with apparently limited corruption. Here, Chinese investments in infrastructure, including roads and large dams, have been seen as supportive to agricultural growth, as has the facilitation of Brazilian investment in the sugar cane and ethanol production sector.

With multiple 'aid' agencies, commercial and development banks, and external investors, as companies but also in the form of a range of funds and other instruments, all clamouring for part of the action, African states do have opportunities to exert their agency, and guide negotiations in their favour, if they play their cards right. Ethiopia, with a strong bureaucracy and with tight party control of state agencies, and many private sector operations too, along with the charismatic leadership of the now late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, has been able to manage this process very effectively, with evident results, if aggregate growth figures are taken as an indicator (Alemu and Scoones, this *IDS Bulletin*).

7.5 *What project-level interactions occur that shape development encounters?*

While agency may be exerted at the broad level of inter-governmental negotiations around cooperation agreements, there are also more micro-level negotiations which play out when a project is unfolding on the ground. These may be just as important as the higher-level agreement in shaping the direction and outcome of an intervention.

At the micro level, the broader discourses which are so influential in framing the wider development debate may be less significant. In the day-to-day interactions between scientists, technicians and government officials, a range of other factors come into play. The actual practices embedded in a cooperation project may be quite mundane, but may be conditioned by misunderstandings over language, over accepted procedure, and cultural misperceptions about what is good practice, hard work or excellent results. For in cooperation projects it is not only the wider 'social imaginaries' which shape cultural understandings more broadly that are imported, but also the routine bureaucratic practices of governmental or commercial operations, the social and cultural values and practices of individuals and the perceptions of

'the other', as reinforced by cultural biases, the media and other experiences.

This, of course, works both ways, and the development encounter becomes framed by all these aspects. As Lila Buckley (2013) outlines in relation to a Chinese development cooperation project in Senegal, a whole series of misunderstandings and misperceptions arose, influenced by racialised stereotyping and failure to communicate. The result, in the end, was a separation of operational activities between the Chinese and Senegalese, accepting difference and realising that an integrated joint activity, no matter what the official rhetoric was, was not going to work.

Project-based encounters can thus be read as part of a 'performance', and development interventions as 'performative' acts (*cf* Desai 2006). Through such performances, the drama of development encounters is played out, with actors playing different roles. Questions of power and authority are central, leading to a variety of outcomes as negotiations progress: from agreement, consent and compliance to reshaping, resistance and renegotiation. There is a particular role for expertise, especially accredited scientific expertise, in such encounters. Science appeals to a sense of universalism: that models can be applied in new places, that technologies will work in new settings, and that projects will unfold according to the scientific plans devised. Techno-science is therefore associated with practices or ordering, creating legibility and defining rules (Mitchell 2002; Scott 1998), each frequently bound up with processes of state planning and control as part of development's modernising and civilising project (Li 2007).

Yet all expertise is ultimately located and local, despite its global, universalistic claims, and local contexts where scientific plans unfold have the habit of challenging the authority of techno-scientific impositions, whether through unruly people resisting or unruly ecologies not playing by the rule-book. Contingency, chance and uncertainty represent the dynamics of the real world. As neat, techno-scientific plans get implemented, they are handed over to technicians, labourers, extension workers and implementation agents who have to broker different compromises in the real world. It is these 'encounters at the interface' (Long and van der Ploeg 1989) between science and practice, policy and implementation where the negotiations around what actually happens take place. And it is these brokering, negotiation and translation processes that become central to understanding how new forms of development cooperation happen in practice.

8 A new paradigm for development cooperation?

Each of the articles that follow in this *IDS Bulletin* picks up on these themes in different ways. We are interested in the cultural and social framings that influence the development encounter, and in particular the knowledge politics that underlie these. We are also interested in the broad political-economic contexts and structural power relations that influence what happens where and why. Through a more comparative approach, we gain an insight into the importance of context, and the role of individuals, bureaucracies and historical experiences in shaping the form new cooperation engagements take place. And finally, we are also interested in the practices and the micro-politics of such engagements, and how individuals – as officials, scientists, or farmers – bring with them ideas, experiences and biases into the encounter, which require negotiation, and ultimately shape the outcomes.

In many respects, the repositioning of these players on the scene in Africa has opened up the development game. The old, narrow conditionalities are being questioned, as African governments do not need to be behoven to the strictures of Western development aid. Yet, engagement always comes with strings attached, as indeed suggested by the 'mutual benefit' proposition, despite the warm-sounding rhetoric of 'South–South cooperation' and 'solidarity diplomacy'. China and Brazil need Africa, just as Africa needs them. Africa's resources, including its land, are critical both for longer-term global food security, particularly in the populous parts of Asia, and such low-cost resources, labour and market connections are vital for agri-business and trade plans.

But is all this new activity ushering in a 'new paradigm' of development cooperation, as some have suggested? As we have seen, the new relationships being forged by Brazil and China are certainly different in some important respects, but are they that new? They are certainly layered on past experiences. Western

donors are changing too and, despite the claims, their aid has never been completely untied, philanthropic giving. It has always been bound up with geopolitical positioning and national benefit, whether explicit or not. The interests of capital have always been important in aid policy, and now with the discourse about the private sector's role in development, this has once again become more prominent. Whether in the context of 'the war on terror' or the market expansion of business interests, development cooperation must always be viewed in the context of a wider political economy with deep historical roots. The same of course applies to the 'rising powers'.

Today with more aid donors, 'development partners' and investors on the scene, there is perhaps the possibility for greater pragmatism and realism and less of a push towards uniformity and harmonisation, and so better possibilities for negotiation by African governments between competing offers. However, there may be downsides of such an opening up of opportunities. With the more lax code of conduct for development cooperation that emerged at the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011, there may be less protection for recipients, and, as in the past, greater chance for duplication and incoherence in development interventions. Furthermore, fears of unconditional aid undermining good governance have been voiced (Kragelund 2010), as have concerns that the offloading of excess capital in the form of cheap loans will result in the accumulation of debt burdens in Africa (Manning 2006).

This *IDS Bulletin* explores these issues through a series of African country cases, complemented by reviews of Brazil's and China's development cooperation and agricultural policy frameworks. It provides a reflection on what is happening in the very particular context of agriculture, a sector central to Africa's development effort. This emerging field of research continues largely unexplored and we hope the insights developed here can be used to unpack and interrogate further the emerging 'development encounters', and pose new questions for further work.

There are two areas that require most additional study in particular. One concerns the domestic dynamics, within Brazil and China, shaping cooperation policies and particularly agricultural development models on offer. Most of the literature has been looking at the engagements of the 'rising powers' in development from an international relations perspective, concerned with geopolitics, but overlooking the domestic political economy. By tracing Brazil and China's own agricultural trajectories, policy debates and political battles, we can better comprehend the narratives and imaginaries of development being deployed in Africa.

The other is a focus on the detailed 'knowledge encounters' in the field, where project and investment plans are defined, and implementation unfolds. This has barely been discussed in the wider literature on Brazil and China in Africa, and in this *IDS Bulletin*, the details are only touched upon. In the next phase of our research, through a more in-depth, ethnographic assessment of different projects and investments, we will gain some wider understanding of this dynamic. Only then will we be able to go beyond the rhetoric and assess whether a new development paradigm is emerging, or whether we have just more of the same.

Notes

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1 www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2013/mar/28/brics-countries-infrastructure-spending-development-bank (accessed 29 March 2013).

2 The term 'traditional donor' is used to refer to the group of donors comprising the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, sometimes also called 'DAC donors'. This term contrasts with that of 'non-traditional' or 'non-DAC' donors, typically referring to countries with emerging economies and more recent histories of development assistance. For a discussion on these concepts, see Manning (2006).

3 www.future-agricultures.org/research/cbaa (accessed 29 March 2013).

4 *cf* www.agra.org/ and www.nepad-caadp.net/ (accessed 5 April 2013).

5 PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t1027582.shtml (accessed 2 February 2013).

6 Cohen, M. (2011).

7 Presentation by Professor Li Xiaoyun at the conference on the Political Economy of Agricultural Policy in Africa, Pretoria, March 2013.
8 www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IKZ0-xvrmM (accessed 29 March 2013).
9 http://revistadinheirorural.terra.com.br/secao/agronegocios/rumo-africa (accessed 29 March 2013).
10 A department within the Brazilian foreign ministry mandated with the coordination of technical cooperation, but without political clout or technical expertise.
11 *cf* www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/dialogo-brasil-africa-sobre-seguranca-alimentar-combate-a-fome-e-desenvolvimento-rural-adocao-de-documento-final (accessed 29 March 2013; see also Cabral *et al.*, this *IDS Bulletin*).
12 *cf* http://aspta.org.br/ (accessed 29 March 2013).
13 *cf* www.mst.org.br/node/9176 (accessed 29 March 2013).
14 www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=14090 (accessed 29 March 2013).

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